

Narratives

Executive Summary

RARE is a community building program that focuses on Oregon's remote and rural communities. RARE members create outreach events, write plans, develop maps, organize downtown development efforts, complete historic preservation projects, implement hazard mitigation projects and start groups to take their work on after their service. RARE provides professional training and support for up-and-coming community development professionals from across the US by placing them with public and non-profit organizations throughout rural Oregon for 11 months.

Rationale and Approach

This proposal supports the continuation of a national service program at the University of Oregon (UO). Housed within the UO's Community Service Center (CSC), the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) Program provides assistance to rural communities across Oregon in the areas of community and economic development, planning, natural resource management and disaster mitigation. RARE will place 20 members across Oregon in nonprofit and local government organizations. Each member will address a specific workplan that is designed to meet the needs of the community. As a service-learning program, RARE is affiliated with a Master of Community and Regional Planning program, has an extensive training curriculum based in that program and provides members with nine graduate credits upon successful completion of the program and therefore addresses CNCS Focus Area 3: Engaging Students in Communities.

Compelling Community Need

The RARE Program focuses on rural Oregon. To provide a context for the placements we support, it is important to understand the geography of Oregon. Oregon is 360 miles north to south and 261 miles east to west. It is the 9th largest state in the US. According to the Census, 97% of the land in Oregon is considered rural and the population density is 26 people per square mile (the US average is 79 people

Narratives

per square mile). Oregon is divided by the Cascade Mountains that run north to south, creating what is known as the "westside" and the "eastside." These distances and physical features mean it can take eight hours to drive from the population center in the Willamette Valley to communities on the eastside.

Access to the resources of Willamette Valley (such as the largest city, Portland, and the capital, Salem) is difficult in these remote locations. A key aspect of the RARE Program is to help these rural communities access resources and technical assistance through the placement of AmeriCorps members.

At the specific community level, RARE will address three critical issue areas for rural Oregon as identified through community needs assessments, research and supported by state policy: food security; community building, including economic development and planning; and disaster mitigation.

Food Security: Oregon has consistently had one of the highest hunger rates across the United States, specifically the non-metro areas suffer from food shortage. (Edwards, Mark and Bruce Weber. "Food Security and Hunger in Oregon: A New Look." 2003. Working Paper No. AREC 03-104 R. Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.) Because of the distances and limited services, the picture of food insecurity in rural communities is more difficult to attain. We are currently working with the Oregon Food Bank on food assessments in 4 of Oregon's 36 counties. Using the lessons learned from this project, and in cooperation with Oregon Food Bank, we hope to conduct food assessments in all of rural Oregon (additional 29 counties) over the next three years.

Community Building, Economic Development and Planning: Rural communities have fallen behind urban Oregon economically since shifts in the timber industry in the early 1980's as indicated by data on income and employment over the past 30 years from the US Census. For example, the per capita income in rural Oregon is 75% of that found in urban Oregon. The unemployment rate in rural Oregon is 128% higher than in urban Oregon. It is this economic disparity that RARE addresses. Our efforts are based in

Narratives

sound research on the needs of rural Oregon. In 2002-2003, the CSC conducted a survey of community development corporations, housing authorities and other nonprofit organizations to identify the most critical needs. Through focus groups and surveys, the following issues have emerged as the most critical community needs: affordable housing; economic development; geographic information systems (GIS); needs assessments and feasibility studies; tourism and recreation development; and assistance with youth projects. Based on the additional information gathered from community partners (through the RFP process) and on statewide needs, the planning and community building component of this proposal will focus on economic development (including entrepreneur development), affordable housing and tourism and recreation planning.

Disaster Mitigation: A sister program of RARE within the CSC is the Oregon Partners for Disaster Resilience (OPDR). In 2002, the OPDR conducted a needs assessment through a household survey to identify residents' perceptions of disaster risk, the level of preparedness for disasters, and the types of disaster risk reduction activities in which respondents were already engaged. The survey identified specific ways in which the UO, and more specifically RARE, could assist residents in addressing disaster issues. Then Governor Kitzhaber identified Oregon as a Showcase State for Disaster Resistance. This focus on disaster mitigation at the state level provides a framework for locally driven projects.

We also wish to address broader issues that affect the rationale and approach of the RARE program. While it is atypical for a single AmeriCorps program to address such a wide range of topics, RARE does so for three reasons. The first two are need based and related: over the years, it has become clear that the needs of rural communities are quite varied and the interests of members are also varied. To serve our two most critical stakeholders, it is necessary to have a variety of placements. Third, RARE endeavors to train professionals in community building, which involves a range of issues: economic, environmental, public safety and social, just to name a few. While any individual member may not be

Narratives

engaged in all issues of community building, through being in a cohort of 20, each individual member is exposed to the range of issues.

This need to expose these emerging community building professionals to a range of issues brings in a broader need that RARE is addressing. According to the International City/County Management Association:

"The local government management profession is at a crossroads. The baby boomers that comprise the majority of local government managers are approaching retirement at a quickening pace, while a much smaller group of young professionals are in line and prepared to fill their shoes. Federal, state and local statistics indicate that the greatest numbers of retirees will come from the managerial ranks."

This looming tsunami of retirees is also true in the nonprofit sector. RARE helps to develop the cadre of professionals that will fill these critical positions.

Because RARE focuses on rural communities and geographically diverse communities (as identified by CNCS) it broadens the overall AmeriCorps portfolio. Over the past 14 years more than 70% of our placement sites have been in communities outside of the urban Portland-Eugene corridor increasing the diversity of placements within the Oregon portfolio.

