

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Providence Children's Museum

Application ID: 14AC155827

Program Name: Providence Children's Museum AmeriCorps 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:

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates that math skills are important and that chronically low math skills among lower-income children are a problem.

The application provides data that demonstrates the increased deficiencies in mathematics for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The applicant provided relevant data specific to the children to be served that showed their lack of proficiency in math.

Specific, relevant data is provided to demonstrate that the need (lack of math proficiency and percent of students eligible for subsidized lunch) is severe and prevalent in the area served by the applicant's proposed program, and includes a comparison of Providence to statewide data.

The applicant provided comparison statewide data where there is a correlation with the number of students eligible for school lunch and their proficiency in math.

The application includes statistics documenting poverty rates and the percent of 3rd grade children proficient in math for the city where this intervention will take place, and compares these figures to state averages. The application also provides data documenting the poverty and percent of 3rd grade children proficient in math in the schools that will be targeted for this program.

The applicant provides well detailed information on what the AmeriCorps members will do in linking resources and providing appropriate number of sessions to the targeted students.

The applicant provides a descriptive, project-based learning model to be implemented by the AmeriCorps members.

The program model described is closely aligned with program elements described by the National Research Council, which as a National Academy provides best practices for programs.

The applicant made a persuasive case that the planned intervention is likely to achieve the desired results, including citing data from their own experience where children participating in at least 12 Learning Club sessions are much more likely to improve their pre-post assessment scores, with 75% doing so with an increase of 10% or higher.

The applicant does a good job of identifying the logic model elements that specify the Theory of Change, including making a case for the adequate level of dosage needed for the desired outcome(s).

The application includes data that the program has collected from past participants that demonstrates that children who participate in 12 or more sessions of the Learning Club are more likely to have increased scores.

The proposed program will employ a standardized curriculum to develop the activities to be conducted in the learning clubs.

The application includes clear descriptions of the program they propose to implement, including descriptions of dosage, duration, and content areas.

The program has successfully met performance measures over the past 2 years, including the percentage of children improving their use of science process skills and increasing attitudes toward learning.

The applicant provides specific information about how performance targets have been met in the two previous years, with 75% of children demonstrating an increased use of science process skills.

The applicant has effectively run academic enrichment programs for disadvantaged children utilizing AmeriCorps members.

Through programs overseen by the applicant in 2012 and 2013, students consistently increased skills and improved scores on achievement tests.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide data on the need for family engagement.

Family engagement activities are listed in the logic model and described briefly in the narrative, but there are no outputs or outcomes associated with them in the logic model.

The lack of direct citation of experimental or quasi-experimental data or studies makes it harder to determine if the intervention is likely to achieve the target outcome(s).

It is not clear whether results or studies cited include statistically significant results.

The application lists two curricula (which they claim are well evaluated) that will guide this intervention. However, the application does not include reference to any research that has been conducted to evaluate the efficacy of these curricula in meeting the stated program objectives (e.g., increased attitudes toward math and increased knowledge of math concepts and applications).

While the application indicates that the program is based on recommendations made in the National Research Council's 2012 report, the application does not cite any research, other than internal data they have collected, to document the efficacy of the overall program model.