

# APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** University of Northern Iowa

**Application ID:** 15AC169316

**Program Name:** Green Iowa 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 describes the need for residential energy services in the 7 county service area. The applicant substantiates this need with compelling data from the 2013 Home Energy Affordability Gap Study, which describes a nearly 6% reduction in Federal energy assistance funding to low-income Iowa residents.

The applicant describes a comprehensive AmeriCorps member training program that includes Weatherization and Building Performance Institute training, which certifies AmeriCorps members as building analysts and energy auditors.

The applicant is targeting 6 counties in Northern Iowa with the highest need to address the energy affordability gap. Compelling US Census demographic data from 2012 is used to support program's rationale to target these counties due to the rates of poverty, elderly poor and disabled in those regions.

The demographic data clearly connects to the research results of the 2013 Home Energy Affordability Gaps study to support the need for interventions by providing energy audits, weatherization and energy education. The long waiting list of individuals waiting for weatherization and energy audits also speaks clearly to the need for the program.

The applicant program will utilize interventions which have proven successful across the United States with the target population to close the energy affordability gap: weatherization, energy audits and energy education programs with a variety of audiences within the target counties.

Member training will include comprehensive coverage of the prohibited activities for Members which will include role playing activities which will strongly imbed the concepts in the Members minds. Prohibited activities will be revisited regularly during site visits by supervisors.

The applicant will provide tangible job skills training for weatherization and energy audits that will lead to certification as a Building Performance Institute Energy Auditor. This is a marketable certification for future Member employment.

Strong monthly opportunities for Member reflection on service are built into required monthly Member reports that are reviewed and discussed with supervisors.

The applicant provides the opportunity for each member to create and initiate a service project involving community volunteers that includes designing the entire process from recruitment of volunteers to community action. This will provide significant practical civic engagement experience that the individual Member will be able to replicate throughout his or her life. Volunteer management skills are included in the regular member trainings.

This was a strong application. The need to educate and weatherize homes of seniors and persons with low income in the seven Iowa counties and surrounding rural areas was strongly presented.

A compilation of supporting information from the 2013 Home Energy Affordability Gap Study was provided to support the need of the weathering the homes in the seven counties.

Strong demographic information was provided from the US Census giving the demographics of each county.

The application described a strong presence of engagement in national and monthly services projects. The Members will gain substantial career and social skills.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant's description of the site supervisors' training plan lacks detail and only delineates a few training topics (i.e. supervisor responsibilities, prohibited activities, rules and regulations).

The plan does not describe any follow up or continuous training opportunities for site supervisors during the term of AmeriCorps members' service.

The process for the host sites to determine which homes are weatherized or receive an energy audit is not clear. For example, it is not clarified if the determination is based on documented need or a first-come-first-served basis.

The proposal does not include mention of a permission to perform services document to protect Members from claims.

The theory of change presented by the applicant indicates that service by highly trained Members is critical to the success of the program; however there is no mention of type of training for the Members listed in the Input section of the logic model.

The logic model presented by the applicant refers to the performance of 90 energy audits for rural municipal utilities and electric cooperatives but it is unclear how this will close the energy affordability gap. It is not clear if the electric company building itself will have the audit or if the customers of the electric company will have the audit.

The applicant doesn't reference any training relating to privacy, liability, or confidentiality for Members which may be important when gaining access to homes especially those of elderly, disabled or low income citizens.

It is not clear if the site supervisors will be all employees of University of Northern Iowa, the Center for Energy and Environmental Education or if they will be employees of the host organizations. If the site supervisors are employees of the host organizations initial training is provided to help with Member supervision but there does not seem to be a plan for ongoing support of host organization site supervisors or a regular process for feedback.

The application does not sufficiently explain the length of supervisor training, level of experience or knowledge of

the supervisor.

The application described only one Members experience out of 25 Members. The targets for the past years was not provided and it was unclear if the applicant met the previous performance objectives.

The application did not address how they will retain all Members in the programs and if the Members will be replaced.