

**APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design**

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

<b>Legal Applicant:</b> Citizen Schools, Inc.	<b>Application ID:</b> 11ED125865
<p><b>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.</b></p>	
<p><b>COMMENTS:</b> This application provides many excellent examples throughout of the different experiences that members have. This gives a significant amount of strength to the application. While it may be difficult to provide data due to the number of sites involved, the application lacks providing substantial data that shows results.</p>	
<p><b>COMMENTS:</b> The applicant presented a compelling case that schools suffer from a lack of AYP, low scores in math and science proficiency and low graduation rates. Further, the applicant describes that over the years, the NAEP has not demonstrated consistent improvement in student performance. The applicant did provide data from some of the targeted schools to but not from all of the schools making it difficult to ascertain that all of the schools were in need. The applicant described a well-developed recruitment process, recruiting members with qualifications that coincide with the responsibilities of the members. The training outline is appropriate and defines activities that support the member throughout the year of service. Supervision is clearly defined and appears adequate for supporting members.</p> <p>Although there appears to be an opportunity for members to experience a powerful service experience, it is difficult to understand if members receive information and support for developing an understanding of the value of lifelong service in their community. The applicant provides compelling information about the success of Citizen Schools as measured by Policy Studies Associates, explaining that Citizen Schools outperform other similar schools on the measures identified to be addressed in the project. The applicant clearly identified 5 skill areas that members will demonstrate competency for, yet only expects 90% to demonstrate competency in at least 3 of the 5 areas. All 5 areas appear critical for members to demonstrate on order for the project to be successful.</p>	
<p><b>COMMENTS:</b> There were several major and minor strengths identified and one minor weakness identified in this proposal.                  (+) The Project details, evidences and addresses the problem of the current school day not meeting the</p>	

educational needs middle school students. The proposal goes beyond what was requested by providing a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested.

(+) The Applicant demonstrates an impressive recruitment, selection, training and supervisory plan for Members and Volunteers to work with middle school children, families, staff and communities in high-need, low-income inner city schools.

(+) The Applicant provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results, supporting ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting ideas to objectives.

(-) There was minimal data provided for each specific site served.

**COMMENTS:** (+) The application provides compelling evidence that the identified problem exists in some of the targeted areas. For example, abysmal high school graduation rates are cited for four of the named cities to be served and in one partner school, only 1% of 8th grade students scored proficient in science.

(-) The application does not fully discuss all target areas described where the 38 programs will be implemented. (+) The application evidences a thorough selection plan designed to solicit qualified, diverse members that have the skills to succeed. For the 2010-11 program year the applicant recruited 723 applicants to fill 170 member slots. Of those, 43% of applicants and 50% of those selected to become AmeriCorps Teaching Fellows were members of racial minority groups. (+) The application provides sufficient evidence that the program will provide AmeriCorps members a powerful service experience that leads to continued engagement in active civic participation. The applicant provides opportunities for nearly all of its members to take on increasing responsibility and leadership at their school site as they develop their skills and gain experience. Many Fellows will serve in one of five leadership roles: Academic Program Lead, Citizen Teacher Liaison, Family Student Engagement Lead, College Career Connections Lead, and Data Captain. These Fellows will collaborate with the other Fellows who serve in the same role at other sites across Citizen Schools' network. (+) The applicant does an apt job of making the case that engaging members is a highly effective means of increasing parent participation, as demonstrated by the significant increase in one of the partner school's capacity to connect with Spanish-speaking parents. Reports demonstrated that the 300 family members who attended a recent apprenticeship showcase event far surpassed family participation at any previous event in 12 years. (-) The application does not discuss how competency in the skills areas (planning and delivering high-quality instruction to middle school students; building consistent, trusting, relationships that reflect understanding of cultural differences; etc.) will be measured.

(+/-) Overall, the application provides sufficient evidence that the program will provide AmeriCorps members a powerful service experience that leads to continued engagement in active civic participation and also indicates that the applicant organization is well able to recruit and select highly qualified candidates to serve as members of a team expected to help underprivileged students make great gains in academics, especially STEM subjects. However, the application does not present a sufficient portrait of need for the vast target area where the 38 projects will be implemented.