

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: United Way of Central West Virginia

Application ID: 13AC145274

Program Name: LifeBridge AmeriCorps Veteran Corps

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant provides a strong rationale for selecting the target population – veterans living in Central West Virginia. Specifically, the applicant notes that West Virginia has the 7th highest population of veterans in the United States. In addition, the applicant notes that Central West Virginia experiences higher than average unemployment compared to the United States as a whole (29% compared to 17.6% nationwide). In addition, the applicant provides the source of this information as well as the date of information supporting that this information is from a reliable source (U.S. Department of Military Affairs) and up-to-date (2011).

(+) The applicant provides a well-documented need for services to increase the employability and employment rates for veterans, particularly those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Specifically, the document notes that 60% of veterans found it difficult to translate skills obtained in the military to civilian employment and 22% have combat-related injuries impacting their ability to obtain employment. In addition, the applicant provides the sources of this information – the Society for Human Resource Management.

(+) The applicant also provides persuasive evidence of need that only 3% of West Virginia veterans are participating in vocational rehabilitation and 5% are using GI Bill education benefits.

(+) The applicant reported that 20 Members will serve individually and as part of a larger team to recruit and train 500 non-duplicated community volunteers to assist with activities and service projects. More specifically, each AmeriCorps member will recruit and train a minimum of 25 non-duplicated volunteers, which will result in 500 volunteers, engaged in communities across the state.

(+) The applicant will utilize veterans and members of military families as AmeriCorps members through the proposed project and provides a strong rationale for this selection. Specifically, the applicant notes that AmeriCorps members that are veterans are highly effective because they understand the military cultural barriers veterans face and the ability to reach out to and earn the trust of veterans struggling with post-deployment transitions.

(+) The applicant provides a comprehensive description of the participant assessment process activity that

AmeriCorps members will provide - administering Dependable Strengths. Specifically the applicant states that the Dependable Strengths assessment is a tool to help participants identify their core strengths as well as how to articulate them in their search for employment. In addition to administering the assessment, AmeriCorps members will provide follow-up support and surveys to determine if the participant was successful in obtaining employment.

(+) The applicant provides strong evidence that the use of the Dependable Strengths assessment tool is both evidence-based and evidence-informed. While the assessment was developed to assist veterans in 1945, the applicant provides recent information supporting that the assessment is reliable and generalizable to today's veterans given its successful use in veterans receiving employment, increase in self-esteem, and ability to articulate their strengths to others.

(+) The applicant provides data to support evidence-based interventions, including the use of Dependable Strengths Articulation Process curriculum, and the impact the program has on the community. The applicant cites data collected from the 2011-2012 program citing that Vet Corps assisted 692 individuals receive job skills training, recruited 324 community volunteers, provided 495 individuals with financial literacy training.

(+) The applicant reported that 99% of 2011-2012 program year participants reported an increase in job related skills and 95% of the host sites reported that AmeriCorps-trained volunteers assisted the organization in reaching stated goals and objectives.

(+) The applicant indicates that by the end of the 2013-2016 grant cycle, approximately 600 military veterans and/or individuals living in transition will receive job skills training; at least 600 military veterans and/or individuals will receive academic support to complete a degree or certificate program; an estimated 1,000 community members, employers, and service providers will receive veteran –centric training on supporting veterans in academic settings.

(+) The applicant will measure impact through the agency's records and standardized questionnaires; results will be reported quarterly to the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service. According to the applicant, performance measure targets were determined based on averages from the previous three-year grant cycle by using surveys, tracking logs, and existing agency assessments.

(-) The applicant provides minimal description on partnerships with community organizations and what the AmeriCorps members' roles and responsibilities with them will be.

(-) The applicant provides statistical information related to veteran's lack of knowledge about health care benefits, education benefits, and life insurance benefits but does not link these to the identified need – increasing veteran's employability and decreasing unemployment

(-) The applicant explains that service-connected disabilities negatively impact employment opportunities. As outlined by the applicant, approximately 26% of Gulf War-Era II veterans reported having a service-connected disability in August 2011; however, the applicant does not cite a source to support such data.

(-) The applicant states, but does not describe how AmeriCorps members will provide job skills training and services to active military personnel, veterans, and their families and capacity building services to partner organizations throughout West Virginia.

