

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: University of South Carolina

Application ID: 14AC156643

Program Name: USCS AmeriCorps

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:

Data from the seven participating school districts clearly shows deficiencies in the reading and writing test scores for middle school students. In 2013, the percentages of students testing below basic levels range from 24.5% to 53% (average 35.5%) for English/Language Arts and 24.8% to 55.9% (average 35.7%) for writing skills. Additionally, recent Census data show significant unemployment and poverty rates in the target counties.

The applicant provides solid current local data on poverty levels, and student academic performance to substantiate the need in the four South Carolina counties they propose to serve.

The applicant's explanation of the need for Saturday Academy in rural South Carolina is clearly described. Supporting documentation from the South Carolina Department of Education clarifies the stated need.

The inputs and activities are clearly defined, including the number students served, dosage of intervention, and location.

The applicant provides clear inputs and activities that are related to those inputs. The Logic Model flows logically through the outputs.

The applicant exhibits the ability to suitably address the goals of the program. Inputs and activities are clearly defined.

Weaknesses:

The absence of state or national comparative data makes it difficult to assess the severity of the identified needs.

The applicant does not provide national or state level data on poverty to make a case for the severity of the local data

in comparison.

The applicant does not define clear, or measurable, outcomes related to the goals of improving the reading and writing skills of middle level students.

The applicant provides non-specific language in the outcomes section of the Logic Model; it is unclear how the applicant defines the outcomes.

The applicant's Logic Model does not clearly delineate the program outcomes.

The applicant does not provide data on their past performance solving the identified problem.

There is no information provided in the Past Performance section of the application. Though there is a brief mention of the refinement of their testing and evaluation structure resulting in 80% of students achieving significant gains in standardized test scores, but no further detail on these tests is provided.

Past performance is not identified.