

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Youth Policy Institute

Application ID: 15AC170783

Program Name: LA Promise 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 provides compelling data on the need for tutoring in its target area by documenting how (a) the educational need in their specific area is far greater than that in LA in general and (b) the 18 schools in which it will work are persistently have been low-performing, with only 38% of students proficient in English and Math and (c) current tutoring services are limited to part-time tutors after school, indicating that the more robust tutoring program to be conducted by Members is needed.

In the Theory of Change section, the applicant provides a strikingly clear case for how likely the project is to be successful. In just some examples, the schools take an active part in selecting students; Members and teachers together establish a student learning plan for each student, the team sets weekly goals. Lastly, they use established assessment strategies and evidence-based tutoring techniques.

Member training exceeds expectations because the applicant offers (1) extended training (80 hours of orientation/ 180 hours in-service education/ 40 hours of training during breaks) and (2) training is not generic; rather, it is focused on the group of students the tutor will serve

Site-specific data demonstrate the needs via comparative statistics for local area schools.

Personnel from the proposed school sites report that current services provided by existing part-time tutors are inadequate to overcome the high rates of low-academic achievement.

Members' services are described in detail, adding valuable intervention activities that are provided to an inadequate degree by existing staff, as stated by personnel from the targeted schools.

Member training is described in great detail, including duration and occurrence throughout the year.

Specific skills and experiences which Members will gain are described in detail and their value to future careers in education or other fields which require communication and organizational skills are noted.

The extensive training, supportive roles and demonstrated success Members experience result in former Members' expression of a meaningful service experience. Experienced Members serve as mentors to new Members. Reflection

is facilitated by recording monthly "Stories of Service."

The applicant identifies its target location as the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood, Los Angeles, CA with includes the communities of Hollywood and Pacoima. The applicant describes this area as having high poverty rates with Hollywood at (35%) and Pacoima at (30%). The applicant states that (83%) of students qualify for free/reduced lunch.

The applicant states it will utilize (54) AmeriCorps Members who will provide academic tutoring to (18) schools at (13) sites. The applicant states that across these schools, (38%) of students are proficient in English Language Arts (ELA) and (31%) of students are proficient in Math.

The applicant identifies its focus area as Education and states it will serve students in grades k-12. The applicant states within the first year, it will serve (65%) or (1,578) students and they will receive at least 30 hours of tutoring in English Language Arts or Math. The applicant states the proposed interventions will cause students to progress one academic proficiency learning level on the Scholastic Reading Inventory/Scholastic Math Inventory assessments.

The applicant states it will use two full-time Volunteer Coordinators, and will leverage (20) ongoing volunteers to tutor and (720) one-time volunteers to assist in special events such as Career Fairs and service days.

The applicant identifies benefits of utilizing AmeriCorps Members working full time with teachers as a program enhancement to help boost academic achievement, and to move tutoring services from part time after school to full time hours.

The applicant provides compiling data from the 2012-13 school year which indicated that target area scored significantly lower than the statewide average.

The applicant states that the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood (LAPN) schools scored (62%) below proficient in English Language Arts, compared to 52% for the statewide average of 44%. The applicant states that (69%) of its students scored below the state average of (49%) in math. The applicant states it will work with teachers to identify students who are lowest test scores and grades and enroll them in tutoring services.

The applicant states it will provide Members and the (13) training sites with two weeks or (80) hours of pre-orientation training.

The applicant states Members will be trained on allowable and prohibited activities, payroll/benefits, grievance procedure, site supervisors/service sites, and overview of communities. The applicant states Members will also receive training in outreach, communication with students and families, mandated reporting, and cross-cultural basics. The applicant states that Members will receive 180 hours of training over a 10 month period or 18 hours per month.

The applicant states that Supervisors/Coordinators will receive a separate orientation before Members begin service.

The applicant states the benefit of doing so is to ensure that Supervisors thoroughly understand AmeriCorps program policies, guidelines, and procedures. The applicant states that Supervisors/Coordinators are also trained with Members during the pre-service Orientation to assist in the alignment of supervisor and member expectations.

The applicant states it is a member of the National Council of La Raza AmeriCorps portfolio, and it intends to partner with other AmeriCorps programs on joint events, such as One Economy (AmeriCorps VISTA in Hollywood).

The applicant describes a persuasive method in which to give Members an opportunity to develop ethics and citizenship. The applicant states Members participate in a swearing-in and graduation ceremony, both of which are valid incentives for the program. The applicant states it will also participate in National Service Days to build a sense of active citizenship.

The applicant states its Members will be recruited from target Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood communities. The applicant states it has deep relationships with Pacoima and Hollywood and two new GEAR UP programs. The applicant states that college students serving as GEAR UP tutors, will be recruited as Members upon graduation.

The applicant identifies several universities in which it recruits new Members such as UCLA, LA City College, LA Mission College, California State University LA, and California State University Northridge.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe in any detail at all how Members will reflect on service. It only states that Members will record "Stories of Service" without indicating that these stories will be shared and discussed with others. Further, it is not clear without further detail if "Stories of Service" are, in and of themselves, a strong reflection tool.

The applicant does not discuss how it will encourage an ethic of service after the service experience.

A causal link between poverty and low-academic achievement is not supported by statistics.

The coordination of volunteer tutors is mentioned; specific roles and activities for volunteers are not described.

Academic interventions are well documented; student and family support services are mentioned but not detailed.

The qualifications of trainers are not included.

The applicant does not clearly describe how the "Stories of Service" will be an effective method for Members to reflect on their service term.