

**APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design**

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

<b>Legal Applicant:</b> <b>Partners for Community Development, Partners Energy Conservation Corps</b>	<b>Application ID:</b> <b>11AC122961</b>
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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:** The applicant presents what appears to be an excellent opportunity for AmeriCorps members in that it targets disadvantaged youth and provides them with a comprehensive training opportunity, both classroom and practical, with knowledgeable teachers and mentors. It also provides them with highly valuable skills and knowledge that should take them well into the future. It also provides them an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the improvement of their own communities through the efforts of their labor, and provides the cost-saving conservation information they will be able to share with their neighbors. The anticipated outcomes described by the applicant are realistic in that they are based on past experience.

**COMMENTS:** (+) The applicant addressed the need for more weatherization programs to address the increased need of energy assistance from residents. The applicant proposes to recruit disadvantaged residents and laid-off blue collar workers from relevant fields to participate as members in the program. Training will be provided that will provide members with the skills to continue in a career beyond their term with AmeriCorps. (-) Tools that are used to measure the efficacy of weatherization programs are already available. The applicant quoted annual savings of 20% to 30% in energy costs after weatherization. This outcome is based on historical data. The applicant did not provide details on the intended outcome target for this program. The benefit to members appeared to be a key theme. Providing an outcome measure, rather than outputs, would also make for relevant measure to track the intended results of Members receiving training and being engaged in the program.

**COMMENTS:** The community needs addressed by the applicant are compelling and well-documented. The applicant referenced information presented by the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program in 2010 that shows 9,160 individuals applied for and received energy assistance in their target communities. Members' roles are well-defined and compatible with the program design. According to the applicant, AmeriCorps members will provide 13,600 hours of service to their community. The applicant presents a well-rounded training plan for members that incorporates a 5-day boot camp and certified training needed to effectively

implement weatherization in the field. The plan for recruiting and managing volunteers is clear and strong because each member is required to recruit (2) volunteers and to instruct them on the basics of energy conservation. The training plan develops and trains the members and is effective. The applicant states that each of the households that benefit from the program will see a dramatic reduction in their energy consumption. The applicant has an innovative approach to service, but additional details were not provided related to specific outcomes.

**COMMENTS:** (+) The applicant clearly explained that hiring AmeriCorps members from the local area to be trained in weatherization activities is a highly effective means of providing low-income homes with lower energy bills. The applicant clearly linked the two goals of lower energy bills and job training needs. The applicant demonstrated through current data why weatherization services are needed in Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Ozaukee Counties and clearly explained how low-income households would qualify for weatherization services. (+) Members will receive 100 hours of pre-service training before starting the hands-on portion of service activities. The applicant has partnered with many local agencies including the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation to design and implement this training. Thus, it is highly likely that members will have sufficient knowledge to complete weatherization activities. (+) The applicant clearly identified who was going to supervise members and explained that these supervisors would receive management and ethical training. Thus, it is likely that AmeriCorps members will be appropriately supervised. (+) The applicant clearly described the NEAT tool, which measures the level of energy savings attributable to member work. (+) The applicant described a comprehensive plan that explained that members will be recruited locally in partnership with job training centers and local high schools. This will provide local youth an opportunity to receive training for a green collar career. (+/-) Members participate in a citizen training program and the applicant provided an overall description of the topics that the program would cover. The applicant also stated that members would be encouraged to actively participate in their community, to develop civic responsibility, and presents them with opportunities for participation, but did not provide enough information on how this would be accomplished. (+/-) While the applicant described how educating volunteers on energy efficiency could lead to lower rates of consumption, the applicant did not provide quantifiable data that demonstrates lower rates of consumption for past programmatic years.

**COMMENTS:** The applicant demonstrates the need for weatherization services in the targeted community including information that 9,160 individuals applied for energy assistance in 2010. They cite current statistics such as 4,689 households had not been weatherized prior to the 2009-2010 heating season and were eligible for the services; however, Partners had limited funding and could only support 587 households. The applicant provided information on income levels and that 49% of Second Harvest Food Bank's clients have to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities. When defining the problem, the applicant clearly provides evidence that the problem of weatherization for low-income families is an ever increasing issue. In the near future, unemployment rates in the targeted community show little change, making the need for home energy assistance and weatherization services critical. The applicant focuses on diversity and recruiting locally by reaching out to local Hispanic and Hmong associations and also local construction, factory and other blue collar businesses for recently laid-off or unemployed individuals. Further, they recruited through outreach to local high schools. These schools have construction training programs where economically disadvantaged students learn basic science principles and construction skills. The applicant clearly demonstrates that the

goal of this program is to engage unemployed and economically disadvantaged families and provide the tools and resources necessary to bring them back into the workforce. The need for weatherization is increasing due to current economic conditions. This program provides individuals with a new career path while providing free weatherization services to low-income families in the targeted community. The "think local" message is very clear in this application. Although the applicant provides information on reporting outcomes through measured annual energy usage reductions of AmeriCorps weatherization services and the National Energy Audit Tool, they lack sufficient evidence to demonstrate the impacts of these activities on the community. For example, they have been using AmeriCorps members since 2006—however, historical data to demonstrate the measurable outcomes of their programs is not provided.