

# **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

## **Part A**

AmeriCorps State & National Social Network Study  
Partnership and Collaboration Survey

Corporation for National and Community Service

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## **A. Justification**

### **A.1. Circumstances that make information collection necessary**

AmeriCorps State & National (ACSN) is the largest program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and supports more than 80,000 members annually to provide a wide range of services, including mentoring, education, neighborhood renewal, and health screenings, among other services. In implementing their programs, many ACSN grantees develop partnerships with other organizations in the communities they serve. Previous evaluations have identified ACSN's impact on members and recipients of services such as increased educational outcomes, life skills, and civic participation. No rigorous, quantitative research has yet been conducted on how ACSN grantees collaborate and network with other organizations in their communities, and how those relationships relate to grantees' programs as well as characteristics of their communities. For the current project, CNCS will collect information to understand how grantees interact and collaborate with similarly-focused organizations within the geographic communities served.

As highlighted in a study on community partnerships “one of the most commonly discussed approaches for addressing the broad needs of a community, especially in health and human services, is the formation of cooperative partnerships or networks of mostly nonprofit and public organizations.”<sup>1</sup> These collaborations are thought to have a positive impact on the community; in many communities “organizational networks have become an important mechanism for building the capacity to recognize complex health and social problems, systematically planning for how such problems might be best addressed and delivering needed services.”<sup>2</sup>

Currently, there is little information about the organizational networks in the communities being served by ACSN grantees, how grantees fit into them, what relationships are found to be effective and in which circumstances, and what are barriers and facilitators to developing these relationships. In addition, CNCS at present has limited methodological tools available to appropriately and effectively understand the

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<sup>1</sup> Provan, K., Veazie, M., Staten, L., & Teufel-Shone, N. (2005). The Use Of Network Analysis To Strengthen Community Partnerships. *Public Administration Review*, 65(5), 603-613.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

networks and partnerships that grantees have. This study, the AmeriCorps State & National Social Network Study, is intended to fill these gaps.

## **A.2 Purposes and Uses of the Collected Information**

In order to enhance their own capacity and the capacity of the communities they serve, ACSN grantees may form relationships with other organizations in their geographic communities to develop networks of organizations that have common interests in one or more of the six service focus areas, including Disaster Assistance, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families. Through these relationships, ACSN grantees aim to increase the scale, reach, efficiency, and effectiveness of both their program and those of other organizations. There is a broad research base supporting the role of collaboration in organizational and community success. Collaboration enables greater flexibility and adaptability, can increase service delivery and competitive advantage, attract resources, reduce environmental uncertainty, diffuse risk, and raise organizational status.<sup>3</sup> Researchers are not the only ones who have recognized the importance of collaboration to improve program performance and community outcomes. Federal, state, and local government agencies have placed emphasis on collaboration among governmental entities, nonprofits, and across sectors.<sup>4</sup> Because of these benefits, it is important for CNCS to identify, measure, and understand the quantity and quality of organizational relationships that its grantees are engaged in.

While it is important for CNCS to understand the existing relationships among ACSN grantees, it is equally important to develop an effective research tool to gather that information in a feasible and cost-effective manner. The ACSN grantee population changes after every new grant year; CNCS needs to find methods that can be regularly implemented to assess this important aspect of its programs. Social network analysis (SNA) has been found to be an effective method to assess organizational relationships<sup>5</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup> Arya, Bindu, and Zhiang Lin. 2007. "Understanding Collaboration Outcomes From an Extended Resource-Based View Perspective: The Roles of Organizational Characteristics, Partner Attributes, and Network Structures†." *Journal of Management* 33 (5): 697–723; Gulati, Ranjay, and Maxim Sytch. 2008. "Does Familiarity Breed Trust? Revisiting the Antecedents of Trust." *Managerial and Decision Economics* 29 (2-3): 165–90; Jang, Hee Soun, Richard C. Feiock, and Marina Saitgalina. 2013. "Institutional Collective Action Issues in Nonprofit Self-Organized Collaboration." *Administration & Society*.

<sup>4</sup> US Government Accountability Office. (2006). *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies* (No. GAO-06-15). Washington DC.

