

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY
FY2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition

Legal Applicant Name: GreenLight Fund Inc.	Application ID: 12SI138953
Program Name: GreenLight Fund	

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.

There were two stages of expert review for the 2012 SIF competition, the Program Review focused on the quality of the applicant's response in most of the Program Design and Organizational Capability sections and all of the Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy section.

Program Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- The applicant clearly identifies the target communities: Boston, Philadelphia and the Bay Area along with the issue area: closing the achievement and opportunity gap for children and youth. The applicant describes in detail their experience with replication and social innovation in Boston demonstrating their ability to successfully support the focus, goals and approach they propose.

The applicant provides a comprehensive plan including timeline and detailed stages of subgrantee selection. The applicant clearly indicates and states that higher levels of subgrantee funding will be provided to organizations, which have greater levels of evidence-based practice.

The applicant identifies an experienced and qualified team, including the national executive director and the executive directors from Philadelphia and the Bay Area, which will provide support to the SIF. The applicant has identified by name, a list of foundation prospects to meet the required match thereby demonstrating a compelling plan to secure the match commitment. An integral component of the applicant's plan to support subgrantees is the strength of their focus on resource development and local fundraising with subgrantee.

- The applicant clearly identifies a three-city strategy (Boston, Philadelphia, Oakland, CA) as geographic targets for their SIF along with a clear program focus. The proposal details statistical evidence of need and they offer clear, concise measurable outcomes. The applicant provides evidence of 8 years of successfully supporting their strategy to use a community based approach to decision making. The applicant's theory of change is well designed. The applicant provides a clear profile of proposed subgrantee organization they would hope to fund. GLF clearly aligns their theory of change with their approach to growing effective subgrantee models and describes how they would support technical assistance.
- The applicant has proposed a unique and innovative program to address achievement and opportunity gaps for low-income children and youth. A strong track record of providing grants supporting evidence-based programs, experience and a framework for providing technical assistance and support, extensive partnership and collaboration to support evaluation and capacity building, and a sound plan to address

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY
FY2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition

sustainability will provide a model program. The applicant doesn't provide sufficient information on program objectives and outcomes, monitoring criteria, and how the applicant will develop a system to address the increase in the infrastructure of their program.

- GreenLight Fund is an innovative approach for attracting creative organizations in specific geographic locations (Boston, Philadelphia, and Oakland) to strengthen educational outcomes for disadvantaged students through performance, academic, and life skill supports. They have found innovative partners who bring significant expertise in education and educational support services to help youth succeed.

GreenLight Fund is still a young organization with a small staff size so while their approach is quite innovative, there is concern about adequate capacity and staff to manage significant growth represented by expanding into both Philadelphia and Oakland.

- The applicant plans to work in three described regions and has past success in one of these (Boston). They have a strong process of selection by using Selection Advisory Committees in each region. They offer a wide range of grants and their approach to help subgrantees is excellent. It includes technical assistance, evaluation, data sharing, and workshops with the help of Public/Private Ventures. They will offer financial management support and oversight. The budget seems well designed and matching funds are available. Weaknesses include a lack of clarity in measurable outcomes and their theory of change is not specific. They also do not list characteristics to assess subgrantee capacity. Overall, if this program is supported, it stands a good chance for success.

The second stage of expert review for the 2012 SIF competition was the Evaluation Review. The Evaluation Review focused on the quality of the applicant's response in the Proposal for Evaluation in the Program Design category and Evaluation Experience in the Organizational Capacity category.

Evaluation Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- There is no doubt that "closing the achievement gap" must be a high priority for the U.S. The project, as described, however, would be difficult to evaluate. Of particular concern is the absence of specific numerical goals attached to the three major priority areas: improved school persistence and academic achievement; increased high school graduation and GED attainment; increased college access; credit accumulation and degree completion. Absent specific goals, it's not clear how the initiative can be judged to be successful or not. The applicant did not provide information indicating if any improvement would be considered a success. That would seem to be too low a standard. Moreover, although it's clear that the applicant has in place a robust process for selecting subgrantees, it is difficult, in advance of that process being completed, to assess the capacity of the applicant and subgrantees to work together—or to offer views about the capacity of the subgrantees. Indeed, one would prefer to be assured that subgrantees with the required capacity to undertake a project that can be rigorously evaluated come forward in the first place.
- From preliminary needs assessment and carried throughout the technical assistance plan, the need for strong local buy-in from local stakeholders and funders is clearly understood and supported.

Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) will help design an RFP, perform intensive due diligence on prospective

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY
FY2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition

subgrantees, and serve as a primary consultant in the overall SIF evaluation strategy. In addition, P/PV will work closely with subgrantees to build performance management systems and to choose skilled local evaluators from each of the three-targeted cities. P/PV has earned a strong reputation in its 35-year history related to its experience and expertise in conducting robust, multi-site, multi-agency evaluation approaches.

The overarching outcome of the project is to close the achievement and opportunity gaps for 20,000 low-income youth (ages 0-24) in the three-targeted cities. This gap closure will be measured around three primary sources of evidences: improved school persistence and academic achievement, increased high school graduation and GED attainment, and increased college access, credit accumulation, and degree completion. These measures appear to need a long-term approach to data collection and analysis; not addressed in the application.

The application provides very limited information to substantiate that the current portfolio of programs has had components replicated throughout the nation.

The applicant provides no hard data in relation to the success of the goals stated/offered of closing the achievement and opportunity gaps for 20,000 low-income youth in the three-targeted cities.

Limited information is offered in terms of the applicant's internal capacity to oversee P/PV's evaluation efforts or those of the local evaluators.