

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Maine Conservation Corps

Application ID: 15AC168294

Program Name: Maine Conservation 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 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 adequately explains the need for youth and veteran Members to increase their job readiness skills to align better with job openings that will be created by the retirement of current workers, showing that there is a demonstrated need to assist unemployed or underemployed youth and veterans.

The applicant details strategic vision and partnerships that align to ensure that the program design can be implemented as intended.

The applicant appropriately notes the incorporation of available resources, such as the GI bill for veterans, into its program design.

The applicant sufficiently describes the value of the training and service-related skills to employers, which demonstrates how the program design will increase the chances that Members become employed post-service term.

The applicant sufficiently describes their array of training components and varied training content delivered throughout the service term to volunteers and reinforced over time.

The applicant thoroughly describes how Members will have time for reflection and the weekly timesheets and daily narratives that will reinforce member reflection.

The applicant sufficiently lists a multitude of AmeriCorps networking opportunities that will be provided to Members.

The applicant adequately describes an adequate handbook and improvements to rules, policies and regulations to improve the program and compliance aspects over time.

The applicant presents a compelling case for the benefits engaging Members in conservation service projects that serve underemployed, unemployed, disadvantaged youth and veterans.

The applicant cites data indicating that an unemployed labor force is likely to increase employment opportunities by 27% though volunteering along with 55% likelihood of employment in rural areas.

The applicant clearly describes the proposed activities as environmental focus, conservation projects and community involvement of the Members.

The applicant clearly aligns the logic model to the theory of change as it relates to the defined need as well as to the desired outcomes of gaining environmental experience through conservation service projects. Member training is detailed by the applicant through training with subject-matter experts in intensive training periods to include specific content that Members will need to undergo service-learning, AmeriCorps requirements, and development.

Supervisors will have frequent interactions with Members as well as undergo regular communication from Host Site Supervisors and an 11-week specific training geared toward team dynamics, accountability, job readiness training, reporting, and related leadership skills.

The applicant has designed reflection experiences for Members that are detailed throughout the program year and that engage the Members in team-building and leadership roles. The applicant clearly describes, in a very easy-to-read and simple dialogue, how there is a growing shortage of skilled workers in the state of Maine who are not ready to retire or enrolled in skill-specific programs.

The applicant provides a select set of evidence to demonstrate that the need for younger skills workers is a growing concern in the state of Maine.

The applicant clearly demonstrates how using AmeriCorps member is a logical way to provide skilled training to youth and veterans while also providing much needed services throughout Maine.

The applicant demonstrates clearly how the proposed project will result in improved living standards and services for residents of Maine as well as provide useful job skills to AmeriCorps members who participate.

The applicant provides a logic model that is logically aligned.

The applicant demonstrates that high-quality training and education will be a mandatory part of the proposed program.

The applicant fully demonstrates that Members will receive necessary and regular supervision and that supervisors will receive on-going training and support throughout the duration of the program.

The applicant demonstrates fully that Members and volunteers will receive training and develop skills that will help them secure meaningful employment after their terms of service end.

The applicant fully demonstrates how AmeriCorps members will have ample opportunity to interact and network with each other through a variety of planned activities.

The applicant demonstrates throughout the narrative that AmeriCorps members should develop an ethic of and skills for an active, involved citizenship to last throughout their lives.

The applicant demonstrates clearly that the proposed program involves components for working with and recruiting future AmeriCorps members.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a sufficient explanation of the conservation needs of the state to be addressed, leaving it unclear why the Members' service should be focused on environmental stewardship or ecosystem improvements that the program intervention will be designed to achieve.

The applicant does not adequately provide data or evidence to support the prevalence and severity of the need to focus the program intervention on environmental stewardship, including the source of data on trail degradation, invasive species or water quality reductions.

The applicant does not completely include the source of data regarding the demographics, including the source of data for the percentage of veterans to evidence the severity and prevalence of the need to be served in the groups targeted for recruitment as Members.

The applicant does not fully explain the value of the Members' service hours in terms of the contributions they provide that could be procured or secured by the communities through other means.

The applicant does not sufficiently describe how Members will engage in environmental efforts that will address the intent of the program as it relates to the problem/need of the community.

It is unclear whether the environmental improvement projects will address the cause of limited job readiness training.