<sup>5</sup> C.f. Borgatti, S. P., Mehra, A., Brass, D. J., & Labianca, G. (2009). Network Analysis in the Social Sciences. *Science*, 323(5916), 892–895.

and is increasingly being used in evaluative contexts.<sup>6</sup> This study is intended to focus on feasibility, and its findings will be restricted to the specific circumstances of the grantees under study. It is not intended to provide generalizable or causal findings. Based on the results of this study, should SNA be an appropriate method for CNCS to study ACSN grantees, the method could be used in a number of ways. For example:

- Case studies on specific communities or organizations, similar to the current study.
- Matched comparison groups to identify causal effects of an AmeriCorps intervention
- Longitudinal studies to describe how networks change following implementation of an AmeriCorps intervention.
- Larger-scale, representative studies to make generalizable statements about broader groups of ACSN grantees.

In addition, the conclusions on the feasibility of SNA in ACSN have the potential to extend to other CNCS programs where community partnerships are important. In this manner, the current study may prove beneficial to other areas in CNCS.

Given this context, the two main goals of this study are:

- Assess the feasibility of SNA to understand the relationships grantees have with other organizations.
- Understand how ACSN grantees collaborate and network with other organizations.

In support of these efforts, as part of this study, we have designed a survey, the Partnership and Collaboration (PAC) survey. We intend to administer the survey to ACSN grantees and other organizations in three to five sites. CNCS will analyze the data from the PAC survey using statistical methods, including SNA. SNA results will produce quantitative mapping of networks and measure the networks' formal properties—notably the nature, strength, intensity, frequency, and direction of the network relations. Results have the potential to provide CNCS with a rigorously developed and reliable dataset that can be used to explore the nature of the relationships between ACSN grantees and other organizations in their communities, and to gauge the efficacy of social network analysis as a tool to

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<sup>6</sup> Fredericks, K. A., & Carman, J. (2013). *Using Social Network Analysis in Evaluation: A Report to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

measure CNCS's contribution to civic infrastructure in major focus areas of the Serve America Act of 2009<sup>7</sup>, as incorporated into the National and Community Service Act of 1990<sup>8</sup>.

This study is designed in alignment with the current research on collaboration and organizational networks. Arya and Lin (2007) define "collaborative networks" as "a collection of loosely connected or closely knit organizations that share resources, which may help member organizations achieve some strategic objectives."<sup>9</sup> Collaboration is not a binary construct, where organizations either collaborate or not. Researchers developing theories of collaboration treat it as an ordinal or continuous construct, often with multiple dimensions.

There are two predominant approaches to studying collaboration and networks in the academic literature. The first approach seeks to explain the reasons for collaboration and the costs and benefits accruing to organizations as a result of collaboration. Researchers apply theories from economics, sociology, organizational theory, and other fields, to attempt to answer these questions. The second broad approach focuses on the functions and structure of the collaboration and networks. This approach defines collaboration in terms of dimensions, the functions organizations play in collaborative relationships, and the stages of collaboration. This research study falls under this second approach.

Perhaps the predominant framework researchers have used when studying functions and structure of collaboration has been to define it in stages. Researchers have defined stages of collaboration by focusing on different aspects of relationships in the process, often targeting integration and formalization (Frey et al 2006). Gajda (2004) argues that groups must move from lower to higher stages of collaboration before they can become effective. Zajac and D'Aunno (1993) classify relationships in terms of degrees of autonomy and resource commitment. Murray (1998) defines collaboration in five stages, ranging from sharing of information to full partnerships and mergers. Kohm et al (2000) define three stages: collaboration, alliance, integration. Other researchers outline a continuum from lower to higher levels, where each level has an increasing level of integration in terms of roles, communication, information and resource sharing, and decision-making: coexistence, communication, cooperation, coordination,

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<sup>7</sup> Public Law 111-13

<sup>8</sup> Public Law 106-170

<sup>9</sup> Thomson, Ann Marie, James L. Perry, and Theodore K. Miller. 2009. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Collaboration." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 19 (1): 23–56.

coalition, collaboration, coadunation.<sup>10</sup> Andersson et al identified a seven-stage model characterized by increasing complexity, moving from information exchange to pooling of budgets.<sup>11</sup> To our knowledge, none of the above frameworks have been validated, though Frey et al (2006) found high reliability in their use of Hogue’s model. An additional challenge to using these stages as a basis for evaluating networks is that they are often measured with single survey items. Organizational relationships are complex constructs, and ideally multiple measures would be used to triangulate their measurement. However, there are practical limitations to how many items can be included in a SNA survey, as all items must be asked about each organization in the network.

