

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

FY2012 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

<b>Legal Applicant Name:</b> City Year, Inc.	<b>Application ID:</b> 12AC133395
<b>Program Name:</b> City Year Louisiana	

*For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. This feedback is provided on a restricted basis and cannot be shared or distributed outside of your organization. We hope you will find this information helpful in completing applications to our future grant competitions. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of your application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory.*

### **Reviewers' Summary Comments:**

- This is a solid proposal. The applicant clearly links the four major elements of the program together. The applicant starts by identifying strong needs such as poor skill development in lower grades that feeds up to the high schools where one out of every two students is not likely to graduate. Ten schools to be served under this proposal fall below the state and district averages, and are Academically Unacceptable or on Academic Watch. Interventions have been planned to use AmeriCorps members to use an Early Warning Indicators approach to identify struggling and at-risk students, provide these students with the right interventions in tutoring and mentoring, and improve their academic engagement and performance. Interventions will also provide opportunities for families and community members to become engaged in the schools. Full-time AmeriCorps members will be a good match for the program as they will be selected using a program Candidate Profile, which includes a standardized rubric that ranks key characteristics around capacity to serve and frame of mind on a five point scale. After recruitment, the Members will have appropriate orientation and training to ensure they are well-suited to deliver the intervention.
- Anticipated outcomes are directly linked to the identified needs and planned interventions. For example, each year 1,025 targeted students will be enrolled in academic programs and served by AmeriCorps members. Of those enrolled, 703 will complete the minimum hours for program completion (15 hours for those receiving tutoring and/or eight weeks of consistent attendance and behavior support). The overall change will be that at the end of three years, the program will lower the number of students at high risk to drop out of high school by improving student performance in one or more of the Early Warning Indicators for at least 1,200 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Overall the applicant presents a strong program. The applicant presents a community need to provide after-school tutoring to students in grades 4 through 9 to improve attendance, behavior and academic scores. The applicant fails to present a clear view of how this need is a severe community need as no data are provided to support concerns in the community such as a high poverty. The target community appears to have been effectively involved in the planning of this program as it provided the applicant with key statistics regarding literacy and math scores, which highlight the need for improvement with math and reading. The AmeriCorps Members will be a cost-effective way to add value to the program and provide "near peers" to support the students to be served. The applicant will recruit 115 full-time Members to deliver a very low student to teacher ratio which is a successful best practice. Proposed activities for the program include RTI and the Whole School Whole Child Model which are both evidence-based approaches for interventions. The strong recruitment plan

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includes an applicant pool which will include Members from a diverse population to help students assimilate with their mentors. The Member's training plan includes 340 hours of training devoted to specific instruction such as basic knowledge of AmeriCorps, CPR, diversity awareness, and literacy training to heighten Member's skills to support the success for the program. The applicant has a past history with the identified program and has experienced success with the model.

- The applicant describes deficiencies in reading and the potential for dropping out of school well. The applicant describes the 10 to 15 Members that will serve in 10 public schools. The Members will be providing mentorship in after-school programs and lunch programs focusing on attendance, behavior and math. The applicant states that AmeriCorps members are uniquely qualified to provide consistent daily interactions. The AmeriCorps members will have the AmeriCorps logos on uniforms, name tags, business cards, recruitment material, websites, and signs where AmeriCorps members work. The applicant describes its recruitment goals by education level and ethnicity. The applicant will utilize the RTI intervention and describes previous success rates of 86% with 3<sup>rd</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The applicant has deadlines for collecting baseline data for mid-year and end of year. The applicant successfully links the need to reduce proficiency scores to its interaction of programs focusing on attendance, behavior and math to how AmeriCorps members are uniquely qualified to help through consistent interaction to the goal of improving academic performance.
- The applicant identifies the need to provide in-school and after-school tutoring and mentoring to 3<sup>rd</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> graders who are at risk for dropping out of school in four schools in the targeted area of New Orleans and East Baton Rouge. The applicant utilizes research that gives key 'off track' indicators that predict student drop out as early as 6<sup>th</sup> grade; these indicators are student performance, behaviors, and course performance in math and English.
- The applicant describes how the activities listed will have a direct impact on the identified need of reducing the rate of dropouts. By utilizing the indicators from the EWI, the Member develops activities surrounding attendance, behaviors and math and reading.
- Although the applicant has a projected target number to help 1,200 students improve in attendance, behavior and English and math, it is not clear if the program identified will meet that goal. There is not enough evidence based data to support that projection.
- The applicant provided clear information about the need, design and outcome of the project it intends to employ. It has designed a program that appropriately utilizes the AmeriCorps members and will engage students to improve specific measures. The choice of assessment tools and the use of summative and formative data to measure outcomes help make this a strong application. Overall, this is a strong application.