

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Playworks Education Energized

Application ID: 15AC170621

Program Name: Playworks California

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 demonstrates a need for bullying prevention and school climate interventions in California public schools with relevant bullying and youth risk data from national, state and local sources.

The proposed school climate intervention is logically connected to the problem and supported with research documenting the effectiveness of the strategy for decreasing bullying, behavior issues, and promoting school engagement.

The applicant clearly explains the role of AmeriCorps Members with details on daily activities and a description of how Members supplement existing school resources.

Member activities both in and outside the classroom are strategically designed to address immediate needs and to build capacity for sustained positive school climates in targeted schools.

The applicant's theory of change is comprehensive, detailed, and supported by convincing evidence from rigorous academic research and program evaluations.

The evidence provided by the applicant, combined with clearly defined and unique member services, suggests a high likelihood of success for the proposed intervention.

The applicant's training approach is rigorous, comprehensive, and strategically designed to prepare Members to succeed in delivering the evidence-based program intervention with quality and fidelity.

The applicant's plan for training Members includes over 100 hours of intervention-specific and AmeriCorps-specific content.

The applicant is committed to adhering to AmeriCorps rules and regulations. The program integrates training and reinforcement of AmeriCorps-specific rules and prohibited activities into multiple programmatic areas, and details how the regulations extend to program volunteers.

The applicant presents sufficient statistical data to support the need for the proposed project. The data presented

indicates that at least two in five students reported some type of bullying and further indicated there were numerous instances of harassment at targeted districts.

The criteria to select schools where services will be presented is outlined and the process will ensure students with the highest needs for the proposed services will be identified.

The theory of change is logical and aligned with appropriate activities that will help to promote positive school environments for the target population.

The plan to provide in-class activities such as the leadership development program is an integrated approach that will also provide Members with the skills they need to implement program services. Additionally, Members will provide fifteen hours of positive behavior training to upper elementary student junior coaches who will model positive behavior and assist their peers with conflict resolution.

This use of junior coaches will encourage positive behavior amongst students and is likely to reduce instances of bullying which is the ultimate goal of the project.

The applicant offers information to show that Member training is sufficient and will support Members. The plans to provide one hundred hours of instruction including AmeriCorps training and prohibited activities, skill development and conflict resolution will likely support program goals and outcome.

The applicant provided a unique program and a compelling description of bullying. The description was supported by relevant and recent data that described an overview of the problem, coupled with comparative statistics highlighting the problem in various school districts in the targeted areas of the state.

The applicant aptly outlined how the problem goes beyond simply bullying, describing how AmeriCorps members will additionally have a positive impact on the youth's academic progress.

The applicant provided a well-documented training program for Members in an effort for them to provide effective service. In addition to the initial trainings that include over 100 hours, there are also weekly follow-up activities incorporated into the training program to further reinforce program expectations and curriculum.

The application outlines the knowledge, experiences and skills (i.e. group management, youth development and mentoring, relationship building and facilitation) that AmeriCorps members will gain as a result of their training and experiences.

These skills are directly connected to the anti-bullying work that the AmeriCorps members' work will be focused on.

The applicant provides information related to how AmeriCorps members will establish connections with each other and the broader National Service network in order to build esprit de corps.

This is expressed through coordinated site visits for Members to spend the day together at school sites and experience a day in the life of another Member.

Weaknesses:

The plan to ensure Members will be encouraged to engage in public and community service after their term is not clear as the applicant provides limited information to show there are processes in place.

The application lacked a clear description of how AmeriCorps members will develop an ethic of service, such as how Members would be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service after their term has concluded.