The current research design adapts Hogue’s five-stage model to assess the collaborative relationships among organizations in the networks involving ACSN grantees. This model was chosen among the various models described above because it aligns most closely with our perceptions of how grantees collaborate with other organizations, and with CNCS’s expectations for these relationships. Hogue’s model focuses on four aspects of an inter-organizational relationship: roles and responsibilities, shared resources and information, communication, and decision-making. The stages of collaboration used in the design of the current study is summarized in Exhibit 1.

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<sup>10</sup> Bailey, D., & Koney, K. M. (2000). *Strategic Alliances Among Health and Human Services Organizations: From Affiliations to Consolidations*. SAGE Publications; Frey, B. B., Lohmeier, J. H., Lee, S. W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring Collaboration Among Grant Partners. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(3), 383–392; Gajda, Rebecca. 2004. “Utilizing Collaboration Theory to Evaluate Strategic Alliances.” *American Journal of Evaluation* 25 (1): 65–77.; Hogue, T. (1993). *Community-based collaboration: Community wellness multiplied*. Oregon Center for Community Leadership, Oregon State University; Peterson, N. L. (1991). Interagency Collaboration Under Part H The Key to Comprehensive, Multidisciplinary, Coordinated Infant/Toddler Intervention Services. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 15(1), 89–105.

<sup>11</sup> Andersson, J., Ahgren, B., Axelsson, S. B., Eriksson, A., & Axelsson, R. (2011). Organizational approaches to collaboration in vocational rehabilitation—an international literature review. *International Journal of Integrated Care*, 11.

**Exhibit 1. Stages of Collaboration**

Aspects of inter-organizational relationships					
	No interaction	Networking	Cooperation	Coordination	Partnering
<b>Roles/ Responsibilities</b>	None	Loosely defined	Somewhat defined	Clearly defined	Fully integrated as a joint venture
<b>Resource/Info sharing</b>	None	None	Share information	Share information and resources	Share strategies, information, and resources
<b>Communication</b>	None	Limited communication	Formal communication	Frequent formal and informal communication	Frequent formal and informal communication
<b>Decision-making</b>	None	Independent	Consider other organization, but independent	Some decisions made together	Most decisions made together

*A.2.1 Research Questions*

The survey and analysis plan are designed to answer the following questions:

1. Can social network analysis provide informative, feasible, and cost-effective results related to how ACSN grantees engage other organizations, and how they contribute to civic infrastructure?
2. What are the positions and roles of ACSN grantees within organizational networks related to their service focus areas?

3. What types of relationships do grantees have with other organizations in their network?
4. How do organizations within networks perceive the role and importance of AmeriCorps members in the interactions between organizations in the community?
5. What factors do organizations within networks think either facilitate or inhibit collaboration? What are recommendations to improve collaboration?

### *A.2.2 Instrument Development*

In developing the PAC survey, most of the items were created based on the above objectives and existing research on the factors researchers have identified as related to collaboration. Although we did include items used in other research, we did not find any validated items or scales. In developing the items, apart from reviewing the literature, we consulted with expert scholars in social network analysis. In addition, we held semi-structured interviews with nine grantees. The grantees were identified by program officers as grantees that are actively engaged in their communities, and our expectation was that they would be in the best position to provide information on how ACSN grantees engage other organizations within their communities. These interviews addressed topics including the role of partnership building and how AmeriCorps members interact with other organizations within their communities. The instrument was subsequently reviewed by various research staff in the Office of Research & Evaluation and program staff in ACNS, and was piloted as described in section B4.

### **A.3 Use of Information Technology and Burden Reduction**

The survey administration will be mixed-mode; conducted primarily online with surveys completed using a paper or telephone format for those that do not respond online (Attachment E: Mail Survey Introduction and Attachment F: Phone Survey Introduction). Eligible respondents will participate with informed consent. The technology to be employed can be configured to allow participants to complete as much of the questionnaire as desired in one sitting or to

continue the questionnaire at another time. The technology also minimizes burden and the possibility of participant error by electronically skipping questions that are not applicable to a particular participant, thus minimizing participant burden. Finally, the questionnaire will use piping logic, prepopulating relevant fields to assist respondents' comprehension and completion of the instrument.

