

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Division of Parks and Recreation

Application ID: 15AC170743

Program Name: AmeriCorps State Parks Partners –Competitive

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 provides a number of compelling examples of invasive species across the state of Delaware and cites a credible recent study demonstrating the extent of the invasive plant locations across the state.

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

The applicant's recruitment plans are extremely thorough and include specific Delaware based organizations that will be consulted to identify potential Members.

The program need related to eradication of endangered species is specifically described in great detail for each area that Members will be working in, making it clear that the priorities for member activities are well thought out.

In addition, the need for employment opportunities for recent veterans is documented and clearly linked to addressing the conservation needs in the program design.

There is a clear description of what each member will be doing, both at the beginning for more targeted interventions and later as a supervisor of volunteer teams. The various activities at each stage and in the different locations are clearly articulated.

The applicant has a clear and specific plan for recruiting and selecting military service Members from the communities in Delaware in which they live and will be serving.

The program goes beyond just training and experience to providing housing and effective leadership for veterans who may be struggling to find employment, increasing their chances of reentering the workforce after their service term.

The applicant clearly describes the nature of the problem - the spread and impact of invasive species on Delaware's native plants and wildlife - and clearly explains how the proposed invasive plant species eradication and related activities will address the problem.

The applicant clearly identifies specific parklands where invasive plant species have been identified and identifies

specific plant species and their actual or potential impacts on native plants and wildlife, including migratory bird species.

The applicant clearly identifies specific activities to be conducted by AmeriCorps members, including assessment, invasive plant species detection and removal, and the proposed distinction between member and volunteer roles in the invasive plant species removal program.

The applicant presents a well-designed member training plan, with an initial orientation to service workshop and relevant knowledge- and skills-based training by a field biologist, trails planner, and outside experts in controlled burns, wildfire management, and interpretive programs.

The applicant describes a clear and substantial focus on program elements that will provide Members with practical skills and training—including classroom, field, and/or on-the-job training, certification, and experience in invasive plant species identification, invasive plant species eradication, ecological restoration, wildfire management, health and safety, and interpretive guiding--intentionally designed to help Members find employment opportunities after their service terms.

The application clearly describes an approach for recruiting Members from the State of Delaware, which is the geographic focus of the program.

Weaknesses:

The applicant presents limited detail concerning how the Members will be supervised in the field and what the criteria will be for determining when a member is "adequately" trained to allow them to supervise volunteers.

The absence of details on the exactly how the yet to be hired Program Lead will train nor the frequency of training reinforcement during the year make it difficult to evaluate the anticipated effectiveness of the overall training program.

It appears that there will be a 3-day orientation to service workshop for both Members and the supervisor, but there is no description of what is included in that orientation or how it will be reinforced over time.

While in general, veterans have already demonstrated a personal commitment to civic responsibility and service, the program itself does not provide much in the way of opportunities to reflect on and reinforce these values.

Information in the application is inadequate to determine the extent of invasive plant species infestation of parklands in Delaware: where specific parks, native plants and wildlife, and invasive plant species are identified, impacts are described in qualitative terms.

The description of training to be received by the Program Leader suggests that it will be the same as member training; the information is inadequate to assess whether this supervisor will be adequately trained in the supervisory responsibilities of assessing Members' activities and reinforcing Members' understanding and compliance with AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities and expectations.

While there is a good likelihood that the activities to be performed by Members will provide a meaningful experience, the applicant provides an inadequate description of program elements intentionally designed to encourage reflection.