Description of Activities and Member Roles

The RARE program places 20 members in individual placements across rural Oregon. Due to the size of Oregon, members are spread out geographically. Through our community selection process, we identify a pool of communities with which to work. Our extensive community placement process, which includes

Narratives

a Request for Proposal (RFP), site visits and reference calls, ensures we are meeting community identified needs. In the RFP we ask for a description of the need, how the placement will address the need, what will be done to ensure success long term of the projects that will be completed, what the learning opportunities for the member will be, and how local volunteers will be involved.

RARE works to improve communities by meeting locally identified needs that will allow the organization and broader community to sustain the projects beyond the RARE member's service year. Due to the intense project management aspect of our placements, they are all full time. All placements will focus largely on capacity building activities as defined by CNCS. Below is a description of the types of activities that RARE members will address.

Food Assessment: Spearhead the county wide food assessment coordinated with Oregon Food Bank and a collaborative local group. Assess the local food system then develop projects to address needs. The assessment process includes surveys and focus groups, facilitating a planning team, developing the plan and getting the plan adopted. Specific actions to be implemented from the plan could include developing food pantries, starting a farmers' market, coordinating a mobile market to reach more remote communities, and implementing a "Buy Local" campaign.

Hazard Mitigation: Facilitate the development of a county-wide hazard mitigation plan. Reduce the risks posed by natural hazards by assessment of risk and vulnerability and the identification of strategies to reduce risk. This could include conducting an assessment of specific risks, coordinating a local group in the planning effort, conducting surveys and focus groups, developing an action plan, facilitating the adoption of the plan, and beginning to implement specific projects (e.g., seismic retrofitting of schools, putting homes on stilts to avoid flood damage).

Narratives

Microenterprise Development: Conduct an evaluation of the existing microenterprise program; provide support to upcoming microenterprise program; co-instruct financial literacy classes and assist in updating the class curriculum; assist in the development of a self-help housing program; and develop a youth business program. This could also include broader support of business development, such as starting a green business incubator to support the development of sustainable businesses.

Our extensive orientation and training program (described fully next in Member Outputs and Outcomes) ensures that members have the skills to complete their projects, the service spirit to be an AmeriCorps member, and an understanding of the required compliance with rules.

Measurable Outputs and Outcomes

In the past six years, since we began addressing performance measures, we have met or exceeded all performance measures related to Rationale and Approach.

In the first year of the new funding cycle, we will achieve the following: 12 entrepreneurship classes will be conducted; 40 resources (e.g., maps, databases, and websites) will be delivered to communities; and 10 plans will be adopted and the communities will have started implementing projects identified in the plan. We currently assess all performance measures through self-reporting by members and community based supervisors. Over the next year, we will be developing web-based reporting system and database that will be ready to use when this new grant cycle begins.

Plan for Self-Assessment and Improvement

RARE regularly conducts project evaluation and employs an action research model, which allows for

Narratives

continuous and regular improvement during all of its projects. RARE has had two evaluations in the past five years. As the first step in our organization development project recently funded by The Ford Family Foundation, we are conducting an external review of the program in 2009. This will provide critical information for program improvement and development.

In coordination with and support of our partners on campus and across the state, we completed a 5-year strategic plan for RARE in 2005 which included an evaluation component. Built into the action plan associated with the strategic plan are specific management points to ensure we are continuing to meet the needs of rural communities and our members. These points include both internal reflection as well as input from our stakeholders and partners. Developing an Advisory Board, which we did as a result of the strategic plan was a critical piece to this, and it is a component of our strategic plan.

Through annual site visits with our AmeriCorps program officer and the use of an Operational Standards Review, we have identified five specific target areas for improvement. These were identified in Fall 2006, and we have made significant achievements in all five areas.

Community Involvement

As discussed above, general needs which form our core service areas were identified through a series of focus groups and surveys that were conducted to identify community needs in rural Oregon. RARE communities self-identify by responding to these core areas through our RFP process, and therefore we know that the applicant organizations are committed.

As part of the response to the RFP, each community applicant must identify community partner organizations. This requirement ensures wide support and reinforces the depth of community

Narratives

involvement. RARE staff calls those identified partners during the placement development process and ask about broader community support beyond the applicant organization. The response to the RFP must describe how the specific projects identified for the RARE member are tied to a specific action or strategic plan for the community or organization.

All RFP responses address the five components of capacity building: Specifically, we ask them to address how the placement will do the following: (1) strengthen volunteer management and recruitment; (2) conduct outreach and secure resources to meet specific needs in the community; (3) build the infrastructure of the sponsoring organization; (4) develop collaborative relationships; and (5) assist in resource development. We consider these capacity building components in the selection criteria for community applications.

Staff members of the RARE program are extensively involved in the networks of technical and service providers within the state of Oregon. Three organizations we collaborate with are Rural Development Initiatives (members receive a scholarship for volunteering at their annual conference), Rural Community Assistance Corporation (their staff provide training to our members pro bono), and Oregon Food Bank (we have had a placement with them focusing on rural counties, and in addition their Rural Outreach Specialist assists several of our members with secondary food related projects).

Relationship to other National and Community Service Programs

We currently work closely with the Oregon Microenterprise Network (OMEN) VISTA Program. This cooperation is critical in that both programs address entrepreneurship. We work together to ensure there is no duplication. RARE's entrepreneurship projects focus on the five target areas associated with the Collaborative for Rural Entrepreneurship (CORE), while OMEN serves other communities.