#### **A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication**

CNCS has conducted no prior research on how ACSN grantees are positioned in organizational networks. CNCS expects to field a Community Engagement Survey during fiscal year 2015; that survey will ask a representative sample of grantees, and a select group of partner organizations, about their relationship to one another. That survey is intended to provide a broad view of how grantees engage other organizations within their communities, but it is not intended to rigorously address interactions among organizations. That survey will ask grantees to enumerate the number and types of relationships it has with other organizations based on the recollection of the respondent; it will not provide a comprehensive list of relevant organizations to the respondent, nor will it include organizations that the respondent may not actively work with. The Community Engagement Survey is also not designed to assess the reciprocity, strength, or other qualities of the relationships. In addition it will not go in-depth regarding the entire group of organizations addressing the focus areas in the geographic areas served by grantees, and thus will not provide comprehensive, rigorous data mapping out the relationships among these organizations. Exhibit 2 provides the questions related to partnerships asked in the Community Engagement Survey. While these items cover similar subject matter, because they do not cover the depth of the PAC survey, the efforts are not duplicative.

## Exhibit 2. Community Engagement Survey Items Related to Inter-Organizational Partnership

Approximately how many partner organizations do you collaborate with in your AmeriCorps program?
As a result of these partnerships and collaborations, has your organization experienced a <u>growth</u> in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of clients</li> <li>- Types of services it offers</li> <li>- Financial or in-kind resources it receives</li> </ul>
How important are your community partners in implementing your AmeriCorps program?
With approximately how many partner organizations do you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regularly exchange information about programs and activities</li> <li>- Regularly have informal communication among staff of both organizations about programs and activities</li> <li>- Occasionally share resources, including personnel, funding, inkind, or facilities, to reach common or complementary goals</li> <li>- Regularly and deliberately coordinate resources and activities to reach common or complementary goals</li> <li>- Work together in strategic planning or jointly apply for funding opportunities, with designated roles for each party.</li> <li>- Share common vision and identity, and share risks, failures and successes.</li> <li>- Have formal agreements, such as a memoranda of understanding or share funding sources</li> <li>- Consider the partner’s goals and mission when making strategic or programmatic decisions</li> </ul>
With how many partner organizations do you coordinate or share the following responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fiscal or in-kind resource administration functions</li> <li>- Management functions</li> <li>- Organizational functions</li> <li>- Service functions</li> </ul>
How do your AmeriCorps members collaborate with other organizations?
As a result of your AmeriCorps members, to what degree has your organization experienced an increase in partnerships with organizations in your community?
How important are your AmeriCorps members in fostering community partnerships?

To ensure that respondents will not be overburdened by both surveys, we have ensured that grantees selected to complete the PAC survey are not part of the sample for the Community Engagement Survey. Additionally, a literature review conducted in the early stages of this project found that no other comparable assessment of ACSN grantee relationships with other organizations, so we are assured that this assessment is not a duplicative effort.

### **A.5 Methods to Minimize Burden on Small Entities**

It is expected that a significant portion of respondents to the PAC survey will represent small entities, including non-profits, religious organizations, and businesses. The data collection procedures have been designed to minimize the burden on those individuals as well as representatives from larger organizations through:

- 1) Web-based administration of the survey, which will further reduce burden in so far as respondents may end any given session on the survey and return to their previous answers in the survey at their discretion. This will allow respondents the ability to complete the survey at a time and place most convenient to them. A paper and telephone version of the survey will be available to respondents who prefer not to use the Web-based version.
- 2) Use of a relatively brief instrument of 30 minutes expected length.

### **A.6 Consequences of Not Collecting Data**

Currently, CNCS has no information on the breadth or depth of the relationships developed by its grantees. It is expected that results from the PAC survey will identify relationships that exist, barriers to forming such relationships, and practices that can increase relationships across sectors, as well as assess the feasibility of using a potentially powerful analytical tool to assess

these relationships not available through other evaluation methods. In these ways, this research directly addresses key strategic goals of CNCS.

