

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: FoodCorps, Inc

Application ID: 15ES167521

Program Name: FoodCorps Montana

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 very clearly describes the proposed activities of the AmeriCorps members: nutrition education, school gardens, and introduction of new foods in school meals.

The applicant also provides a clear rationale as to why these particular activities were chosen in order to address the cited problem of low quality food in school meals, and how the intended changes in food consumption relate to the outcomes of reducing obesity and improving the future health of the children engaged in these activities.

Clear and compelled evidence is cited to support the interventions chosen. In particular, evidence is cited that the strategy of performing multiple, mutually-reinforcing activities such as those proposed in the project plan is more effective than a single intervention.

The applicant describes a comprehensive and on-going training program for the Members, starting with a three-stage (national, state, local site) orientation, followed by monthly webinars and on-line resources, and reinforced by opportunities for Members to share experiences and best practices.

The applicant describes a member experience plan that would facilitate meaningful opportunities for reflection through having each member complete a weekly Reporting and Reflection log.

The applicant clearly describes how the community problem/need will be addressed by providing research on childhood obesity and its impact on health.

The applicant supports its proposed interventions with research supporting the role of school gardens and nutrition education in reducing childhood obesity.

The applicant clearly describes how the intervention is likely to lead to the identified outcomes by citing research on school gardens and their own data that supports the Three Pillar strategy they propose to use.

The applicant describes use of its Landscape Assessment at the beginning and end of the school year to assess change in the school food environment and uses data from this instrument from the previous year to indicate statistically significant changes in nutrition education, school garden environments, and school cafeterias. This indicates that

their proposed intervention will likely lead to similar outcomes.

The applicant provides support that Members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers by reporting that over half of their Members who complete their terms of service enter jobs or continue study in school nutrition and local food systems.

The applicant presents relevant data that demonstrates the effects of unhealthy diets and childhood obesity nationally and within the state of Montana, the targeted service area. The applicant's cited data includes an informative overview of statistics relative to students who are eligible for free/reduced rate meals and experience food insecurity in two specific areas (Butte and Glacier County) of the service area.

The presented data shows schools' integral influence in food sourcing and nutritional education and how and why the proposed AmeriCorps members' activities will be connected with school food programs.

The description of the linkages and connections with community, regional, and state partners demonstrates how the recruitment of local Members will occur.

The applicant cites sources to support the selection of its evidence-based model. The methods in which the program services will be delivered through school- and community-centered activities that are connected to the identified need in the targeted service area.

The applicant clearly describes how the defined activities of AmeriCorps members connect with the healthy food-centered program design.

The proposed outcomes focus on increasing knowledge about, engagement in growing and sourcing of, and subsequent access to and consumption of healthy food for students.

The applicant quantifies the number of schools and number of unduplicated students that will be engaged in program activities to be conducted by AmeriCorps members and the volunteers that they recruit and train to assist.

The applicant effectively describes the Member training by quantifying the number of hours projected for preparation and effective program delivery, and providing an overview of the annual and mid-term training experiences, ongoing supervision, and leadership and team-building cultivation activities.

The training plan demonstrates how AmeriCorps-specific compliance topics and comprehensive organizational and grant-related requirements will be conveyed, including specific guidance as to prohibited activities, scheduled opportunities for reflection through logs and reports and reporting and tracking of outcomes.

The supervisory training plan and oversight of Members is suitable and appropriate for the proposed activities. The applicant presents an adequate plan for eliciting Member feedback, including how satisfaction and service retention information will be elicited through surveys.

The applicant's description of the experience gained by Members related to healthy food sourcing and education and access to relevant networking events throughout the terms of service is adequately linked to future employment and community engagement opportunities.

Weaknesses:

The logic model does not quantify any of the expected outputs or outcomes for each activity.

The application mentions recruitment of volunteers, but does not describe how these volunteers will be recruited or the role of volunteers in the program activities.

The applicant presents only very limited information about Members' development of skills for future employment, and no description about the Members' development of an ethic of and skills for engagement in public and community service.

The applicant states that it will work with local partners to recruit Members from the local communities, but does not present any plan as to how that recruitment will be carried out. The applicant states that they target their interventions in "limited-resource" communities but does not describe what resources are limited in their proposed target communities.

In describing the proposed intervention, the applicant describes the roles of Members but does not describe the roles of 450 community volunteers.

In describing the proposed intervention, the applicant does not describe why its state host site partner, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, is suited for this role.

In describing its proposed intervention, the applicant does not describe what kinds of community-based organizations are used as service sites.

The applicant does not adequately describe existing efforts the problem of obesity in their target communities and therefore what significant and unique contributions to these efforts AC Members will make.

The applicant states that the Members have individual check-ins with their supervisors and FoodCorps staff but does not describe how often these check-ins are or how long they are.

The applicant does not describe in detail how the AC Members will collaborate with other National Service organizations.

The applicant states that they recognize the importance of recruitment of Members from local communities but the plan presented is vague.

The applicant does not address how Members will develop an ethic of and skills for active and productive citizenship and will be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service after their term is completed.

The applicant emphasizes the importance of volunteers in its program by quantifying goals for recruitment. However, the specific role of volunteers in the program delivery and how they will be trained is not clearly described.