Narratives

However, we do cross training and collaborate on events. We also work with other statewide AmeriCorps programs (particularly Oregon State Service Corps and Northwest Service Academy's Statewide Individual Placements Program) to ensure there is no duplication of programs or confusion among communities, organizations or potential members. With these two programs, we conduct regional trainings and in the past three years, our members have coordinated with members of these two programs on national service day activities.

Recently, and as a result of the efforts of RARE staff, the University of Oregon joined Oregon Campus Compact. We now can collaborate both with the Compact as a network, but also with other member organizations. We are currently working with Oregon State University, Portland State University and Eastern Oregon University on a proposal to identify service learning projects across the state that can assist rural Oregon. Many of the other university programs have been or are funded either directly by Learn and Serve, or through Oregon Campus Compact.

Potential for Replication

In our 2005 strategic plan, we address replication specifically. We have a proven, excellent model for a rural program supported through a central office, linked directly to an appropriate academic program. We have been approached by three states to see if RARE can be replicated elsewhere. Because we have a network through Peace Corps (RARE is a Peace Corps Fellows Program), we plan to start working with other Peace Corps Fellows programs at other universities across the country, as well as with the three states that have indicated interest. In the long-term, we can envision a multi-state, national direct program partnering with several universities. We will be applying for a planning grant to assess this. We have already worked with Western Illinois University and University of Arizona in developing an AmeriCorps program, sharing with them resources and tools we have developed over the past 14 years.

Narratives

Organizational Capability

Sound Organizational Structure

Programmatic and Fiscal Oversight

RARE is housed in the University of Oregon's (UO) Community Service Center (CSC) and is affiliated with the academic department of Planning Public Policy and Management (PPPM). The UO, PPPM and the CSC (which will implement this grant) have extensive experience in public service programs. A history of the UO, PPPM, the CSC and related programs will provide context for RARE.

Established in 1876, the UO is a world-class teaching and research institution that offers a broad spectrum of opportunities for learning in the liberal arts and professional programs in architecture, arts, business, education, journalism, law, and music and dance.

PPPM was established in 1972. This department was authorized to offer the UO's accredited professional master's degrees in community and regional planning and in public affairs, as well as a BA/BS in planning, public policy and management. For more than thirty years, PPPM has been recognized for: scholarly and applied research on a wide variety of policy issues; the excellent professional work being done by our alumni; the assistance our faculty and students provide to small communities in Oregon and around the Pacific basin; and the quality and variety of field-based learning opportunities available to our students. It is these last two areas that lead to the creation of the CSC and its programs.

In 1978, PPPM began to offer the first of its applied courses, Community Planning Workshop (CPW). That program has grown from five students on one project 30 years ago to its current form, with more than fifty students from multiple disciplines involved in more than twelve projects each year. The staff

Narratives

has also increased from .25 FTE (full time equivalent) of one faculty member to 2.25 FTE for faculty and five graduate level project managers, advanced students that work with the CPW student teams.

In 1994, RARE was established to meet two needs: first, students expressed an interest in a more intense experience, longer and in the field. During that time, the rural areas of Oregon, and indeed the entire Pacific Northwest, underwent significant economic transition due to shifts in the management of federal lands. Through consultation with rural development practitioners and state leaders, the staff of CPW developed RARE to address both of these needs.

In 1998, the PPPM Department and the UO recognized that the existing service programs, CPW and RARE, as well as emerging programs, needed to be housed within a single center on campus. Between 1998 and 1999, a strategic planning process was conducted to develop this center. In 2000, the CSC was officially established on the UO campus. In addition to CPW and RARE, the CSC also houses the Community Outreach Partnership Center the Oregon Partners for Disaster Resilience and the Housing and Urban Development Fellows Program. The CSC has extensive experience in programs similar to RARE. CSC continues to be involved in creating and implementing service-learning opportunities on our campus.

Since 1994, RARE has engaged more than 325 AmeriCorps members in serving rural Oregon. With a retention rate greater than 95%, we have been extremely successful in placing members, in supporting them through their service, and in assisting them in career development. Our accomplishments include developing over 220 community plans, completing 10 watershed assessments, providing rural Oregon with more than 700 new resources, providing training to more than 600 community members and retaining most of our former members in public service, nonprofit management or national service (AmeriCorps or Peace Corps).

Narratives

As a higher education institution, the UO, and specifically the CSC, recognizes the importance of community service through higher education. In 2003-2004, 7% of the UO's Federal Work Study funds were used for community service placements. The work study program is jointly administered through the financial aid office, which is responsible for administration, and the career center, which is responsible for placements. The most significant partnership has been with the SMART program, a literacy program in which university students work one-on-one with students in grades Kindergarten through 3rd. Training is provided through the staff of the SMART Program.

RARE serves as an intermediary by providing full-time members to locally-based organizations and communities that do not have the capacity to manage an entire AmeriCorps program. A Program Director and Field Coordinator are responsible for selection and support of members and overseeing the service sites.

The UO, and specifically the CSC, have extensive experience in fiscal management and in particular the management of federal grants. We have extensive on-site financial systems that are used to manage grants and contracts. All grants at the UO are managed through the Financial Information System (FIS). This system represents a local adaptation of BANNER Finance, one of the BANNER family of administrative software products used by the UO and other Oregon University System (OUS) institutions. FIS is linked to the UO's BANNER Student, Financial Aid, Accounts Receivable, and Human Resources systems. Our implementation of FIS also includes payroll, budget, and chart of accounts query menus.

The financial management of the CSC is lead by the Managing Director, Megan Smith, in cooperation with the CSC Grants Manager, Julie Foster, and UO's Office of Research Services and Administration

Narratives

(ORSA). We use mirrored systems to ensure quality control through redundancy. Approval of expenses involves an intricate process beginning with the grants manager with final approval by the program director. These are then sent through the UO Business Affairs office for implementation. All financial management is monitored by ORSA.

