

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Teach for America

Application ID: 14ES155738

Program Name: Teach for America Wisconsin

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 sufficiently defines the problem by providing current data that includes the poverty rate and the academic achievement levels of the targeted students that the Teach for America program proposes to serve.

The applicant also provides current statistics regarding the highly qualified teacher shortage within the Milwaukee Public Schools.

The applicant explains well the current status of available teachers in the proposed project site, i.e., the severe teacher shortage, particularly in terms of the diversity of teachers available to serve in a highly diverse environment.

The applicant effectively linked the critical need for a diverse pool of effective teachers to ensure successful student achievement among students who live with the challenges of impoverished communities.

The applicant provided strong data to support the fact that the students in the 60 target communities and schools live below the federal poverty guidelines and all of the Teach for America teacher candidates will be trained to work exclusively in these schools and communities.

The applicant has demonstrated that a lack of highly qualified and diverse teachers affect the learning of students.

The applicant outlines a consistent and logically-aligned Theory of Change that demonstrates a logical relationship between the inputs, activities, outputs, and the short, medium, and long-term outcomes.

The applicant has also collected past evidence from the 2012-2013 school year to demonstrate the achievability of the performance targets outlined for the student targeted in the Milwaukee Schools (i.e., 1.5 years in academic growth/80% content strand mastery in one academic year).

There is a successful 4-year history of the City of Milwaukee working with AmeriCorps.

The applicant is gaining credibility for its ability to attract and retain a diverse teacher corps through the Teach for America model and Members.

Student achievement is showing gains from prior teaching efforts that engage Members.

There are established relationships within the project area community and stakeholders that support Members' efforts.

There is an established track record of successful fundraising to support the community's Teach for America initiatives.

The applicant has effectively demonstrated that the rigorous training that will be provided to prospective teacher candidates will focus not only on developing the educational pursuits of students, also acknowledging the challenges of poverty to learning.

The applicant cited some evidence that a previous school year demonstrated some success in helping students with academic achievement levels (e.g. 1.5 years of academic growth).

The applicant provided evidence that the program's efforts to increase the diversity of the Teacher for America pool had been successful (e.g., providing over 250 teachers to the targeted area since 2009 and doubled the number of people of color from 16% to 32% within the same time period).

Applicant met targets for prior year in student achievement.

Teach for America Milwaukee had a retention rate higher than that first first-year teachers in low-income communities.

Teach for America Milwaukee successfully incorporated service learning for Members into the programming.

The applicant has effectively demonstrated that the proposed training institute is key to enhancing the skills and preparation for participants to work in challenging high need communities.

The applicant has effectively demonstrated that the proposed Teach for America training institute for new teacher corp Members serve as a valuable source for recruiting a diverse pool of teachers.

The applicant has clearly demonstrated that the training institute will support the preparation of 160 new teachers to increase the academic achievement of students in over 60 schools.

Weaknesses:

The applicant attempts to link the highly qualified teacher shortage to the school system's inability to provide excellent education to low income student but does not provide comparative data within surroundings cities in Wisconsin to contrast how students are achieving at higher levels based on the quality of teachers within comparable grades and schools.

The applicant provides statistics regarding the doubling of the Teach for America AmeriCorps members who have become the 'pipeline for diverse leadership' in Milwaukee's education sector, but no data was provided as to whether the increase made a difference in raising achievement levels among the target student population.

The applicant provides poverty data without offering comparison to state and/or national data.

The data is not focused on the specific schools.

The applicant did not provide sufficient evidence that an additional 160 members would make a significant difference in increasing the academic achievement levels of low income and students of color within the Milwaukee Public Schools.

Applicant's past performance targets during the 2012-2013 school year were cited, but it was unclear as to how significant the 1.5 years of growth and 80% mastery was in helping students achieve.

Comparative data regarding achievement levels was not provided by the applicant to indicate whether the previous performance was significant.