

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: City Year, Inc

Application ID: 15AC168392

Program Name: City Year Diplomas Now/New York

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 applicant clearly describes and documents with current, relevant and extensive data, the needs of the community to be addressed with this funding, specifically, the academic achievement in English and Mathematics and graduation rates of students in inner - city low performing neighborhood schools whose student populations are primarily low income, black and/or Hispanic youth.

The applicant provides extensive research data to establish the effectiveness of the activities and strategies it will implement to improve students' school retention rates and academic performance in English and Mathematics, including the use of evidence-based intervention curricula and program models implemented both during the school day and during after-school hours.

The applicant effectively describes the interventions and supports Members will implement, including focusing on services to high needs students who are below grade level in English and/or Mathematics and who have an attendance rate below 90% or identified by school staff as needing intervention support.

Applicant's supports will include help with assignments and providing tutoring and follow-up at school and home with students who do not complete homework assignments.

Members will be engaged with school staff in a variety of support activities to improve student's experiences and outcomes. For example, Members will support positive student behaviors throughout the day during transition and non-academic activities, provide follow up when assigned students are absent from school, contacting the home and encouraging students to improve attendance. These activities can be expected to improve the attendance and academic success of the students.

The applicant clearly and comprehensively provides current data about the community's need for a multi-faceted program that plans to, among other things, increase graduation rates which ranged from 55% to 64.3% in 2014.

The applicant persuasively outlines a series of student interventions which include Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Moreover, the interventions are well-aligned with the proposed outcomes.

The applicant plans to provide services to students that are not provided during a typical school day. Additionally, the program solidly demonstrates the connection between their proposed interventions and the goal of increased graduation rates.

The proposed member training is of high quality because it will be delivered by individuals with appropriate expertise. Also, the applicant provides a comprehensive plan for member training that begins strongly with the 21 day Basic Training Academy (BTA) and continues consistently throughout the service year.

The member supervision plan is effective in that supervisors will have frequent and meaningful interactions with AmeriCorps members.

The applicant describes the abundant employment opportunities in the education field for previous Members such as with Teach for America.

A significant strength of this application is the evidence that is presented through a variety of school, city, state and national data that thoroughly outline the need for an increase in measures that will support student performance and the likelihood that this program will be able to improve student performance in the community by supporting specific components identified in the Early Warning Indicators.

The applicant provides a strong description of the need for academic support in the target communities where extremely high poverty rates are evident along with student performance and graduation rates lower than city and state averages as indicated through city and school level poverty statistics along with national, state and district level student performance data.

The applicant provides clear and compelling evidence that the afterschool and whole school interventions proposed are likely to produce the desired outcomes of enhancing the numbers of students staying in school, increasing their ELA, Math and Reading scores.

The applicant presents a comprehensive description of the proposed intervention including a detailed plan of instruction and mentoring for Members throughout the program period using methodologies that have been tested and recognized for their effectiveness and are likely to result in well-trained Members with clearly defined, active roles that are essential to the overall program delivery.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly explain how its theory of change, pairing low performing students with near-peer mentors and role models in a positive learning environment, will keep more children in school and on track to graduation.

The applicant does not clearly explain the relevance of near-peer mentors in the program. There is no information about the relevance of peer mentors, as compared to the same activities conducted by others (e.g. school staff, adult volunteers, parents, etc.)

The applicant's extensive Logic Model does not clearly and comprehensively link each input and output to the expected outcome(s), to clearly demonstrate the expected results of each aspect of program implementation and the expectation that the proposed outcomes will be realized.

The applicant mentions that prohibited activities will be one of the topics of initial training/orientation for Members,

but does not provide information on how this will be accomplished or how it will ensure that all Members understand what activities are prohibited and the consequences should they engage in prohibited activities.

The applicant does not provide clear plans to connect participants to the broader National Service network.

The application fails to adequately address opportunities for its Members to have meaningful interactions with some of the other national service programs.

There is an absence of explicit information about how the proposed program will encourage Members to continue their journey in community service beyond their service term.

The applicant fails to provide a detailed and intentional plan to recruit Members from the target communities.

This application presents limited information regarding the plan to recruit Members from the community which the project will serve, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the project's ability to successfully recruit Members from the communities in which the program operates.