

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Harlem Children's Zone

Application ID: 15AC168446

Program Name: Harlem Children's Zone Peacemaker Program

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 will comprehensively address the needs of the community through a three tiered program approach, including improving literacy skills, school readiness, and improving graduation rates. These supports will occur in grades kindergarten through high school, each program will target a certain grade level.

Both improvement in literacy skills and graduation rates will be conducted during and after the school days, while the school readiness will take place in the four Harlem Gem Pre-Kindergarten program sites.

The Members working as Intervention Specialists and Program Aides providing small reading groups, iReady modules, lending libraries, and Pre and Post assessments will successfully lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change presented by the applicant.

AmeriCorps members will provide effective significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem through mentoring, positive role models, literacy supports, and the online iReady Diagnostic and Instruction literacy program.

Members will receive high quality guidance and support from their weekly supervisory meetings with the supervisors to provide effective service.

The member supervisors will have bi-weekly supervision with their senior manager or program director, which are trained in AmeriCorps rules and regulations during the training sessions conducted by the AmeriCorps Program Directors. These meetings will provide adequate training and preparation to follow AmeriCorps regulations, priorities, and experiences.

The AmeriCorps members will gain extensive knowledge and skills through their experiences in this program. The Members will participate in seminars lead by program leaders, who will share their career experience. The program will also offer mentorships with senior program staff to help Members explore career and educational goals, and offer advice and supports when needed.

In the past two years 21 Members have been hired at the Harlem Children's Zone after completing their service time.

The applicant will target services to children in schools where 90% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch and

students perform poorly on State ELA exams, with only 11.6% testing at grade level (NYC DOE).

The applicant addresses the need for intervention and the roles they will play. They include significant data from the area schools and fully state their need for intervention.

The applicant provides significant detail of their proposed program. For example, they will improve literacy rates for K-5 students through AC member working in the school during the school day. The AC Members will also support after school programs in 7 schools and utilize the iReady Diagnostic & Instruction, which is a proven curriculum.

The applicant demonstrates significant evidence that their program is effective and will be meaningful. For example, they have utilized an independent research group to analyze their program last year and their results were higher than expected, because the students improved more than expected in their literacy grade levels.

They also include career paths and 21 past recipients have become program staff. They also have a thorough screening process for the applicants.

The applicant has developed a significant holistic program that provides high quality instruction. The students receive added support from age three until high school graduation. The services are not duplicated elsewhere in the school and the grantees services are unique to their program.

The applicant will provide a significant eight days of orientation training for the AmeriCorps members with three days on board training and a week of site specific training. They will then receive training once per month thereafter. They will also include training during school breaks in December, February and April.

The applicant provides a sufficient program that includes a review of the prohibited activities at the beginning of the service period. Also, Members found to be participating in the prohibited activities will be investigated.

The grant demonstrates a well-aligned supervision program through having the supervisors thoroughly trained on AmeriCorps rules and regulations and by having the host site program directors sign an MOU each contract year that outlines all the rules and regulations and requirements for their compliance. Since the program takes place in the schools, the school supervision must be on board.

The applicant organization fully describes how the proposed program will meet the clearly articulated needs of the service area and target population.

The applicant organization clearly describes evidence-based interventions that are proven effective in responding to need and attaining outcomes.

The applicant organization clearly describes Members' roles, responsibilities, division-of-labor and evidence-based interventions to meet target population needs and attainment of educational success.

The applicant organization describes that Members' in addition to meeting program goals, objectives and adhering to standards for delivering evidence-based interventions, as a value-added outcome also function as mentors and role models for the target population and the community-at-large.

The applicant organization clearly describes the comprehensive and professional development Members receive to deliver programs supported by the proposal.

The application clearly describes the role supervisory and senior staff that assures a highly effective level of Members' activity.

The application fully describes local and state activities that permit Members opportunities to network with other AmeriCorps programs.

The application describes that previous Members have gained the skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy resulting in the commitment to remain in community service within the target area.

The application describes how past activities have significantly increased community capital and the image of AmeriCorps in the service area and target population.

Weaknesses:

There are elements missing from the logic model due to page constraints. There is no discussion of the third tier of the program, the High School Graduation in the first three pages. The applicant does not specifically state what skills the AmeriCorps members will gain through their program experience or training for future employment. The applicant does not significantly describe how their experience will be meaningful.

The applicant does not fully develop opportunities for their Members to identify community needs and to engage in service learning projects. They have not listed what skills will be developed or what percent of their Members went on to become civic leaders.

The logic model exceeds the page limit therefore not all elements could be assessed for alignment.

The Logic Model exceeds the three page limit prohibiting a full analysis and assessment of all elements.