The first goal of the CNCS Strategic Plan<sup>12</sup> is to “Increase the impact of national service on community needs in communities served by CNCS-supported programs.” Given the evidence (cited above) that organizations that engage in collaboration are more likely to meet community needs, it is essential that CNCS understand how CNCS grantees are collaborating in their communities. In addition, Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan is to “Maximize the value we add to grantees, partners and participants.” One of the objectives of this goal is to leverage community assets through public-private partnerships.

Without the information provided by the PAC survey, the agency will not have first-hand experience using SNA, the most appropriate method available to assess organizational relationships. In addition, it will not have comparable cross-site data to explore the nature of the relationships between ASCN grantees and other organizations in their communities to support community capacity building. This information is essential for monitoring use of agency resources and assessing their impact.

## **A.7 Special Circumstances**

This request is consistent with the general information collection guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5(d) (2). No special circumstances apply.

## **A.8. Federal Register Notice and Outside Consultations**

### *A.8.a. Federal Register Notice*

As required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), a notice was published in the Federal Register on November 30, 2014, page number 71095, for 60 days.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan>

### *A.8.b. Outside Consultations*

CNCS contractor ICF International conducted:

- A review of grantee applications, annual reports and performance monitoring reports to gain an in-depth understanding of how the relationships are set up for each of the ten initial sites and to create a profile for each site
- Interviews with key informants of each ACSN grantee to understand the population of organizations within the network and define the network boundaries
- Criteria development for selecting five sites for participation in the PAC survey

### **A.9 Explanation of any Payment or Gifts to Respondents**

No incentives will be provided to respondents to encourage participation.

### **A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents**

The study was reviewed and approved by ICF International's institutional review board (IRB). All reports and publications generated by this study will report data at the organizational level and will identify organizations but will fully protect the privacy of individual respondents.

Respondents will be notified of privacy and non-disclosure regulations governing the collection and use of these data, and the purpose for the collection.

The PAC Survey is administered to individuals in administrative roles from organizations identified in the three to five ACSN grantee communities that are most knowledgeable of the collaboration between organizations through a Web-based format. Full contact information for respondents, including name, address, phone, and e-mail addresses, will be gathered from the organization identified as part of the network. Active consent is obtained. The pre-notification email and formal invitation explains the survey, including the voluntary nature of survey completion, confidentiality of responses, and the risks, benefits, and rights as respondents, and

advises the recipient that completion and submission of the survey indicate consent to participate (Attachment B: Pre-notification Letter and Attachment C: Email Formal Invitation). This invitation also provides contact information if the survey recipient has questions or desires clarification prior to participation.

Access to the PAC survey is password protected, and both surveys use data encryption to further enhance security and protect confidentiality. To maintain anonymity of individual responding for the organization, two databases will be created: one to store the identifying information, including name, user ID, and password, and the other database to store the survey responses. The two databases are not linked after the data are collected. While data are being collected, only the system administrator has the key that links the two databases, and this key is destroyed when the data are finalized and downloaded.

Respondents are asked to log in using an assigned ID and password that is provided in the formal invitation. After the respondent logs on to the survey, it is possible to check off that the subject responded to the survey in the identifier database.

All survey instruments used in this study will include the following disclosure:

**PRIVACY ACT NOTICE:** The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C § 552a) requires that the following notice be provided to you: The information requested in the AmeriCorps Partnerships and Collaboration Survey Form is collected pursuant to 42 U.S.C 12592 and 12615 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended, and 42 U.S.C. 4953 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 as amended, and 42 U.S.C. 12639. Purposes and Uses – The information requested is collected for the purposes of assessing the degree to which AmeriCorps State & National grantees are connected to other relevant organizations in the communities they serve, as part of a longer term research agenda to evaluate AmeriCorps’ impact on the communities it serves. CNCS also will collect information from grantee partner and other relevant organizations, which are integral in engaging and serving client communities. Routine Uses - Routine uses may include disclosure of the information to federal, state, or local agencies pursuant to lawfully authorized requests. The information may also be provided to appropriate

federal agencies and Department contractors that have a need to know the information for the purpose of assisting the Department’s efforts to respond to a suspected or confirmed breach of the security or confidentiality or information maintained in this system of records, and the information disclosed is relevant and unnecessary for the assistance. The information will not otherwise be disclosed to entities outside of the Corporation for National and Community Service without prior written permission. Effects of Nondisclosure - The information requested is not mandatory.