The UO has extensive experience administering grants and contracts. In 2006-2007, the UO received more than \$90 million in grants, of which 84% were federal or sub-federal grants. More than 27% of these were public service grants, with the remaining 73% focused on research and instruction.

The staff of the CSC has extensive experience managing federal grants, including funds from the following federal agencies: Education, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Receiving this AmeriCorps grant will allow us to take our existing program to new communities, especially those with the least capacity. Our goal in this funding cycle is to focus on the communities within Oregon that are on Oregon Economic and Community Development's distressed list and have a Beale Code of either 7, 8 or 9, meaning they are communities of 19,999 or less that are not adjacent to a metropolitan area. This will allow us to be more strategic and proactive in developing placements in the communities that may not even have the staff to apply to RARE. We know that the existing services we provide are greatly needed in the most rural and most remote of our communities. This funding, combined with the guidance provided by our 2005 strategic plan, will ensure that we are able to accomplish this. We recently received a three year grant from a private foundation to develop strategic alliances with other technical assistance providers to develop a continuum of programs and services, with RARE being the cornerstone.

Narratives

Continued funding for RARE also allows us to continue developing a cadre of community development professionals. Our connection to the graduate programs in PPPM is significant in this effort. RARE provides critical on-the-ground experience for our students. RARE is a critical link between the research being conducted on campus and the communities in Oregon, which may be as far as a ten-hour drive from the campus. For example, a UO faculty member recently developed an entrepreneurship curriculum that four members are using in their placements. These opportunities are only beginning to emerge as RARE has truly established itself as a resource in rural Oregon.

Multi-site/Statewide Program Management

RARE serves as an intermediary providing members to locally based organizations and communities that do not have the capacity to manage an entire AmeriCorps program. The CSC has extensive experience in the successful implementation of AmeriCorps programs, and specifically in a multi-site program. The broad geographic distribution of the members of RARE, admittedly, makes this a challenge. However, since 1994 we have developed a very intensive monitoring and support protocol. The Field Coordinator is assigned full time to supporting and overseeing the service sites, with the support and guidance of the Program Director.

RARE staff members conduct a site visit during the Request for Proposal phase to each potential sponsoring organization to evaluate the appropriateness of the placement and the capacity of the organization to sponsor and supervise a member, and to review program requirements, including AmeriCorps regulations.

During the site visit we also address the organization's capacity to house a member, to provide day-to-day supervision, to meet AmeriCorps regulations and to enter into a fiscal agreement with the UO. In

Narratives

In addition to meeting with the staff of the applicant organization, we interview local partners of the organization as well as staff of regional and state organizations to ensure that the organization's application to RARE has broad support and can be implemented.

Through our supervisor orientation and through regular site visits, we ensure that all sites comply with fiscal and program requirements. This includes the initial site visit during the application process, during which we discuss all program requirements, including AmeriCorps regulations. This is covered again at the supervisor orientation, during which they are provided with a handbook that covers all of these issues. We have a contract with each community organization that must be sent through their decision making process to ensure the organization can provide the \$19,000 in matching cash funds and that it can house a member. During our site visits we track that regulations are being followed. We also discuss in-kind requirements at site visits and orientation, and provide communities with a specific form with which to track in-kind match.

At the beginning of the placement, supervisors are required to attend an orientation to again review requirements and to establish specific expectations in terms of program administration, such as tracking time. Quarterly progress reports are provided to the program staff and supervisors by the members. Written quarterly evaluations are completed by both members and supervisors and submitted to the program. During the year, the members develop an initial workplan, in cooperation with their supervisor. This workplan is updated quarterly. RARE staff members conduct personal site visits to each placement at least three times during the year.

Supervisors are also invited to participate in additional trainings throughout the year. We conduct a training mid-year, called "Making Connections," which takes place in the state capital. Members and their supervisors come together for this, which is focused as much on networking and developing

Narratives

partnerships between communities as it is on skill development. State and federal agency members also attend, providing a critical link to government resources.

Throughout the year, we utilize the common elements of community capacity building to link our sites and site supervisors together, and to ensure that the overall mission and vision for the program is consistent across the state.

Board of Directors, Administrators and Staff

As part of the Oregon University System (OUS), the UO is governed by the Oregon Board of Higher Education, whose members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. Our Senior Faculty Advisor, Dr. Jean Stockard provides a link to the academic components of our program. PPPM faculty members also serve as an informal group of advisors. The UO Vice President for Research, Dr. Richard Linton, oversees all UO centers and therefore is the direct supervisor of the CSC. The CSC has a Board of Advisors. This group includes statewide partners from government, non-profit and private sectors.

The CSC includes six planning professionals that serve as faculty and program managers and two administrative staff. As a group, the CSC has more than seventy years of experience in implementing service-learning programs and in community development and planning.

The key staff members responsible for the implementation of the RARE projects described in this proposal are: Megan Smith, Director, RARE Program and Managing Director, CSC (responsible for overall program direction, training development and staff oversight); Amie Collins, Field Coordinator, RARE Program (responsible for regular, continuing contact and support of field-based members

Narratives

including problem-solving and quick response to member needs); and Julie Foster, Grants Coordinator (responsible for the day-to-day accounting and for coordination with the UO-wide offices, such as ORSA, Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable). Smith, Collins and Foster are the key staff responsible for implementation of RARE. In addition, they are supported by the other four program staff of the CSC and an office manager.

