

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: AMVETS Career Center, Employment and Training Services for Ohio Veterans	Application ID: 11AC123940
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Below are the comments from each External Peer Reviewer that read and evaluated the application. While Reviewers did engage in discussion about their evaluations, consensus was not required as part of their review. Therefore, there may be differing views in their feedback on the quality of the proposal.

COMMENTS: This proposal flows well. There is a clear problem identification and proposed solution. AMVETS demonstrates it has an established record providing the same types of services to the same type of clientele.

COMMENTS: This applicant has a decent plan for attaining their goals and objectives and program success within the targeted areas and populations. The applicant illustrated a unique approach to the stated need of the targeted area and demonstrated sensitivity to the issues facing the veterans. Overall the proposal was good. The applicant presented an excellent training plan, and demonstrated organizational capability, but lacked specific data to support program impact and performance measures.

COMMENTS: Though the applicant has an innovative approach to the issues facing veterans and strategies to address those issues they were lacking the linkage of program components and specific data or supporting evidence to support their claim that the proposed program would have a measurable impact within the state of Ohio.

COMMENTS: The information presented in the first paragraph of the member selection, training and supervision section may cause confusion for some when trying to identify the number of additional positions being requested, “this proposal requests funding for 30 MSY positions” as opposed to “this proposal requests funding for 10 additional positions to bring the total to 30 MSY positions.” (+) Identifying barriers veterans experience when seeking services provides justification for the program. These barriers include: DOL funded services are limited to those clients who qualify for intensive services and the existence lack of / reduced access to services in some areas. Currently members are deployed to 13 communities however there are additional underserved communities in northwest and southeast Ohio. (+) Qualities and characteristics of the service providers are matched to the population being served e.g. utilizing college students. (+) Recruitment methods are designed to address documented needs. For example, the program recruits college

students/recent graduates with a focus on colleges that are located in desired service areas. This specific strategy serves a dual purpose: (i). The largest component of unemployed vets is in the 18-24 year old group. Utilizing college students for this program not only provides needed support but allows these young vets to reconnect with their civilian counterparts. (ii). College students are particularly qualified to deliver program services. They are technically proficient and familiar with the use of social media, which is becoming increasingly important in the job search market. Most have received prior training or have personal experience in resume building, career assessment and navigation of internet based job sites through participation in campus based programs. (+) This program is well structured and provides continuous participatory and training activities. Members have a private forum, blog and Facebook page that they can use to share information with other members or to ask for assistance. This is reflective of networking practices that are used today. Host site pairing and mentoring will provide members with ongoing access to career counselors, social workers and mental health professionals who routinely work with veterans. (+) Members have access to the internet based training courses for veterans. This allows them to speak knowledgeably about these courses as well as offer additional insights to their clients. (-) There seems to be low minority representation in the current corps (only 4 of 22 individuals). It cannot be determined if this is adequate as the ethnic and racial demographics of the veteran population are not given. The applicant makes the case that engaging AmeriCorps members is a highly effective means of solving the identified community problems through. (+)The applicant utilizes an existing model which has a successful track record. The applicant states that in the first 2 months of the present grant they are on track to surpass performance measures. To date, they have provided career assistance to over 100 veterans, entered 30 veterans into case management, placed 7 veterans into employment, and recruited 25 employers into the veteran friendly employment program.

COMMENTS: (+/-) The applicant is proposing to reduce the unemployment rate among veterans in portions of Ohio with high unemployment rates and that are currently underserved. They have good statewide data to show the need but failed to include local or county data to justify the need for services in the proposed target communities. (+) A good recruitment plan was presented however there is concern that recruiting only veterans from their home communities will limit the reach and the program's ability to attract qualified members. Supervision appears to be solid and there is a good training program. (-) The major fault with this program is that the measurable outcomes are very low and will have minimal impact on the overall unemployment rate in Ohio. With members only placing an average of 3.5 veterans in jobs, there is little return on the federal investment of AmeriCorps dollars. With more ambitious objectives and more data as to the needs of veterans in the targeted communities, this would have been a very good proposal.