

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

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| Legal Applicant: City Year, Inc., City Year Miami | Application ID: 11AC124385 |
| Below are the comments from each External Peer Reviewer that read and evaluated the application. While Reviewers did engage in discussion about their evaluations, consensus was not required as part of their review. Therefore, there may be differing views in their feedback on the quality of the proposal. | |
| <p>COMMENTS: The applicant succinctly identifies the compelling needs (reading and math skills below grade level, high school suspensions, and poor school attendance) of the target community. The applicant cites relevant data (2006 John Hopkins University research) to assert student attendance, behavior and course performance in English and Math can predict, as early as 6th grade, student’s likelihood to drop out. The training plan is comprehensive and properly develops members for their assigned activities. The applicant provides up to 340 hours of training that includes Basic training, 3-day retreat, mid-year advance training and three Fridays a month on site training. The applicant describes in detail how member training is designed to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for the effective implementation of the program. The applicant describes how the 125 members will be assigned to teams to implement and support programs to address the compelling needs. The applicant provides an example of a team's high school day activities, which outlines a list of focus activities that members will implement. These activities (attendance initiatives, tutoring, lunchtime behavior mentoring, and afterschool supplemental tutoring) are clearly linked to improving the identified compelling needs. The members will receive mid and end of term performance evaluations and complete Leadership After plans, which includes participation in structured reflection exercises. Feedback from these activities provide for improvement in program delivery and quality of service.</p> | |
| <p>COMMENTS: The desired qualifications of AmeriCorps members are discussed, diversity goals are clearly outlined, recruitment plans are based on successful models from previous programs and the number of applicants needed to meet the goal of 125 members is stated. The applicant makes a good case for AmeriCorps members being a cost effective way to bring near peers into the schools nearly full time to provide consistent tutoring and mentoring in schools that are struggling.</p> | |
| <p>COMMENTS: The applicant uses researched-based Early Warning Indicators to determine need for services including attendance, behavior and course performance in English and Math though there is no</p> | |

data or measurable outcome goals to support the problem of Math instruction. It is unclear how the elementary school program fits into the greater scope, or how it serves the community-identified schools (11 of lowest performing 5% of schools in state) that have below state average graduation rates and are reading below grade level. The high school program is comprehensive in its ability to address the targeted problems and provide a consistent presence to positively influence the school culture. The AmeriCorps members will be recruited from a diverse field and will be supported by supervisors with relevant experience who will mentor and respond to member feedback. The service term will be engaging for members through on-going training, encouraged reflection, career planning and creating a post-leadership service plan.

COMMENTS: The grant narrative made a strong case for the educational need in the Miami-Dade School District, using cited statistics to describe the educational and disciplinary issues in the local schools. The recruitment and training methodology is the strongest section of the grant proposal, targeting students with cultural competency, using avenues that reach the appropriate age group. The extra time taken with interviews and the required essays should help with future retention. Excellent training will segue into a powerful service experience through reflection activities and good standards of supervision. Peer-to-peer mentoring holds great potential for affecting change, however the application lacked in providing a more comprehensive notation on risk management and boundaries training. The measurable impacts and outcomes were well-defined and achievable, with achievements in the past three years highly commendable. Although mathematics is noted as a goal for the program, the application lacked possible outcomes. With strong corporate support, community volunteers might be recruited from the organizations that already have invested in the program mission. With the clear need for academic and behavioral improvement, AmeriCorps members will provide much-needed support and assistance to the educational system through the City Year Miami program.