

# APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** Emerald Youth Foundation

**Application ID:** 15AC168397

**Program Name:** T.E.A.M.

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 statistical ACT and TCAP data are current, relevant, and appropriate to support the need for interventions in the target community.

The proposed AmeriCorps members' activities (homework assistance, ACT prep courses, and recreations activities) are logically connected to the need defined by the applicant.

The applicant presents a sufficient plan for how both Members and volunteers will be trained in prohibited activities and how that training will include curriculum modules, pre-service training, and final assessments.

The Members will gain valuable experiences which can be used after the service time with the applicant.

Applicant documents the severity of the need for an AmeriCorps Educational Program by identifying a large achievement gap among students at "inner-city" high schools when compared to other schools in the same district that are meeting proficiency in several areas.

Applicant identifies 7 service sites within "inner-city" communities to provide afterschool services using AmeriCorps Members as tutors, utilizing computer-based learning labs and personalized education plans to address academic weaknesses and set academic goals.

Applicant cites a study justifying the theory of change which documents the effectiveness of using online modules such as Compass Learning's Odyssey when compared to students that do not use this method of academic intervention.

Applicant thoroughly describes member training opportunities which includes a pre-service orientation and training (topics include: AmeriCorps history, position descriptions, prohibited, and member service agreements), Emerald Youth University, and a 2 week on the job training (topics include: Emerald Youth Overview, Learning, Relationship Building).

Applicant identifies AmeriCorps Development Days as a once a month opportunity for Members to come together for development, reflection and team building.

Applicant proposes to support and improve educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged students in inner-city Knoxville, Tennessee. Its use of locally specific data and standardized measures persuasively demonstrates the need for the proposed intervention. Data used includes proficiency on the American College Test, where a majority of the targeted students are projected to score no higher than 16, well below the range that would predict success in college. Also, the applicant used current data to show that significant numbers of the targeted students experience a deterioration in academic proficiency between sixth grade and eighth grade.

The applicant outlines a plan under which Members will be used to enhance and expand services provided by inner city schools and local churches. It notes that its after school program would have a teacher-to-student ratio of one-to-eight, compared to a state-monitored childcare ratio that ranges as high as one-to-thirty-two.

Applicant uses the U. S. Department of Labor's well-established curriculum materials known as "Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for the Workplace." From this and other training activities, Members will be able to boost transferable job skills by improving abilities in communication, critical thinking, problem solving and job readiness.

**Weaknesses:**

The type of support provided by supervisors to AmeriCorps members is unclear. Cited statistics within the needs section reference "inner-city" schools making it difficult to distinguish which schools are linked to the documented disparity. Although, Fulton and Austin-East are referenced within the discussion of benchmarks there is a lack of assurance that the other data provided is also connected to these two schools.

Applicant does not provide a clear schedule of services provided to students with corresponding locations in relation to targeted "inner city" schools.

It is unclear if the plan for recruitment of Members from partner churches serving as placement sites will result in a Members of similar "community."

In some cases the applicant relies on old data to establish program need. One such example of this occurs when applicant references a 1990 study on important skills for youth development.

Applicant is somewhat vague on exactly how it will assure that Members are fully trained on relevant matters including prohibited practices, indicating only that the program director will review this information "more than once."