

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Great Basin Institute

Application ID: 15ES170154

Program Name: Great Basin Institute

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 plans to provide a very high level of training relative to AmeriCorps member's day-to-day duties, supplemented by discussions led by partner agencies to reinforce the civic engagement portions of their professional development.

The applicant will be providing supervisors who are trained in environmental resource management and capable of giving AmeriCorps members written evaluations through feedback loops. This constant form of feedback is a requirement established by the applicant and ensures it will be reinforced during the member year.

The recruitment description was one of the strongest portions of the narrative. The recruitment process (and focus) was connected to the proposed activities and the communities to be served/targeted.

The applicant provides compelling and well documented evidence of the problems within the Great Basin. The applicant provides a clear and logical plan that will address and produce positive trends for their at risk ecosystems.

The applicant has established strong bonds with several organizations which will be a benefit not only to participants but also the community they serve.

The strength of the applicant's training programs is evidenced by the certification in federal protocols and practices received by the participants. The applicant provides additional training certifications geared to strengthen the skills of the participant.

The applicant provides detailed plans on how it will collect empirical data to forecast positive or negative trends within specific concerns relative to the Great Basin. (For example, sage grouse population and habitat, reducing hazardous forest fuels, and decreasing invasive species populations.)

The application presents clear and feasible rationale in their approach to improve the Great Basin ecosystem.

The applicant provides extensive and reliable resources it will utilize to recruit its Members.

The applicant provides an excellent proving ground for future scientists interested in depressed eco-systems. The

training received will benefit any participant interested in a career in land conservation and species management.

The application uses the potential listing of the Greater Sage-grouse as endangered and the potential negative economic consequences to the region to make a compelling argument supporting the need for the program and why the need exists. They have several interventions planned, which are well-documented to address several causes of the habitat issues, and are logically aligned.

The application uses specific, relevant, and up to date data to document the need for its proposed interventions to improve Sage-Grouse habitat. Although citations are lacking for some of the data, there is still sufficient information to determine the data is from reputable sources.

It is clear from the application what the AmeriCorps members will be doing under each intervention listed.

The application uses two scientific studies, one specific to the management of the Greater Sage-grouse habitat, upon which to base its interventions. Within the discussion of the specific interventions, there are additional studies. All of these studies make a compelling case that these interventions will indeed be successful in increasing and improving Sage-grouse habitat.

AmeriCorps members will provide clear value added to the community, by enhancing efforts of existing management agencies who do not have the funds and personnel to achieve the measures needed to enhance the habitat.

Members will receive sufficient training tailored to what interventions they will be engaged in. The training includes prohibited activities and a Leadership academy for professional development provided by partner agencies.

Reinforcement of regulatory compliance will be provided by partner agencies, which are also educated about national service and policies regarding the treatment of Members.

A detailed plan is in place to achieve compliance, which includes a full-time Human Resources/Compliance Officer to deal with issues that may arise.

The application gives several methods they will use to recruit Members, which include intentionally recruiting from the region that will be served as well as from outside the area.

Weaknesses:

The applicant framed the problem it is trying to address in the Great Basin portion of Nevada, but failed to provide any compelling data to describe the problem in terms of scope (acreage) or how the study will incorporate existing land use issues (development) cited as a "critical step" by the applicant.

The applicant provided a series of outputs in the logic model, but many of these outputs were not connected to the individual work assignments listed in the application.

The logic model included "Lack of viable data to inform landscape-scale resource management" as one of the problems to be addressed, but failed to connect how the "monitoring plots" will lead to an improved series of land use policies listed as the long-term objective.

The applicant did not provide AmeriCorps details or training topics that will be covered by the supervisors.

The applicant did not identify how the experience reflection requirements will be incorporated into member activities other than at the NCC celebration at the culmination of the program year - without a more detailed explanation it is not clear if the criterion is being met.

The applicant does not provide sufficient details relating to how it will reinforce training for its supervisors.

Volunteers are briefly mentioned but it is unclear what role they will be playing in implementing the program as insufficient information is given.

It is unclear whether the training given to the Members will be reinforced throughout the year.

The application includes training on prohibited activities but does not supply sufficient detail as to whether volunteers will receive any.

The application states that supervisors will receive an orientation session, but the information given is insufficient to determine if the training is adequate or if it will be reinforced throughout the year.

Other than some time for reflection built into the program through weekly evaluations of their experiences done by the Members, there is very little discussion on how the service experience will be meaningful for the Members.

Other than during training, it is unclear whether Members will have interaction with other Members, except those on their work team. There is no mention of opportunities to connect with other service program Members, so this part of the program appears to be nonexistent.