**A.11 Justification of Sensitive Questions**

This project includes no questions of sensitive nature. The instruments do not contain any questions concerning sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, personal income, or proprietary business information.

**A.12 Estimate of Hour Burden Including Annualized Hourly Costs**

This study has one survey. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes (0.5 hours) to complete, and approximately 250 respondents (approximately 50 respondents from each of the 5 sites) will participate, resulting in 125 burden hours. Exhibits 3 and 4 report the estimated annualized burden hours and cost.

**Exhibit 3: Estimated annualized burden hours**

<b>Form Name</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of responses per respondent</b>	<b>Hours per response</b>	<b>Total Burden hours</b>
<b>Partnership and Collaboration (PAC) Survey</b>	250	1	0.5	125
<b>Total</b>	250	NA	NA	125

\*\*Estimated total number of unique respondents.

#### Exhibit 4: Estimated annualized cost burden

Form Name	Number of Respondents	Total Burden hours	Average Hourly Wage Rate*	Total Cost Burden
Partnership and Collaboration (PAC) Survey	250	125	\$36.30*	\$4,537.50
<b>Total</b>	250	125	NA	\$4,537.50

\* Average hourly wage based on the weighted average of wages for the variety of respondent occupational categories expected to participate in this survey: 1 Community and Social Service Occupations (21-000, \$19.86), 1 Management Occupations (11-0000, \$47.83), 1 Business and Financial Operations Occupations (13-0000, \$29.97), 1 Administrative Services Manager (11-3011, \$37.61), and 1 Education, Training, and Library Occupations (25-0000, \$46.23). **Data Source:** National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates in the United States, May 2012, "U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics" (available at [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics4\\_621400.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics4_621400.htm))

#### A.13 Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents and Record Keepers

The only cost to the respondent will be that associated with their time to respond to the data collection, as shown in Exhibit 4.

There are no other costs to respondents and no respondent recordkeeping requirements.

#### A.14 Estimates of Annualized Costs to the Federal Government

The contract to conduct the survey and assess feasibility of ongoing surveys was issued to ICF International under Contract No CNSHQ14A0006. The costs associated with administering the survey and assessing feasibility for an ongoing survey is \$151,791.58. There are no other costs to the Federal Government.

## **A.15 Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments**

No change in burden is requested. This submission to OMB is for an initial request for approval.

## **A.16 Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule**

### *A.16.1 Analysis Plans*

#### *General Analysis Plan*

The analysis of the PAC survey is based on the research questions identified and the types of data collected. Three types of data will be collected: numerical, categorical, and free text. In general, for quantitative data, descriptive statistics, statistical modeling, and graphic analysis will be used. Continuous data will be explored through common measures of central tendency and dispersion (e.g. mean, median, standard deviation, variance), and through histograms.

Categorical data will be tabulated to show frequencies. Open-ended questions (free-text) will be analyzed using standard qualitative analysis methods that involve identifying common themes and describing these by frequency and type.

After descriptive statistics are explored, social network analysis will be conducted. This will focus on measuring the extent and nature of collaboration among all organizations in an ACSN grantee community working on common service act focus areas. The PAC Survey instrument will assess collaboration by inquiring about the extent to which each organization interacts with every other organization, the depth of the relationship (as measured by item 10 based on the adapted Hogue model described above), and two other items in question 11, related to the type of relationship and perceived importance of the relationship. Using specialized social network analysis software such as UCINET<sup>13</sup>, standardized social network analysis methods<sup>14</sup> will be

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<sup>13</sup> Borgatti, S. P., Everett, M. G., Freeman, L. C. 1999. *Ucinet 5.0 for Windows*. Natick: Analytic Technologies.

