

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: City of Camden

Application ID: 15AC169827

Program Name: Camden PowerCorps

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 provided a strong description of the activities to be undertaken by the AmeriCorps members and the expected environmental outcomes associated with these activities.

The type of supervision (full-time) to be provided through the Center for Family Services will help to ensure AmeriCorps members will be held accountable and develop the work ethic required to maintain a consistent level of staffing for the yearlong program.

The applicant clearly defines the problem and corrective actions required to produce a favorable outcome. The application confirms, by logical and clear sources, their methods to improve environmental conditions.

The applicant provides a viable and strong training program that tackles both the economic opportunity and environmental stewardship. The applicant provides a process of improving employment among the targeted population which is compelling and is highly likely to produce positive trends.

The application provides excellent reference and support from several external organizations seeking to improve and work toward favorable outcomes seen within the participants, public parks, stormwater inlets and green infrastructure.

The economic opportunity need is well documented with specific, relevant, up-to-date data from reputable sources comparing the conditions in Camden to the national and state averages for unemployment and poverty.

The application uses two similar programs that their program has been modeled after. These programs have had success in post program employment of their Members showing a likelihood of success for the application's program in this category.

AmeriCorps members will be providing services in areas of park clean up, maintenance of storm drains, etc. that are not funded for the entities who would normally be responsible for them, giving the community a valuable service.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provided a clear outline of Camden's need relative to maintaining its open space and park areas, however it was not clear how the 60 AmeriCorps members will be used to address the City's environmental issues.

The applicant touched on some of the requirements of the AmeriCorps program applicable to the initial training exercises (i.e. anti-lobbying) but a plan was not provided to ensure training would be enforced during the program year.

The applicant provided relevant facts and figures to support the need for summer youth employment, but did not provide the same level of detail to support the environmental needs outlined in the grant request.

The applicant did not provide enough data to connect the workload measures (maintenance of 53 green infrastructure installments and litter removal) corresponding to reduced flooding during storm events.

The specific skills related to environmental stewardship were not sufficiently described or accompanied by detail about duties associated with Member activities. Additionally, due to page limitations, Member experience and other sections could not be fully assessed.

The applicant does not clearly describe how its Members will establish connections with the National Service Network.

The application talks about several problems/needs, but it is unclear how these problems relate to each other. Insufficient detail is given about most of these issues to determine the causes or how the intervention will address these problems.

For the Environmental Stewardship need, the application includes little to no data on the severity of the issue dealing more with generalizations rather than the specifics of the problem.

It is difficult from the application to determine what the AmeriCorps members will specifically be doing, since the activities are described in general terms with little detail. One mention of volunteers is included in the application, but little detail is given as to their role or what they will be doing.

The logic model is difficult to follow with several pieces appearing to not be directly related to each other.

It is not clear what type of training volunteers will receive on prohibited activities.

Supervisor training is given insufficient treatment in the application. The topics are incomplete, there are no details on the amount of training or if it will be reinforced.

The application does not explain how the service experience will be meaningful. Reflection is not incorporated into the Members' service terms.

It is not clear whether Members will have opportunities to connect with other national service programs, Members, or volunteers.

The program includes training on active citizenship and civic engagement, but it is unclear how this will encourage these behaviors beyond the term of service.