

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Student Conservation Association, Inc

Application ID: 15ES168851

Program Name: SCA-New Hampshire Corps

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 proposed education and stewardship activities to be undertaken by Members and volunteers are very clearly identified and explained.

The applicant relies on relevant academic studies to make a strong case that the proposed education and stewardship opportunities afforded participants will positively support the desired outcomes.

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

By meeting weekly to check-in with Members during the year and by conducting site visits to ensure that all activities are consistent with AmeriCorps' policies, the Supervisors will provide excellent and frequent guidance to the Members.

Specific activities for individual and group reflection are well described and provided for on a weekly basis throughout the program year.

By living together on site, the Members will have ample opportunities to establish connections with one another and events and gatherings with other similar programs across the state will encourage networking.

The Applicant has put significant effort into gathering evidence and ensuring that their program design provides meaningful outcomes, both in terms of conservation and in environmental education and awareness, leading to continuous improvement in program design and results over the years.

The program appears to have a well thought out plan for residential and activity-based supervision of AmeriCorps members, using staff experienced with AmeriCorps programs and the functions Members will be carrying out.

The structure of the program, including its residential nature and partnerships with other AmeriCorps programs, projects, and partners in New Hampshire, provides significant opportunity for the Members to build networks with each other and the broader conservation community.

The emphasis on skills training, leadership, and opportunities to organize events as well as the networking with existing professionals provided appears to be good preparation for a future career in conservation.

The applicant provides detailed and thorough description of three different member roles, how Members will leverage volunteers, volunteer roles, and the contributions of Members and volunteers to program outcomes.

The applicant provides a compelling case that the intervention is likely to lead to the long-term conservation stewardship outcomes expected from the program, substantiating the posited likelihood of impact with detailed descriptions of member activities, a coherent theory of change, and relevant studies.

The applicant describes a well-designed and extensive training program, including: orientation training, with reinforcement during weekly community meetings; focus area training to be delivered by subject matter experts; wilderness first responder training to support member and volunteer safety during member service; and 2 weeks of environmental education training.

The applicant proposes a well-designed and extensive member supervision program, including identification of specific, relevantly experienced staff that will be responsible for supervision of each member cohort, regularly scheduled supervisory activities, and supplemental supervision to be provide by seasonal staff, the Program Coordinator, and the Program Director.

The applicant provides a compelling case that member experience during their service--particularly collaborative problem solving that results from communal living and service, professional development, and leadership experience--will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.

The applicant describes a thoughtful and extensive program of structured reflection activities, including community meetings, journal-keeping, and group games that will support meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection.

The applicant describes an extensive program of activities that will enable Members to establish connections with each other and others engaged in conservation stewardship, environmental education, and other service activities through the State and National Service network (e.g., New Hampshire State Service Alliance, VISTA, and City Year).

The applicant describes a significant focus on experiences, including group activities, reflection, and a focus on identifying with a broader service movement, that promises to instill within Members a durable ethic of service and civic engagement.

Weaknesses:

The information provided to support the program need is statewide and somewhat general, based on priorities, surveys, and planning processes rather than any specific data on environmental metrics, budget, or staffing. It does not discuss the conservation or environmental education/outreach status of the specific communities/parks in NH where the AmeriCorps members will be serving.

It appears that the activities of the SCA NH Corps will largely duplicate and support existing programs that are underfunded within the state, such as the DPP Program, school-based education, and existing conservation projects,

rather than providing unique interventions.

There does not appear to be a strong emphasis on recruiting Members from NH or areas they will be working in as opposed to more broadly nationally.

The applicant inadequately establishes the need for conservation stewardship or environmental education in the State of New Hampshire.

The application provides inadequate evidence of the problem/need: of the plans and surveys identified in the application, only the description of the DPR Ten-Year Strategic Development and Capital Improvement Plan includes a statement that the state's resources are degraded, and this statement is not substantiated with data regarding the prevalence and severity of the problem and need for intervention.

Applicant provides insufficient information regarding the training received by supervisors; supervisor titles and statements that they are experienced are inadequate evidence of training in AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities and expectations.