<sup>14</sup> Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994). *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications: Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press.

employed to analyze the frequency and types of linkages between organizations, network characteristics such as centrality and clustering of the most highly interacting players, gaps in linkages, and overall network pattern measures such as density and fragmentation. Indices of collaboration will be constructed to indicate strength of collaboration for any one organization in the network within these communities. Regression models using quadratic assignment procedure (QAP) will be used to identify organizational factors correlated with network indices. Typical regression models, such as ordinary least squares or logistic regression, require that observations be identically and independently distributed. Data on networked actors, however, are not independent, and therefore traditional methods cannot be used for hypothesis testing. QAP avoids the independence requirement through various permutations on the data.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Analysis for Each Research Question*

**Research Question 1:** Can social network analysis provide informative, feasible, and cost-effective results related to how ACSN engages communities and relates to civic engagement and infrastructure?

To answer this question, we will do a qualitative assessment of the value of the study's results to ACSN decision-makers and program officers, the grantees involved in the study, and to the broader research agenda of the Office of Research & Evaluation. In making the assessment, we will balance the benefits with the costs of implementing the research. Benefits could include increased knowledge of programs, more informed decision-making, increased capacity of grantees to serve their communities, and other contributions to the long-term research and evaluation agenda of the agency. Costs may include the financial and human capital investment by the Office of Research & Evaluation as well burden imposed on survey respondents. To gather information on the benefits and costs to grantees, we plan on holding brief, follow-up interviews with grantees that participated to gather their perspectives on the benefits and burdens

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<sup>15</sup> Hubert, L.J., and Arabie, P. (1989). "Combinatorial Data Analysis: Confirmatory Comparisons Between Sets of Matrices." *Applied Stochastic Models and Data Analysis*, 5, 273-325; Krackhardt, D. (1987). "QAP Partialling as a Test of Spuriousness." *Social Networks*, 9 171-186; Krackhardt, D. (1988). "Predicting With Networks: Nonparametric Multiple Regression Analyses of Dyadic Data." *Social Networks*, 10, 359-382.

of participation. We will hold the interviews after the final report has been issued and shared with respondents.

**Research Questions 2 and 3:** How are ACSN grantees situated within organizational networks related to their service focus areas? What types of relationships do grantees have with other organizations in their network?

To address this question, we will calculate the various network statistics and indices discussed above, and compare the grantee indices to other actors in the network. We will visualize networks using network graphs, which draws nodes (i.e., actors) and edges (i.e., lines representing relationships). We will focus on the different types of relationships as identified in questions 10 and 11 in the PAC survey, and draw graphs using directed and undirected relationships. We will also use QAD regression models to identify factors related to the organizations that predict different positions in the network and network indices.

**Research Question 4:** How do network actors perceive the role and importance of AmeriCorps members in the interactions between organizations in the community?

To address this question, we will analyze the questions related to the perceived role of AmeriCorps members in the network. In addition, conditioning on the organizational demographic data collected in the survey, we will identify the extent to which ACSN grantees are in central, high status, or powerful positions in the network. This will not show that AmeriCorps members caused grantees to occupy these positions, but lack of position will be an indicator that AmeriCorps members do not have an important role in organizational relationships.

**Research Question 5.** What factors do network actors think facilitate and inhibit collaboration? What are recommendations to improve collaboration?

To address this question, we will analyze several open-ended items (items 14-16) that address barriers and facilitators to collaboration, and recommendations for improving collaboration. We will conduct thematic analysis, identifying common themes as well as outliers that may prove useful. We will code responses and assess whether the coding correlates to other characteristics of the respondent organizations.

Exhibit 5 provides a breakdown of the relationship between the research questions, survey items, and the analytical steps to be taken.

**Exhibit 5: Analytical Methods for Each Research Question and Survey Item**

Partnership and Collaboration Survey			
Research Questions	Indicators	Questions	Analysis plan
General demographic characteristics of organizations and respondents		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questions 1 - 9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Univariate analysis</li> <li>▪ Covariates for later modeling</li> </ul>
<p>How are ACSN grantees situated within organizational networks related to their service focus areas?</p> <p>What types of relationships do grantees have with other organizations in their network?</p>	<p>Organization of Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types and number of organizations</li> <li>• Formalization of the network</li> </ul> <p>Extent and Nature of the Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of linkages</li> <li>• Stages of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questions 10 and 11</li> <li>▪ Questions 12 and 13</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Univariate/ Multivariate Analysis</li> <li>▪ Social Network Analyses</li> </ul>

	collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of relationships</li> </ul>		
What factors do network actors think facilitate and inhibit collaboration? What are recommendations to improve collaboration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open-ended list of factors that facilitate and inhibit collaboration</li> <li>▪ Open-ended recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Question 14</li> <li>▪ Question 15</li> <li>▪ Question 16</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Thematic analyses</li> </ul>
How do network actors perceive the role and importance of AmeriCorps members in the interactions between organizations in the community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Perceived impact of AmeriCorps member on             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Roles</li> <li>• Impact on focus area</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questions 17-21</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social Network Analyses</li> <li>▪ Univariate/ Multivariate Analysis</li> </ul>

