

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Okeene Public School
Program Name: Serve for Success

Application ID: 14AC155797

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:

Strengths:

The applicant cites strong evidence of the prevalent needs in the community including language barriers, low economic status, and low-test scores.

The applicant provides a compelling explanation of the severity of the need by explaining the multiple factors of the community including the rural setting without organizations to help schools, low-test scores, and a significant increase of students who fail to complete homework.

Okeene Public School's Program Serve for Success (SFS) cites numerous studies and measures about their need.

SFS presents very clear data on how compelling their situation is.

The applicant provides a comprehensive description of the academic achievement in the area and the 23 schools being served.

The applicant reports that current efforts are hampered by budget cuts and the lack of English-speaking skills.

Focusing on tutoring students in reading, the applicant provides specific data for all districts involved, e.g., 26.58% of all students need remediation.

SFS has an appropriate number of AmeriCorps members providing dosage that mirrors other evidence-based best practices.

The applicant provides strong evidence to support the success of the program by describing the training AmeriCorps members will receive including pre-service training at the beginning of the school year.

The proposed program will likely be successful with the training of AmeriCorps members in tutoring and also the further training in the schools where the members will be serving.

The applicant describes procedures to monitor and supervise AmeriCorps members. The members will be required to pass a tutoring skills proficiency test before providing services to students.

The application describes training in program rules and regulations, tutoring and instructional strategies, leadership, and life skills that are consistent with the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the Logic Model.

The applicant cites strong evidence for success with a total of 832 students that received tutoring sessions with 275 of those students receiving 35 or more tutor sessions which met their target performance.

The applicant shows success in the past by describing the leadership of the program and a full time director and co-director who oversee the program with valuable experience.

In 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 utilizing National Performance measures SFS has doubled their goal of 500 students entering the AmeriCorps tutoring program.

The applicant describes a competent staff and well-developed procedures that will effectively implement the Theory of Change.

Weaknesses:

The dropout rates for all of the districts that will be served were not clearly stated with only two districts cited so it is difficult to know the severity of the need.

SFS does not present a scientific study yet they have a lot of data with which they could design their own study.

The applicant lists drop-out rates, language barriers, low economic status, budget cuts, and large class sizes as impairing achievement. It is unclear whether any priorities are assigned to these problem areas.

There are no significant weaknesses in the application concerning the AmeriCorps members as a highly effective means to solve the identified problems.

The applicant presents limited information on the 2011-2012 programs due to the lack of pre-test scores that prevented meeting the improved academic performance goal.

The application demonstrates issues with compliance in substitute teacher pay and AmeriCorps member duties with proper time sheets.

In 2011-2012 some of the students in SFS's program did not receive pre-test scores so they were unable to measure improvements from their intervention, thus not able to substantiate their goal of 78% students reaching improvement.