

## **APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY**

### **2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition**

Legal Applicant: Teach For America

Application ID: 14ES156843

Program Name: Teach For America-Oklahoma

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 clearly demonstrated the problem that Oklahoma counties have with teacher shortage, low teacher retention, and the limited number of qualified teachers in specific curricular areas.

The applicant provides a compelling case of the need of the community, such as data related to high number of students who are not qualified for admission to any Oklahoma's public 4-year universities and shortage of teachers in the state.

The applicant satisfactorily presents the need to meet the general teacher shortage in the state of Oklahoma and provides specific data illustrating the link between high dropout rates and students' life prospects.

The applicant provided suitable evidence in support of the academic improvement of the students in classrooms of Teach for America Members.

The applicant cites a large number of studies to show the effectiveness of their previous programs and the impact they have made in schools.

The applicant has provided evidence that their program is effective in providing qualified teachers who have helped their students achieve 1.4 years of academic growth in just one calendar year in urban and rural areas with diverse populations.

The applicant describes progress in the program's performance by providing data on improved student performance in classrooms of Teach for America teachers and retention of these teachers.

The applicant provides relevant data that their Members were able to improve the students' academic performance.

The applicant was successful in meeting its goals during the 2012-13 school year, surpassing its goal by retaining 197 of the AmeriCorps members during the year.

Weaknesses:

The evidence presented to document the problem of educational inequality was not well articulated. There was little supporting data that geography and poverty were the causes of this inequality.

The applicant cited statistics that were not directly related to the initial statements of need. For example, the applicant presented the disparity in college entrance exam scores and college completion to support the argument that poverty was responsible for achievement gaps.

The applicant indicates that 23% of Oklahoma students drop out between 9<sup>th</sup> grade and graduation. However, the applicant does not provide the national drop-out rate which makes it difficult to determine if 23% is considered as high or not.

Needs specific to Lawton, El Reno, and Muskogee are not specifically addressed by the applicant, which makes it difficult to assess the needs in those areas which the applicant intends to serve.

The applicant did not present a well-articulated Theory of Change – the components were described but were not put forth in a logical flow.

The components of the logic model were not fully aligned as outputs and outcomes were not placed in the appropriate temporal columns, adding to the difficulty in understanding the Theory of Change.

Evidence was lacking to substantiate or support the outcomes of producing effective teachers or retention of these teachers in counties where teacher shortage or quality teacher retention is prevalent.

The applicant provides strong evidence that their intervention can solve the teacher shortage problem, but there is no evidence that their Members will solve the academic problems the community faces.

The applicant does not provide any information regarding how the Members will leverage an additional 415 volunteers to support students in the classrooms.

The applicant mentions the types of the cited studies (such as quasi-experimental or correlational studies). However, the applicant does not provide any methodology of these cited studies which makes it difficult to determine the actual type of studies and how these studies inform them if their program model will solve the community problem.

The applicant cites 11 studies to support the high quality of the program. However, no information is provided about each of the 11 studies, which makes it difficult to determine how and where these studies were conducted and if they are relevant to their program model.

It is unclear whether the 1.4 years of academic growth by the AmeriCorps teachers reported by the applicant constitutes a significant impact on student achievement because the applicant did not explain whether the gain was

statistically significant or greater than what could be expected or that this was also not accomplished by non-AmeriCorps teachers.

Insufficient evidence is presented in either the narrative or the logic model by the applicant relating how the AmeriCorps members will leverage 415 volunteers to support students and classrooms or what these volunteers will be doing.

The applicant does not provide information regarding what their goal was on the number of students who were expected to make academic growth in one year.