

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Goodwill Industries of Northern New England

Application ID: 14AC156198

Program Name: Granite State Education 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:

Strengths:

The applicant provides compelling statistics on the economic and social “costs” of low educational attainment. Recent, nationwide data illustrating the relationship between dropping out of school and annual income, and dropout rates and unemployment are also provided (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2012).

The applicant presents the need for AmeriCorps members to be responsible for increasing student academic engagement and increasing economic success.

The applicant cites specific data to document the need: Four school districts in New Hampshire (Manchester, Berlin, Claremont, and Rochester) have the lowest performance on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) standardized tests, and also have the highest dropout rate (NH 2013 Kids Count). College enrollment rates were as low as 40%.

The applicant defines its target populations as the most in need populations within New Hampshire. The applicant substantiates this claim by providing poverty rates.

The applicant provides social risk factor data such as parental incarceration rates and rates of low economic status to substantiate the need for the identified intervention in Manchester, NH, which is one of the targeted communities.

A well-tested model of intervention has been selected to increase school retention rates in a population with high dropout rates.

Volunteers, members of the community, parents, and school officials will be involved in this project.

The applicant is committed to effective means to solve student engagement needs and ultimately increase economic success for New Hampshire's neediest students. The Granite State Education Corps will utilize AmeriCorps

members to implement the Check and Connect program model. The core of this program is a trusting relationship between the student and a mentor. The mentor advocates on challenges the students and partners face with family, school, and community to keep the student academically engaged.

The applicant briefly states that AmeriCorps members will be used to recruit and train community volunteers as mentors.

One year of performance indicators are provided (for 2012-2013), which show that Granite State met two of their three enrollment targets (ED1 and ED2).

The applicant has a history of meeting and exceeding performance targets in the past National and State AmeriCorps grants. In the past 10 years of operating multiple AmeriCorps programs annually, the applicant has met over 60 set performance measure targets and only missed four.

Weaknesses:

Statistics on the dropout rate for U.S. citizens nationwide are provided, but not specific comparison data on local rates. The applicant does state that while the dropout rate in NH overall is lower than most states, four school districts have the highest rates, again without specifying what those rates are.

The application does not sufficiently address local program data relevant to document the need in a comprehensive manner.

The applicant provides school dropout rates for the United States but does not present detailed dropout rate information for the targeted communities.

The applicant lacks detail when describing the specific needs of the target communities as related to the expected outcomes of the *Check & Connect* mentoring model. For example, no truancy rates, tardiness or school completion rates are given for the targeted schools.

Significance levels are not provided, although the applicant indicates the results were “significant”. Furthermore, many studies are listed without discussion of their findings, except to note that these are current efficacy studies (e.g., American Institutes for Research’s efficacy study and Stanford Research Institute’s efficacy study).

The applicant demonstrates the need for intervention for academically disengaged K-12 students; however the majority of the emphasis is directed at high school students and studies indicate that school drop-out prevention must begin as early as possible.

The applicant’s statement that AmeriCorps members are the most effective means to solving the identified problem is largely unsubstantiated.

The applicant provides insufficient detail about the need for AmeriCorps members.

The applicant does not clearly identify the benefits of using AmeriCorps members as opposed to a strictly volunteer-

based mentoring program.

The applicant presents evidence that it has been effective at recruiting volunteers. For example, in the 2009-2010 program year, 10,000 volunteers were recruited and almost 100,000 volunteer hours were logged.