

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Great Basin Institute, Nevada Conservation Corps AmeriCorps Program	Application ID: 11AC124520
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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 problem to be addressed is energy and environmental stewardship in Nevada. The applicant describes the need for renewable energy in Nevada and cites statistics related to these needs and quotes the director of the Bureau of Land Management. The applicant also discusses need for clean energy demonstration projects and lists several examples of projects that are underway, including the Carson City Greenhouse project. +In addition the applicant includes a detailed discussion of environmental issues to be addressed that include endangered forests, invasive weed threats, and undamaged recreational trails. +The applicant draws a clear picture of how these issues relate the state of Nevada and the importance of these issues in the community. +The recruitment plan includes both on-line advertisements as well as recruitment through veteran organizations and through university outlets. +The applicant has strategies for both crew placements and intern placements and is committed to diversity. That commitment to diversity is evidenced by recruiting through a broad range of websites as well as organizing inclusive community events. +The applicant has developed a weeklong pre-service orientation for team members as well as training on technical issues such as clean energy practices. +The internship program is described in detail with internships that are in such areas as environmental outreach or community support and the responsibilities of those interns are included. +The applicant provides a week-long Leadership Academy. +The applicant identifies the supervisory positions and also indicates that the supervisor of the veteran team is a trained veteran advocate. -More detail could have been included on how supervisors are selected and trained. -The description of member supervision is limited. -The applicant does not include a plan for structured opportunities for Corps members and interns to reflect and learn from their service to promote a life-long ethic of service and civic responsibility. While Corps members and interns will receive training in technical skills such as trail construction, arid land restoration, grant writing and environmental interpretation, no provision is delineated for structured opportunities for reflection on service. +Throughout the narrative, the applicant provides an explanation of the projects that address the energy issues and environmental issues that the applicant identifies as the problem. -It is somewhat unclear what activities are already underway and are designed for other groups, e.g. alternative spring break for college students and which are the responsibility of the AmeriCorps team members. +The applicant includes the number of Corps members and interns that will be hired and describes how those positions will fulfill the seasonal project timeline. Some of the positions will be half-time, some quarter-time, and some limited to the summer, while 36 members will be full-time. +The applicant indicates that the team members will be placed with such agencies as the US Forest Service, the

BLM, and other governmental agencies but does not link specific projects with the agency placements. -The applicant does not provide a clear description of the overall change to be seen by the end of the three-year grant period. (+) Throughout the narrative the applicant describes the role of volunteers and volunteer recruitment and has engaged more than 3,400 volunteers from 2007-2009. The applicant describes the various ways a diverse volunteer base is recruiting through field studies, school outreach and collaboration. +The applicant has cultivated relationships with such partners as US Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service and developed projects through these partnerships. The application provides a detailed listing of community collaborative partners such as Nevada Econet, Truckee River Flood Project, and the Washoe County Schools. +The applicant provides limited information about its sustainability efforts. The sustainability section focuses primarily on the role of AmeriCorps members in enabling the applicant to carry out projects rather than focusing on how the projects can be sustained in the future. +Throughout the narrative, the applicant clearly states various facets of the problem of environmental conservation and renewable energy and relates how the solution can be carried out by AmeriCorps members both as part of the member teams and through internships. +The applicant stresses that AmeriCorps is key in carrying out conservation and restoration work in terms of protecting wildlife and public lands. + The role of volunteers is included in the project implementation and the applicant has a track record of volunteer recruitment. +The overall project plan is sound, the training to be provided is appropriate for the work plan, and links to the problem to be addressed are strong.

COMMENTS: (+) The applicant presents the case for increased need for national service in Nevada by stating the vast open spaces are under increasing duress from drought, invasive species, flooding, fire, and unmanaged recreation. In the last federal budget cycle, agencies responsible for forestry, conservation, research and education suffered significant cuts. The statement also reflects an unmet service need. (+) The applicant presents a compelling case that there is an increase in support service needs from other state agencies that depend on them for services. (-) The applicant states the problem in both national and state terms without providing, reports or citing research sources to support details of the claim.(-) The applicant makes the compelling statement about reductions in budgetary resources, program cuts and eliminations and the unprecedented need for volunteerism. They also cite an ongoing demand for support services will continue, but provides no specific examples or cited reference to quantify or substantiate the claim.(+) The applicant offers a summer service-learning program, Great Basin Naturalists, which engages high school students in conservation through science education and service projects. (+) The applicant's recruitment plan is clear and strong as evidenced by its recruitment, training and development program. The recruitment efforts reflect outreach to diversity in the community. (+) The applicant program design is detailed and reflects a comprehensive staffing structure in key areas of administration, project and program management, supervisory, training and grant administrative and fiscal management. (+) The applicant's plan for internal and external evaluation, as evidenced in their statement, provides a self-assessment focused on their performance in the following areas: Purpose and Activities; Organization and Management; Program Design; Corps member Development; Work Experience and Service Projects; and Evidence of Success. In addition to this evaluation program, the NCC will continue to undergo an annual external evaluation of its program facilitated by the University of Nevada, Reno's Center for Program Evaluation.

