

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: American Red Cross of Northeastern New York
Program Name: Red Cross Disaster Resiliency Corps

Application ID: 14AC156338

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 states that there are, on average, 10 local disasters per day, which is a compelling argument that the need is prevalent.

Survey results from individuals who received American Red Cross (ARC) services after a disaster showed 0% had taken an ARC disaster preparedness course, which provides compelling evidence that very few New Yorkers are prepared in case of emergency.

The capacity building argument presented by the applicant is persuasive and extremely well done. Starting with three recent, named, disasters and describing the impact those disasters had on the communities along with the number of ARC volunteers needed to address those disasters paints a clear picture of why additional volunteers are necessary and important.

The section describing New York as ranking 50th out of 51 in the number of volunteer service hours was a compelling argument for the need to increase volunteerism in the state.

The Corporation for National and Community Service study demonstrating a low rate of volunteerism in New York (50th of 51 states) provides compelling evidence of the need for greater volunteer capacity.

The applicant provides persuasive evidence of the need for disaster preparedness education in the Customers and Partners Survey of disaster victims which showed that 0% had taken a disaster education class.

The applicant establishes well-documented problems that align with their proposed interventions of providing disaster preparedness information and assisting citizens below the poverty level in developing emergency plans and supply kits.

The applicant presented information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that provided

convincing evidence that a "hands-on" training approach was effective for training children.

The applicant presented a convincing description of the Volunteer Connection system to collaborate with community organizations and recruit volunteers.

The well-developed training curricula, Be Red Cross Ready, Masters of Disasters, and Scrubby Bear, will enable AmeriCorps members to be well equipped to reach the community disaster education goals among low-income populations.

The applicant presents a comprehensive training plan for AmeriCorps Members, with a valuable disaster simulation module.

The applicant exceeded their past performance measures (training 25,000 people) by 1,500 individuals, and exceeded the number of individuals they proposed to assist for disasters by at least 550 people. It is clear that this applicant has been successful in meeting performance measures in the past.

Previous AmeriCorps member volunteer training as reported was extensive. Members participated in CPR/AED/First Aid, fulfilling the mission, and sheltering. It is apparent that AmeriCorps members are treated well and have a good experience with American Red Cross of Northeastern New York (ARC/NENY).

The applicant presents evidence of surpassing the goal of training 25,000 individuals.

The applicant greatly surpassed the target of directly serving 350 individuals by serving 900.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of past performance in surpassing the number of individuals receiving education and direct disaster response services.

The applicant has developed a comprehensive plan of proven interventions based upon successful past performance.

Weaknesses:

The nationwide ARC survey conducted by an outside evaluator found that only 25% of respondents received disaster preparedness training from ARC. "25% of respondents" does not indicate how many surveys were initially distributed and is therefore not useful data as presented. Generalizing to the remaining 75% of the population being unprepared based on those survey results does not provide evidence of a significant, prevalent, and severe community need.

The applicant mentions low-income communities but does not provide sufficient detail about why that is important, and how they propose to focus on low-income communities given the challenges and barriers faced by people who might be choosing between food, heat, and medical bills.

The applicant sufficiently explains that NY is the 4th most affected state for disasters, but also has 19 million residents. Not knowing the appropriate percentages means it is impossible to know the breadth and depth of the problem.

The applicant did not provide sufficient evidence for the effectiveness of volunteers providing training.

The applicant's suggestion that 75% of the population have not received disaster preparedness information is unsubstantiated by the Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) survey that was cited, which lacked an explanation of the data used.

The statement that New York is the 4th most affected state for disasters (with 10 per day) lacked convincing per capita data that would allow comparing the number with other states.

The applicant presents limited analysis that the proposed interventions will produce the desired outcomes.

The proposed evaluation plan is insufficient to determine whether or not the service is effective. The applicant proposes to self-design a survey, which may mean that it has not been tested for reliability or validity.

The applicant's description of how they will recruit participants for the various trainings is unclear, specifically, how they will ensure low income populations are recruited and participate.

The applicant provides a limited description of the role Members will play in developing disaster response plans, and what type of training is provided for this.

The applicant focused on changing attitudes and feelings about disaster preparedness, while providing insufficient explanation of the knowledge and skills participants will acquire. Any discussion about actual changes in behavior was also absent.

The applicant does not define outputs and outcomes for their intervention of increased disaster response planning.

The applicant did not sufficiently address how they successfully intervened with low-income individuals in the past.

The applicant provides insufficient evidence of the knowledge or skills acquired by participants through the trainings.

There is also minimal information about any actual changes in behavior resulting from the trainings.

The applicant provides no information about the number of low income individuals who participated in the trainings.

The section regarding past performance is unclear whether and to what extent previous lifesaving training was provided to low-income populations of New York, a critical intervention and target beneficiary of the current grant request.