Smith was a member of RARE in its first year (1994-1995) and became the Field Coordinator in the 1995-1996 year. She has had progressively increasing responsibilities, and now serves as the Director of RARE and the Managing Director of the CSC. Smith has a master's degree in Community and Regional Planning. In addition to her 14 years with RARE and other service learning programs, she has four years of experience in community development and natural resources management prior to coming to the UO. Smith is Chair of the Oregon Rural Development Council. She was a panelist at the CNCS sponsored Forum on National Service and Community-based Development, from which policies on national service and rural communities were developed.

Collins was a member of RARE in 2006-2007. She completed her Master of Community and Regional Planning in 2008. Prior to coming graduate school in 2005, Collins worked for four years with non-profit organizations focusing on food systems.

Foster has been on staff at the UO for 13 years. She was an accountant on campus for three years before becoming the grants administrator for CPW, RARE and eventually the umbrella of the CSC. Foster has a BA in Business.

The four additional staff members of the CSC are available for technical assistance to our members in the field. Each has an advanced degree in planning, community development or natural resource

Narratives

management and between four and twenty years of professional work.

Plan for Self-Assessment or Improvement

RARE regularly conducts project evaluation and employs an action research model, which allows for continuous and regular improvement during all of its projects. Built into the action plan are specific management points which include both internal reflection as well as input from our stakeholders and partners.

RARE has had two evaluations in the past five years. In coordination with and support of our partners on campus and across the state, we completed a 5-year strategic plan for RARE in 2005. Our plans include an upcoming, in-depth external evaluation, input from our Board of Advisors and regular compliance reviews with our AmeriCorps program officer

Plan for Effective Technical Assistance

The UO provides significant technical assistance in the areas of program and fiscal management. The staff of the Office of Research Services and Administration (ORSA) is available for all aspects of grant development and management. The Office of Business Affairs provides technical support in contracting, purchasing, and payroll. The Office of Human Resources provides assistance in areas such as benefits (including researching options for our members' health insurance), affirmative action and supporting members with disabilities. In addition to these offices, the Office of the Vice President for Research provides programmatic support.

In terms of training and staff development, the UO has a training program which CSC staff can access,

Narratives

such as Leadership Communication and Supervision. ORSA provides trainings in grant and fiscal management. The Program Director has attended several sessions on grant management. In addition, through the Office of the Vice President for Research, each staff member has a professional development allowance that can be used off campus at appropriate trainings.

Technical support for the sites is provided by the Field Coordinator and the Program Director. In addition, the other CSC staff members are available for technical support to members and to local sponsoring organizations. For example, a member used Global Positioning Systems to identify specific sites for her project. The CSC staff member with technical expertise in this area assisted her with this. In addition to CSC staff, UO faculty members at large provide technical support to RARE communities. For example, the Director of the UO Museum of Natural History, a faculty member in Anthropology, worked with a member in creating an inventory of a Native American site. Last year, a graphic design class at the UO had a competition for the design of a logo and other resources for a city at which a member was placed.

Sound Record of Accomplishments as an Organization

Volunteer Generation and Support

Whether on campus or off, the UO is committed to service learning and volunteerism and this commitment is made clear through its support of a wide array of programs, classes, internships, and student opportunities involving students on campus, in the local community, across the state, and around the world. According to its mission statement, the UO is committed to the "integration of teaching, research, and service as mutually enriching enterprises that together accomplish the university's mission and support its spirit of community (University of Oregon,

Narratives

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~uosenate/UOmissionstatement.html>).

At any given time, hundreds of UO students are engaged in both formal and informal volunteer activities and give generously of their time and knowledge. According to the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO), the 120 programs it supports each year, including community outreach programs, the UO Student Senate, local street fairs, etc., rely on student volunteers for planning, coordination, and support. In addition, each term the ASUO engages 25-30 students in an internship program, designed to foster student activism and promote leadership. Similarly the Greek Life Chapter at the UO reports that students involved in fraternities and sororities contribute close to 6,000 hours of community service each quarter. Students plant trees, organize river clean-ups, work at food banks, etc., and each year host "University Day," a day devoted to campus beautification and celebration. Each term, the UO's OSPiRG Chapter engages 40-50 students per term in voluntary local, state and national environmental campaigns. According to Internship Director Rhonda Smith, approximately 75 unpaid interns participate each year through the PPPM Internship Program, working with a wide variety of organizations, including Food for Lane County, the McKenzie Watershed Council, the National Coalition Against Pesticides or Youth and Family Services.

International students on campus are also engaged in service. Through the International Cultural Service Program, the Participatory Language Experiences Program and the American English Language Institute's Community Interactions, UO's international students serve in local schools, non-profits, and retirement homes. Through these programs, they proved more than 4000 hours in service each year.

The UO Law School's Pro Bono Program, a program designed to introduce law students to the importance of public service while filling a crucial community need for affordable legal assistance. For each of the last four years, this program has received recognition for providing more than 10,600

Narratives

volunteer hours directly to the poor and the agencies that serve the poor.

Finally, each year, the CSC works with 60-70 students (in addition to RARE members) through its service-learning and fellowship opportunities. They provide more than 7000 hours worth of service to community organizations. The University is a member of Oregon Campus Compact.

Organization and Community Leadership

The CSC is the leader in community service on the UO campus. We have provided leadership by sponsoring trainings for faculty in service learning, speaking at regional and national service learning conferences, and publishing in peer reviewed journals. The CSC is the lead outreach organization at the UO. University President Dave Frohnmayer describes the programs of the CSC as the "outposts of the university, demonstrating that this is the University of Oregon, not the University of Eugene" (Eugene is the city the UO is located in).

