

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Student Conservation Association, Inc.

Application ID: 13ED145656

Program Name: SCA AmeriCorps

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 proposes an effective three-pronged approach to address this need by restoring trails and boardwalks and implementing re-vegetation projects in the aftermath of natural disasters; using data collection/monitoring to assess resources and develop future strategies; and educating visitors about conservation and environmental stewardship.
- (+) The severity of the need is evident in that 76% of AmeriCorps member projects were identified as critical by partnering land management agencies. The applicant gives examples of Member projects that were specifically cited by partnering agencies.
- (+) The applicant makes a convincing argument that Members are uniquely positioned to address the identified needs because, as college students or recent graduates, they have training in natural resource technology. They are also available and deployable for short-term projects, the majority of which are in remote rural areas.
- (+) Through a recent survey of federal land management partners, the applicant effectively shows that AmeriCorps members can accomplish what the National Park System cannot otherwise accomplish because of current travel restrictions and manpower. Survey data shows that 90% of Member projects--the vast majority of which were identified as critical-- would not have happened without AmeriCorps member service. The valuable contributions of AmeriCorps members are also evident in the statement by one partner agency that backcountry interns are an 'irreplaceable asset' because they fill a gap resulting from staffing difficulties, remoteness of the service, and the time commitment needed.
- (+) The applicant proposes to achieve better protection of natural resources through interventions such as improvement/creation of trails, plant/debris removal, and improvement of waterways. Outcome measures are appropriate, and include the number of acres of public lands that are improved and the number of trails or waterways that are created.
- (-) The applicant does not adequately elaborate on its statement that the measurable outcomes of the program will

be the improved protection of natural, cultural, or recreational resources as a result of Member improvements. It is unclear what constitutes cultural or recreational resources or how improvements to these resources will be measured.

(-) It is not clear from the narrative why volunteers cannot be used for many of the activities such as planting native trees, plant removal, debris removal, and improvement/creation of trail.

(-) The applicant does not provide sufficient information about the backcountry and "gateway communities" that will be served by Members. There is limited information about the economical disadvantages faced by these communities and the ecosystem improvements that these communities will benefit from.