

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: California Conservation Corps Watershed Stewards

Application ID: 15AC170573

Program Name: Watershed Stewards Program: CCC

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:

It was clear in the Theory of Change section what the 44 fulltime Members will be doing relative to the watershed restoration project. Each of the four proposed activities were detailed and assigned a project percentage corresponding to the total work effort, this will be helpful going forward to measure the effectiveness of the program.

The applicant provided a logical cause and effect relationship between the four member activities and the desired outcome associated with each activity. The results of a review of the program conducted in 2009 for the member development component of the program was included as well to help connect the program effect to its overall effectiveness.

A thorough plan was provided to ensure Members and volunteers were educated about prohibited training. This training will be provided at multiple points in the life of the program through periodic check-ins to verify training is continual. Relative to supervision, mentors will be available on a daily basis to address questions or provide clarifications to Members.

The Watershed Stewards Program will provide experience with field surveys, scientific databases and provide them with the training needed for the field of natural resources. These skills have real-world applicability underscoring the program's ability to provide Members with a valuable skill set.

The application provided compelling evidence to support the problems found within its coastal watersheds and negative growth trends seen within its salmonid populations. The applicant provides clear and reasonable plans to produce favorable outcomes.

The applicant provides reliable empirical data to describe the negative implications found in its watersheds.

The applicant provides clear plans how its training modules will provide favorable trends in watershed recovery.

The applicant provides well detailed explanation on its use of effective federal and state recovery plans to improve its salmonid population.

The applicant provides comprehensive educational programs and several outdoors training modules that will be

effective tools for its Members. The applicant provides persuasive points on how the training of its Members will produce positive outcomes in land and species conservation and management.

The application has three types of activities the AmeriCorps members will be engaged in to deal with the problems in the area. Each is broken down further as to what the particular activities are in each category clearly showing what the Members will be doing during the program.

The applicant has had outside sources evaluate their program that clearly shows their interventions are effective means to the outcomes desired. These studies also clearly show significant and unique contributions made by AmeriCorps members.

The training plan consists of several training opportunities related to the activities the Members will be engaged in. Feedback from past sessions has been implemented to improve the quality. Additional training will be provided throughout the program including conferences with professionals in the field.

This plan appears to be sufficient to prepare the Members for their work program and to prepare them for future careers.

Training on prohibited activities is given in orientation sessions. It is reinforced by Members then training the volunteers they recruit along with reinforcement throughout the program. This clearly shows a program where Members and volunteers will be aware of prohibited activities.

The application clearly shows the skills and experience gained by the Members provide professional development and training for those wanting to pursue a natural resource career. This is proven by the statistic that 80% of the placement sites, where the Members work, have hired graduates of the program to continue at the sites.

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant indicates the statewide need for conservation of salmonid habitats (84% of CA's waterway) it was not clear how specific areas of the state were targeted or prioritized.

The applicant indicated a training plan and state training may be provided by multiple team Members (site supervisor, mentor or co-mentor) however, with the exception of the site supervisor, it was not clear if these team Members are appropriately skilled to provide the necessary training needed by the program Members.

The monthly interaction between site supervisors and the mentors/Members was not explained in enough detail to ensure it will be meaningful.

The Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) stated the program will encourage active citizenship, but did not explain how this will be achieved.

The applicant provided a generalized approach to recruitment, but did not identify how the recruitment efforts would be specific to the needs of individual communities.

Although the applicant states mentors will be available, there is insufficient information regarding the specific training of their supervisors. The applicant does not provide specific details on reinforcement or length of training for their supervisors.

The application gives several statistics for the need but it is not clear where these come from. No citation is given for the statistics on salmonid decline, which appears to be the primary need they are addressing.

The application specifies Members will be working in Southern California to improve drought conditions. It is unclear how this ties into Salmonid restoration and the other listed needs.

The application mentions qualified trainers will be doing the instructing of the Members but does not give sufficient information to determine this.

Mentors are required to be available for Members daily to address questions, clarifications, etc. but are only required monthly check-in meetings. It is unclear if this is sufficient supervision.

Mentors are only given an annual training on regulations and how to supervise and support the Members.

No details on the length of this training are given as well as any mention of how it will be reinforced. It is unclear whether this will be sufficient training for supervisors/mentors to ensure compliance with regulations and other supervision issues.

While the Members will have the opportunity to interact with other AmeriCorps members, it is unclear if they will have interaction with other service programs or volunteers.

The application lists several ways it plans to recruit Members, however it is not clear if this will center on the communities where the program will operate or from other areas.