

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Legal Aid Society of Hawaii

Application ID: 15AC169570

Program Name: Project Kaulike

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:

Applicant adequately demonstrates how the program will address the need for legal assistance and services to low and moderate income people in the state.

Applicant's narrative clearly states the efficacy of "form of counsel" and "brief services" in educating low and moderate income persons about the legal system and their legal rights,

The applicant makes the case for providing full case representation where appropriate but also advocacy assistance (form of counsel and brief services) to marshal resources to have more impact).

The applicant adequately describes how the interventions will lead to the outcomes described.

Applicant's logic model connects the program interventions to the general outcomes expressed.

Applicant's plan for training, supervising, educating, and guiding and mentoring AmeriCorps members is adequately explained.

Applicant's supervisors are certified as required by the state and educated as to CNCS requirements.

Applicant's program system, described using positive data from prior years, is appropriately geared toward providing AmeriCorps members access to meaningful life experiences through interaction with each other as well from mentoring and training by supervisors.

The applicant addresses in detail the numerous needs associated with individuals who are unable to or do not have the means to obtain legal advice or representation.

The applicant is committed to ensuring the underserved in their region will have their legal claims heard and will be enforced by the court. The applicant demonstrates the importance for access to legal advice, knowledge regarding when their rights have been violated and how to go about setting things right.

The data sources have been identified as reliable and each member role is explained in detail. The applicant is

transparent in how they plan to provide opportunities for people who lack the legal knowledge needed and sometimes are forced to represent themselves.

Training allows Members to develop leadership skills, which they can utilize by helping others in their communities and surrounding areas.

A member experience that radiates throughout the proposal is the Members compassion followed by their dedication to seeing the long-term outcome of the project. The member experience also provides some Members options.

One would be to continue with a legal education supported by mentorship of the legal support team from the program. This encourages Members to return back to their communities to serve.

Member Supervision is a process that will manage functions intended to promote the achievement of the member thereby enhancing their personal and professional growth. Supervision supports the applicant's mission with selection, training and addresses the needs of the departing and remaining Members.

The application clearly identifies the need for Members in the community to assist low income and other disengaged populations gain access to much needed information and advice surrounding legal matters facing the identified populations in the target area and how AmeriCorps programs are suited to provide this service.

The application cites several studies and reports to support the need for this activity in the identified communities including studies from the Hawaii state court system and analysis from the state's legal aid hotline.

The application clearly describes the interventions that member's will engage in as well as provides additional information as what activities member's will be primarily engaged in.

The application outlines a very comprehensive training and supervision protocol for Members. Due to the complexity of the legal system and the law as whole, Members will receive general AmeriCorps orientation including review of manuals, goals and prohibited activities as well administrative procedures surrounding service, awards and required paperwork.

Specialized training and supervision will be tailored to individual member's placement within the entire program. Supervision will be conducted by trained staff attorneys, Pro-Bono lawyers and other law professionals to ensure Members are prepared for their terms of service.

The application provides details on how the term of service will help prepare Members for employment, continued service, volunteerism and knowledge to enter the legal field after completion of their terms. Additionally, the application describes further annual training's including opportunities for Members to engage with other AmeriCorps personnel through quarterly meeting to allow for member's to share their experiences and build community with one another.

The application describes a plan to identify and recruit Members from the local community. They have determined that local AmeriCorps members are better suited to provide services due to their knowledge of the unique needs and challenges facing the target communities and populations.

Weaknesses:

Applicant's data on need in the state for legal assistance is confusing in that the fact there are more low income persons in the state does not directly demonstrate the extent of a continuing need for the proposed legal services.

Applicant's narrative does not completely and clearly tie together the provision of hard legal services and the offering of wider impact soft legal services like education with recruitment of leveraged volunteers and with the long term outcomes expressed.

Applicant's narrative is unclear which AmeriCorps members and other volunteers will serve in which capacity, where they will serve and what their unique contributions might be.

Applicant's narrative is unclear about the role of leveraged volunteers in the program even though volunteers are mentioned in the logic model.

The application did not describe in adequate detail the role AmeriCorps members will have in recruitment and retention of volunteers.

A review of the logic model and the narrative describes outreach efforts that Members will engage in to recruit potential clients but fails to provide with any specificity how many volunteers are planned to be outreached and engaged. The state that one full time member will spend "at least a quarter of their time with the program director to recruit and place volunteers".

At times, it appears that Members will be providing services that could easily be accomplished through the use of paid staff or volunteers without the need for member service. Specifically, initial intakes and phone interviews/consultations could be accomplished by other volunteers or agency staff and not specifically for member service.

Although the program will provide members with an ability to engage the legal system first hand. It was not clear how the member's service would provide a unique experience for Members.

At times, it appeared that Members would merely be used in capacity building activities including conducting phone interviews and screenings of potential clients.