

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

FY2012 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

<b>Legal Applicant Name: City Year, Inc.</b>	<b>Application ID: 12AC133397</b>
<b>Program Name: City Year Orlando</b>	

*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:**

- Overall this is a very sound program. The applicant provides strong evidence of need for Florida's Orange County Public School students who are enrolled in Evans and Oak Ridge High Schools and five middle schools (from which a majority of Evans and Oak Ridge generate). All of these schools are Title I eligible and have student populations with 84% - 98% student minorities, 19% - 51% limited English proficiency, and 79% - 95% eligible for free or reduced lunch. Math and English tests scores for the targeted schools are significantly low. In addition, in 2010-11, only 23% of 1,900 students at Evans and 22% of 1,800 students at Oak Ridge tested Proficient or Advanced (Level 3 or Higher) in Literacy/ELA on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).
- The interventions have been planned 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. The 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 picked 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. The overall change for the program is that at the end of three years, City Year Orlando 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 450 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. The program has the following goals to be achieved by June 30, 2015: increase the percentage of students performing at Level 3 or Higher on the FCAT in Reading from 67% to 77%; decrease the achievement gap in the areas of reading and math for each identified subgroup by 10%; and increase the graduation rate to 90%.
- Overall the applicant presents a strong program. The applicant presents a community need to provide after school tutoring to students in grades 6-9 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. AmeriCorps Members will be a

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cost-effective way to add value to the program and provide "near peers" to support the students to be served. The applicant will recruit 50 full-time members to deliver a very low student to teacher ratio, which is a very successful best practice. Proposed activities for the program include RTI and the Whole School Whole Child Model; both are evidence-based approaches for interventions. The strong recruitment plan 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 describes deficiencies in reading and the potential for dropping out of school well. The applicant describes the 50 members who will serve in five public schools and provide mentorship in afterschool programs and lunch programs focusing on attendance, behavior, English 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. There will be site-wide events and service events. The applicant has recruitment goals based on education levels and race/ethnic category. 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, English and math to how AmeriCorps members are uniquely qualified to help to the goal of improving academic performance.
- The applicant presents evidence that supports the need for in-school/afterschool tutoring and mentoring to 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students who are at risk to dropping out of school. Low performance results on Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) shows students at risk of dropping out without intervention. The applicant utilizes a John Hopkins University study that identified trends that would identify students who are at risk to drop out. This research shows key 'off track' indicators that predict student drop out risk as early as 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- The applicant describes an orientation and training model where all AmeriCorps members will receive a total of 324 hours of training. The Basic Training Academy (BTA) and the Advanced Training Academy (ATA) will help Members develop professional skills and the discreet knowledge, skills or attitudes necessary for successful implementation.
- The Members can utilize their relationships with the students to recruit for the afterschool support program. This process is strongly supported by the teachers, recognizing the improvement of the overall academic performance of the students.
- The applicant provided clear information about the design and outcome of the project it intends to employ. However, the need section falls a little short in that it only provided evidence that English and math scores needed improvement. There was no discussion of attendance and behavior in this section. 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.