CSC staff members serve on a variety of campus committees. CSC staff members serve on statewide and regional committees and boards, including the Oregon Rural Development Council, the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association, the Governor's Natural Hazard Mitigation Team, the Cascadia Region Earthquake Workgroup, the McKenzie River Trust, the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils and Partners for Rural America. The CSC has received the national 1000 Points of Light Award, has received a national American Planning Association Award, and has received several awards from the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association.

RARE staff participated in 4CAST, a technical assistance and training program funded by CNCS, which built capacity of national service programs to utilize field-tested practices in recruiting, developing, and

Narratives

supporting participants.

Success in Securing Match Resources

The CSC has been extremely successful in securing match. Since 1994, we have been able to provide a minimum of 50% cash match for the program. We have always had diversified sources, including local, state and federal funding. Over the past fourteen years, we have had eight funding partners, in addition to the communities which each provide cash match. We anticipate that in the upcoming grant cycle we will be able to continue this success. We do note that state resources are decreasing, which means we need to focus more on private foundations. As part of our 2005 strategic plan, we developed a campaign to engage private foundations, working within the UO structure. We have been successful in obtaining our first direct private foundation grant.

Success in Securing Community Support

Collaboration

In 2005, we participated in the development of the Collaboration for Oregon Rural Entrepreneurship (CORE). As a result of that collaboration, the Kellogg Foundation funded CORE as one of five efforts across the country to develop entrepreneurship on the ground, as well as develop systems to support entrepreneurs. CORE has more than fifteen partner organizations. RARE is a key partner in that we have members in each of the local organizations that are part of CORE. Our members are the lead in the on-the-ground delivery of CORE. This collaboration has allowed us to work in a new program area.

Local Contributions

Narratives

AmeriCorps funding is used to support only 25% of our member costs. The other 75% is generated from local communities and state resources. RARE has always received significant cash match from the local communities in which we serve. Each local sponsor is required to provide a cash match. In 1994-1995, that match was \$12,000. It increased to \$15,000 in 1999 and to \$17,000 in 2002. In 2009, it will increase to \$19,000. Each year, more than 40 communities identify the match locally and apply to the program for one of 20 placements. In addition to the cash and supervisory time, the communities provide office space, a computer, a telephone, and any travel costs associated with local travel.

Stakeholders

Our most important community stakeholders are the local sponsors. We have worked with more than 200 local community sponsors over the past fourteen years. Each year, we develop partnership with at least five new local sponsors. Some sponsors come back every few years as they identify new projects that can be assisted by RARE. In addition to the local sponsors, stakeholders include statewide organizations, such as the Association of Oregon Counties, the League of Oregon Cities, the Oregon Rural Development Council, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, and Rural Development Initiatives; representatives of state and federal agencies, such as Oregon Economic and Community Development and US Department of Agriculture Rural Development; the Ford Family Foundation; and multi-county organizations within the state, such as councils of government and economic development districts.

Special Circumstances

RARE focuses on resource-poor communities that are remote and rural. We plan to serve communities

Narratives

that have been placed on Oregon Economic and Community Development Department's Distressed Communities list and are rural, based on Beale codes. We also focus on communities that have been impacted by changes in the management of federal lands by the US Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Cost Effectiveness

Our CNCS cost per member service year (MSY) is \$7497, which is 59% of state maximum of \$12,600 cost per member.

Diverse Non-Federal Support

Each local community sponsor provides \$19,000 in cash match in order to host a member. This results in \$400,000 in non-federal cash match. We receive private foundation funding from the Kellogg Foundation as part of CORE. We receive funding from the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department. For the next three years we will receive funding from a private foundation, which is matched by UO funds required by the foundation. Additionally, the UO provides significant in-kind match through indirect cost recovery. This allows us to match member costs at a 75% rate. One of RARE's greatest strengths is its ability to leverage CNCS funds at a high level, making us a low risk program with a very high rate of return on investment.

As mentioned above, the CNCS support for RARE is relatively minimal in terms of the percentage of funds. Our ability to have the impact on rural Oregon with the small amount of federal funds says much about our sustainability and cost effectiveness.

Narratives

Budget Adequacy

Through the knowledge and skills the CSC has gained in administering RARE over the past fourteen years, we are certain the budget is adequate to meet the needs. The Program Director and Field Coordinator, provide 1.5 FTE for the program, which is perfect for a program with 20 members across the state. While the grants administrator and office manager salaries are largely supported through UO funds and indirect cost return on grants they bring an additional .45 FTE to RARE.

Our focus on rural communities and our extensive site support model requires significant travel costs. Because of the distances in our state (some of our placements can be 500 miles from the main office), travel costs are a significant portion of our program costs. We support part of the costs for members to interview in the communities prior to placement. We pay staff travel to do site visits with communities that apply to the program (usually there are at least five to ten new communities we must visit). These travel costs are needed to ensure successful matches at the beginning. We also must pay for travel to ensure staff support throughout the year and training opportunities for members.

For the following reasons, the stipend for a member is higher than in other programs operating in Oregon. RARE is based on a professional corps model. In order to place highly skilled members in underserved rural communities we must provide a higher stipend. In addition to required skills, the cost of living for an individual in rural areas is higher than in an urban setting for an individual (e.g., there is little if any opportunity for shared housing, members are required to have a vehicle because of limited public transportation). Both the high travel costs and the higher stipend are a result of serving the rural, remote communities.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Patricia Bollin, AmeriCorps Program Officer for the State of Oregon, conducted an evaluation of our program for 2006-2007. An electronic copy will be sent to the Corporation.

Narratives

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

AmeriCorps Identity

The RARE AmeriCorps Program instills AmeriCorps identity in a variety of ways. First, through providing members with AmeriCorps gear, including vest, water bottle, stickers, patches, pins and signage, which they are required to display at their service location. In addition, we ask them to put AmeriCorps in their e-mail signature and on any large documents they produce.

RARE AmeriCorps members participate in AmeriCorps statewide events, such as Kick Off and the Northwest Service Symposium. Each member is required to participate in two national days of service. Members recite the pledge at orientation and at Kick Off.

Criminal Background Checks

The University of Oregon acknowledges the changes required by the Serve America Act and that all three components (NSOPR, state registry and FBI) of the background check are being administered for all required staff and members.

Hazard Performance Measurement

We requested an expansion of two education award only slots to support two positions specifically related to hazard mitigation. Because we will not be receiving those slots, we are removing the hazard mitigation specific performance measure.

Budget Clarification Items:

Narratives

1. Fringe benefits are set by the Oregon University System (on behalf of the University of Oregon) in collaboration with appropriate unions. Benefits are calculated as below:

The Fixed amounts are:

*Insurance: Insurance coverage is applicable to any employee at an Appointment of 50% or greater. For Unclassified, the insurance amount remains the same between 50 to 100% FTE. (Note: although the employee may "opt-out" of insurance coverage, the employer must still pay insurance for every eligible employee.)

For Classified, the insurance coverage is pro-rated between 50 to 99%. (See OPEU Contract, Article 24)

*Employee Relations Board: The ERB charge is to any classified employee (permanent or temporary). It is the same amount per month, regardless of Appt%.

The Variable amount comprises the remainder of fringe. These amounts vary because they are percentages of the employee's income or based on hours worked per month.

*Retirement is taken for most full-time employees after 6 months of full-time work and is based on all taxable income (including opt-out return). (If you have any questions about an employee's retirement eligibility, contact the retirement specialist in Payroll).

*Social Security, Medicare, Mass Transit are based on the employee's taxable income.

*Unemployment is based on gross salary (opt-out not included)

Narratives

*Workers Comp is based only on working hours (not vacation, sick pay, etc.)

2. Mileage rate is indeed 50 cents per mile. Adjustments were made to the calculations increasing the amount requested for lodging and decreasing the amount requested for mileage. Total amount request for line item remains the same.

3. Field Support communications are based on approximate monthly costs of \$25 for postage, \$60 for long distance and \$125 for printing/photocopying for 12 months.

4. All staff members working in the RARE program are required to have background checks and NSOPR checks, as verified by Oregon Volunteers at their annual site visit. Because these checks have already been accomplished for existing staff, they are not included in the budget -- no costs to be incurred. Should new staff be brought on, background checks are built into the budget under Section I: Other Program Costs

Continuation Changes

Year 3 Changes

Site Locations

Site locations will be determined in May following site application review and site visits.

Expansion Request

The Resource Assistance for Rural Environments Program at the University of Oregon (UO) is proposing to add an additional two members to the program for 2011-2012 to specifically address hazard mitigation in rural portions of the state. We propose that the member start date be September 1, 2011, to coincide with the start date of the other members of our program to ensure esprit de corps and

Narratives

that all members receive orientation and training. Members will complete their service by July 31, 2011.

Program support will continue to be provided by existing RARE staff and by the staff of the Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience (OPDR), Josh Bruce, Megan Findley and Michael Howard.

The two members will be implementing projects that were identified in a 2008 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan that was produced by a former RARE member. The geographic focus of the efforts will be in Clackamas, Hood River, Wasco, Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler, Morrow and Umatilla counties. Following the development of the plan, the counties agreed that a collaborative approach to implementation would work best.

Counties want, and need, to collaborate. Counties in the Mid-Columbia Gorge approached OPDR for help in creating collaborative strategies to implement hazard mitigation plans. The counties recognize the reality of limited human and financial resources and the need to work together to successfully overcome these barriers to implement their mitigation plans.

Collaboration allows for maximum use of limited resources. Scarcity of information, money, staff time, and expertise is a significant obstacle to implementing hazard plans and projects. By working together, counties can maximize the use of the region's resources and establish and sustain an effective disaster program. The counties have identified similar mitigation strategies, and it will be more efficient to address them together.

Disasters often affect multiple counties in the region. Natural disasters can disrupt transportation and economic systems at multiple levels, affecting not just one county but an entire region. In a disaster, neighboring counties become a vital resource for one another. Coordinating efforts means individual

Narratives

counties have the resources they need to be adequately prepared to assist each other in an emergency.

The types of projects to be implemented vary, but include things such as developing a defensible space education program to minimize fire damage, coordinating a collaborate effort to keep trees cut back to minimize electricity loss during a wind storm, and helping a community adopt design standards that minimize flooding.

Budget Changes

We have made minor budget changes based on a review of our travel costs (lower than anticipated due to multiple site visits completed on one trip) and anticipated salary increases for staff.

Cost per MSY

The cost per MSY will decrease from \$7497 to \$6942.

Enrollment

Our enrollment rate is 100% and we receive four applications for each placement.

Retention

Overall, our retention rate last year was 85%.

Last year, two second year members received job offers from their placement sites during the year. Although we discussed this in depth with both the members and the sites before the year started, and they assured us they were ready for the 11 month commitment, they decided to leave the program and forfeit their education award. We will continue to emphasize with all parties that they must commit to the full 11 months.

Narratives

A community broke their contract with RARE due to financial issues. We worked with the member to identify a new site that was suitable for his needs, but were unable to find one that worked. He received his prorated education award.

Other Changes

We have added a Performance Measure to address disaster services. We have removed the Performance Measure addressing entrepreneurship as our five year partnership on that project has ended.

Year 2 Changes

The Resource Assistance for Rural Environments Program at the University of Oregon (UO) is proposing to maintain its five ARRA funded members for 2010-2011 to specifically address food security in the rural portions of the state. We propose that the member start date be September 15, 2010, to coincide with the start date of the other members of our program to ensure esprit de corps and that all members receive orientation and training. Members will complete their service by August 15, 2011. Maintaining the ARRA members will bring the program to a total of 25 members.

Program support will continue to be provided by existing RARE staff and Sharon Thornberry, Community Resource Developer with Oregon Food Bank (OFB).

Five of the members will be doing work similar to what the current ARRA members are doing; conducting community food assessments, organizing one related event, and serving as the liaison to the local regional food bank. All will be placed in rural Oregon.

Narratives

The need for this work remains, and it meets the original ARRA design and need. Since our original ARRA submission, food insecurity has increased. OFB reports that distribution of emergency food boxes increased 14% from 792,000 in 2007-08 to 897,000 in 2008-09 -- an increase of 105,000 additional emergency food boxes. Oregon's unemployment rate continues to rise, reaching 11.5% in September 2009, nearly two points above the national unemployment rate (9.8%).

To date, our ARRA placements have met or exceeded all benchmarks. We have been 100% successful on both recruitment and retention to date. In fact, the five ARRA positions were among the most desirable of all of our positions. In cooperation with OFB we have provided one specific training and will provide another one in two weeks. In addition to the RARE ARRA members, from the Red Cross' ARRA Program as well as a VISTA program are also attending. In addition, we developed a web-based tool for the members (including those with the Red Cross program and VISTA) and RARE and OFB staff to communicate. This new partnership with between OFB and the national service community is proving to be extremely beneficial (e.g., through this partnership OFB staff presented at the Civic Engagement conference).

The CNCS cost per member service year (MSY) will increase minimally, from our current grant, \$7,463 to \$7,497, due to anticipated increases in travel costs.

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - None
 Geographic Focus - Urban
 Geographic Focus - Rural
 Encore Program

Priority Areas

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 0

Service Categories

Other Community and Economic Development Primary Secondary

Community Resources

Service Category: Other Community and Economic Development

Measure Category: Needs and Service Activities

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Members will develop unique resource tools, such as marketing materials, databases, grant applications, websites or maps and plans to be a sustainable resource for the community.

Results

Result: Output

RARE members will each develop two new resources or plans for their communities for a total of 50.

Indicator: Deliverables

Target: 50 deliverables

Target Value: 50

Instruments: Member reports

PM Statement: Rural communities are at a disadvantage because they have limited professional infrastructure and resources to address economic and community development issues. Members will develop unique resources, such as marketing materials, databases, websites or plans, to be a sustainable resource for the community. Each member will develop two resources, for a total of 50, as reported by members.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

More rural communities will have an increased capacity to address critical needs in areas such as downtown development, food security and green space.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Indicator: Number of plans implemented.

Target: Twelve months after the end of the member's service in their community, community

supervisors will report that the plans developed by the member will be being implemented.

Target Value: 10

Instruments: Survey of supervisors.

PM Statement: Rural communities are at a disadvantage because they have limited professional infrastructure and resources to address economic and community development issues. Members will develop unique resources, such as marketing materials, databases, websites or plans, to be a sustainable resource for the community. One year after member's service in their community, supervisors will report that the plans developed by members are being implemented in the community.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Increased Civic Responsibility

Service Category: Other Community and Economic Development

Measure Category: Participant Development

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Members will show increased understanding of government and non-profit issues which they demonstrate in their post service activities. Members will be either be pursuing education or professionally engaged in public service or non-profit sector work in the year following their AmeriCorps service.

Results

Result: Output

All 25 members will receive training in civic engagement.

Indicator: Members trained

Target: Number of members trained.

Target Value: 25

Instruments: Training agenda and attendance record

PM Statement: As the generation born between 1946 and 1964 begins to retire, professionals in the government and non-profit sections will be needed in the future. Creating a cadre of these professionals is critical at this time. Therefore, RARE members will receive training in civic engagement and will gain a working knowledge of federal, state and local government as well as non-profit organizations.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Members will have a working knowledge of federal, state, and local government as well as nonprofit organizations.

Indicator: Members with a working knowledge of federal, state and local government as well as

Target: # of members with working knowledge

Target Value: 25

Instruments: Pre and post survey of members.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

nonprofit organizations.

PM Statement: As the generation born between 1946 and 1964 begins to retire, professionals in the government and non-profit sections will be needed in the future. Creating a cadre of these professionals is critical at this time. Therefore, RARE members will receive training in civic engagement and will gain a working knowledge of federal, state and local government as well as non-profit organizations. After their service, 25 members will have this working knowledge as indicated by pre and post service surveys.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: End Outcome

Following their service through RARE, members will be engaged in public or nonprofit work or will be studying those fields in graduate school.

Indicator: Members

Target: # of members indicating they are in graduate school or employed in the public or nonprofit sectors

Target Value: 25

Instruments: Member interview

PM Statement: As the generation born between 1946 and 1964 begins to retire, professionals in the government and non-profit sections will be needed in the future. Creating a cadre of these professionals is critical at this time. Therefore, RARE members will receive training in civic engagement and will gain a working knowledge of federal, state and local government as well as non-profit organizations. RARE members will have opportunities to explore careers in these areas. After their service, 25 members will report they are either in school to study or professionally involved in the government or non-profit sector.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Already on File at CNCS

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable