

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Application ID: 13ND147083

Program Name: LISC AmeriCorps - Parent

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 has indicated that needs exist within the community referencing a 33% poverty rate and that only 44% of their clients had been employed in the previous year. They also referenced a high rate of income needed for rent/mortgage (58%), and poor credit history of community residents.

(+) The applicant is clear that their purpose for the grant application matches the needs of their organization. Their efforts will be directed toward increasing the quality of life in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods throughout urban and rural areas. Their focus is to improve economic opportunities and address economic challenges for the AmeriCorps participants and to build capacity of participants and community members to improve the quality of life of individuals within the community.

(+) The applicant used evidence-informed data from their Chicago site to highlight the need for increased support of financial literacy through CNCS's Economic Opportunity focus area where 68% of Members will be serving on this issue nationally.

(+) The applicant made a compelling case for supporting the needs of economically disadvantaged neighborhoods through their Building Sustainable Communities (BSC) Initiative and by showing that 165 Members will ultimately impact over 13,000 clients and volunteers throughout the United States.

(+) The applicant has designed an intervention which they believe will help alter community downturn by providing cognitive financial guidance, assistance with employability and goal setting to families in the communities in which they serve.

(+) The applicant proposed a comprehensive plan to engage Members in economic opportunities through financial literacy and job skills, affordable housing, increased volunteer engagement and education to help students excel academically and physically.

(+) The applicant has described a strategic approach to the use of the AmeriCorps participants during the course of

the grant programming. They have described how they will actively train and use 165 AmeriCorps participants. Their planning strategies are effective as they specifically describe the allocation of participants as: 115 full-time, 10 half-time, 25 quarter-time, and 15 minimum-time for 129.79 Member Service Years. They have also described how this mixed-slot program is planned so that there is additional flexibility for the host site to apply AmeriCorps participants to meet the specific needs and activities that will be determined locally.

(+) The applicant has described how the AmeriCorps participants are well suited to the tasks associated with their programming and for the role that AmeriCorps members play. They indicated that the AmeriCorps members bring a high level of youth and enthusiasm to their programming and that often the community ties that they bring to their roles become a positive for the community.

(+) The applicant's assertion that Members would be assisting organizations accomplish goals they could not otherwise accomplish was supported by third-party evaluation of host organization's self-reporting through survey response.

(+) The applicant adopted the mix-slot type program to respond to both host site organizational capacity and the needs of specific types of activities.

(+) The applicant has provided descriptions of the impact of the AmeriCorps investment with details about past AmeriCorps experiences with their organization. The applicant provides data that showed that they realized all but five of their intended performance outcomes. For example, they indicated that they were able to exceed the services expected in relation to housing and foreclosure counseling. They also acknowledged areas of negative impact with AmeriCorps members leaving the program after one year for various reasons and indicated that they have adjusted their programming to address the concerns and needs associated with the type of impact.

(+) The applicant cites research from a third-party evaluator on the efficacy and success of the proposed 'bundled service' model.

(+) The applicant uses research evidence to support the impact of affordable housing development on the overall economic health of a community.

(+) The applicant supports the likely impact of its youth-related activities by citing research evidence from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on the connection between youth activity and decrease in obesity.

(+) The applicant describes an 18-year track record of successfully providing program activities including housing counseling, affordable housing development, and volunteer recruitment.

(+) The applicant will engage the community in areas of planning, community governance and support for partnerships. This is an evidence-informed approach that has a proven outcome of neighborhood improvement.

(-) The applicant does not provide detailed descriptions of the fourteen communities and community members that will be served through the application of the grant as they only indicate that these will be identified later in the application process.

(-) There was no persuasive evidence that the needs exist in the targeted communities.

- (-) The target communities were not identified in the proposal.
- (-) The applicant provides no documentation of the Hurricane Sandy-related damage that Members will address.
- (-) The applicant was not specific about measurable outcomes in multiple operating sites and describing how Members will contribute to community impact.
- (-) The applicant did not provide sufficient information about AmeriCorps member roles at LISC operating sites.
- (-) The narrative contains little description of the actual activities that Members will carry out.
- (-) The applicant's references to the impact on the community were general and not specific.
- (-) The application does not clearly specify how the program's overall community impact will be measured.