

**CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
2014 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION**



## EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM – LEARNING TOOL

Application ID: 14AC987654

Panel #: 1

Legal Applicant Name: Merida School District

Panel Coordinator Name: Jane Doe

### RATIONALE AND APPROACH/PROGRAM DESIGN

#### Problem/Need

*Instructions: Assess how well the applicant met the standards below. Check the box that corresponds to your Rating.  
Provide significant strengths and significant weaknesses at the end of the section.*

*Criterion: Describe the community need the members will be addressing.*

*Criterion: Provide information about the extent/severity of the need in the communities where members will serve.*

**Standard:** The community problem/need is prevalent and severe in the communities where members will serve.

RATING	<input type="checkbox"/> Greatly Exceeds the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	---	---	---	--	---

**Standard:** The applicant cites specific, relevant data to document the need.

RATING	<input type="checkbox"/> Greatly Exceeds the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	---	---	---	--	---

Significant Strengths for Problem/Need:

- The applicant satisfactorily articulates the need to improve high-school graduation rates in the target community and provides specific data showing the gap between Merida's graduation rates and statewide rates.
- The applicant also describes the link between dropping out of high school and lower earnings later in life.

Significant Weaknesses for Problem/Need:

- The applicant defines the problem as a lack of academic skills in young students that puts them at greater risk to drop out of school; however, no data is provided to demonstrate how prevalent or severe low academic achievement is among the 1st-6th grade students that the program proposes to serve.

**Comment [FEP1]:** This IRF is completed as an Example form, and is based on the Sample Application. This should be used as a Learning Tool to inform your understanding on how to document your assessments. There is not a single "right" Rating for any Standard; however, if your Rating was more than one rating higher or lower than the example provided by CNCS, your assessment may not be normed closely enough to CNCS' expectations for applications.

**Comment [SY2]:** This weakness is greater in significance than the strength, which is consistent with the "Partially Meets the Standard" Rating selected in the Problem/Need section.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
 2014 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION



**EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM – LEARNING TOOL**

Application ID: 14AC987654

Panel #: 1

Legal Applicant Name: Merida School District

Panel Coordinator Name: Jane Doe

**AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO  
 SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS EVIDENCE BASE AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT**

*Theory of Change and Logic Model (Logic Model Worksheet)*

*Logic Model Worksheet – Completeness*

*Instructions: For each Criterion below, check the box if the item is included in the Logic Model Worksheet.*

Check each of the following if present in the applicant's Logic Model Worksheet:

- Criterion: Number of locations and sites where members are providing services
- Criterion: Number of members that will be delivering the intervention
- Criterion: Core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will be implementing or delivering
- Criterion: Duration of the intervention
- Criterion: Dosage of the intervention
- Criterion: Target population for the intervention

**Comment [SY3]:** Days of service are not included in the Logic Model, but this are not considered a core activity for this applicant.

*Theory of Change and Logic Model – Quality*

*Instructions: Using the Logic Model Worksheet and the Application Narrative, assess how well the applicant met the standards below. Check the box that corresponds to your Rating (note that the "Exceeds" and "Greatly Exceeds" Ratings are not available for some of the Standards). Provide significant strengths and significant weaknesses at the end of this section.*

*Criterion: Describe how the intervention is designed to address the problem described in the Narrative and the Logic Model Worksheet.*

**Standard:** The intervention is an effective way to address the problem/need identified by the applicant.

**Comment [SY4]:** The design of the tutoring intervention is not adequately described in the application, so it is difficult to assess how effective it will be in improving students' reading and math skills.

RATING	<input type="checkbox"/> Greatly Exceeds the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	---	---	---	--	---

**Standard:** The theory of change is described consistently in the logic model and application narrative.

**Comment [SY5]:** There are no contradictions between the information provided in the logic model and the application. Note that the same information does not have to be repeated in both locations, but the descriptions provided in each piece of the application should align seamlessly with each other. Inconsistent information would cause the applicant to be scored lower.

RATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	--	---	---

**Standard:** The inputs, activities and outputs are logically aligned.

**Comment [SY6]:** Although the AmeriCorps member activities are not described in much detail (see the "Significant Weaknesses" section below), this does not significantly interfere with the logical alignment. If the proposed outputs were NOT logically connected to the inputs and activities, the applicant would be scored lower.

RATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	--	---	---

**CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
2014 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION**



## EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM – LEARNING TOOL

Application ID: 14AC987654

Panel #: 1

Legal Applicant Name: Merida School District

Panel Coordinator Name: Jane Doe

**Standard:** The outcomes identified in the logic model are **logically aligned with the problem/need and intervention.**

RATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	--	---	---

**Comment [SY7]:** Although the AmeriCorps member activities are not described in much detail (see the "Significant Weaknesses" section below), this does not significantly interfere with the logical alignment. If the proposed outcomes were NOT logically connected to the Problem/Need and intervention, the applicant would be Rated lower.

**Standard:** The Theory of Change and Logic Model cover comprehensively the applicant's entire program (i.e. no significant aspects of the program design are left out.)

RATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	--	---	---

**Comment [SY9]:** Since the applicant did cite studies, this question can be left blank

**Comment [SY8]:** The three non-experimental studies cited by the applicant were:

- Academic achievement data based on pre/post test scores – non-experimental design
- Report from the Wayne Foundation – the experimental design of this study is not described, so it should be marked as non-experimental
- Study by the Xavier Institute - the experimental design of this study is not described, so it should be marked as non-experimental

Only one of these non-experimental studies (the pre/post test scores) was conducted on the proposed program itself. The other two non-experimental studies were conducted on different programs.

### Evidence Base

*Number and Type of Studies – Fill in the Blank*

*Instructions: Indicate the number and type of studies described by the applicant as evidence for the intervention. If a study is presented, but you are unable to assess with confidence what type of study it is, mark it as Non-Experimental.*

TYPE OF STUDY	NUMBER OF STUDIES	IF NO STUDIES WERE CITED BY THE APPLICANT: Did the applicant collect quantitative or qualitative data from program staff, program participants, or beneficiaries that have been used for program improvement, performance measurement reporting, and/or tracking? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Experimental Studies	0	
Quasi-Experimental Studies	0	
Non-Experimental Studies	3	

**Comment [SY10]:** When assessing the Evidence Base, reviewers should only consider studies that are directly relevant to the applicant's proposed intervention. Extraneous studies that may mentioned in the narrative (for example, studies that are conducted on a completely different type of intervention or that focus on unrelated outcomes) can be ignored. Also, if the applicant cited poor-quality studies that ranked Unsatisfactory on one or more Quality of Evidence standards and lower the applicant's overall Level of Evidence, those studies can be excluded from consideration. As a general rule, reviewers should give the applicant credit for the highest level of evidence for which they are genuinely able to qualify.

### Quality of Evidence - Select

*Instructions: For the study or studies that provide the best evidence for the intervention, assess how well the applicant met each of the four Standards below. Check the box that corresponds to your Rating. If no studies were described by the applicant, please select N/A (No Studies Cited) for each standard.*

*Criterion: How closely the program model evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant*

**Standard:** The program model(s) studied is **the same or nearly the same as the model the applicant will implement, in a similar context with similar target beneficiaries or entities.**

RATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (No Studies Cited)
--------	--	---	---

*Criterion: The methodological quality of the studies presented (e.g., statistical power, internal and/or external validity, sample size, etc.)*

For the norming application, the pre/post test score data cited by the applicant is the only non-experimental study conducted on the proposed program itself. As a result, this is the best evidence for the intervention, and the Quality of Evidence Standards are Rated based on this study.

**Comment [SY11]:** Since the pre/post test score data was collected on the proposed program itself, it is the same as the model the applicant will implement.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
 2014 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION



**EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM – LEARNING TOOL**

Application ID: 14AC987654

Panel #: 1

Legal Applicant Name: Merida School District

Panel Coordinator Name: Jane Doe

**Standard:** The study or studies used rigorous and appropriate research methodologies given the design (e.g. non-experimental, quasi-experimental, experimental,) for example, using high quality data, sufficient sample size/statistical power, and a representative sample to identify effects. The study or studies exhibited internal validity, i.e. any effects identified can be reasonably attributed to the program model given the methodological limitations.

**Comment [SY12]:** The pre/post test score data was collected using a valid and reliable standardized instrument, which is an appropriate methodology for a non-experimental study of this type.

RATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (No Studies Cited)
--------	--	---	---

*Criterion: The recency of the studies, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years*

**Standard:** Studies conducted within the past 6 years are considered satisfactory. For studies older than six years, a 'Satisfactory' rating may be given if there is reasonable confidence that the relevant conditions in which the program operated when studied are the same or similar as the conditions in which the applicant's program will be operating. For example, for an educational program relevant conditions could include community demographics and educational standards. For an economic opportunity program relevant conditions could be economic climate.

**Comment [SY13]:** The pre/post test score data was collected within the past six years

RATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (No Studies Cited)
--------	--	---	---

*Criterion: Strength of the findings*

**Standard:** The findings from the study or studies indicate with confidence that the program model under study had at least one positive and significant effect on target beneficiaries or entities. "Significant" means the results were statistically significant, for example at the 95% confidence level (or  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Comment [SY14]:** it is not clear whether the 15% gains reported would constitute a positive and significant effect, because the applicant does not explain whether the 15% gain is statistically significant or is greater than what could be expected through academic instruction alone.

RATING	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (No Studies Cited)
--------	---------------------------------------	--	---

*Level of Evidence – Select*

*Instructions: Based on your assessments of the Number and Type of Studies and the Quality of Evidence standards above, indicate the overall Level of Evidence presented by the applicant. Provide significant strengths and significant weaknesses at the end of this section*

- NO EVIDENCE** means that the applicant did not collect any data or cite at least one non-experimental study from a similar program.
- PRE-PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE** means the applicant presents evidence that it has collected quantitative or qualitative data from program staff, program participants, or beneficiaries that have been used for program improvement, performance measurement reporting, and/or tracking.
- PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE\*** means the applicant presents an initial evidence base that can support conclusions about the program's contribution to observed outcomes.

**Number and Type of Studies:** The evidence base consists of at least 1 non-experimental study conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention). A study that demonstrates improvement in program participants over time on one or more intended outcomes OR an implementation (process evaluation) study used to learn and improve program operations would constitute preliminary evidence.

**Comment [SY15]:** The pre/post test score data cited by the applicant meets this description

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
2014 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION



## EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM – LEARNING TOOL

Application ID: 14AC987654

Panel #: 1

Legal Applicant Name: Merida School District

Panel Coordinator Name: Jane Doe

—AND—

Quality of Evidence: The applicant was rated Satisfactory on all four Quality of Evidence standards.

\*If the program's Number and Type of Studies match the description for Preliminary, but one or more of the Quality of Evidence standards were rated as Unsatisfactory, please select Pre-Preliminary as the Level of Evidence.

- MODERATE EVIDENCE\*\*** means the applicant presents a reasonably developed evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with moderate confidence.

Number and Type of Studies: The evidence base consists of 1 or more quasi-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention) with positive findings on one or more intended outcome OR 2 or more non-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcome OR 1 or more experimental studies of another relevant program that uses a similar intervention.

—AND—

Quality of Evidence: The applicant was rated Satisfactory on all four Quality of Evidence standards.

\*\*If the program's Number and Type of Studies match the description for Moderate, but one or more of the Quality of Evidence standards were rated as Unsatisfactory, please select Preliminary as the Level of Evidence.

- STRONG EVIDENCE\*\*\*** means the applicant presents an evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with the highest level of confidence.

Number and Type of Studies: The evidence base consists of 1 or more well-designed and well-implemented experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcome.

—AND—

Quality of Evidence: The applicant was rated Satisfactory on all four Quality of Evidence standards.

\*\*\*If the program's Number and Type of Studies match the description for Strong, but one or more of the Quality of Evidence standards were rated as Unsatisfactory, please select Moderate as the Level of Evidence.

**Comment [SY16]:** The pre/post data cited by the applicant does NOT meet this description

**Comment [SY17]:** Based on this guidance, the overall Level of Evidence that should be selected for this applicant is Pre-Preliminary.

**Comment [SY18]:** The applicant does not meet this description because only one of the non-experimental studies cited in the application (the pre/post test score data) was conducted on the proposed program itself.

### Level of Evidence – Justification

Instructions: Provide a short justification for the assigned Level of Evidence, including comments on both the Number and Type of Studies and the Quality of Evidence standards. This justification will be utilized to inform later stages of the grant review process and should be written for a non-technical audience with minimum evaluation expertise.

(This justification will be utilized to inform a later stage of the review and will not be included in the Applicant Feedback.)

Justification for selected Level of Evidence:

Three non-experimental studies were cited, but only one of these (the pre/post test scores) was conducted on the proposed program itself. As a result, this study provides the best evidence for the intervention. The pre/post test was conducted on the program participants within the past six years using a valid and reliable standardized instrument. However, it is not clear whether the 15% gains reported would constitute a positive and significant effect, because the applicant does not explain whether the 15% gain is statistically significant or is greater than what could be expected through academic instruction alone.

**Comment [SY19]:** This justification includes comments on both the Number and Type of Studies and the Quality of Evidence standards. Remember that this narrative will NOT be returned as feedback to the applicant, so make sure that any significant strengths and/or weaknesses described here are also included in the Significant Strengths and/or Significant Weaknesses comments section on the form.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
 2014 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION



**EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM – LEARNING TOOL**

Application ID: 14AC987654

Panel #: 1

Legal Applicant Name: Merida School District

Panel Coordinator Name: Jane Doe

**Significant Strengths for AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems Evidence Base and Measurable Community Impact:**

- The applicant describes a consistent and well-aligned Theory of Change that demonstrates a logical relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.
- The applicant has also collected pre/post test data on student participants that provide evidence for gains in academic achievement over the course of the intervention.

**Comment [SY20]:** The comments in the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses sections below reflect the Theory of Change and Logic Model and Evidence Base sections of the review form. They are also consistent with the ratings selected for the various standards in this section.

**Significant Weaknesses for AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems Evidence Base and Measurable Community Impact:**

- The design of the tutoring intervention is not adequately described in the application, so it is difficult to assess how effective it will be in improving students' reading and math skills.
- It is not clear whether the 15% gains in standardized test scores reported by the applicant constitute a significant impact on student participants, because the applicant does not explain whether the 15% gain is statistically significant or is greater than what could be expected through academic instruction alone.

**ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY**

*Past Performance*

*Instructions: Assess how well the applicant met the Standard below. Check the box that corresponds to your Rating. Provide the significant strengths and significant weaknesses at the end of the section.*

*Criterion: How successful has the applicant been in solving the identified problem?*

**Standard:** The applicant demonstrates success in solving the identified problem.

**Comment [SY21]:** Because the applicant provided an overall satisfactory response whose strengths and weaknesses balance each other in significance, the applicant meets but does not exceed the standard for Past Performance.

RATING	<input type="checkbox"/> Greatly Exceeds the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds the Standard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard
--------	---	---	--	---	---

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
2014 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION



## EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM – LEARNING TOOL

Application ID: 14AC987654

Panel #: 1

Legal Applicant Name: Merida School District

Panel Coordinator Name: Jane Doe

Significant Strengths for Past Performance:

- The applicant was successful in meeting its performance measure targets for its first year of program operations and is on track to meet its targets for the second year as well. The vast majority of the students served by the program (85%) met the benchmark for test score improvement set by the program.

**Comment [SY22]:** This comment is based on the information provided by the applicant in the Past Performance section of the application as it specifically refers to performance measure targets. External Reviewers should NOT review or comment on the actual Performance Measures that follow the application Narrative section.

Significant Weaknesses for Past Performance:

- The applicant does not sufficiently explain how the observed 15% gains in student test scores are solving the identified problem in Merida, since it is not clear to what extent these gains represent significant increases in student achievement or will lead to greater high-school graduation rates.