COMMENTS: (+) The applicant presents a well-documented need with in the target community. The

applicant provides evidence that the recent budget for agencies responsible for forestry, conservation, research and education have received significant cuts and participants in the program will help fill the gap. The demonstrated needs related to renewable energy, energy conservation, endangered forests, invasive plants, unmanaged recreational trails, wilderness areas and flooding were well presented and provided evidence of a demonstrated need that will be addressed by the program. (+) The applicant outlines a plan to recruit members from diverse backgrounds by using both online and community based recruitment strategies focusing on selecting members that reflect national demographics. (+) The training plan is comprehensive and includes a weeklong pre-service orientation program as well as additional training in first aid, chainsaw skills and arid land restoration. Local site supervisors will also make on-going training opportunities such as volunteer management, grant writing, environmental interpretation as well as monitoring and assessment protocol available to members. A mid-service weeklong leadership academy will also be provided. (+) The applicant also outlines plans to include high school students in the program through Summer of Service initiatives. (+) The applicant provides both team based and individual service opportunities to participants, which address the identified need in a well-rounded way. The program will allow participants to work on projects throughout the state addressing the identified need in a way that would not be possible by any other means. (+) The applicant also outlines member slot needs based on the seasonal demands of the southern and northern part of the state. (+) The applicant outlines measureable outputs and outcomes they expect to achieve which include environmental restoration, clean, energy, land health assessment, member development and capacity building. Within each of the areas, specific targets have been specified and appear to be in line with member service activities. Outputs and Outcomes will be tracked using weekly reports, audits, classroom forms and the overall service experience will be captured in a final report. (+) The applicant outlines a comprehensive plan to recruit and engage volunteers from diverse groups such as K-12 students, corporations, families and at-risk youth to support the work of the program as well as participating in many national days of service. (+) Program objectives were based on multi-agency needs and a cross section of community organizations are involved in the planning and implementation of the program. Feedback from stakeholders will be collected in the form of project evaluations and will be used to revise approaches, trainings and systems to better meet the needs of the target communities. (-) The applicant does not outline how they will address life after AmeriCorps issues or specifically mention how they will help members connect service experiences with the lifelong pursuit of civic engagement.

COMMENTS: (+) The singular problem of managing Nevada's public land is complicated by the multi-faceted description of Nevada's energy and environmental stewardship needs. Included among these problems are assessment of range conditions, energy conservation in public and private structures, providing volunteers in programs that have received funding cuts or have been completely eliminated, deployment of crews for hazardous fuels reduction across the state; identify, monitor and control exotic plants throughout the state and support for trail construction and maintenance. (+) The applicant has partnered or is working in concert with several local, state and federal agencies including the Bureau of Land Management, Clean Energy Corps, Humboldt County, Great Basin National Park, Nevada State Parks, the US Forest Service, Washoe County, the National Science Foundation, Veterans Green Corps and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. (+) The applicant has a recruitment plan designed to draw from a diverse and all inclusive pool of eligible candidates to include veterans. The program is designed to address crew placement as well as internship placements. Crew placement will be based on skills, experience, and desire to perform environmental as well as community service. The Internship program will focus on college students and graduates with an environmental or educational background and applicants with experience in the same

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fields. (+) Prior programs in environmental restoration, capacity building and volunteer recruitment have demonstrated the success of providing members a fulfilling service experience. For several years the applicant has exceeded original goals leading to the setting of even higher standards. All of these programs have attributed to the measured success and ensuring the sustainability of each. (+) The state has, at the rate of 87%, the highest public owned land in the country and with federal and state budget deficits it is not able to initiate or maintain the level of conservation necessary to promote adequate management of these areas. This initiative achieves goals that include environmental restoration, clean energy initiatives and land health assessments, while at the same time placing AmeriCorps members and other volunteers in engaging and self-fulfilling work opportunities.