

## **APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY**

### **2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition**

**Legal Applicant:** City Year, Inc.

**Application ID:** 13AC145786

**Program Name:** City Year New York

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 New York Public Schools students' needs are compelling and supported by documentation showing a low high school graduation rate, poor student academic performance in English, Language Arts, and Math, and high absenteeism. The 20 identified target schools are Title I schools, eight are categorized as Priority or Focus School on New York State's 2012 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and eight are designated as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Tier III schools requiring improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

(+) The 89% of the students in the four neighborhoods to be served come from families within the top quarter of the economic need index. The four low-income communities of Hunts Point, East Harlem, East New York, and Long Island City are the pipeline for the neediest students in the New York City School District.

(+) The applicant has clearly articulated the specific data within the schools demonstrating the needs, including low graduation rates, low proficiency scores on standardized tests, lower attendance rates, and the need for family support and tutoring activities to assist students in improving their academic performance.

(+) The applicant has provided persuasive evidence that a need for education interventions exist in the identified 20 schools in four New York communities, 16 have been identified as high-need by the state of New York and have been utilized as host sites in previous grant applications, and the remaining four will be new schools selected collaboratively with the Department of Education utilizing the same parameters. Proficiency in English ranges from 10-45% and 18-58% showed proficiency in Math on New York State Testing Program standardized assessments. Average attendance rate is 91%, below the city standard of 95%.

(+) The applicant clearly describes the roles of AmeriCorps members as full-time tutors, academic coaches, and mentors and provides full information about all aspects of the daily service of Members. This description offers a clear connection of how the activities are related to the need.

(+) The applicant describes the effectiveness of the program at addressing core indicators associated with school dropout and emphasizes how the program supplements student supports in schools, providing services that would not

otherwise exist. Additionally, the applicant offers data to support this claim and anecdotal evidence from teachers who worked with the program in previous program years.

(+) The applicant thoroughly described what Members will do in their Member service, including specific examples of research-based activities connected to the Early Warning Indicators. These interventions include attendance check-ins, behavior modification projects, and coursework improvement activities such as tutoring and in-class academic support. Members participate in structured day-to-day activities full-time in school and after-school, Monday-Friday. The ongoing training plan for the Members is also explained clearly, aligned with the proposal objectives, and connected to demonstrated needs.

(+) The Whole School Whole Child (WSWC) Program will provide AmeriCorps members who will provide services to 260 classrooms reaching 6,600 students. Literacy and/or math supports will be provided to 1,385 students and 1,347 will be enrolled in attendance and/or behavior mentoring. Prior project year survey data from students indicate the services often/almost always helped them learn and believe they can.

(+) The applicant is requesting 294 full-time AmeriCorps members and 280 Members will be deployed in teams to provide 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders with targeted interventions. Six Members will serve as school-based Project Leaders and eight Members will address volunteer generation through the Civic Engagement Team. A detailed schedule and activities are provided for an AmeriCorps member's day and correlates with the needs of the target students and schools.

(+) The program infrastructure is supported by components addressing high-risk youth, theory of change, service-learning, school climate, and student academic success. Johns Hopkins research supports the focus for serving youth who are at risk of dropping out of high school. The theory of change research (Brett Consulting Group), service model and school climate (Osher, American Institute for Research), and student academic success (Makkula, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education) make up the core components of the WSWC Program and address the specific needs of the target population. Current and reliable research has been combined with ongoing program results to provide high-quality services to student at risk of not graduating from high school.

(+) Prior years' data indicate significant gains in student academic levels, attendance, and behavior. The data indicate over a six year period, 74% improved their raw scores on literacy tests. Attendance results indicate over half of the students served increased their average daily attendance by at least a percentage point. Significant results were reported by classroom teachers indicating students' motivation, enjoyment of school, engagement in learning, improved academic performance were positively impacted by the AmeriCorps WSWC Program. The Policy Studies Associates external evaluation of the program identified that higher scores on the English Language Arts state tests are correlated with additional hours of tutoring provided by AmeriCorps members. The applicant demonstrated a strong track record of positively impacting the target population and schools.

(+) The applicant demonstrates a commitment to continuous program improvement by including required and applicant-determined measures to understand the program performance. The measurement tools are directly linked to their evidence-based model and include data collection from multiple sources and levels, including student, teacher, administrative, and district.

(+) The applicant includes evidence of successful outcomes from previous program years, including significant

improvements in student test scores and attendance and provides evidence from external program evaluations that found these improvements to be directly related to Member interventions.

(+) Previous interventions were identified by an external evaluator (Policy Studies Associates) to increase achievement scores in pre- and post-test scores. Since 2006, 74% have improved on literacy tests. In 2011-12, 83% of 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders and 78% of 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders increased scores on literacy assessments. More than half of middle school students increased daily attendance as well.

(+) Performance targets were identified using two Tier 1 AmeriCorps national standardization performance measures in academic improvement and academic engagement. Additionally, two applicant-determined measures have been identified focusing on student connectedness and whole school support, which connect to the applicant's focus on decreasing dropout indicators, and are connected to indicators of importance cited in the research.

(+) The applicant clearly delineated specific increases in performance measures of both formative and summative measures over the life of the grant. The applicant demonstrates how it will improve academic scores and grades, foster better attendance and behavior, and ultimately improve graduation rates. The applicant identifies specific instruments and data collection procedures to help demonstrate improvement and growth of students.