

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Graceland University

Application ID: 15AC168812

Program Name: AmeriCorps Youth Launch

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 adequately documents high poverty levels in the targeted communities and describes the negative educational outcomes that accompany high rates of poverty. Income levels and qualification for school lunch programs are cited to document the level of need with comparative data provided for the state and nation.

The applicant provides a sufficient description of the interventions and the roles of Members and volunteers in providing a range of mentoring and services to children and youth in rural areas with limited access to enrichment activities.

The applicant proposes a solid approach to building capacity within rural communities to meet the developmental needs of children.

A well-documented protocol of building developmental assets is clearly described. The strategy proposed builds on existing community assets within a regional college to engage adults to promote positive youth development.

The applicant clearly describes strategies to ensure Members continue with the commitment to service after they complete the program. Examples of activities of past Members are provided.

Additionally, the acquisition of knowledge regarding the developmental needs of children and youth combined with the recruitment of Members from local communities ensures that the skills gained will continue to benefit the community.

The applicant presents an adequate plan for member reflection on service activities through regular meetings with peers and recording of service activities.

Members are provided with sufficient opportunities to connect with one another and the larger AmeriCorps community through regular meetings, trainings, and service activities.

Citing recent and relevant sources such as the US Census Bureau, the applicant describes in great detail the poverty and attainment levels of this rural target audience. The description clearly illustrates the impact it has on educational success, future development of students, and the need to provide more supportive activities for these students.

The applicant presents compelling statistics comparing the poverty, social isolation and lower than expected developmental assets in the targeted communities.

Data is also presented to demonstrate the connection found in their state between poverty (as measured by free and reduced lunch) and academic achievement.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides limited details regarding the provision of high-quality supervision to AmeriCorps members. The plan does not address issues related to limited local community capacity to support an AmeriCorps program which is identified by the applicant.

The applicant does not articulate how the activities will produce significant and unique contributions in the communities to be served. Outcomes are presented in general terms such as graduation from high school without identifying specific improvements anticipated.

Inadequate detail is provided regarding the training of site supervisors. Information is not provided regarding specific training topics covered throughout the year.

The logic model does not provide measurable criteria in terms of the short, midterm, and long-term outcomes. There are no quantitative measures provided for the amount of increases or improvements that will be realized by the students who participate in the program. The outcomes are essentially process-oriented; for example, 108 at risk students will participate in out of school programs. No description of how much improvement they will realize is provided.

The application is lacking clear information about the proposed program model beyond the amount of time that the AmeriCorps members will spend with the program participants.

The logic model and theory of change do not include the types of activities the Members will engage in to enhance the student's Developmental Assets either in the school-based program or in the out-of-school program for at risk youth nor does the application specify the types of exploratory and enrichment activities youth will participate in.

The lack of information regarding the content of the program and the supporting evidence to demonstrate that the planned activities have been shown to be effective makes it impossible to determine if the proposed program activities will lead to the stated outcomes of building developmental assets in the children who participate.