

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: The Service Collaborative of WNY, Inc.

Application ID: 13AC147829

Program Name: AmeriCorps Builds Lives through Education (ABLE)

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 targeted community is Buffalo, New York and the need is evidenced by data from the New York State (NYS) Community Action Association 2011 NYS Poverty Report saying that 30% of Buffalo's residents live in poverty, twice that of the whole state. In addition, the number of children living in poverty is three times higher than the national average all of which show that this community is economically disadvantaged. This high need justifies their project.

(+) The applicant provides a persuasive evidence of a compelling community need that exists within the target community. The targeted community experiences low academic achievement, high dropout rates, and high rates of absenteeism. The need is well documented and includes information from a variety of sources including Federal, State, and local agencies.

(+) The applicant chose this community eight years ago because it is severely economically disadvantaged and has high rates of low performing students, high dropout rates, and truancy problems. They have a track record of addressing these issues which is reasonable and significant.

(+) The applicant supplies strong evidence of the severity of need in the target community. For example, 1/3 of elementary and middle school students are performing below grade level in reading and math. Only half of the students in the targeted community graduate from high school. Additionally, there is an extremely high rate of truancy.

(+) What Members will do is described and focuses on two main activities: creating and delivering academic support within the classroom and providing tutoring to students in-need. Specific activities for full-time Members will include participation in teacher assisted lesson planning, delivering Common Core subject-specific lessons, and special projects. Specific activities are also outlined for minimum-time Members and Education Only Award Members. All Members will work with a certified teacher which further assures their work is appropriate and addresses the need.

(+) The applicant provides a clear description of how AmeriCorps members will help them accomplish more than

they could without Members. Members will deliver academic and personal student support that could not be accomplished by teachers alone. Additionally, Members will serve as positive role models for students demonstrating the importance of community service.

(+) The applicant provides a thorough description describing how the different slot types align with the program design and activities. For example, 35 full-time Members will deliver academic support in school classrooms, 65 full-time and 30 Education Award Only Members will serve as tutors in schools and in out-of-school academic programs and 64 minimum-time Members will deliver academic enrichment in summer programs at three sites.

(+) The applicant describes how the proposed interventions are evidence-based. They will incorporate proven logic models and data-driven instruction to measure program impacts. The program links planned interventions with intended outcomes.

(+) The applicant does a good job describing how the AmeriCorps investment will have measurable community impact. Increasing graduation rates will have a direct impact on alleviating the number of people who live in poverty. Information is included showing a large percentage of low-income people living in the target community do not have high school diplomas. Improving graduation rates will also provide a higher skilled workforce which will increase the possibility of attracting new businesses to the geographic area. Additionally, the AmeriCorps investment will have impact on the number of high quality, civic-minded, teachers in the labor pool.

(+) The applicant clearly describes how the performance measures were chosen and who will participate in the overall evaluation process, collecting data and demonstrating success.

(+) The applicant does a thorough job describing how the performance targets were determined. For example, the applicant utilizes past program data measuring student growth, feedback from community education leaders, and annual site surveys.

(-) There is only poverty and school data to demonstrate the severity of the need. Data on other demographic or behavioral indicators that would support their claim is not provided.

(-) The applicant does not give a clear definition as to how AmeriCorps members would be uniquely qualified for volunteer recruitment and positions. The applicant states that there is a volunteer center already established. It unclear how AmeriCorps members would be more beneficial to the program rather than the regular volunteer program that is already established.

(-) It is not clear how reporting on the impact will be done and if it will be reported on an annual basis. This is necessary to show how progress is being made and if adjustments are necessary in measures or activities.