

## **APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY**

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

**Legal Applicant:** Operation UNITE

**Application ID:** 13ES145702

**Program Name:** UNITE Service Corps

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 provides sound evidence describing a compelling community need that is supported by extensive documentation. Data are included showing that the target community has extremely high levels of drug abuse, illiteracy, and poverty. Documentation of need includes information from a variety of sources including federal, state, regional, and local surveys and reports.

(+) The applicant outlines the community problems for which the project will focus. Through a Healthy Choices curriculum they will teach healthy decision making regarding eating habits in order to curb obesity. Drug prevention education will be taught in order to reduce tobacco use (highest in the country) and drug use and abuse. Math tutoring will be implemented to increase proficiency in math as well as to slow dropout rates and ensure future success. A correlation between success in math, the development of critical thinking and later life success is postulated as a reason given for selecting this population for intervention.

(+) The targeted community is described (4th and 5th grade students attending 44 of the poorest elementary schools in Eastern Kentucky). 2010 Census data and figures related to students qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch are used to illustrate the community's economic distress.

(+) The applicant provides documentation of the severity of need in the target community. Details show that a high percentage of youth in the 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades are using drugs and alcohol. Reports also show that large percentages of youth are scoring below proficiency and that 29% of students are scoring at the lowest level measurement.

(+) The applicant provides solid details describing Member activities and roles. Members' responsibilities include tutoring before and after school, teaching healthy choices programs and coordinating school projects, participating in UNITE clubs, and taking part in community service projects.

(+) Members will add value to the organization outside of what existing staff and volunteers could accomplish. The applicant does a good job describing how their organization will benefit from enlisting a cadre of highly trained,

dedicated Members from diverse backgrounds. This is significant because Members will serve in collaboration with existing staff and volunteers without duplicating their organizational roles.

(+) The applicant is requesting 44 full-time AmeriCorps members. The proposed slot types directly align with program design and activities. For example, Members will provide a significant number of mathematic tutoring hours per year. Additionally, Members will deliver a healthy choices curriculum which includes a physical activity component. This is significant because the selected interventions are likely to succeed given the well-rounded program design.

(+) The applicant is engaged in evidence-based interventions by its incorporation of evidence-based programming (The 'Take 10' Program and 'Energy Balance 101' program) in their curriculum available through Healthy Choices.

(+) Their success will be measured by pre- and post-test scores and they expect a thirty percent increase in test scores. They also expect to see a reduction in both the number of school incidents involving substance abuse and in the percentage of students that meet the health guidance of obesity.

(+) The applicant provides a description of the overall change the applicant expects to see by the end of the three-year grant cycle. The applicant utilizes previous pre- and post-test scores from past program performance to outline expected change.

(+) The applicant describes how their performance measure target was determined through using pre-and post-test scores from the beginning years of the program. They reported a significant percentage of increase in program goals of improving mathematic proficiency and healthy choices.

(+) Performance targets were chosen based on pre- and post-tests that will show math score improvement that will move each student one letter grade during the period. Attendance records will also document students' participation in the program as well as overall school attendance. Together these will provide the data necessary to determine program effectiveness.

(-) The applicant provides a review of the school report card to assess effectiveness specifically in the area of tutoring in math. This one measurement does not reflect progress on other initiatives such as substance abuse prevention and obesity.

(-) Limited documentation is provided linking math instruction with the identified community need of illiteracy, drug abuse, and poverty. For example, the application includes a general statement that improved math skills lead to higher thinking skills which result in students' making healthy choices.

(-) The targeted population is 4th and 5th grade students, there is no specific corresponding data substantiating the needs of this age group. The applicant mentions the fact that 2011 data from three Area Development Districts (ADD) in Kentucky indicates the percentage of elementary students scoring below proficient and novice area are higher than other places in the service area. The applicant does not offer more exacting data, from this source for 4th and 5th grade students. Data is presented only for 8th and 12th grade students related to drug and alcohol use and only for adults related to obesity.

(-) The applicant does not specifically address what the organization can accomplish that it would not otherwise accomplish through existing staff and/or volunteers.

(-) The applicant did not include evidence of how AmeriCorps members would accomplish UNITE Club participation goals rather than the use of regular staff or volunteers. There was no differentiation or specific examples or measurable impact that would separate the requirement for AmeriCorps members rather than other staff.