

# APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** ServeMinnesota Action Network

**Application ID:** 15AC169175

**Program Name:** Promise Neighborhood 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 presents strong evidence that there is a need to improve literacy proficiency in children from grades 3 - 8 in North Minneapolis.

The applicant presents a well-designed logical description of the need in the Promise Neighborhood in North Minneapolis. This neighborhood has some of the lowest reading rates in the state.

The proposed intervention of extending tutoring services after school with master coaching who are experts in math and reading along with AmeriCorps is likely to be successful. This approach is evidence based and already has a proven track record of success.

The applicant presented an effective training program for AmeriCorps members. The program will have AmeriCorps members work with experts in math and reading along with providing training to prepare them for future jobs and college placements. This is a very valuable experience for each member.

The proposed training of AmeriCorps members is likely to be successful because of the guidance that Members will receive from their supervisors. Throughout the program pilot managers will have discussions with Members about all aspects of the program including their career aspirations.

Members will also have on-going guidance from master teachers who are experts in math and reading.

The applicant provided a clear, detailed explanation of how Members will address the community needs through tutoring and mentoring teachers, using the Harlem Children's Zone as a model.

In the theory of change section, the applicant very clearly explains the methodology and curricula that will be used by Members to improve students' reading and math skills. The applicant further cited evaluation studies that revealed that their intervention resulted in higher academic scores when compared to other schools that did not host this intervention.

The applicant also explains the Members' unique contribution to the community and schools through data collection that will inform administrators of students' and teachers' progress in order to better monitor and improve curricula

and classroom teaching.

The applicant has a very detailed strategy for member training that was backed by positive results from an external evaluation and that includes a multi-tiered approach. The training is very hands-on and practical, including strategies for engaging challenging students in the classroom in a positive way ("innocent classroom") and includes a tour of the site and meetings among the Members and their internal and master coaches. Members will receive an internal coach as well as a master coach to monitor their progress, and Members will participate in regular trainings taught by the program staff.

The applicant's member experience section was also very detailed and strong: Members will be provided space for reflection through professional learning groups, which will also serve to connect Members to each other to share best practices. Members will be asked to submit self-evaluations and personal plans to monitor their personal and professional growth.

The applicant clearly describes how Members will be provided opportunities to connect with each other and the broader National Service network as well as to engage in community service projects: an inter-corps council will be established to allow Members opportunities to engage in civic engagement projects as well as connect with other Members in the larger AmeriCorps network.

The applicant's recruitment plan clearly explains how they will recruit from the target community by using videos and culturally-specific communication outlets. The recruitment will be year-round and also utilize local relationships with partners for referrals to ensure representation from the target community.

The interventions that are chosen are compelling and will lead to the outcomes of producing students that are literate and math proficient.

The applicant sets math and literacy targets and repeatedly test students during the intervention to modify the instruction in order to ensure progress toward their intended targets.

The Members of this project will give value to the targeted community by using the knowledge of classroom tools (i.e. ELLCO), assisting students with foundational math skills, and assisting the targeted population with efforts to increase skills in math/reading proficiency.

The applicant presents a comprehensive training plan for Members. Members engage in a four-day, pre-service institute which includes AmeriCorps 101, program requirements and expectations (prohibited activities), student confidentiality processes and operational details (i.e. Data assessments and progress monitoring).

Strong data has been presented by applicant describing member support. Information regarding the multiple layers of support for the Members have been explained. Each member is assigned three staff Members that provide observation and feedback. Each of the three layers of support also provide assessment assurance, integration of service experience with career plans, and subject matter expertise in the program model.

Members will gain valuable skills and training that can be utilized after their service ends.

Members build employable skills in communication, cultural competency and instructional practice.

Personal reflections are completed at the end of each Members' service year. Personal reflections allow Members the opportunity to assess their strengths and weakness in order to become better prepared to serve their targeted group

and to become overall better individuals. Self-evaluation is done prior to mid-year.

The Members are given the opportunity to share best practices and enhance their connectivity with other Members. They are allowed to participate in community service projects and civic engagement activities throughout the year.

Student groups within AmeriCorps hold recruitment events supplemented by community-specific advertising, and community outreach such as local fairs and festivals. Members are trained to be goodwill ambassadors to build grass root promotional efforts.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not sufficiently explain how supervisors are trained. This made it difficult to assess the type of service supervisors will be providing.