

## PART I - FACE SHEET

<b>APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE</b>		1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction	
Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)			
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):		3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:  29-NOV-10	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:
2b. APPLICATION ID:  11ES124110		4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:  09ESHCO0010001
<b>5. APPLICATION INFORMATION</b>			
LEGAL NAME: Colorado Youth Corps Association  DUNS NUMBER: 136191710		NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):  NAME: Jennifer A. Freeman  TELEPHONE NUMBER: (303) 863-0602  FAX NUMBER: (303) 863-0610  INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: jfreeman@cyca.org	
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 225 East Sixteenth Avenue Suite 475 Denver CO 80203 - 1620 County:			
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):  841532028		7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit  7b. Statewide Association	
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).  <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>  A. AUGMENTATION        B. BUDGET REVISION  C. NO COST EXTENSION    D. OTHER (specify below):		9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: <b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>	
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps Fixed Amount Grant (State)		11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: Colorado Youth Corps Education Awards Program	
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): This is a statewide project		11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):	
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 01/01/12      END DATE: 12/31/12		14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="CO 001"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="CO 001"/>	
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <input type="text" value="3"/>		16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?	
a. FEDERAL	\$ 31,585.00	<input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:  DATE:  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372	
b. APPLICANT	\$ 0.00		
c. STATE	\$ 0.00		
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00		
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00		
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00		
g. TOTAL	\$ 31,585.00		
17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO			
18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.			
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Alicia Oletski		b. TITLE: Associate Director	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (303) 863-0604
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:			e. DATE SIGNED: 05/05/11

## Narratives

### Executive Summary

Colorado's 10 accredited youth conservation corps will engage youth and young adults, ages 16--25, in land, water, and energy conservation service project throughout Colorado. Members will also participate in a number of education and training activities including GED preparation, environmental education, & job skills training.

### Rationale and Approach

1) COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEED - The CYCA Education Awards program addresses two community needs simultaneously 1) the need for Colorado's youth to complete high school (or secure a GED) and have access to college or trade school and 2) the need to conserve Colorado's land, water, and energy resources.

#### NEED #1 - YOUTH EDUCATION -

Low college graduation rates for Coloradans, the high and ever increasing cost of college, and the ambiguity of future student loan accessibility means that families are facing increasing difficulty in sending their children to post-secondary educational institutions. Even though Colorado is a well-educated state, we do an inadequate job of preparing our youth for college, especially those who are minorities or from lower-income families -- and the achievement gap is growing. In all, 30% of Coloradans do not graduate from high school, another 30% do not enroll in college, and 50% of those who do enroll take more than four years to finish. A significant percentage of our state's educated workforce has moved here from other states or countries -- only 8% (approx.) of Colorado's educated adults over 25 years of age are born in Colorado. These statistics are not surprising given that Colorado ranks 49th in the nation for state and local support for higher education, 48th in higher education spending per capita, and 49th in K-12 spending as a percentage of personal income (The State of Colorado's Talent Development: Competing in the 21st Century Economy, Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2006).

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Teens who succeed in graduating from high school, or earning their GEDs, and have their sights set on college face additional impediments. College tuition has increased 5.6% since 2005-2006, and exceeds the means of many young people and their families. The average cost of in-state tuition in the West plus other costs such as fees, books, and room, board or commuting expenses totals almost \$17,000 per year. The cost burden becomes even greater for youth who do not complete their degrees in four years because of family obligations, job commitments, or academic difficulties (Trends in College Pricing, College Board, 2006).

CYCA recently completed a statewide youth corps evaluation conducted by OMNI Research and Training, Inc., a Denver-based social science research firm. Results show that youth corps participants at risk for low academic achievement were significantly more likely to say they intended to graduate from high school and enroll in college. After the results of this study were published, youth corps statewide have worked to further improve their educational offerings, increasing their GED preparation programs, working closely with members to plan their educational futures, and creating community college partnerships to provide work experience credits for Members. Youth corps help bridge the gap between high school graduation and college enrollment, especially for the state's low-income and minority youth.

### NEED #2 -- CONSERVING COLORADO'S LAND, ENERGY, AND WATER RESOURCES --

While approximately 20% of youth corps members' time is spent focused on education, the remainder is spent conserving Colorado's land, energy and water resources. Youth corps participants engage in community service projects that address high priority issues identified by land managers and other conservation officials including the negative effects of: recreation, bark beetle infestation of forests, non-native invasive species, climate change, and population growth.

