

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: National College Advising Corps

Application ID: 15ED170519

Program Name: National College Advising 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 strong and compelling evidence that supports the need for AmeriCorps members to provide college advising services (such as counseling, assistance in completing college and financial aid applications, and retention) to low-income, first generation and underserved students.

The applicant's detailed description of its "Near-Peer Advisers" model provides strong evidence that it is an effective intervention and sound rationale for 243 full-time AmeriCorps Members to serve as near-peer advisers in the 243 targeted high schools; of which over 70% of the advisers are underrepresented or first generation students.

The applicant provides persuasive evidence that AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training. Based on an annual adviser survey, 80% of advisers stated that their CAC/AmeriCorps experience affected their future education and career goals; and 99% of advisers reported their intentions to attend graduate school which strongly demonstrates the effectiveness of their training/experience.

The applicant's recruitment plan is intentional and results-oriented; as evidenced by the applicant recruiting recent graduates of its 23 partner colleges and universities; of which most are first-generation college, low-income and/or underrepresented themselves.

The application clearly describes a well-designed and complete training plan Members will receive, both initially and on-going, from local persons with expertise in the areas Members will use during their college advising activities.

The application clearly describes the professional development opportunities offered by the program including public and community service, creating skills and commitment beyond their current service terms, with internal surveys attesting to success in this area.

The applicant addresses the need for assistance with the college application process for students from low income families through the placement of advisors at participating schools. Data is provided to demonstrate the need for this program.

The Members will be provided high quality training. This is evidenced by the details provided regarding the targeted training the participating advisors will receive. The trainings are directly aligned with the tasks to be performed.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provided limited socio-economic statistical data that demonstrate the lack of its proposed college advising services is prevalent and severe in all eight targeted states of AZ, FL, GA, MA, MI, NC, PA, and TX where it serves the 243 underserved high schools.

Because the applicant did not provide convincing evidence of the need of its proposed college-advising services in all nine targeted states, the outputs and outcomes sections of the logic model contain questionable assumptions (such as "direct products of program activities"); and therefore do not appear to be logically aligned. Also, the Executive Summary identifies eight states as part of the target service area but the logic model only lists six; AZ and FL are omitted.

The application does not include data relevant to the eight states the program will serve to support the problem/need of providing college application and entrance advising to low-income, first-generation, underrepresented students.

The application does not describe how Members will leverage 1200 volunteers.

The applicant does not fully address the role of leveraged volunteers and how the AmeriCorps participants will facilitate this aspect of the program.