

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Teach For America

Application ID: 15ES169259

Program Name: Teach For America- Detroit

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 presents current and supported data applicable to Detroit about the city's lack of teachers and the consequential effect on students.

The applicant demonstrates a strong focus on AmeriCorps members understanding the communities in which they will serve.

Events and activities are planned with a variety of service organizations during which Members can make connections with others and Members can expand their awareness and understanding of other programs.

Plentiful opportunities are planned for member reflection.

The applicant has a strong plan for recruiting Members from within the service community.

The applicant describes clearly the exact problem their program will address and presents a strong argument for Teach for America-Detroit's educational program to serve 70 high need schools in Detroit.

The applicant demonstrates through clear, comprehensive, and relevant data that their intervention will lead to the results stated as goals.

The applicant provides a comprehensive set of historical data for similar programs, and relates this program well to those programs, indicating the high success rate of this program based on the similar high success rates of those programs (showing, for example, that students received on average the equivalent of 3 months more instruction under Teach for America corps Members, gains in both math and reading, and were consistently the most effective in terms of student gains).

In all sections, comprehensive and clear data is presented which back up the efficacy of the interventions proposed. For example, the applicant provided relevant examples of the types of training to be given to AmeriCorps members including examples of what constitutes induction, orientation, and ongoing support.

Clear and comprehensive data is given to provide illustrative examples of how member supervision will be carried out.

The logic model's order makes sense from a "cause-effect" or "if-then" standpoint. "Story" is clear as to what the problem is, what the intervention is and the results that are likely based on data given.

Compelling, relevant, and recent data is provided to justify the need for educational support and intervention in low-income, under-represented minority populations in Detroit.

Based on prior experience in deploying AmeriCorps members in similar high-need areas, the applicant ably demonstrates that this intervention has effectively increased educational outcomes for students in similar populations.

Member training and supervision are of high quality, are thorough and comprehensive, and are provided before AmeriCorps members enter their service area schools, and throughout the year.

Weaknesses:

The applicant's plan provides principals and other school administrators only with orientation guides and no training.

Information is vague and unclear regarding definitions of some terms and program implementation. For example, the applicant refers to "highly qualified, talented teachers" but does not provide a sufficient definition or reference studies that support what makes for a highly qualified teacher and information regarding addressing increased performance is vague and unclear.

While there is a flow to the Logic Model, some items are repeated from column to column; for example, placing 200 Members in Inputs and Outputs.

The applicant's plan for training Members to become teachers appears to be insufficient and lacking topics such as teaching strategies, classroom management, increasing student motivation, and student knowledge retention that are needed for teaching. The proposed training presents itself as applicable for classroom assistants or aides.

Some of the evidence provided is dated (one study is from 2003 - this is 12 years old).

The applicant describes member supervision and indicates the Manager of Teacher Leadership Development has a cohort of 25 teachers. This ratio appears to be too high for maximum effectiveness.

It is not clear why the intervention is slated to occur in high schools, and not earlier grade levels. Data is presented showing low rates of graduation from high school, but the need is apparent at all grade levels, not just high school.

Quantitative outcomes are not adequately described in the narrative and do not match what is presented in the logic model.

The roles of volunteers and how they are expected to contribute to the success of the project are not articulated. Recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteers are not adequately explained, nor are the expected outputs and outcomes for volunteers.