

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: City Year, Inc

Application ID: 15ND166909

Program Name: City Year

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:

Compelling evidence shows the need to improve four-year high school graduation rates in 11 target cities. These rates are 1-23 percentage points below the national average of 81%.

The Logic Model is detailed in all areas, and flows from the problem of low graduation rates and its factors, to inputs of people, time and financial resources, leading to intervention activities and output measures. Short-term goals of attitude and skill change are easily measurable, with mid-term and long term outcomes reasonable for the program.

A highly effective plan is proposed to provide services in the targeted schools.

The member training plan is comprehensive and uses a variety of techniques and opportunities to provide training throughout the service term.

The applicant is proposing a national level project that will target 75 schools in 9 different states bringing them academic and social emotional supports for high need students in elementary, middle and high school grades. They provide relevant, current, and comparative local statistical data related to graduation rates, poverty rates and minority population representation.

The applicant provides a detailed description of the schedule of planned interventions and member activities for each school day illustrating how academic and social emotional support services will be provided to students. They provide a clear narrative summary of the research study data that forms the supporting evidence behind their chosen intervention model.

The applicant's Logic Model flows naturally from left to right and clearly illustrates their project need, planned interventions, lists the resources and inputs, the expected outputs and intended short and longer term outcomes. The proposal narrative is in alignment with the Logic Model.

The applicant provides a solid description of their extensive member training and supervision plan. They plan to provide formal training for all Members through a basic training academy complemented by an ongoing 36 week professional development calendar backed up and supported with self-directed learning opportunities and supervisor observation periods.

Each member will be observed monthly and have an opportunity to participate in a feedback session with the observing supervisor. AmeriCorps members will have leadership opportunities within their assigned sites as well as within the national AmeriCorps structure.

The applicant provided specific data and studies to support their statement of need. They thoroughly described their plan to address the need through the use of 789 corps Members as near-peer mentors and tutors in 75 selected schools.

The applicant described a typical day and duties which would be assigned to the Members in order to address the need of helping these low-income, early warning indicator students to graduate. They also noted that the Members will organize and participate in special events during vacation periods and on weekends in order to engage the students further and they will collaborate with school staff and faculty as well.

The applicant provided extensive information on the member training, management and supervision plans, and organizational structure that will be used by City Year in training and supervising the Members they employ to carry out this program.

The applicant provided a listing of specific skills and experiences the Members will obtain during their service that will prepare them for future employment and enhance their employability too.

Opportunities for the Members to share and reflect on their experiences at numerous meetings and training opportunities were also provided.

The applicant provided studies and research as evidence to support their program design, past successes and potential for continued success.

Weaknesses:

The plan for AmeriCorps member recruitment contains limited detail for recruitment within the communities of program operation. It is not clear if Members will be recruited from the school districts served.

The applicant's description of how AmeriCorps members will be recruited is vague and does not explain any specific efforts or strategies for member recruitment. Further, they do not state whether Members will be recruited from the target communities that are being served in this project or if locally recruited Members will be assigned to sites in those communities.

In describing the problem of addressing schools graduation rates below the national graduation rate of 81%, one of the selected schools in Sacramento has a 90% graduation rate. No explanation is provided for why this school is being targeted.

The applicant did not share how the Members would connect with National corps Members.