

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Jennings Public School

Application ID: 15AC168698

Program Name: Lead to Read (Successful Service)

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 identifies the problem and the needs of the community. It outlines who is being served, how they are served and the wide array of cultures and participants with statistics and clearly defined research on the area.

The applicant addressed the hard to serve population and adequately described how they will be putting their plan in place and will be starting at the 3rd grade level for child development which is a pivot point.

The applicant has concrete training tools that are evidence based and have proven to be effective. In addition, they are providing their AmeriCorps volunteers with a well-developed training program which will make them more effective throughout the program.

The applicant paints a good picture of the education and employment limitations in the community. It clearly outlines how this program will enhance lives and increase their economic status.

The applicant presents clear long-term goals to have students' graduate high school at or above grade level with the intent for them to obtain secondary education, military service or livable wage employment, which will allow sustainability.

The applicant clearly describes the role of the AmeriCorps Members and provides them with several ways for supervision. In addition they are provided a mid and end year evaluation to determine their progress and success which will be invaluable.

The applicant paints a substantiated picture of community and school literacy needs through relevant, current data on poverty rates, free/reduced student lunch rates, school reading scores, school funding deficits, rural area lack of resources, unemployment, and college degree attainment.

The applicant describes a compelling plan for high quality training including a 4 day intense orientation, AmeriCorps specific instruction, ongoing collaboration between schools/Members/volunteers, evidence-based literacy strategies, listed specific topics, a specific 6 step approach to tutoring sessions, and ongoing support by a Literacy Coach. In addition, ongoing teacher support and monthly Program Director visits will support Members and volunteers; the

Director is also a reading specialist who will prescribe specific strategies for struggling readers after observing tutoring sessions.

The applicant presents a solid, logical plan to address prohibited activities including practice in identifying allowable and unallowable activities.

The application presents an ongoing reflection and service experience plan for Members which will support their continued learning and dedication to community service.

The applicant provides significant demographic data detailing the population, lack of employment, and inadequate educational opportunities for the 19 districts to be served by the tutoring program. Sixty-three to ninety percent of the students in the program districts receive free or reduced price lunches compared to the statewide average of 62%.

Research from reliable cited sources, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is presented and strongly supports the need for reading proficiency by third grade.

Significant data comparing reading proficiency in the state, 8 counties, and the 19 schools in which Members will serve, supports the need for the proposed tutoring program. Most of the 19 schools where Members will provide tutoring fall almost 20 points below the state reading proficiency average.

The applicant cites research which strongly supports the need for reading proficiency by third grade. For example, a Hunter College study determines that third graders who lack reading proficiency are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

The applicant thoroughly describes the evidence-based Scott Foresman literacy curriculum which is used in Member training. The curriculum has been tested and improved over time and includes such topics as engaging reluctant readers. Members also receive additional training from a Literacy Coach. These factors in combination will lead to an effective tutoring program.

The applicant recruits Members within the rural communities and provides opportunities for them to enhance their own education and gain skills for future employment. For example, by writing in their respective journals, or writing to each other to create a written dialogue both Members and students increase skills.

Throughout the year the Program Director showcases talents and skills of the Members. This demonstrates opportunities for the Members to prepare for future leadership and employment.

Weaknesses:

The applicant presents a brief description of a one-time, annual training of supervisors during a meeting in August between the site supervisor and Program Director, making it unclear whether this is adequate for supervisors previously uninvolved in AmeriCorps activities. There is no mention of ongoing training reinforcement for supervisors.

The applicant lacks a detailed plan for recruiting AmeriCorps Members from the local community.

Members are to leverage 10 volunteers but applicant does not present any information about how the volunteers will be recruited or utilized.