

# APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** California Conservation Corps Backcountry Trails

**Application ID:** 15AC170713

**Program Name:** CCC/AmeriCorps Backcountry Trails Program

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 presents a clear and compelling explanation as to the needs in the project area and how proposed stewardship activities and environmental education will be undertaken to address the needs in these areas.

The data presented makes a persuasive case citing credible studies that the identified problems are widespread across the project areas.

By remaining in the backcountry for extended periods, the Members will be able to effectively address serious trail needs that existing agency staff are unable to address.

The proposed training program is detailed and thoroughly covers the range of activities that Members will be undertaking during their assignment.

By living with and working closely on a daily basis with their supervisors, the Members receive high quality support and frequent opportunities for interaction with both the other Members and their supervisors.

Supervisors are provided solid training that covers all AmeriCorps requirements and skills for working with Members.

The proposed project will provide Members with an excellent set of skills that are valuable to future employment.

Specific activities for individual and group reflection are well described and provided for frequently, including weekly, monthly and at the end of the season.

The applicant clearly describes the exact tasks that will be conducted by the Members in restoring substantially degraded trails, where these activities will be conducted, and how they differ from normal trail management activities conducted by PLMA staff.

A substantial amount of relevant training is provided, in program areas, prohibited activities, and in the specific activities needed to succeed in backcountry trail restoration. This training is backed up by continuous evaluation to ensure skills improvement over time.

The qualifications and training of the supervisors and ongoing supervision of the Members are clearly described. The supervisor training and program support of both Members and supervisors appear meaningful and substantial.

The program cites clear data that Members successfully gain the skills and experiences to become employable by the PLMAs, providing benefit to both the Members and to the agencies in having a skilled work force.

The applicant provides a clear description of the activities that Members will perform, including extensive and detailed discussion of the types of trail work that Members will conduct.

The applicant describes a well-considered and multi-faceted theory of change, including the basis for selecting trails to be addressed, the short-term consequences of trail repair and maintenance, and the longer-term implications for trail sustainability associated with intentional elements of the program design (e.g., larger crews, more durable projects, long-term trail management capacity building).

The applicant clearly describes how the program model will supplement existing trail management resources, making a compelling case that larger crews who can remain in the backcountry for extended periods can complete larger projects in more remote locations more efficiently.

The applicant clearly describes a thorough, high quality training plan, including a full scope of service- and skills-oriented training, on-site training, and a supervisory design intended to reinforce training.

The applicant clearly describes an approach for making Members and volunteers aware of prohibited activities and helping assure adherence to rules against prohibited activities through the use of in-the-field crew supervisors with specific training in prohibited activities.

The applicant describes a strong supervisory model, including embedded crew supervisors, regular check-ins with crew Members, and supplemental resources (e.g., program director, supervisor coordinator) to provide supervisor relief and help resolve disputes.

The applicant provides compelling evidence that the experience gained through the program will prepare Members for future employment following their service term, highlighting experiences in personal growth and presenting evidence that past Members have gone on to work in Public Land Management Agencies.

The applicant describes a thorough and intentional program to encourage Member reflection, including journaling, weekly meetings, monthly performance review, and completion of an end-of-season essay.

**Weaknesses:**

Acknowledging that proposed work will occur in remote backcountry locations, the applicant does not provide a clear plan for providing Members opportunities to connect with other national service program Members.

The applicant does not articulate a plan to recruit Members from the local communities where the program will operate.

It is not clear how Members will be able to recruit volunteers when they are spending most of their time doing trail restoration work in remote back-country areas. The roles of the volunteers are also not as clearly described as those of the Members.

Opportunities to participate and network with other volunteers outside of the immediate crew seem minimal and there is little direct focus on activities that would create civic engagement following their term of service. Member recruitment from the local community (or at all) is not discussed in the application.

The applicant describes an inadequate set of opportunities for connecting with the broader National Service network, describing a single, end-of-season debriefing, which may reflect the nature of service (i.e., in backcountry, remote locations).

The discussion of community development/team-building in the application inadequately addresses how the program will incorporate intentional activities to help instill in Members an ethic of active and productive citizenship and encourage continued community and public service.

The recruitment activities described in the application--including letter writing and recruiting recreational trail users--constitute an inadequate approach for intentionally recruiting Members from the local communities where the program will operate.