

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Rural Alaska Community Action Program

Application ID: 15AC167080

Program Name: Youth Success 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 summary 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 clearly identifies the problem of substance abuse and suicide in its service area, documents an increase in alcohol dependency and abuse among Alaskan youth ages 12-17; and documents suicide as a leading cause of death among Alaska Native young males ages 15-34.

The applicant documents the need to reduce substance abuse and suicide as prioritized by tribes of the service area; and provides evidence that increasing resiliency has been linked to reducing substance abuse and suicide among youth.

The applicant proposes member interventions to build resiliency among youth by developing cultural identity and supportive relationships, and cites literature that supports these interventions among Alaskan youth and other indigenous populations.

The applicant clearly describes the activities of AmeriCorps members to include planning, implementing and evaluating service projects to build youth resiliency in collaboration with wellness coalitions in 25 consortium communities.

Members will assist the development of activities using the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMSHA) Strategic Prevention Framework, which is being utilized nationally by the State of Alaska, Division of Behavioral Health, and in many rural communities across Alaska as an effective prevention model.

The applicant proposes leveraging an additional 1,000 volunteers to organize, coordinate and implement activities that the coalitions will identify. Volunteers will assist by participating in wellness coalitions and assisting Members to organize/host interventions, conduct outreach to youth and adults to participate in events, generate resources, and gather feedback for evaluation.

The applicant will be recruiting from within the rural communities for the AmeriCorps members. Given the communities' remoteness, this is a logical and useful strategy.

The applicant provides significant data in support of their need statements. The applicant provides a variety of

demographic data on the rural Alaskan Native communities that would be the host sites.

The applicant has past experience with AmeriCorps activities. They are experienced with supervising activities in remote, limited access sites and have two full-time coordinators to support and supervise the on-site supervisor to ensure rule compliance.

The proposed activities as interventions are varied and directly related to both focal points, cultural identity and fostering relationships.

The applicant provided clear and detailed information regarding the needs of the target community and how the proposed program will address them.

The training and supervision of volunteers was also a strength with this proposed program. Volunteers will be provided with daily on-site supervision and will also have access to a host-site in a nearby community.

Weaknesses:

The applicant describes past successes of AmeriCorps members but does not adequately describe how Members will emerge from their experience, or how the skills and experience will be relevant and valuable to future employment.

The applicant states that Members will be encouraged to reflect on and learn from their service through weekly reflection logs, but does not incorporate this activity into a description of an intentional program element woven throughout the service term.

The applicant provides no description of how the program will actively encourage Members to continue engagement in public and community service beyond their terms of service.

The applicant indicates that Members will be recruited from local communities but does not provide a detailed and intentional plan for local recruitment.

The applicant expects to offer in each community, 86 youth opportunities and yet will survey youth that only attended a minimum of 20 activities. Therefore, they are including youths who might have attend less than 25% of all available activities.

The retention rate for AmeriCorps members is low, but that may be related to the isolated nature of the rural communities.

The applicant offers support for the interventions, but there is no indication of support or evidence that increased resiliency and supportive relationships decreases substance abuse, which is the applicant's stated problem.