

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Blueprint Schools Network

Application ID: 13ED147077

Program Name: Blueprint Fellows Program

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 community problem is clearly stated: to help designated school districts close the achievement gap in Mathematics in their lowest performing schools where racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps are prevalent and persistent.

(+) The applicant provided persuasive evidence that there is an identified need in the target schools due to their having large populations of ESL (English as a Second Language) students (38%), FRL (Free or Reduced Lunch) students (86%), and African-American or Hispanic students (93%).

(+) The applicant does a good job of offering details that describe the extent and severity of need in the target community. For example, the application includes research showing how socioeconomic and racial achievement gaps have not changed in twenty years. Additionally, strong evidence is presented showing need for mathematics tutoring for populations within each target community in the three cities where the proposed program will operate.

(+) The extent and severity of the need of the targeted communities is clearly outlined. Academic data are documented for each of the identified proposed service areas and provides evidence of deficiencies in academic performance specifically in the area of mathematics.

(+) The large number of students receiving free and reduced lunches, for each of the identified communities, substantiates the fact that the population is economically disadvantaged. The correlation of data between this poverty measurement instrument (FRL) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Mathematics Exam clearly establishes a correlation between low academic performance and economic distress.

(+) The target community has been identified. Students in 4th/6th/9th grades underperforming in mathematics in Denver, Colorado, Houston, Texas and The Commonwealth of Massachusetts within underperforming schools have been identified.

(+) The applicant explains the reason why the population has been selected to be served. This is as a result of the

documented need and established relationships with school districts in Denver, Houston, and The Commonwealth of Massachusetts who address this population. These were the identifying factors in selecting this population.

(+) The applicant states these schools in the new target area, Massachusetts, were chosen because they have a documented need for Blueprint's program through poor math achievement. This explains why they chose the target community.

(+) The applicant selected this population to serve because of the compelling documented need to provide mathematics tutoring in low-income, ethnically diverse, urban schools.

(+) The applicant provides a clear plan outlining AmeriCorps member roles and activities in the schools where they will serve. Member activities are directly aligned with meeting the identified need. They will provide small group mathematic tutoring to students in one hour sessions that is built into students' daily schedule.

(+) The applicant does a good job describing the number of Members and slot types needed. 70 full-time AmeriCorps members will serve each year for three years. The slot types are directly aligned with their program design and Member activities. This is an intensive tutoring program and placing full-time Members in classrooms as tutors will result in dramatic improvement in student mathematic achievement.

(+) The value of added AmeriCorps members is that they are high-caliber, service-oriented individuals that would not normally come to high-need schools. They are unique because they have already demonstrated a commitment to service and a desire to aid struggling populations through their participation in AmeriCorps.

(+) The applicant does a good job describing how AmeriCorps members will engage in interventions that are evidence-based. The application includes statistics from several sources demonstrating how their program design and intervention strategies will have community impact and solve community problems.

(+) The applicant identifies strong plans designed to measure how interventions will have significant community impact. For example, student achievement will be tracked throughout the program year through pre-tests and post-tests for each unit of learning. This is important because students who are not progressing will revisit lessons until concepts are mastered. Students who have mastered skill levels will move to the next levels. AmeriCorps members will have the ability to adapt tutoring practices to the needs of each student.

(+) Investing in AmeriCorps will add value to already successful programs being implemented by the applicant. Members will receive extensive training that can be utilized to build and expand programs with the end goal being improving students' lives.

(+) The applicant references research that shows that daily, small group, high-frequency tutoring has a significant impact on student achievement. This provides evidence that is informed and points to an intervention that will have a measureable community impact.

(+) The applicant presents hard and actual evidence of this intervention being measureable and effective. In the Denver schools 49.7 % of all students scored proficient or advanced in Mathematics which was an increase over the 9.1% of students at the beginning of the academic year.

(-) At the end of the three-year grant cycle, the applicant expects that students will demonstrate one year of growth in mathematics for each academic year. In the inaugural year of work it is stated that the initiative had been effective, particularly in raising mathematics achievement. The applicant proceeds to provide statistics on assessments pointing to improved math performance. It is difficult to discern whether these results correlate to one year's growth in academic achievement.

(-) There is insufficient documentation of the target community's low socioeconomic level. Statistics are national only and not for their target communities.

(-) It is unclear if schools would be able to accomplish intended interventions through existing staff and volunteers. The applicant bases interventions on documented need but does not explain how AmeriCorps members are better suited than staff/volunteers to carry out activities.