

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** Westhab, Inc.

**Application ID:** 13AC146310

**Program Name:** Serve America

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 describes the community problems they will serve the following community needs: placing homeless and economically disadvantaged individuals into quality, affordable housing; providing job training, placement, and retention services to hard-to-serve individuals; and improving the academic performance of homeless and economically disadvantaged children in after-school settings.

(+) The applicant provides a compelling argument for the services supporting the needs of the targeted communities in Westchester and Bronx Counties of New York. The information includes census data on the need for affordable housing where up to 29.1% of individuals live below the poverty line in certain communities and unemployment rates for African-Americans and Hispanics in Westchester are 14.3% and 11.8%, respectively as compared to an overall rate of 6.8% in the county.

(+) The applicant provides a compelling need for academic support to the targeted community due to high school graduation rates that are significantly lower (between 60-68% in the targeted communities) as compared to an 80% average in the county.

(+) The applicant describes AmeriCorps members' activities, roles and/or responsibilities clearly and the examples are: 20 half-time AmeriCorps members will provide educational services to homeless and at-risk children living in shelters and distressed neighborhoods and place economically disadvantaged households into permanent housing and new jobs.

(+) The applicant provides measurable outcomes for the performance of the service Members for all assignments. For example, AmeriCorps members supporting the youth services project will assist 240 children, 180 of whom will demonstrate improved academic literacy; and those supporting housing services will place an additional 60 families into permanent housing which will represent a 21% increase over the previous year.

(+) The applicant provides measurable data on what services would be lacking without the funding of the grant such as 140 students at four youth centers will not receive one-on-one and group tutoring support.

- (+) The applicant states youth services outcomes will be measured using the evidence-based Development Reading Assessment pre- and post-tests. Members will track activities and services which will be reported to the Director of Employment Services and the Volunteer Coordinator bi-weekly.
- (+) AmeriCorps members will impact the target community over three years by assisting 240 economically disadvantaged individuals with employment readiness, placement and retention services and place 180 economically disadvantaged individuals into jobs. Member Outcomes were determined by the Vice President of Adult & Employment Services based on the average number of clients served each month and the percent of clients who are actually placed into employment. Employment placement Outcomes will be measured using follow-up reports from employers and client paystubs.
- (+) The applicant provides compelling information that AmeriCorps members' support in housing services is both evidence-based and evidence-informed. For example, housing support services are based on the Housing First model which is a national priority of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Using the program over the past two years has resulted in the average shelter stays being reduced from approximately one year to less than two months.
- (+) The applicant provides compelling information that Members' support in youth services is also both evidence-based and evidence-informed. For example, the applicant reports that they will use the Literacy Improvement Program which is recognized by the state of New York for reading improvement. As reported by the applicant 85% of the students who complete the program show improvement in reading levels.
- (-) The applicant lacks the research data that links economic disadvantage with low academic performance. This is important because the proposal suggests that economic disadvantage is related to the low academic performance associated in the targeted communities.
- (-) The applicant lacked a detailed description of how proposed slot types will be aligned with their program design factors.
- (-) The applicant indicated that they will deploy two Member slots at six centers to serve 240 children. It is unclear whether two Members are adequate without knowing the number of students each center serves on average daily.
- (-) The applicant lacks evidence-based or evidence-informed research on the employment services portion of the grant, and as a result, the success of the four AmeriCorps members assigned to this part of the project could not be discerned.
- (-) There is insufficient evidence that the applicant can achieve its intended outcomes with the ratio of clients per student outlined in the proposal.
- (-) The applicant failed to provide information on how they will report the program's impact on an annual basis.