

**APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY**  
**2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition**

Legal Applicant: Minnesota Alliance With Youth

Application ID: 14ES156739

Program Name: Central & Southern 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 high school graduation rate data by ethnic group within the targeted communities in Minnesota that the proposed program intends to serve.

The applicant also provides comparative graduation rate data to support the need for providing the program to serve specific ethnic groups within targeted communities in Minnesota (i.e., Hispanics, African Americans, and American Indians).

The applicant has effectively documented the high rates of poverty that exists in the targeted communities and thus provides a realistic correlation between poverty and lack of motivation for educational attainment.

The applicant overwhelmingly demonstrates that the state of Minnesota has one of the nation's largest disparities in graduation rates and that the economic impact of dropping out can be devastating for communities.

An additional and compelling discussion is provided regarding the economic consequences of not addressing this problem and the potential economic benefits of reducing the problem.

The applicant provides an aligned Theory of Change that demonstrates an appropriate and defined relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and short, medium, and long-term outcomes.

The applicant provided a well-aligned Theory of Change that will provide targeted interventions at critical points in a student's educational pathway in order to increase school engagement and high school graduation rates among low-income students and students of color.

The applicant included a continuous improvement plan to solicit feedback from both internal and external

stakeholders to help ensure program effectiveness.

The applicant has successfully demonstrated that the proposed project has merits and all of their efforts will contribute to closing the disparities in high school graduation rates between at-risk students and their more advantaged peers.

The Alliance Model takes a multi-faceted approach to engage Members in case management for intervening with students, which is supported by the interventions recommended in the cited studies.

The proposed program supports full-time Members to serve as case managers for the designated caseload of students. Members receive training that is linked to drop-out prevention and mentoring students in a variety of settings.

The Applicant is in its third year of performance.

The number of youth recruited increased from the first to second year (more than doubled).

Of the students who did complete the program in the two prior years, these students improved their attendance and behavior activities.

The applicant has reasonably shown a success rate of 100% of the participants who completed the targeted interventions have shown signs of improvement in at least one of the early warning indicators of attendance or behavior.

The applicant provided solid data to prove that the targeted interventions have resulted in the fact that of the 1,452 students who received individualized interventions during the 2011-2012 school year, 334 youth had positive data that was comparable over the course of the year. Of those, 49% improved in either attendance or behavior as a result of the members' support.

The applicant used a variety of methods to develop a continuous improvement plan to help achieve service and performance targets.

The applicant cited that for both program years (2011-2012 and 2012-2013, respectively), the program was able to service a significant percentage out of the total number of students who participated in the program

Weaknesses:

It was unclear as to what specific benchmarks would indicate the level of success for the proposed program.

While the participation numbers for program years 2012-2013 more than doubled for the year before, the student completion rate for the 12-week program decreased by a considerable amount than the prior year.

Tracking student participation and performance during the school year is not consistent.