

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2015 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Youth Policy Institute

Application ID: 15ND170849

Program Name: Promise Zones AmeriCorps

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 program design addresses activities in a logical method to prepare boys / young men of color for college or career after high school (goal setting, academic support, college visits).

The distribution of the 50 Members is an added bonus. The Members provide assistance to career and college counselors in high poverty communities where the ratio of counselor to student is extremely high.

The member placement is based on community and school needs which is well described in the proposal to service youth in high poverty communities. The majority of the parents do not have a college degree and lack the knowledge of post- secondary opportunities. The Members' expertise and training will ensure the participants are informed and ready for college or a career after high school.

The logic model address the diverse needs of each student (exceptional students, below grade level, college track, career track).

The participants will attend workshops such as college readiness (FASA), internship, and apprenticeship. The participants will visit various universities. The majority of the parents of the participants do not have a college degree and high paying job. The applicant clearly describes how the need will be addressed by the program.

The recruitment of college graduates and discharge military personnel is a positive influence to the participants.

These Members provide the knowledge and requirements to be successful as a college student and military personnel.

The AmeriCorps members have opportunities to set personal goals, professional goals, and gain leadership experience (reflections, facilitator of workshops).

Applicant identifies Los Angeles and Philadelphia designated Promise Zones as its target areas of service which is consistent with national initiatives, relevant and furthermore identifies the exact neighborhoods and schools in the targeted Promise Zones, articulating a need for the community.

Applicant provides compelling evidence of poverty (34.86% LAPZ and 48% PPZ) and unemployment in targeted neighborhoods, showing a well-documented need not only for the area, but the specific promise zones.

Applicant provides quantitative outcomes of the program and describes the inclusion of Individual Student Service Plans and 5 post-secondary options after the students graduate from high school.

Applicant activities includes workshops, trainings, one-on-one support between member and students in an effort to increase academic involvement and achievement, which is consistent with the Theory of Change and inclusion of Members as a necessary intervention.

Applicant identifies two and four year college enrollment, military service, national service, employment and paid internships or job training as the 5 post-secondary options available to students. Individual Student Service Plan includes a calendar of benchmarks including SAT or ACT testing, FAFSA deadlines, Vocational Aptitude Tests, as applicable.

Applicant identifies workshops for parents and guardians to increase their knowledge of post-secondary options, providing an additional level of support.

Applicant describes how students will be targeted for the program through communication with teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors to involve those most in need of services.

Applicant describes process of monitoring student's pre and post understanding of their post-secondary options in an effort to document significance of the project.

Applicant identifies the College Knowledge curriculum for those interested in two and four year colleges as their post-secondary path, which educates students in various topics including college systems, standardized testing, college applications, financial literacy, and career planning.

Members will provide tutoring and homework help to students needing help with academic achievement which then increases their chances of success in the project.

Applicant thoroughly describes topics included in member trainings and the schedule of when the trainings are provided, along with the frequency at which they are given. Applicant also describes how the quality of services are being provided, and how improvements are made upon the identification of intervention by a member's supervisor.

Applicant identifies multiple national AmeriCorps programs as opportunities for Members to connect, including One Economy and City Year Los Angeles.

Applicant identifies other federally funded programs within the target communities as a source for recruitment, including Gear Up.

It is a strength of this application that it proposes to operate in the high-poverty high-crime areas of Los Angeles and Philadelphia, two geographic areas federal officials already have designated as deeply troubled with very a high need for interventions such as that proposed. It then builds on the existing federal designation by fully documenting high poverty rates and lagging school performance, and poor post-secondary school achievement. For example, it points out that some of its target schools rated in the 1 to 15 point area on Pennsylvania's 100 point college preparedness scale.

Applicant effectively outlines a comprehensive and sequential theory of change with measurable goals and outcomes.

Each aspect of the model has a well-reasoned nexus with proposed member activities. First, the applicant proposes to use Members in tutoring and educational enrichment activities in ways that will improve educational proficiency among a targeted group of economically disadvantaged students. Next, Members together with leveraged volunteers will help the students explore post-secondary opportunities including higher education, military service, skilled trades and other career options. Finally, Members will work with the students to obtain internships and other inroads into post-secondary educational and career opportunities.

Applicant describes a high quality member training program of at least 340 hours beginning before service orientation and continuing throughout the school year. The 19 specific training topics seem reasonably calculated to provide Members with the baseline level of knowledge they will need.

Weaknesses:

The target group is boys/ young men of color; it is unclear why New Village Girls Academy was included as a target school.

Applicant does not thoroughly describe how the swearing-in and graduation ceremonies, along with National Service Days participation builds a sense of active citizenship or ethic.

The program design provides substantial overlap in the roles of Members with that of existing staff personnel.