

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** American Conservation Experience

**Application ID:** 15ES170727

**Program Name:** American Conservation Experience

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 succinctly and clearly spells out three categories of on-the-ground projects that members and volunteers will undertake.

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

**Weaknesses:**

Insufficient evidence is presented to support that the proposed interventions will effectively address the water quality and supply problems faced by the State of California.

While the anticipated achievements will benefit the watersheds in which they are undertaken, the applicant does not provide compelling evidence that the cumulative benefits will significantly improve the identified problems across the project area.

The applicant merely states that supervisors were past AmeriCorps members but does not provide sufficient detail as to what additional training they will be provided before becoming supervisors themselves.

While members will be afforded time together while on assignment, there is no description as to how members will be afforded opportunities to interact with the broader National Service network.

The applicant does not clearly explain how members will be encouraged to continue engaging in community service past the term of the project.

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

It is unlikely that the projects as described could have a substantial impact on the stated problem, which is a very large-scale state-wide problem. The projects appear a bit scattered in location and type. Santa Cruz and South Lake Tahoe are mentioned in the introduction as focuses of the volunteer effort, but not mentioned again in the application as focus areas or why these areas were selected.

There appears to be one short orientation session on prohibited activities at the beginning, but reinforcement over time as part of supervision is not discussed. Supervisors appear to receive the same training as members, but there is no mention of additional training for their supervisory role or on Americorps policies and regulations.

While there is mention of service and civic engagement being promoted by the tasks the members will otherwise be doing, specific activities are not described that foster these values. Opportunities for networking are described as available, but also not emphasized by specific activities or program design.

There is no description of member recruitment from local communities (or at all). More emphasis is placed on meeting others from across the US and internationally.

The applicant presents insufficient information regarding the condition of streams and wetlands and the construction, condition, and network of trails to be addressed by the program to judge whether the program would enhance or safeguard California's freshwater supply.

The lack of specificity with respect to the projects that will be conducted by members and the delegation of project scoping to non-grant recipients (i.e., partner organizations) makes it difficult to reasonably conclude that members' activities will be effective in achieving the desired outcomes.

The scale of the applicant's proposed program is too small to make a significant impact on the problem defined in the application--the quantity and quality of California's freshwater supply--and, thus, the applicant makes an inadequate case that members will produce significant contributions to the problem.

The applicant provides insufficient information regarding the training that supervisors will receive, beyond their training as former members, and does not present a plan for reinforcing supervisor training throughout the program year.

The applicant presents inadequate information to assess whether members will have opportunities for reflection, stating that members will reflect on their experience without describing the activities designed to encourage reflection or providing other evidence to support this statement.

The applicant does not describe activities intended to connect members to others in the broader National Service network and, thus, provides inadequate evidence that members will have opportunities to establish connections beyond those established with their fellow members in the ACE program.

While participation in restoration, trail, and fuel reduction projects can be expected to expose members to the benefits of community service, the applicant provides an inadequate description of activities intentionally designed to reinforce these experiences and instill in members an ethic of service and skills for active and productive citizenship and to encourage continued public and community service.

The applicant presents insufficient information to assess the extent to which members will be recruited from the local community, stating in the logic model that volunteers will be recruited from the community without presenting an intentional plan to support this statement.