

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Blackfeet Tribe, Blackfeet AmeriCorp Project	Application ID: 11TN126058

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: The applicant clearly demonstrates that this community is in grave need and could benefit from key services and systematic change. Simply, the poverty rate of 34% coupled with the unemployment rate of 65% creates an extreme burden on this community. Additionally, over 50% of the housing on the reservation is low rent with potential overcrowding in a majority of the units. However, the applicant failed to adequately describe how this need was chosen. Even more confusing is that the applicant affirms that housing conditions and preventive maintenance is an enormous hardship on the reservation, but provided limited information on why they are choosing to dedicate 70% of their efforts to merely landscaping. Although the reservation’s economy centers on agriculture, there is no alignment with how this ties back to the economy or housing need. The applicant does briefly describe how they plan to recruit local housing authority tenants to provide services. There is no evidence that these members can or will effectively begin the process of solving the reservation’s identified needs in the proposal. Potential members from the community on or off the reservation may diversify and enhance this movement. Furthermore, the program design and recruitment plan needs more diverse members to intensify a broader approach. No data was presented to support the notion that recruiting solely from housing authority tenants documents their understanding of the problem versus a job opportunity. With a limited recruitment plan and moderate outcomes of the three year grant period, this proposal lacks indicators that outline adequate success. Community partners and stakeholders will not have enough of an impact on the program or members to designate this as a worthwhile service term. The evaluation plan includes both internal and external evaluators which includes mid- and end- of-the-year evaluations. Specifically for this population, the inclusion of qualitative focus groups will be highly effective combined with three year quantitative data. Nonetheless, this proposal lacked strong links to diverse partners and specific outcome measures for proposed goals such as landscaping or housing maintenance which limits the compelling factor of this proposal.

COMMENTS: Unemployment rates of 65% and a 34% poverty rate document a compelling need for improvement of living condition, well-being and economic development in the defined targeted community. A plan to draw members from the Blackfoot Housing Authority tenants is directed to members taking a long term pride in their community. This is designed to make them aware of the need of the project and more able to solve the problem. It is very unclear how the impact of the project will be measured to determine the impact

upon the targeted community.

COMMENTS: The applicant presents a compelling description of the severity of homelessness in the target area, contributing to high rates of domestic violence, increased alcoholism, high dropout rates, child abuse problems, low educational achievement, teenage marriages, and crime. The plan for recruiting volunteers is clear and strong. The training plan seems effective, conducive to appropriate member development, and provides well-designed activities that promote an ethic of service and civic responsibility. The applicant's plan for providing supervision to members is unclear, and a detailed plan for supervisor selection.

COMMENTS: While the orientation plan includes training from professionals in the community, the applicant failed to provide adequate details in the plan including length and occurrence of training. The proposed recruitment plan will recruit members from within the low-income housing area but the applicant fails to provide sufficient data that there are enough qualified individuals with the criteria that they are requiring (associates degree and one year experience in landscaping, construction, human services, etc) in the housing area to be recruited for this project. There is no evidence provided that would indicate continued engagement after the term of service; therefore it is questionable what impact the program would have on the members and the community. The applicant uses AmeriCorps member and volunteer interchangeably and therefore it is unclear if the applicant will be recruiting volunteers. It appears that the applicant is engaging AmeriCorps members because they do not have other funds to hire the individuals and provides no evidence that this would be the most effective way to solve the community problems. The problems of high poverty and overcrowding of housing are not linked with the member duties. It appears that the members would be used to work on landscaping and cleanup projects that encourage beautification in the community which does not tie into the lack of housing units available. The outcomes do not match with the community needs stated and it is unclear if this program could be sustained after the grant funding has ended.

COMMENTS: The applicant presents highly compelling needs that are clearly integrated with specific program activities. Recruitment and orientation processes are well-defined to select members from the targeted population; however, the applicant has no clear plan to recruit from outside the targeted community. The unique involvement of members in both the planning and execution of sustainable improvements in their own communities is well-designed to provide a lasting understanding of the benefits of service. The inclusion of members in evaluation and other recognition activities provides a strong link between service activities and Tribal values. The applicant clearly links the lack of resources for resolving problems with specific activities that are well-planned for member success. Training and supervision plans have been well-developed with Tribal, professional and community partners and experts.