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Public Lands - Colorado's public lands, which make up 42% of the state, are impacted by millions of users each year, and have severe backlog maintenance problems. More than 75% of Coloradans participate in outdoor recreation activities each week and an additional 28 million people visit Colorado annually, many of whom participate in outdoor recreation. An increase in population growth and tourism has led to an increase in outdoor recreation, which generates \$10-15 billion in revenue annually for the state, and thus an increase in the need for land and wildlife protections (2008 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Colorado State Parks). According to the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (Colorado and the Colorado Market Region, USDA Forest Service, 2007), the top five outdoor recreation activities in the state are trail-based activities. Land managers have difficulty maintaining, not to mention enhancing, the land for recreation and habitat protection.

Though pressure on the state's natural resources grows, there are fewer and fewer funds available to protect them. "Stagnant or declining funding has directly affected the ability of many local governments, state, and federal agencies to address recreation and management needs and meet increasing statewide recreation demands. A slowing economy...higher priorities for funding, and declining tax revenues are a few factors that contribute to recent funding shortfalls" (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Colorado State Parks, 2008).

Youth corps make the perfect partners in the effort to maintain and enhance trails, open space, wildlife habitat, and protect forests from fire and weed infestation while helping Colorado's young residents.

Water and Energy Conservation -- Youth corps also engage their members in energy and water conservation projects, typically for low-income residents and non-profits. Because our state's population continues to grow, and as we begin to feel the effects of climate change, water and energy

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conservation is essential. Not only do these projects help save money, they also preserve resources for the future and educate youth about sustainable lifestyle practices.

### 2) DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND MEMBER ROLES

Youth corps programs are crew-based education and service programs that use conservation projects as the tool to develop young people. Corpsmembers serve between 32 and 40 hours each week, from eight weeks to six months at a time, on adult supervised crews completing land, energy, and water conservation projects. Land conservation projects will make up the bulk of the service projects conducted by AmeriCorps Members serving as part of this grant program.

Land conservation projects include: trail maintenance and construction to improve user safety or protect sensitive lands; fence construction to prevent cattle migration into critical wildlife habitat; dismantling fences to improve wildlife migration; improving breeding grounds for sage grouse populations, eradicating invasive species, such as tamarisk, which thrives along stream banks, consumes 200-300 gallons of water each day, contributes to ongoing drought conditions, salinates waterways, kills fish, and creates monocultures; elimination of hazard trees killed by bark beetles; and fire mitigation in the "red zones" near homes and public buildings. Depending on the youth corps structure and the needs of the youth served, some corps operate residential (or camping) crews, meaning they travel together and camp near their projects throughout the term of their service, and others are non-residential (or "day") crews, meaning they return home each evening. Crews are then "hosted", on a project-by-project basis, by a public land management agency such as the United States Forest Service, a Colorado State Park, or a city or county government.

CYCA is requesting 303 Member slots in 300-hour, 450-hour, and 900-hour slots. The 300-hour Members will primarily serve in an eight-week summer season, while the 450-hour and 900-hour

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Members will serve longer terms of service in the spring and fall seasons. Each of the nine community-based youth corps, or operating sites, request member slots based on their program needs and season schedules.

CYCA has a well-defined system of assuring compliance with AmeriCorps regulations to avoid the possibility of Members engaging in prohibited activities. Each operating site has a designated AmeriCorps coordinator trained annually by CYCA to abide by the AmeriCorps Provisions and to use WBRS. CYCA also conducts an AmeriCorps site visit during annual accreditation visits to review member files and discuss member orientation. In addition, Members and their Crewleaders are thoroughly oriented to AmeriCorps upon entry to the program. More importantly, each member is assigned to a crew with a trained adult supervisor. All program activities happen in these crews, leaving little opportunity for a member to perform prohibited activities.

### 3) MEASURABLE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

CYCA has developed one aligned "Primary Service Delivery" performance measure which addresses CNCS's "environment" priority area - To enhance and maintain Colorado's public lands by completing 150 conservation service projects (output), that are rated at "4" or above by project sponsors on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being "extremely satisfied" (intermediate outcome), with 75% of the projects having benefits lasting more than three years (end outcome). Note - the "Member Training and Support" performance measure will be addressed in a later section.

### 4) PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

CYCA will track its progress toward meeting the performance measures using the Corps Information Database, a statewide online system used by the Colorado corps coalition. This system tracks project accomplishments, sponsor satisfaction and project sustainability, the three goals within the "Primary

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Service Delivery" performance measure.

Because youth corps programs conduct conservation projects of high priority for land managers, projects must be completed in a high quality fashion. A culture of continuous improvement is necessary in order to retain and gain sponsors and projects each year. Land managers are reluctant to work with community groups, even those offering free services, if the service performed is poor and inefficient. Each sponsor completes an evaluation of every project and makes note of Member skill, behavior, leadership ability and whether the crew accomplished the project in an environmentally conscious manner. These evaluations are calculated statewide to determine overall sponsor satisfaction. In addition, youth corps use these evaluations to improve their programs and as a training tool for Members and crewleaders.

Of the programs' 2008 sponsors, 100% requested a corps in the future and 91% rated work at a "4" on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being "exceeds expectations".

### 5) COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Youth corps would not be as powerful without access to meaningful conservation service projects. Local, state, and federal land managers determine which service projects a corps will accomplish on an annual basis. These project sponsors prioritize their enhancement and maintenance project needs, consider which are most appropriate for youth corps programs, and which will provide valuable education opportunities for Members.

In 2007 and 2008, youth corps crews completed more than 300 service and conservation projects. CYCA and the youth corps collaborated with 60 different project sponsors to complete these projects. These sponsors included 25 local municipalities, 27 non-profits (conservation and human service-

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oriented), 3 state agencies, 4 federal agencies, and 1 Native American tribal council.

Project sponsors are responsible for designing the service projects, providing on-site technical expertise, as needed, and funding the project. Youth corps programs and CYCA work closely with sponsors to help fund projects from sources such as private foundations and government grant programs.

Corps also collaborate with high schools, community colleges, workforce centers and other organizations to deliver education programming for their members.

### 6) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

Because of the residential nature of many programs, joint activities with other streams of service are rare, though they do occur when possible, especially in conjunction with state and National Service days such as Make a Difference Day, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, National Youth Service Day, and Colorado Cares Day as well as National Public Lands Day and National Trails Day. Youth corps also hold all-corps community meetings and joint service projects with multiple crews to build relationships within the programs.

CYCA also operates a statewide 26-Member VISTA program at youth corps and other youth-serving organizations. Much of what the VISTAs accomplish is aimed at improving the lives of low-income and at-risk youth in the state.

### 7) POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

CYCA has intentionally replicated the youth corps model many times over in Colorado. In 1997, there were only five youth corps programs serving 210 youth annually in the state. There are now 11 programs serving 1,200 youth and young adults annually.

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### Organizational Capability

#### 1) SOUND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

##### ABILITY TO PROVIDE SOUND PROGRAMMATIC AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT

CYCA is an independent 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization governed by a fourteen-member Board of Directors. The Colorado Youth Corps Association has been in existence for eleven years, growing and supporting Colorado's network of youth corps. CYCA has more than doubled the number of youth corps operating in the state and more than quadrupled the number of youth served.

CYCA has managed ten years of AmeriCorps funding and annually manages approximately \$700,000 in State of Colorado, Great Outdoors Colorado (lottery trust fund), and federal project-based funds which are passed through to youth corps. Appropriate fiscal controls and checks and balances, approved by an auditor, are in place. CYCA received an unqualified financial audit in 2007 (and every year since its first audit in 2002).

As part of the CYCA accreditation process, operating sites undergo a comprehensive quality review of their AmeriCorps files and program procedures. CYCA also provides one-on-one training to all new program staff in AmeriCorps compliance and record keeping and trains all staff annually on any changes to Provisions. CYCA staff also visits crews in the field to discuss AmeriCorps with Members and answer their questions. CYCA hosts an annual site with the Governor's Commission on Community Service and always receives high marks for program management and compliance.

CYCA utilizes a statewide online database to collect critical information on projects and Members, called the Corps Information Database. The first of its kind in the nation, this comprehensive database provides online real-time reports to CYCA and programs. The database will be used to track the performance measures detailed in this application.

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2) BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATION, AND STAFF - Mara McGuin, CYCA's Program Manager, is responsible for managing the Education Awards Program. Ms. McGuin has spent four years in the Colorado nonprofit community. She has been with CYCA for one year and is a former VISTA Member with Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. Jennifer Freeman, CYCA's Executive Director, provides oversight for the AmeriCorps program. Ms. Freeman has been involved in National Service since 1993 and has directly managed the CYCA AmeriCorps program since 2000.

### 3) PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT OR IMPROVEMENT

CYCA is committed to self-assessment and improvement and uses three strategies to achieve continuous improvement: 1) Evaluation; 2) Planning, and 3) Accreditation.

EVALUATION - CYCA and OMNI Research and Training, Inc., a Denver-based social science research firm, developed an outcome evaluation tool to examine the effectiveness of youth corps programs on the young adults they serve. Areas of measurement include: job skills, employability and post-corps job acquisition; academic performance; environmental awareness; community, interpersonal and affective measures; and the reduction of risky behaviors.

PLANNING - CYCA recently completed a three-year strategic plan that identifies three goals for the organization:

Goal #1 - Work to build and expand a quality corps movement in Colorado

Gal #2 - Advance the interests of Colorado Youth Corps through comprehensive resource development activities.

Goal #3 - Sustain a professionally staffed statewide organization to achieve goals one and two.

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ACCREDITATION - As part of the annual Colorado youth corps accreditation review process, each corps in the coalition completes an organizational self-assessment and undergoes a rigorous peer review process that assures that corps effectively serve youth and the state's conservation needs using good non-profit management practices. This assessment focuses on each corps' capacity building needs related to governance, management, human resources management/knowledge management, external relations (stakeholders), strategic planning, financial resources management, and service delivery.

### 4) PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CYCA provides technical assistance to programs through the CYCA compliance reviews, formal training, and one-on-one assistance.

COMPLIANCE - AmeriCorps compliance reviews are part of the accreditation review process. CYCA staff reviews member files and discusses other compliance-related items with the corps staff.

TRAINING - CYCA is continually working to develop a cadre of highly trained youth corps professionals in the state. CYCA maintains a cohesive corps network in which program staff share best practices and lessons learned and work to keep quality staff in the network through training and opportunities for promotion. A Directors Retreat hosted by CYCA each Fall is one of the venues at which this peer exchange occurs.

CYCA also trains youth corps crewleaders who have direct supervision over AmeriCorps Members. These crewleaders can make the difference between a positive or poor service experience for Members. CYCA trains 100-150 youth corps crewleaders each Spring. Crewleaders gain a firm foundation in leading quality service projects, fostering Member development, esprit d'corps, and facilitating education activities.

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### 5) SOUND RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AS AN ORGANIZATION

#### a) VOLUNTEER GENERATION AND SUPPORT

Youth corps occasionally use volunteer regularly, primarily to help tutor corpsmembers and participate in community service days.

#### b) ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

In addition to working collectively with other organizations toward a common goal, CYCA staff members sit on community boards. CYCA's Executive Director sits on the Board of the Outdoor Stewardship Institute and sits on the advisory committees for the Colorado Kids Outdoors movement and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

#### c) SUCCESS IN SECURING MATCH RESOURCES

Because CYCA is applying for an Education Award Only grant, generation of match resources is not a requirement.

### 6) SUCCESS IN SECURING COMMUNITY SUPPORT THAT RECURS, EXPANDS IN SCOPE, INCREASES IN AMOUNT, AND IS MORE DIVERSE

#### a) COLLABORATION

The youth corps coalition in Colorado is unique in the nation in that it capitalizes on the support of local community leaders and organizations while leveraging resources and knowledge at a state and national level. In its role as an association, CYCA accesses many resources for the entire coalition that are inaccessible to small, local programs. In turn, the programs are deeply rooted in their home communities, with local boards of directors, community and faith-based organizations, program alumni,

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and parents who are committed to the success and sustainability of the programs.

As previously mentioned, youth corps have significant support from more than 300 conservation and human service project sponsors. Often two or more sponsors are involved in planning, developing, supporting, and funding a single project.

### b) LOCAL FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Nearly 100% of the funding for the youth corps network comes from other sources rather than from AmeriCorps fixed award funds. Youth corps in Colorado are independent of a state or federal structure and are rooted in local communities in order to foster just this kind of local and community support.

Historically, youth corps programs in the nation have relied heavily on federal funding. CYCA helps corps diversify their funding base and create strong programs that are marketable to local, state, and private funders, as well as federal funders. Private and corporate supporters (in-kind and cash support), to name a few, include the Gary Williams Energy Corporation/Piton Foundation, The Daniels Fund, Kroger Foundation, REI, OMNI Research and Training, Inc., Anschutz Family Foundation, The Colorado Health Foundation, Skins USA, Schramm Family Foundation, Carson-Pfafflin Foundation, Anheuser Busch, local businesses, The Colorado Trust, The local community foundations, individual donors, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. CYCA also leverages project funds for corps from Colorado State Parks, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Continental Divide Trail Alliance, the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, United States Forest Service, and the Colorado State Trails Program.

In 2008, CYCA passed through approximately \$700,000 to youth corps for land conservation projects.

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### c) WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Youth corps are supported by parents, alumni, education institutions, and other community-based non-profits, in addition to funders.

The Colorado youth corps coalition is unique in that each of the eleven corps has a locally-based governing body rooted in the community. The Colorado Youth Corps Association acts to advance the interests and quality of those programs. The individual corps' stakeholders (such as funders, parents, and alumni) and Board/governing bodies, not CYCA, determine the type of youth targeted for participation and the types of conservation service projects the youth complete. CYCA supports the programs as designed by their local communities while providing accreditation standards that serve as a blueprint for high quality programming. This governance structure provides for a bottom-up, rather than top-down, approach to program planning and implementation. CYCA connects corps to the statewide coalition through its statewide Board of Directors. Every region served by a local youth corps program has a representative on the CYCA Board. Currently, five youth corps staff serve on the CYCA Board as well.

Over the years, non-financial support for youth corps has grown in scope, quantity, and diversity as the corps network has grown. There are more locally-based Board Members, parents and alumni in more areas of the state. More local businesses contribute in-kind donations to the program now operating in their community.

### d) SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

CYCA is the only organization of its kind in the nation. CYCA has enjoyed rapid growth (though it still only has three full-time staff), serves youth in all parts of the state - in particular those in remote rural communities with high poverty rates and few financial resources. The model CYCA has developed,

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however, has allowed CYCA to serve these areas while maintaining local ownership of youth corps programs. CYCA sees these circumstances as an asset, rather than a liability, to the overall strength and sustainability of the network.

### **Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

The Colorado Youth Corps Association will manage the Education Awards Program on behalf of the youth corps coalition. As an intermediary, CYCA can capitalize on economies of scale, minimize reporting and administrative burdens on the local programs, and ensure compliance with AmeriCorps provisions.

#### 1) CORPORATION COST PER MSY

Because CYCA is requesting funds for an Education Award Only grant, the Corporation's cost per MSY is \$600.

#### 2) DIVERSE NON-FEDERAL SUPPORT

The AmeriCorps fixed award funds make up only a fraction of the overall youth corps coalition budget, with the remaining funds being leveraged from other sources including local, state, and private sources. The true value of the AmeriCorps Education Awards program is its ability to engage rural and un-served youth in service while offering them assistance to fund their continuing education. CYCA, by managing the program, reduces individual youth corps programs' administrative and reporting burdens, freeing them to do what they do best - serve the state's young people. Please see previous sections for information on non-federal fund sources.

#### 3) DECREASED RELIANCE ON FEDERAL SUPPORT

Given that Education Award Only grants use a fixed award formula, CYCA will not be increasing its share of costs over time.

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### 4) BUDGET ADEQUACY

CYCA uses the fixed award funds to offset a portion of the administrative costs related to managing the Education Award program. CYCA has managed this program for many years and has sufficient systems and staff capacity to undertake a new three-year cycle.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

Evaluation of Crew-based Employment and Training Programs for Young People - The Colorado Youth Corps Association

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Colorado Youth Corps Association, in partnership with OMNI Research and Training, Inc., conducted a formal evaluation of Colorado's 11 accredited youth corps to examine outcomes for participant youth members. Through the use of a validated survey instrument administered prior to and following participation in youth corps, 359 corps members across the 11 youth corps sites were assessed in several key areas, including: educational and career objectives; civic engagement; psychological well-being and resiliency; and environmental awareness. The full evaluation report is available on the CYCA website: [www.cyca.org](http://www.cyca.org).

### Key Findings

Following participation in youth corps:

>Members at risk for low academic achievement were significantly more likely to say they intended to graduate from high school and enroll in college.

>Over a third (37%) of members who had never held a job prior to youth corps reported having obtained part- or full-time employment.

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- >Members showed statistically significant improvements in job readiness and job skills.
- >Members showed statistically significant improvements in leadership skills.
- >Members showed a statistically significant increase in civic engagement, indicating meaningful improvement in their levels of interest and investment in their communities.
- >Members reported significantly reduced stress levels and were significantly more likely to say they felt in control of their lives.
- >Members were significantly more likely to believe they could help the environment through their own actions and by educating others.

Members also had positive things to say about their youth corps experience.

- >Over ¾ of members (77.6%) said that youth corps helped them consider future career options; and more than 9 out of 10 (92%) said their experience in the youth corps provided them with valuable tools for obtaining future jobs.
- >The vast majority of members reported that youth corps:
  - Provided them with meaningful responsibilities (85%)
  - Gave them freedom to develop and use their own ideas (76%)
  - Made them feel like an important part of a team (89%)
- >More than 9 out of 10 (92%) felt they made a contribution as a member of youth corps.

### Conclusion

Results of the evaluation demonstrate that participation in Colorado youth corps has a positive, meaningful, and broad impact on its members, and that youth corps are accomplishing their objectives to train, educate, and inspire youth to be productive, caring, and committed citizens.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

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### Clarification Summary

-Please elaborate on the member activities (i.e., where the members are serving and specific examples of service projects)

AmeriCorps Members in this program will serve on land, water, and energy conservation projects throughout Colorado. Land conservation projects will occur on local, state and federal lands throughout the state such as Colorado State Parks, State Wildlife Areas, Rocky Mountain National Park, Great Sand Dunes National Park, the Town of Ridgway and the City of Denver. Land conservation projects include trail construction and maintenance, wildlife habitat protection, tree planting, and fence construction or fence dismantling, fire fuels mitigation, invasive species mitigation, and beetle-kill projects (removing beetle kill trees). For example, 52 Members will spend 48 weeks protecting National Forest users from hazard beetle kill trees around parking lots, campgrounds, and along hiking trails.

Energy efficiency projects include installing energy efficient fixtures (compact fluorescents, low-flow showerheads, programmable thermostats) and conducting energy audits in the homes of low-income residents. Members will also educate residents, many of whom are poor senior citizens on fixed incomes) about how best to save energy in their homes. These projects will occur in the Denver-metro area, and in the southwest, north central, south central, west, and northwest areas of the state.

Water conservation projects occur primarily, but not exclusively, in the Denver-metro and western parts of the state. The projects include installing high efficiency toilets in the homes of low-income residents as well as eliminating tamarisk from the banks of major waterways. Tamarisk is an invasive species that creates a monoculture along riverbanks and drinks 300 gallons of water per day, salinates waterways and kills native plant and fish species.

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- Please elaborate on if the target communities are involved in the planning process of the entire program as opposed to the individual site projects.

The youth conservation corps participating as operating sites in this program are rooted in their local communities and have all conducted needs assessments to determine how best to serve those communities. The participating corps have Boards of Directors/Advisory Boards from their communities, receive input regularly from local youth, parents, and project sponsors. Additionally, project sponsors solicit public input for projects and master plans. Once these public processes are complete, youth conservation corps are engaged to complete the conservation projects.

- Please discuss if and how the program recruits for diversity.

Corps actively recruit and serve low-income and at-risk youth, and approximately 36% of participating youth in 2008 were low-income or considered at-risk according to the data available. Of these participants, some had been involved with the justice system, had been foster children, did not complete high school, were teen parents, had been on public assistance or had other indicators of at-risk status.

In 2008 statewide, 38% of the youth enrolled were Native American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, African American, or of Hispanic origin. According to the US Census Bureau, in Colorado as a whole, only 18% of the population is non-white or Hispanic. Furthermore, the youth who participate in corps come from both urban and rural communities.

Youth corps recruit Members from local schools, colleges, churches, youth-serving non-profits, probation officers, workforce centers, and neighborhood centers. Corps have anywhere from three to six more applicants than positions available, depending on the time of year, which speaks to the

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popularity of corps with youth, parents, and community leaders alike.

Members do not need specific skills to participate in a youth corps, but need to have a willingness and desire to further their education, serve in a team setting, and be able to complete their full term of service. Generally, crews are a mix of "at-risk" and mainstream youth. Corps strive to enroll Members with diverse age, gender, education, and ethnic backgrounds, paying special attention to the demographics of the surrounding community.

- Please discuss the process for criminal background checks for members and staff working with vulnerable populations.

All staff, crewleaders, and AmeriCorps Members that have recurring access to children, persons age 60 and older, and individuals with disabilities will undergo (1) a State criminal registry search, (2) a National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) check and (3) FBI fingerprint checks. These checks occur prior to program employment/enrollment and background check results are filed in the employee/Members' locked personnel file.

- Please discuss in more detail how the program rewards members. This is especially important because the members are not receiving a living allowance.

Members receive a living stipend from the participating youth conservation corps (operating site). Youth corps raise 100% of these funds. Youth corps programs use a number of additional techniques to reward members for their service. These techniques range from beginning and end of season celebrations, mid-season perks (pizza parties, popsicles on the project), recreation activities (rafting, recreation center, free swimming), incentive items such as movie tickets or bus passes, and honoring

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members with leadership responsibilities or awards such as "Corpsmember of the Month" Awards. Members also have opportunities to attend training sessions to improve their conservation skills as well as speak in public, at Rotary Clubs, county commission meetings and program graduations, for example.

- Please elaborate on member training, supervision, and how they maintain their ethic of service.

Training -- Members engage in pre-service orientation and daily training. The pre-service orientation lasts from one to two weeks and ongoing training is approximately one hour each day. Crews dedicate approximately 80% of their time overall to direct service on conservation projects and 20% of their time to various education activities such as civics training, skills training related to performing service activities, leadership, life skills, health and wellness, GED completion, and environmental education. The youth corps model is well suited to providing young people who are typically not successful in the traditional education system an alternative. Relying heavily on experiential education techniques and hands-on learning, youth corps appeal to a diverse population of youth. Training is delivered by a number of different staff people. Pre-service orientation is generally conducted by a program coordinator or director. On projects, crewleaders or assistant crewleaders conduct education activities. Additionally, many crews have "Education Mentors", Members in leadership roles trained to facilitate education activities.

Supervision - Members are supervised at all times. On land conservation projects, Members serve in crews of 6-10 with one to two adult supervisors. On water and energy projects, Members serve in small teams of two-three with an adult supervisor for several teams.

Ethic of Service -- Corps stress "Ethic of Service" with members throughout their service, starting when

## Narratives

young people apply. Marketing materials highlight the service aspect of youth corps and the contribution that Members make to their communities. Additionally, education activities and training focus on the long-term value of the service projects to communities and staff, crewleaders, and project sponsors all speak about the "big picture" with Members. Members journal and engage in debrief activities that focus on service, as well.

- Please elaborate on the nine participating community-based youth corps sites? i.e., who they are and how they are related to the program.

The participating youth corps are member organizations of the Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA). Member corps in the CYCA coalition are accredited by the CYCA Board of Directors annually after undergoing a rigorous annual peer review process. Six of the member corps are independent non-profit organizations, two are housed within city or county governments, and one is a program of a larger non-profit. Each corps operates independently of CYCA and is governed by a community-based Board of Directors or Advisory Board.

List of participating corps - Colorado Range Rider Youth Corps (eastern plains), the Colorado Legends and Legacies Youth Corps (southern Front Range), the Southwest Conservation Corps - Los Valles (central valley), the Mile High Youth Corps (Denver-metro area), the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (northwest), the Weld County Youth Conservation Corps (northern Front Range), the Southwest Conservation Corps - Four Corners (southwest), the Western Colorado Conservation Corps (Western Slope), and the Larimer County Youth Conservation Corps (northern Front Range).

- Please discuss how the program will generate and support volunteers to expand its reach in the community.

## Narratives

Youth corps and their Members engage volunteers primarily on large, episodic volunteer events five to six times each year, providing thousands of youth and families an opportunity to beautify their communities. Because Members serve full-time on pre-scheduled service projects, often in remote locations, it is difficult to place volunteers on these projects. Therefore, corps bring conservation service opportunities to the heart of communities throughout the state for National and State service days such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Earth Day, Make a Difference Day, National Trails Day, National Public Lands Day, Colorado Cares Day, and National Youth Service Day.

- Please describe how the program will enhance the capacity-building of other organizations and institutions important to the community.

The primary capacity-building role that this program will play is in helping youth corps in all parts of the state -- both urban and rural -- to reach underserved populations. Without the AmeriCorps Education Award program, youth corps would be much less successful at carrying out their "serve and learn" mission, and fewer young people would have the opportunity to serve their communities and go on to college or trade school.

- Desired grant award start date - January 1, 2012

- Desired member enrollment period start date - July 4, 2012

### Continuation Changes

PROGRAM YEAR 3 CONTINUATION CHANGES

ENROLLMENT

Program Year 1 Enrollment - 40%

2009 and 2010 were difficult years in which to accurately estimate slot needs for two primary reasons:

## Narratives

1 -- SLOW RECOVERY ACT ROLL-OUT - Youth corps slot needs are heavily dependent on conservation project funds. Recovery Act-funded conservation projects made available to youth corps from public land managers such as the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service were released more slowly than expected and, in some cases, not at all. Therefore, youth corps overestimated the number of projects they would have and, consequently, the number of young people they thought they could enroll.

2 -- COMPETING RECOVERY ACT GRANTS - Many members were enrolled in CYCA's Recovery Act AmeriCorps Education Award grant, rather than this grant. Additionally, many youth corps chose to enroll members in Mile High Youth Corps' Recovery Act operating grant which provided many more slots than originally expected.

These issues have resolved themselves with the expiration of Recovery Act funding. CYCA works very hard to accurately estimate slot needs based on the information available, and will continue to do so.

CYCA requests 74.67 MSY for a total of 303 member slots. We are confident we will fully utilize these slots based on past enrollment data for all CYCA Education Award grants (Recovery Act and non-Recovery Act).

### RETENTION

Program Year 1 Retention to date -- 95% of members are currently enrolled or have earned their award.

### PROGRAM YEAR 2 CONTINUATION CHANGES

The only changes that are relevant to this application are related to the structure of the Colorado youth

## Narratives

corps coalition. The Colorado Range Riders Youth Corps is no longer an accredited member of the Colorado Youth Corps Association. Therefore, they will not participate in this application. Also, the Los Valles Youth Corps has changed its name to the Southwest Conservation Corps-Los Valles, and is one of four offices operated by the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC). The other SCC office that will participate in this application is Southwest Conservation Corps-Four Corners, based in Durango, Colorado. Finally, the Mile High Youth Corps and the Colorado Legends and Legacies Youth Corps merged. This merger will not result in any changes to the opportunities for youth on Colorado's Front Range.

### ENROLLMENT

2008 Enrollment -- 88%

2009 Enrollment -- 70%

Because youth corps make slot requests more than one year in advance, it is always difficult to forecast the number and type needed. Youth corps slot needs are heavily dependent on the conservation project funds that are available. In 2009 in particular, many members were enrolled in CYCA's Recovery Act AmeriCorps Education Award Grant, rather than this grant. Those enrollments are not reflected here but will be reflected in our 2009 and 2010 Recovery Act reporting. Additionally, many youth corps chose to enroll members in Mile High Youth Corps' Recovery Act operating grant which provided many more slots than originally expected.

Because our 2010-2012 grant-cycle and 2010 program year begin on January 1, 2010 and we have a continuing Recovery Act grant, there is a strong probability that we will be under-enrolled in one or the other of these grants. Two primary factors have or will impact enrollment in 2010:

- 1 - The speed and quantity of conservation Recovery Act funds that project sponsors make available.
- 2 - The level to which youth corps choose to enroll their members in the Mile High Youth Corps

## Narratives

AmeriCorps operating grant program, which was originally funded at \$75,000 but was then increase to approximately \$1 million.

### MEMBER RETENTION

2008 Retention -- 82%

2009 Enrollment to date -- 86%

We are pleased with this rate given that more than half of our members are at-risk or low-income and many encounter barriers to success in a structured program.

### FY10 BUDGET CLARIFICATION RESPONSE

RECOMMENDED FUNDING - CYCA has revised the slots requested and MSYs in the budget to match the recommended funding level.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN - CYCA has requested a one-year no-cost extension of its FY 09-10 grant to assure that we can utilize all of our Recovery Act and FY 09-10 slots. With this extension, we are confident that we will not have enrollment issues.

NEED FOR HIGHER \$ PER MSY - CYCA is requesting an \$800/MSY for several reasons:

- 1 - Data Management - The advent of eGrants has increased our internal data entry and management costs in order to assure adequate compliance and quality controls for our geographically dispersed multi-site program. In the past, data entry was completed by each Service Location. We now, necessarily, conduct 100% of the data entry in our office.
- 2 - Increased compliance and file monitoring - CYCA has increased its capacity to monitor member files and assure compliance by Service Locations. We have instituted new protocols, training sessions, and travel schedules for corps staff, all of which require a greater investment in CYCA staff time and

## Narratives

resources.

3 - Increased costs - The \$ per MSY has not increased since 1998 while other costs to our organization have increased steadily over the years including insurance, rent, gas, lodging, and health care.

START & END DATES - January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011

### 30-DAY EXIT & ENROLLMENT RULE - CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

CYCA has made a number of changes in the past year with the goal of assuring compliance with the 30-day rule. The newly implemented changes include:

>Service Location Agreements that clearly detail the 30-day rule.

>Each Service Location has a dedicated staff person responsible for managing the AmeriCorps Education Award program.

>CYCA hosted one in-person and two webinar training sessions with the Service Location lead staff. Attending one of these sessions was mandatory.

>CYCA distributed AmeriCorps resource binders as part of these training sessions to assist Service Location staff in complying with all AmeriCorps regulations related to the AmeriCorps program.

>CYCA has implemented a Corrective Action Policy & procedure that will be enforced if any Service Location fails to adhere to any of the items listed in the Service Location Agreement, including the 30-day rule.

>CYCA's policy is NOT to enroll or exit any member in violation of the 30-day rule.

## Performance Measures

### SAA Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - None  
 Geographic Focus - Urban  
 Geographic Focus - Rural  
 Encore Program

### Priority Areas

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures                      |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>            | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship            | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families       |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>            | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas      39.53

### Service Categories

Job Preparedness/School to Work/Vocational Education/Youth ESL

## Performance Measures

### Service Categories and GED

At-risk Ecosystems Improvement

## National Performance Measures

**Priority Area: Environmental Stewardship**

### Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

AmeriCorps members will complete conservation service projects for public land managers that improve

Colorado's recreation infrastructure, wildlife habitat, and other natural resource amenities.

### Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Public land managers will, on average, rate their satisfaction with the project results at a 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, with

5 being extremely satisfied.

Indicator: Project sponsor satisfaction

Target : Number of miles (of the 25 measured in the output) that will receive a rating of 4 or higher on a scale of 1-5 satisfaction by public land managers.

Target Value: 20

Instruments: Project Sponsor Satisfaction survey in CYCAs Corps Information Database

PM Statement: Of the 25 miles of trails and river ways on public lands cleaned, improved, or created, public land managers will, on average, rate their satisfaction with the project results at a 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 being extremely satisfied as identified on sponsor satisfaction survey in CYCAs Corps Information Database.

### Result: Output

Result.

AmeriCorps members will clean, improve, or create 25 miles of trails or rivers that are owned/maintained by

national parks, state, county, city, or other public lands and tribal communities.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) EN5: Miles of trails or rivers improved and/or created.

Target : Miles of trails or rivers that are cleaned, improved, or created.

Target Value: 25

Instruments: Project Accomplishment logs within CYCAs Corps Information Database

PM Statement: AmeriCorps members will clean, improve, or create 25 miles of trails or rivers that are owned/maintained by national parks, state, county, city, or other public lands and tribal communities and will document their project accomplishments in CYCAs Corps Information Database.

## Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Already on File at CNCS

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable