

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Community And Economic Development Office

Application ID: 13AC144996

Program Name: CEDOs We All Belong AmeriCorps State Program

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. 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 the 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. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant identifies a need in the community for cultural competence training for city departments, schools and nonprofits, and documents this need with compelling statistics and data. For example, the target communities have experienced an influx of 5,000 resettled refugees from dozens of countries of origin, as well as other immigrant and American-born groups. More than 60 different languages are now spoken in local schools.

(+) The applicant describes the problem to be addressed by the proposed AmeriCorps project: community systems such as city departments, schools and nonprofits have been slow to adapt to the new cultural environment in Burlington. There have been protests about inequitable treatment leading to economic and educational disparities for minority and immigrant residents.

(+) The applicant cites compelling poverty data including a rise in poverty rates from 16.2% in 1980 to 25% in 2012. The applicant identifies increased need in minority populations with poverty rates for people who identified themselves as white having a 23% poverty rate while non-white populations had a 42% poverty rate.

(+) The applicant makes a very strong case that this lack of parity is the need behind their proposed approach to achieve equity by examining achievement gaps and figuring out how to better serve their diverse populations.

(+) The applicant explains why it selected the target community by identifying encouraging recent community developments, including: ambitious diversity and equity goals in the school district; a city resolution to create a strategic plan for diversity and equity; and community awareness initiatives with the same goal.

(+) The applicant gives specific examples of Member activities, roles and responsibilities in each proposed service sector of the community. For example, in the Education sector, Member activities will include providing diversity and equity training for staff, providing English Language support for students, and providing curriculum development. In the Social Services sector, Member activities will include translation and outreach to limited English speakers about services available, parent education, and program assessment. In the Arts, Parks and Culture sector, Member activities will include running youth leadership development programs, conducting outreach, and

interviewing stakeholders. In the Local and Regional Government sector, Member activities will include integrating equity into regional and municipal plans, improving hiring diversity, and researching best practices.

(+) The applicant provides a very detailed description of Member roles and responsibilities, identifying specific locations and expectations for each role.

(+) The applicant is very specific regarding the Member slot types and how those types align with their program design based upon past experience and proposed program enhancements. This is particularly evident in the fact that the applicant proposes placing the largest number of Members in the education sector of the program where the Member roles are more expansive than those of Members in the other three project sectors.

(+) The applicant cites the evidence basis for their chosen interventions. For example, the applicant cites an Office of Refugee Resettlement study showing that improving organizational cultural competence improves program impact and success by clients and students. The applicant's AmeriCorps program philosophy is aligned with recommendations of the 2010 Leadership Learning Community report, "Leadership and Race: How to Develop and Support Leadership that Contributes to Racial Justice." The applicant cites a 2009 paper by St. Onge to demonstrate that cultural competency interventions targeted at nonprofit leaders can improve the effectiveness of community organizations.

(+) The applicant provides specific outputs to be measured and instruments such as the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmark tool to be used. Additional measurements such as attendance at trainings, focus group summaries, and number of volunteers recruited from the target population will be utilized to assess program achievement.

(+) The applicant provides an impressive resume of successes as a result of their interventions and community buy-in and clearly provides their program goals and performance measures.

(-) The applicant selects organizations (sites) for program participations through a request for proposal process and delineates 12-15 specific criteria in their evaluation selection. None of these include need.

(-) The applicant does not clearly express what the organization will accomplish with AmeriCorps members that it would otherwise accomplish only through existing staff and/or volunteers.

(-) The applicant does not clearly describe the overall change expected in the community as a result of the AmeriCorps program, or describe the expected demonstrable impact of the AmeriCorps investment.