

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Knox Parks Foundation

Application ID: 13AC146351

Program Name: Green Crew AmeriCorps Program

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 provided a compelling argument of the need to improve public lands and streetscapes in Hartford, Connecticut. During the 2011 blizzard and Hurricane Sandy, it is estimated that Hartford lost 3,000 trees in addition to the 200 trees that are lost each year because of disease and natural aging.
- (+) The applicant further documented the need in a 2009 report of the Cultural Landscape Foundation that listed Hartford as one of the 10 most endangered public landscapes in America for its backlog in maintenance.
- (+) The applicant made a strong evidence-based case for green jobs to help support Hartford City Forester's estimates that well over 3,000 trees and public landscapes were destroyed by the October 2011 blizzard and Hurricane Sandy, which can be addressed by AmeriCorps members.
- (+) The applicant provides persuasive evidence that there is a need for GED programs in the target community and population by citing a high school dropout rate of 40%.
- (+) The applicant provides persuasive evidence that there is a need for job and life skills development by citing a youth unemployment rate of 38%.
- (+) The applicant is seeking to assist out of school and unemployed youth with gaining specific, albeit low level skills in the growing green industry which also fulfills a need for the city to replant and recapture green space after two devastating storms destroyed a significant portion of the city's greenery.
- (+) The applicant established clear expectations for each Member to complete an educational requirement and service requirement while in the program and beyond.
- (+) The applicant outlined the community problems that the AmeriCorps members will be addressing. These areas include: a lack of filled community landscaping jobs, a lack of qualified individuals to provide landscaping services, and the ongoing landscape needs within the community that the municipal government agencies are unable to address

due to a lack of expertise, knowledgeable staff, and a lack of equipment.

(+) The applicant has described how the AmeriCorps program is a good fit for the community needs as it provides economic opportunity for Hartford's disenfranchised youth and connects them to a larger civic framework. This connection is described as not only building the capacity of the individuals participating in the program, but instilling a sense of pride in the individuals and connecting them back to their community in a positive manner.

(+) The applicant is requesting 15 AmeriCorps members (a total of 45 over a three-year cycle) They will provide education training, concrete employable skills simulating the environment through service, mentorship, and job and educational placement.

(+) The measurable impact was tracked through job placement, educational attainment, and continued stewardship in the community.

(+) The applicant has multiple venues throughout Hartford that will give Members an opportunity to develop skills in the green jobs industry. Most noteworthy, are efforts with Greenhouse Management/Hartford Blooms and maintaining community gardens.

(+) The applicant has described how the services that the AmeriCorps members will be an asset to the Hartford community. They describe how activities such as tending to small green spaces, tree planting, and graffiti abatement are tasks that the community municipal organization does not have the capacity to consistently address.

(+) The applicant thoroughly describes how AmeriCorps members support volunteerism in the community. The training that Members receive and subsequently use to support volunteers is compelling evidence that Members serve a unique and useful role in the community.

(+) The applicant explains how Members' affiliation with AmeriCorps enhances their service and learning experiences, making them more likely to achieve the program's intended outcomes.

(+) By citing evidence that concrete green jobs frequently go unfilled, the applicant makes a strong case for the need for the particular job training that they provide to AmeriCorps members and the likelihood that Members will be highly employable after completing their training and service.

(+) Through tracking job placement and education in 2009-2010, the program was able to measure the progress of each applicant. Seventy-eight percent of graduating Members found employment or were enrolled in college or trade school within three months after graduation.

(+) The applicant is confident with the success of previous years and through the use of the same tracking system that Members will continue to progress.

(+) The applicant has outlined performance measures associated with their planned programming. It is an articulated plan with performance measures tied to specific interventions and activities.

(+) The applicant has used evidence-informed decision making to drive the interventions that it is creating and

providing for the AmeriCorps participants. The applicant has described how they are using national Performance Measure to track the capacity built in the AmeriCorps volunteer's growth as a part of this program. They are also tracking job placement data and measuring feedback of observations made from within and outside the community on the impact of their landscaping measures.

(-) The applicant did not specifically state how it would track the organization's increased horticulture and volunteer management capacity.

(-) Some of the data cited by the applicant did not include dates and, therefore, it is unclear how current those data are.

(-) It was unclear where the evidence for the assertion of the 38% unemployment rate was taken from, although a hard number of 3,000 unemployed was cited.

(-) The applicant has not provided sufficient evidence to support their claim that an unemployment rate of 38% is a significant need.

(-) The number of MSY slots proposed only meets a very small portion of the documented need for services in the target communities.

(-) The role of GCAP vs. KNOX is not clear; whether GCAP does the green jobs volunteer service or KNOX focuses on youth recruitment and training primarily.

(-) The application has limited reference to the number of participants that will be impacted by the programming; fifteen participants yearly (45 for three years). Nor does it describe how these participants will be distributed in their service experiences and throughout the program activities.