### *A.16.2 Publication Plans*

Study results will result in an internal report documenting the feasibility, utility, and effectiveness of conducting this type of study, and the results based on analysis of the data gathered through the survey will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publications and presentations at professional conferences. While this study does not have the potential to identify causal impacts of ACSN programs on community infrastructure, or any validation that collaboration leads to the expected outputs and outcomes, this research does have utility to the

broader field of research in community engagement, collaboration, partnerships, social capital, and civic infrastructure and capacity. Manuscripts and presentations will clearly state the limitations of the study findings including the lack of generalizability of the specific results associated with the research methods.

While the concepts embedded in social network analysis have driven scholars for decades, more recent advances in technology and statistical techniques have afforded researchers the opportunity for increasingly complex and nuanced analyses<sup>16</sup>. Social network analysis has focused on a vast array of populations from the finance industry<sup>17</sup> to how knowledge is disseminated within and across organizational networks<sup>18</sup>, nonprofit organizations with similar target populations leverage resources in strategic ways<sup>19</sup> and how grant-funded agencies grow and maintain their networks over time.<sup>20</sup> This exploratory study will enrich this literature by demonstrating how organizations across a variety of sectors collaborate and how key stakeholders perceive this collaboration as impacting services to the communities.

### *A.16.3 Project Timeline*

The project timeline is shown in Exhibit 6 below.

<sup>16</sup> Borgatti, Stephen, Daniel Brass & Daniel Halgin. (2014). *“Social Network Research” in Contemporary Perspectives on Organizational Social Networks*, Brass et al., eds. Bingley, England: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.

<sup>17</sup> Kim, S., Suh, E., & Jun, Y. (2011). Building a Knowledge Brokering System using social network analysis: A case study of the Korean financial industry. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 38(12), 14633-14649.

<sup>18</sup> Fritsch, M., & Kauffeld-Monz, M. (2010). The impact of network structure on knowledge transfer: An application of social network analysis in the context of regional innovation networks. *The Annals of Regional Science*, 44(1), 21-38.

<sup>19</sup> Albert, Connie, Mitchell Church, Hamid Nemati, Jacquelyn White, and Prashant Palvia, (2012). "Knowledge Seeking and Knowledge Sharing in a nonprofit organizational partner network: a social network analysis" *AMCIS 2012 Proceedings*. Paper 25.  
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2012/proceedings/EndUserIS/25>

<sup>20</sup> Gregson, J. , Sowa, M. and Flynn, H. K. , 2008-07-31 "Evaluating Form and Function of Regional Partnerships: Applying Social Network Analysis to the California Nutrition Network, 2001-2006" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Sheraton Boston and the Boston Marriott Copley Place, Boston, MA Online <PDF>*. 2013-12-14 from [http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p240030\\_index.html](http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p240030_index.html)

**Exhibit 6: Project Timeline**

Data Collection and Analysis	Timeframes
<i>Administer Survey</i>	
Partnership and Collaboration Survey	May 2015
<i>Data Management and Analysis</i>	
Data cleaning and preparation of data analysis file	September 2015
Data analysis	October 2015 through December 2015
Preparation of manuscript for publication	January 2016 through March 2016

**A.17 Display of OMB Expiration Date**

CNCS does not seek this exemption.

The OMB expiration date will be displayed on the introductory page of the survey instrument.

**A.18 Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

CNCS is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements.

## **List of Attachments**

Attachment A: Partnership and Collaboration Survey

Attachment B: Pre-Notification Letter

Attachment C: Email Formal Invitation

Attachment D: Web Consent

Attachment E: Mail Survey Introduction and Consent

Attachment F: Phone Survey Introduction and Consent

Attachment G: Email Reminder 1

Attachment H: Email Reminder 2

Attachment I: Post Card Reminder