

# APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** City Year, Inc

**Application ID:** 15AC168267

**Program Name:** City Year Jacksonville

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 summary 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 logic model is clearly defined by the applicant regarding the proposed intervention and the expected outcomes. In addition, it is clear how the applicant plans to contribute to the existing problem.

The applicant will provide year round tutors, mentors and role models to support the school climate improvement plan.

The member training that will be provided is efficient to address the needs of the population being served. The training ensures the vision, mission, values and formal on the job training aligns with the organization. Basic Training Academy (BTA), CPR, Response To Intervention (RTI) trainings will be conducted by Members to ensure the understanding of the population being served.

Members will be supervised directly by a manager from City Year.

There will be opportunities on alternating Thursdays to provide staff training.

Members will have opportunities to engage with others in the community through the Nation service network. During this time they can establish relationships that will encourage them to participate in community projects after the training has been completed.

The applicant provided compelling details to show how the community need is prevalent by providing data showing that the local graduation rate is at 72.1%; 64% of 3 through 8 grader were Level 1 or 2 below satisfactory on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT); and 59% were below satisfactory on the math portion of the FCAT.

The applicant provides adequate details to show the interventions and roles of the AmeriCorps members. They described that their Members will commit to a year of full-time service in schools and will serve as tutors, near-peer mentors, role models, and support whole school climate improvement.

The applicant provided distinct evidence to show that the Whole Child service model (WSWC) will produce significant contributions to their theory of change by connecting students to near-peers. These peers will be expected

to provide individualized attention to students in Early Warning Indicators drop out risk of attendance, math, English, and will keep more students in school and on track.

There is strong evidence to show the applicants WSWC model will have an impact goal of having 80% of the students in program schools reach 10th grade on track and on time by using the evidence based (RTI) approach. The RTI approach is focused on providing targeted interventions in the four risk indicators which is based on the Early Warning Indicators research conducted by John Hopkins University.

The Logic Model provided is strong and very comprehensive because the applicant discussed the graduation rates at schools to be served by the program as being below the state graduation rate of 80%.

The applicant also provided inputs, outcomes and activities to address the graduation problem by discussing the roles of community volunteers in reducing the drop out risk by using the Early Warning System risk indicators.

Compelling evidence is provided by the applicant to show high quality member training that includes rules involving prohibited activities because the applicant discussed that the WSWC service model foundational training model will occur during their 21-day Basic Training Academy (BTA).

The applicant also discussed that the AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities will be reviewed during the registration day prior to start of service.

The proposed supervision trainings are likely to be successful and effective in providing guidance, support and allow AmeriCorps supervisors to follow program priorities because program managers will be expected to complete monthly on-to-ones with each member of the team to track progress towards goals and service quality.

The applicant provided compelling evidence to show how AmeriCorps members will have opportunities for reflection and will recruit from communities in which their program operates because the applicant discussed that there are opportunities for reflection through their individual development plans.

The applicant also provided details to show they draw applicants from their local communities by targeting recruitment efforts at local schools and colleges.

The program addresses the clear problem of underperforming schools in Duval County, FLA through targeted interventions for lower and high school students, providing both one on one tutoring and support for whole school climate improvement through the Whole School Whole Child (WSWC) model.

These interventions are specifically designed to address the identified problem by improving graduation rates and addressing early warning indicators for drop out, including poor English and Math skills, attendance and behavior issues.

The application provides a detailed explanation of AmeriCorps members' program tasks and schedule throughout the school week.

One hundred FT AmeriCorps members will benefit 1,400 students through whole class and school climate support and 1,025 students through targeted tutoring and mentoring, providing multiple hours of service throughout each class day throughout the school year, as well as afterschool services for homework assistance and student clubs.

The application contains a detailed and comprehensive Member Training plan that includes a strong and ongoing

program to cover both specific content for Members to perform their activities, as well as AmeriCorps-specific requirements, and contains well-organized feedback and coaching, and supervision at multiple levels.

There are multiple opportunities for member reflection, including an Idealist's Journey (IJ) curriculum, Leadership After City Year program, and daily team circles and debriefs. The IJ teams are structured to support site wide interaction and the program provides opportunities to serve on a national Dean's Council. Members in program will interact with Teach for America Members through joint training.

The program actively recruits in the local community and, in the past year, one third of the AmeriCorps members came from the community that the program serves.

**Weaknesses:**

Members experiences was addressed but the applicant gave only one example where an alumni servers in a position through the AmeriCorps programs but no other examples of how the experiences will benefit the majority of the Members.

The applicant was unclear if the Members will receive the appropriate experiences upon completion of the training related to a specific career path.

The applicant didn't clearly define how the Members would have meaningful service projects that will give them opportunities to reflect.

The applicant did not provide details to show when the actual training for WSWC would occur nor who would conduct this training.

The applicant did not provide specific details to show how they planned to train supervisors to follow AmeriCorps program regulations.

The application provides only limited detail on some program activities, such as the tutoring plan and activities to improve school climate, and does not clearly explain how these activities specifically lead to lowering some of the risk indicators for drop out.

The application explains that large percentages of students at the targeted schools are below satisfactory in Math and English Comprehensive Assessment Tests (CAT). However, the application does not provide the statewide percentage of students with below satisfactory scores on the CAT, so there is no basis for comparison.

In addition, the application explains that the targeted schools have a high proportion of minority and economically disadvantaged students, which it says that statewide tend to be more academically behind. However, the application does not provide the percentage of minority or economically disadvantaged students in these targeted schools who had below satisfactory scores on the CAT, so it is not clear if they are in fact more likely to be underperforming at these schools.

Other than phone calls home for students who are absent, the applicant did not include a description of activities that were focused on school attendance or behavior issues.

One of the two studies cited to provide evidence that the activities will produce the desired outcomes focuses only on younger grades (grades 3 - 5) and did not provide actual data, other than saying that the WSWC model significantly

and positively impacted test results. The second study focused only on after-school programming.

The application also cites a study still in progress that it says is expected to support the positive impact of WSWC.

There is no study focusing on the impact of the activities on attendance or behavioral issues, two indicators of drop-out risk identified in the application.

There are other groups providing some similar services at several of the identified schools - Teach for America, Duval Reads AmeriCorps Program, and Foster Grandparents. Though the application says that the program will cross-reference students so that there is no duplication of services, it says that it does not actively partner with these organizations (other than member training with Teach for America), which risks lack of coordination and inefficiencies in service delivery.