

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Colorado Youth Corps Association  
Program Name: Youth and Vets for Colorado

Application ID: 14ES156095

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:

##### Strengths:

The applicant articulates the need to improve opportunities for employment skills and training for young adults, and particularly for ethnic minority and post-9/11 veteran young adults, due to a higher need among this population as opposed to the larger aggregate adult unemployment figures.

The applicant articulates the need for public lands improvement in the wake of fires, flooding and pine beetle infestation, based on the local economic impact those factors have had on the local economy (including needed repairs for damages, FEMA support, and the importance of recreation and public lands to Colorado's economy).

The applicant demonstrates that while land and trail use is so critical to the economy, they have not had adequate staffing support for maintenance (OMNI Institute report).

The applicant indicates that low-income residents in Colorado need financial support for energy costs, and decreasing those energy costs could increase their financial security.

The applicant satisfactorily indicates the need to educate and prepare economically disadvantaged for jobs in Colorado public lands and energy efficiency projects and provides data showing the lack of funds and workers needed to work the conservation issues in lands improvement and energy efficiency projects.

The applicant indicates that low-income residents in Colorado need financial support for energy costs, and decreasing those energy costs could increase their financial security.

The applicant adequately describes and justifies the community problems of Colorado in relation to Economic Opportunity and Environmental Stewardship.

Environmental issues, such as impact of fires, floods and pine beetle epidemic are clearly described as rationale for targeting AmeriCorps resources.

The applicant cites non-experimental but very applicable research to support the proposed interventions.

The applicant indicates positive success with previous applications of the proposed interventions, including high levels of satisfaction from program partners and success for targeted outcomes for Members (Texas A&M study).

The AmeriCorps Members benefit by receiving job training and personal development while producing positive outcomes in the environment, which has faced multiple stressors and leads to a negative economic impact on the area.

The organization's history with AmeriCorps programs has shown a record of success, and the bundling of Members will improve oversight and compliance.

The aspect of the program that engages veterans in fire management has shown to be successful (Syracuse University) and the program design has been adapted to improve success (longer service terms).

The applicant describes a consistent and aligned Theory of Change that demonstrates a logical relationship between resources and inputs, activities and interventions, outputs and beneficiaries and skills, behavior and condition outcomes.

The applicant satisfactorily shows that 75% of the participants will be prepared for a job or continuing education.

The applicant cites a study stating that using young adults for land conservation jobs will be 65%, on average less expensive.

The applicant's Theory of Change model is coherent, well described and interventions show logic and unity with activities, outputs and proposed outcomes.

As noted in the Past Performance section of the Applicant's narrative, the applicant has exceeded performance measures (for example, 85% goal for positive feedback from program partners; actual was 94%), demonstrating ability to achieve current goals and have a successful intervention.

Participants of select programs (as indicated by the surveys cited) experienced an increase in environmental awareness and job readiness.

One-year follow-up surveys indicate that high numbers of clients (80 - 85%) were enrolled in jobs or education three months after their term of service.

The applicant has been successful in exceeding its 85% goal of satisfaction among project partners regarding the conducted projects. Surveys indicate the rate of satisfaction as 94%.

Evidence provided in support of the program model is consistent with the program model's description as it relates to targeting of disadvantaged individuals and positive impact on conservation in the use of youth corps services.

As stated in the Applicant's narrative, their performance in the most recent concluded program year has either met or exceeded the proposed / identified performance, stating such examples as one goal was to improve 150 acres of park land and the performance actually improved 281 acres. This performance demonstrates the high effectiveness of the applicant in solving the identified problem(s).

**Weaknesses:**

The statistics on post-9/11 veteran unemployment (Syracuse University) are not specific to the service area in Colorado, but seem to be a national figure.

While the application outlines the unemployment rates for the targeted populations, there is no evidence to support the proposed need for job training as an appropriate intervention.

The applicant defines the problem as an unemployment issue for a specific group. However, there is no specific data cited for the unemployment rate for youth and young adults.

Statistics offered in support of community need and target intervention rationale were not adequately cited, or certain citations were not recent or clearly described with regard to year statistics derived / based on.

The applicant does not cite evidence to support the use of the standard curriculum in ongoing training.

The personalized approach to each Youth Corps member is a positive element of the program, but the applicant does not cite research to support that intervention.

The applicant shows that 75% of the participants will be prepared for a job or continuing education. However, there is no data that provides the evidence for the outcome.

The applicant cites a study stating that using youth adults for land conservation jobs will be 65%, on average less expensive, however, there is no data provided of this target community being trained or educated.

The applicant does not show collected pre/post test data on participants to provide evidence regarding how many former participants became economically self-sufficient.