

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Teach for America

Application ID: 13AC146007

Program Name: Teach for America-Greater Philadelphia

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 presents detailed documentation based on current research, website data, district level proficiency results, and anecdotal evidence supporting the program's finding that the Pennsylvania area student achievement gap is attributed to educational inequity and lack of opportunity for the 15,400 low-income students targeted for Teach For America-Greater Philadelphia (TFA-Philadelphia) assistance.

(+) The applicant identifies the target area and the target population and provides a reasonable argument for why this general population was selected. Additionally, the applicant provides current evidence from a reliable source (the Pennsylvania Standardized System of Achievement) of the low levels of academic achievement of Philadelphia's 8th graders in science and 11th graders in reading as well as current data relative to the low graduation rate amongst African-American males in Philadelphia.

(+) The application clearly explains the number of MSY requested (220) and explains how full-time slots recognize the Members' service as full-time teachers.

(+) The application fully provides a detailed overview of what Members will do as full-time teachers: carry a full-class schedule, lesson planning, professional development, and leading extra-curricular activities.

(+) The application clearly explains how having AmeriCorps membership helps the organization attract teachers from low-income communities who share the same background as their students (90% African-American or Latino) allowing them opportunity to have an additional impact as models of the potential for success.

(+) The applicant describes the evidence base for the program as research from Mathematica Policy Research (2004) and some internal performance data from the 2011-2012 school year. Since the Mathematica Policy study used random assignment of students to teachers, it meets the highest level of standards for evidence-based research. Thus, the use of the TFA's Teaching as Leadership (TAL) intervention to increase student performance in reading and math is supported and is highly likely to reach the desired outcomes as long as there continues to be fidelity of implementation with the procedures outlined in the 2004 study.

- (-) The applicant suggests that poor teachers are the cause of low school performance for this target group, but there are no statistics to support this.
- (-) The application lacks examples showing how members will cultivate rigorous, engaging, and safe classrooms.
- (-) The application provides unclear examples of how teachers will arrange for a transformative learning experience (extra-curricular activities, field trips, other activities to prepare students for college).
- (-) The applicant does not fully describe who their target population is beyond those in disadvantaged schools who have evidence of achievement gaps.
- (-) The applicant states that the population was chosen based on the repercussions of short-term and long-term achievement gap disparities however, the applicant does not provide a compelling description of those repercussions.
- (-) The applicant does not make a compelling argument that the year of growth expected in students taught by TFA members differs from what would be expected for students taught by existing teachers.
- (-) The comparison between Teach for America teachers and existing classroom teachers is not clearly evident or convincingly supported and thus the rationale to use one over the other is not clearly evident. More specifically, it is not clearly evident if there is a difference in the teachers due to recruitment efforts, training efforts or other factors.
- (-) The applicant does not describe how teachers will be evaluated or placed in their assignments.
- (-) The types of student achievement data that will be monitored is unclear.
- (-) It is not clear how the applicant will measure and report the TFA-Philadelphia program's overall impact for the Philadelphia schools on an annual basis.