

# APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

**Application ID:** 15AC167967

**Program Name:** Minnesota GreenCorps

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 includes significant, relevant, and up-to-date data documenting the prevalence of multi-faceted environmental problems facing Minnesota. The applicant then places these statistics within the larger context of the United States to show relative prevalence and severity.

The applicant lays out the program's three-pronged approach (assess, engage, and implement) and details the myriad actions under the scope of each area.

Members will receive training and mentorship from professionals in environmental fields, as well as technical skills related to such jobs.

The applicant also mentions a high percentage of AmeriCorps members historically secure green jobs before the end of the service term.

The developers of the subject proposal did an excellent job in identifying and documenting the root cause of environmental and educational problems facing constituents living in areas served by the applicant organization.

The applicant presents a good description of local and national data used to identify the major environmental problems caused by climatic changes.

The plan of operation is well-designated and is focused on addressing environmental problem that will involve AmeriCorps members in the process of helping to resolve such problems.

AmeriCorps members will have ample opportunities to apply technical skills learned in various, training activities in the process of serving as tutors and mentors to the targeted, student population.

The applicant plans to use the services of individuals with expertise concerning current, environmental issues.

The logic model states that the problem is a need to prepare for more extreme weather events and other environmental and health impacts of a changing climate, and a lack of community capacity to do so. It does not state a need for MN to decrease its contribution to furthering climate change, but many of the activities (decreasing water

consumption, recycling, energy audits) and outcomes (alternative transportation improvements, reducing emissions) are more related to preventing future climate change than to dealing with its effects.

AmeriCorps members are assigned mentors who are deemed content-area specialists, to provide them with technical guidance in their work.

Prohibited activities are discussed at initial orientation, in mentor and host site trainings, and revisited 2x/year when program staff visits host sites.

Members will receive training and mentorship from technical experts and content-area specialists and learn technical skills (energy audits, building retrofits, garden construction, bike maintenance, tree inventory, etc.) as well as leadership and communication skills.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant mentions both youth and adults as target populations but does not mention any youth-specific programming.

Supervisors' training does not appear to be reinforced throughout the length of the service term, and a detailed supervisor training plan is not present.

The application does not make clear how Members will be encouraged to be active citizens – beyond a brief mention of encouragement to vote – within the service term or beyond.

The applicant failed to clearly describe how the Members will actually produce significant and unique contributions concerning the environmental problem that will be addressed.

Insufficient information is presented to support the fact that Members and volunteers will be made aware of the rules and regulations concerning prohibited activities.

No information is provided concerning the protocol procedures that will be followed by the fellows concerning how they are to facilitate energy, efficiency retrofits in public buildings including implementing upgrades for lighting, heating, and cooling systems.

The applicant failed to clearly describe the types of training that the project supervisors will actually receive. Limited information is presented concerning the existing networks that will be used to help recruit AmeriCorps members.

The applicant failed to clearly describe what is meant by the use of the term “cutting edge best management practice”.

The details of the training programs for Members are not clearly described by the applicant.

The sites that are to be used to recruit Members are not identified in the applicant's proposal.

Applicant describes a host of problems related to climate change and its effects (such as increased frequency and intensity of weather events and northward shifting species ranges) and other environmental problems not clearly caused by climate change (such as air pollution), but it is not clear which of these problems will be addressed by the

program.

It is unclear whether this program is designed to address climate change itself as the problem, or to address community capacity to handle the effects of climate change. It appears that the goal is to do both, in which case one could argue almost any activity with positive impact on the community or the environment would be relevant. This is a problem that every community in the US is facing.

No regional or national data is provided to indicate that the climate-related or air pollution problems Minnesota is experiencing are unique or particularly severe or prevalent in Minnesota.

Some of the outcomes described are directly related to interventions (more efficient buildings, reduced emissions) but not likely to address the stated problems. Some of the interventions are broadly related to sustainable living (choosing bicycle transportation, for example) but not directly tied to the problems.

The logic model states that the problem is a need to prepare for more extreme weather events and other environmental and health impacts of a changing climate, and a lack of community capacity to do so. It does not state a need for MN to decrease its contribution to furthering climate change, but many of the activities (decreasing water consumption, recycling, energy audits) and outcomes (alternative transportation improvements, reducing emissions) are more related to preventing future climate change than to dealing with its effects.

No details are provided about the quantity or content of host-site member training, it impossible to determine whether it will be sufficient.

Supervisor trainings are not described in detail but all necessary topics seem to be covered. I do not see supervisor training officially reinforced throughout the year.

Some of the activities designed to promote esprit de corps are unconvincing – such as shared Google calendars and conference calls. Volunteering on each other’s service projects might.

The applicant does not indicate what exactly “facilitating connections between current Members and alumni” means, how often it is done, or how or whether that is the means by which Members are encouraged to continue to engage in public service after their AC term.

The applicant provides a vague response, listing various outlets for advertising the positions but failing to indicate how that prioritizes Members of target communities.