

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: United Way of Central West Virginia

Application ID: 15AC168060

Program Name: LifeBridge 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 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 documents the high poverty rate in West Virginia and cites that all of its counties are distressed or at risk, giving compelling evidence that such factors tend to have undesirable secondary effects on its focus areas.

The proposal provides low reading and math proficiency data, indicating a great need for improvement in that only 75% of students graduate.

The state has nearly 170,000 veterans with 29% of young veterans unemployed, pointing to a dire need for job assistance at a decisive time in their lives when help is most needed.

The applicant portrays and plans to continue a community-level model for a state that has rural communities which are physically isolated from one another.

The model of "where they are" demonstrates the use of volunteers in their own communities and seems to provide a tight fit for the proposed interventions.

The applicant notes how Members will not supplant employees but will instead give value-added support.

The applicant has provided substantial details ensuring AmeriCorps members are paired with mentors to prepare them for life afterwards.

The applicant does a great job including former AmeriCorps members and volunteers to assist with meeting the training needs of new Members.

The applicant appropriately describes the extent and severity of the need in the community of Central West Virginia where AmeriCorps members will serve. The applicant provides compelling data, to include the overall poverty rate and the lack of overall educational attainment of the targeted population in comparison with other US states.

The applicant clearly describes an ongoing training protocol that includes topics broken into phases and time frames throughout the Members year of service.

The applicant presents clear plan for supervisors and AmeriCorps member training/preparation in the program rules, expectations to include the topic of prohibited activities.

The applicant describes interventions which are logical within both the Narrative and the Logic Model.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides unconvincing evidence of its ability to provide hard job skills.

The proposal omits how many miles from a supermarket or grocery store are involved in food deserts, as it cites that one-third of its rural population lives in a food desert.

The applicant does not compare the unknown number of served individuals that existing agencies now provide to the proposed goal of 8,000 individuals that the applicant plans to serve.

The applicant does not address who will provide the four-phase member training or their expertise and does not include training on prohibited activities for volunteers or reinforcement training for Members. The proposal lacks a clear, detailed plan for training supervisors or its reinforcement.

The Narrative did not provide sufficient information to clearly define how the proposed activities will produce project outcomes.

They applicant mentions they will implement evidence based interventions but fail to identify the names of the interventions or details for how the stated intervention will be implemented.

Applicant failed to identify how the targeted population will be selected or identified.

The Logic Model was vague and lacked specific details which makes it difficult to determine if the desired outcomes will be reached.

The proposed project did not adequately address a plan to ensure training reinforcement occurs with its Members or volunteers.

The applicant provides little detail about the problems/needs of the veterans. Additionally, the applicant lacks data to substantiate the disabilities that are barriers to employment opportunities for veterans returning the targeted communities of West Virginia.

The applicant does not clearly describe the proposed program activities to develop job skills and increase employment opportunities for the targeted population.

The applicant proposes a portion of training for AmeriCorps Members will be conducted by the West Virginia's Disaster Corps program, but the Narrative does not adequately describe how this training will prepare the member for the service assignments.

The applicant fails to include a plan for training the 500 volunteers about the prohibited activities.