Applicant Feedback Summary: External Evidence Review  
2017 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: FoodCorps, Inc.
Application ID: 17ED191968
Program Name: FoodCorps: A School Garden and Farm to School Program

The purpose of this summary feedback is to enhance our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). These comments originate from the External Review and are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment. Rather, the analysis pertains to the evidence base portion of the application and the elements that had the greatest impact on Reviewer determinations for the Evidence Tier and Quality Rating. This feedback consists of summary comments from more than one Reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem inconsistent or reflect multiple views. External Review comments do not represent of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

External Review Summary Comments

**Evaluation Requirements**
Evaluation Required: Yes  
Evaluation Submitted: Yes  
Type of Grantee: Large

**LARGE GRANTEE EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS**
External Evaluator: Yes  
Impact Evaluation: Yes  
At Least One Year of AmeriCorps Program Activity: Yes  
Alternative Evaluation Approach: No  
Type of AEA:  
AEA Condition Met:  
Previously Met Impact Evaluation Requirement: No  
Comments:

**Evidence Review**
Evidence Tier Claimed: Moderate  
Number of Studies Submitted: 3  
Number of Studies Assessed: 1  
Evidence Tier Assessed: Moderate  
Quality Rating: Low

**Evidence Tier Justification:**
The program’s level of evidence is “Moderate” based on the submission of a 2016 quasi-experimental design (QED) evaluation of their program. FoodCorps proposes to leverage AmeriCorps members to provide children with healthy food experiences by teaching nutrition, building/tending gardens, and promoting healthy options schoolwide. Together, these activities are expected to increase student consumption of fruits and vegetables during school lunch and improve broader school food environments. The QED study was conducted in 2015-16 and compared 12 pairs of schools (24 schools total) matched on several geographic and demographic characteristics, including poverty, race, enrollment size, and urbanicity. Using an evidence-informed tool, Healthy Food Progress Report, the study examined changes in the school food environment from the fall
The outcome instrument is a summary measure that includes 5 components of the school’s food culture: hands-on-learning knowledge, hands-on-learning engagement, healthy school meals, schoolwide culture of health, and staying power. These elements are then combined to form an overall score. Although change scores overall were higher for FoodCorps schools than comparison schools, the difference was not statistically significant. The evaluation, however, found positive effects in overall changes for a subset of matched pairs (this subset excluded 5 paired schools due to contamination and zero change scores). The overall scores increased by 13.7 points in the treatment group compared to a 2.7-point change in the matched comparison group (score on a 0-100 scale). Significantly greater gains were also found for schoolwide culture of health, with the treatment schools increasing their score by 5.3 points compared to the matched school increase of 0.8 points (on a 0-25 scale). These outcomes clearly align with the school culture component of the program’s logic model. While the applicant also described outcome studies conducted on the program as well as research from comparable interventions showing positive effects (two of which were attached), these findings did not contribute to the Moderate Evidence Tier. For that reason, the attached studies were not considered as part of the evidence review.

Quality Rating Justification:
The Quality Rating is “Low.” Data were recently collected (2015-2016) and clearly align with the logic model. The design, data collection methods, data sources, and analysis are reliable and appropriate for assessing outcomes. However, no significant differences were found between FoodCorps schools and comparison schools. Positive effects were only detected for a subset of matched pairs when problematic cases were removed due to contamination (1 pair) and when zero changes were reported in the Progress Report from fall to spring (4 pairs), which left 7 pairs (14 total schools) for the analysis.

**STUDY 1**
**Report Title:** Study 2 in FoodCorps: Creating Healthy School Environments  
**Program Type:** Applicant's Program  
**Evaluation Type:** External  
**Study Design:** QED  
**Study Design (if multiple):**  
**Specify study design if “other”:**  
**Assessed for AmeriCorps Evaluation Requirements:** Yes  
**Year(s) Data Collected:** 2015-2016  
**Summary of Findings and Methodological Quality:**
The quasi-experimental design (QED) study of the FoodCorps program was conducted in 2015-16 and compared 12 pairs of schools (24 schools total) matched on several geographic and demographic characteristics, including poverty, race, enrollment size, and urbanicity. Using an evidence-informed tool, Healthy Food Progress Report, the study examined changes in the school food environment from the fall (before programming began) to the spring. The outcome instrument is a summary measure that includes 5 components of the school’s food culture: hands-on-learning knowledge, hands-on-learning engagement, healthy school meals, schoolwide culture of health, and staying power. These elements are then combined to form an overall score. Although change scores overall were higher for FoodCorps schools than comparison schools, the difference was not statistically significant. The evaluation, however, found positive effects in change scores overall for a subset of matched pairs (this subset excluded 5 paired schools due to contamination and zero change scores). The overall scores increased by 13.7 points in the treatment group compared to a 2.7-point change in the matched comparison group (score on a 0-100 scale). Significantly greater gains were also found for schoolwide culture of health, with the treatment schools increasing their score by 5.3 points compared to the matched school increase of 0.8 points (on a 0-25 scale). The design, data collection methods, data sources, and analysis are reliable and appropriate for assessing outcomes which clearly align with the school culture component of the program logic model. However, positive effects were only detected for a subset of matched pairs when problematic cases were removed due to contamination (1 pair) and when zero changes were reported in the Progress Report from fall to spring (4 pairs), which left 7 pairs (14 total schools) for the analysis.