

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Equal Justice Works

Application ID: 13ND145059

Program Name: Veterans Legal 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 relationship of legal issues experienced by veterans and the resulting risk or actual state of homelessness is corroborated by several cited sources. Legal issue resolutions are also noted as ranking among the highest unmet needs of veterans experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.
- (+) The difficulty and importance of obtaining appropriate service-related disability benefits, particularly with regard to economic impact and the benefit of legal representation in doing so is demonstrated by cited research.
- (+) The applicant further explains the need for this program: the legal community does not understand the claims process and challenges facing the community of veterans and their families, thus exasperating the situation and demonstrating few resources are available to solve the legal issues they face.
- (+) The applicant demonstrates clearly that there is a shortage of legal aid lawyers nationwide, citing that there is just one lawyer for 6,415 low-income claimants.
- (+) The unique contributions of law students versus lawyers are delineated, as well as their specific tasks.
- (+) The duties law students will undertake is well defined and thought through to provide great use of skills and knowledge on the project and freeing up lawyers for more complex cases.
- (+) The applicant makes a persuasive case for using AmeriCorps members specifically trained to serve with veterans and navigate the Veterans Administration (VA) benefit system, citing the lack of legal professionals that work with veterans or are not educated in navigating the VA benefit system.
- (+) The applicant demonstrates clearly that their choice of an evidence-informed model, one that they successfully implemented in 2010 in coordination with CNCS, should be able to replicate or exceed the award successes and clients served, which included a 66% increase in veterans served in just the first year of the program.

(+) The applicant will use an experienced evaluation team to provide evidence of impact of the programmatic and beneficiary-level changes at the end of three years proving the effectiveness of the legal interventions.

(+) Successful outcomes of the applicant's pilot program were cited, with the impact further demonstrated by the fact that one program component's success led to a recommendation that it be replicated on a national level. The planned change in utilization of Members to increase intensive services addressing complex issues and lessening provision of advice and brief services should produce an even greater number of successful outcomes.

(+) The projected three year change is stated in terms of documented economic benefits for the number of veterans served. The projection is based on the outcomes of the pilot project and seems reasonable in view of the substantial increase in numbers of Members and sites to be engaged.