

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: California Children and Families Foundation

Application ID: 15AC170571

Program Name: First 5 Service Corps

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 explains how significant numbers of economically disadvantaged children in California start their school careers behind in literacy, numeracy and social emotional skills.

The applicant explains that this will impact these children's entire academic trajectory and their later employment and career prospects. Though there is good evidence that early education programs can address this gap, state budget cuts have meant that a large portion of this at-risk group does not have access to these programs.

The applicant proposes to provide these needed school readiness services to these at-risk children ages 2 - 5 years old in 15 California counties.

The applicant provides strong data to document the particular need for these services in the selected counties, which have a significant population that is low income and/or from ethnic and language minority backgrounds. Children in these population groups are at high risk for academic failure. Within the particular sites, children will be screened both for family income and access to other early childhood education services to ensure that the program services will be provided to students in most need and without access to other services.

The application provides a detailed explanation of the specific evidence-based interventions that will be employed.

The applicant also gives a specific description of the AmeriCorps members' tasks throughout the program and their daily activities, which will include class, small group and individual work with the children. There will also be workshops with parents to improve family literacy.

The applicant presents strong evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed intervention in both assessing and improving school readiness skills. The application discusses a recent independent evaluation of its program, a Kellogg Foundation experimental study, and a national evaluation of the GOLD assessment. The flow of the logic model is clear and its elements are logically aligned.

There is a comprehensive and ongoing member training program; and Members are closely supervised by qualified and experienced Early Childhood Educators.

The applicant clearly describes how the community problem will be addressed by detailing that the California Children and Families Foundation (CCAFF) and Prevent Child Abuse California (PCACA) propose to continue First 5 Service Corps with 135 AmeriCorps members who will provide school readiness services to economically disadvantaged children ages 2 to 5 years old. Further evidence of addressing their community problem in school readiness is provided by the applicant discussing that at the end of the first program year students will demonstrate gains in school readiness in social emotional development, school readiness in literacy skills, and gains in numeracy skills.

The applicant provided compelling details to show how the community need is prevalent by providing data showing that since 2008, California cut over \$1 billion from child care and preschool resulting in a loss of 30,000 preschool slots for children. Further strong evidence of severe community needs is provided by the applicant which shows that 30% of children live in low-income working families, and 30% to 46% of children 3 to 5 years old are not enrolled in preschool or kindergarten.

The applicant provides some details to show the interventions and roles of the AmeriCorps members by discussing that AmeriCorps members will provide economically disadvantaged children with 35 hours of social emotional/literacy/numeracy school readiness activities based on a child's need. The applicant also discussed that they plan to use an intervention called Teaching Strategies GOLD which provides aligned activities and curricula.

The applicant provided some evidence to show that their proposed project will produce significant contributions to their theory of change by discussing that F5SC's proposed intervention is Response to Intervention (RTI). The applicant further detailed that RTI will result in proposed outcomes because extensive studies show children who receive early education are ready to succeed in elementary school, and is validated by the long-standing positive effect early intervention programs have on a child's cognitive development.

The Logic Model provided is strong and very comprehensive because the applicant discussed inputs, outcomes and activities to address the project problem. Further evidence is provided by the applicant detailing that early child development is critical for school success and by providing literacy and numeracy skills activities children will succeed in school.

Compelling evidence is provided by the applicant to show high quality member training that includes rules involving prohibited activities. Members will attend an orientation conducted at F5SC service sites; and will involve a history of National Service, member benefits, code of conduct, policies/procedures, including prohibited/un-awarded activities .

There is strong evidence to show that proposed supervision trainings are likely to be successful and effective in providing guidance and support for AmeriCorps supervisors to follow program priorities. This support is further provided by supervisors receiving training on prohibited/un-awarded activities.

The applicant discussed that Prevent Child Abuse California (PCACA) monitors the quality of supervision through monthly member webinar calls, annual site visits, availability of Project Manager to Members, and reviewing Members' timesheet for recording of weekly supervision.

The applicant provided compelling evidence to show how AmeriCorps members will gain skills that will be valued by future employers. F5SC helps Members succeed in future careers by collaborating with community partners for future employment.

There is strong evidence to show that the applicant will have access to meaningful services and opportunities for

reflection during trainings, supervision, and in twice yearly written success stories.

The applicant provided strong evidence to show how Members will develop connections with each other, develop an ethic of skills, and an active productive citizenship while continuing to engage in public and community service.

The applicant also provided details to show how they draw applicants from their local communities by service sites promoting service listings through community bulletin boards, local listservs, presentations at local schools, and outreach at local events.

The strengths of the program design are early intervention for school readiness. Creating an avenue to employ educational and social development for children in low social and economical areas will help to decrease the dropout rate. Parental involvement is addressed and this component will be key in the overall success.

The applicant clearly provides rationale for the need of a program that will address school readiness for the under privilege children ages 2-5 of 15 California communities.

The program design also addresses the need of early education since the state has cut funding for Head Start and Pre-K. One of the most important components is the parental involvement to help create a foundation. This innovative component could strengthen the community as whole by investing in lives of children and parents.

The Theory of Change and the Logic Model meet the criteria because AmeriCorps has developed a measure to leverage school readiness programs and incorporate volunteers to help bridge cultural and emotional gaps.

The applicant views on early intervention and school readiness will help in creating family literacy measures to assist in advancing early childhood education.

The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contribution for social and emotional development, by increasing student learning in literacy and/or math skills. The results of the Quasi Experiment support the need of this program as a whole.

The applicant clearly states that member training and volunteers will adhere to the regulations as well as the prohibited activities. The applicant does this by developing a performance management, leadership skills, time management and core training.

The supervisors are highly trained and provided the support and skill set required to successfully follow the AmeriCorps program regulations and expectations. Data collection and family engagement training will help to develop future sustainability.

Weaknesses:

The applicant says that it will leverage the services of 810 volunteers to support the school readiness activities, including outreach and training parents, but does not describe how they will be recruited or explain in detail exactly what their role will be (other than that 270 will be ongoing and 540 will be one-time volunteers).

The application does not explain clearly the physical location where the school readiness services will occur. The sites appear to be at organizations with ongoing operations, but this is not fully detailed. The application provides selection criteria for the sites, but does not give a real indication of the ongoing work of the sites and whether they are doing similar or other work in addition to the AmeriCorps project.

The applicant did not provide details to show how AmeriCorps members will develop their ethics and skills to become active and productive citizens who will engage in public and community service after their AmeriCorps term ends.

The applicant did not provide details to show how AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address their community problems.

There are no details to show how the applicant plans to develop AmeriCorps members ethics and skills for productive citizenship or how they will be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service.