

# APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa

**Application ID:** 15ED170324

**Program Name:** Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa

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 proposes a strong plan to have highly functioning Members to respond to local and national disasters and shows continued commitment by having them pledge to be a part of the local and national responder deployment list.

The applicant displays that they will recruit 65% Members in the communities that they serve which provides a strong level of support.

The Members will interact with other Members in different areas and experience their programs in Tennessee, Texas and Washington.

The applicant presents strong supporting evidence from the CDC in 2014 to improve the lands for recreational purpose.

Members will have a strong support system and supervision with one supervisor and 3-5 team members.

The applicant describes a comprehensive training plan that delineates curricula content and duration of training. To enhance Member learning experience, the applicant partners with topic experts, such as the American Red Cross, Safety Council and National Park Service. Completion of training results in Member certifications (e.g. Red Card for wildfire suppression and Pesticide Applicator's License). The plan provides for quarterly training sessions.

The technical skills and knowledge AmeriCorps members gain from implementation of intervention activities and the earned certifications prepare Members for careers in the field of public land management and disaster response.

Extensive, current data was presented from national and local public and private sources to document the pervasiveness of the needs in three priority areas: habitat degradation, public engagement in outdoor activities and disaster preparedness. The presented research also documents the effectiveness of the proposed interventions in these problem areas.

The teams of Members will be able to travel to different worksites and have meaningful engagement with local groups such as Audubon Society, Project Awareness and potentially the 120 regional partnerships with which the

Conservation Corps is matched.

The applicant convincingly connects its logic model with the three documented need areas and the abatement strategies.

Significant hours of training will be provided for each Member: 150 hours initially with bi-weekly refreshers and mid-term workshops. The training provided yields certification in multiple areas that will provide credentials related to future employment as well as opportunities to serve as volunteers in times of disaster.

The field supervision ratio of 1:3-5 is impressive and recognizes the importance of teamwork as well as safety risks faced by Members.

Monthly evaluations done with Members and supervisors provide important feedback for Members and opportunities to make corrections.

**Weaknesses:**

The need statement was slightly outdated with the most recent supporting data from 2012. The applicant only provides two supporting sources (EPA and Smith) to justify the need.

The Logic model did flow and the interventions could lead to the stated outcomes however, they were ambiguous in their goals.

The applicant does not cite relevant data to substantiate the need and severity for intervention activities in the six communities identified as service areas. The data cited (2010 EPA report and WI 2006) are not recent and are based on statewide analyses. For example, the 2010 EPA report showed more than 75% of Minnesota and Iowa waters were impaired.

The applicant does not provide any water quality data on any of the communities to substantiate the need for intervention activities.

The sections relating to the engagement of the population in healthful outdoor recreation is tenuous.

The logic model doesn't include the types of publicity and public education that will be done to ensure that the public responds and uses the improved sites.