

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Providence Children's Museum	Application ID: 11AC124188
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.	
COMMENTS: This application was strong in identifying the qualifications of AmeriCorps members that were being sought and ways to recruit them. The proposal lacked supporting evidence showing that intervention would impact the community need.	
COMMENTS: The applicant presents a compelling case that children in low-income communities perform academically well below those children from more affluent communities. Further the applicant provides data showing that differences in academic achievement is related to differences in experiences in pre-kindergarten and out-of-school opportunities, but does not directly relate this to the targeted communities. Proposed activities are directly related to the compelling need and the outcomes are clearly delineated with methods or instruments to be used to measure achievement of outcome. The plan for recruiting members is comprehensive and targets appropriate candidates for the responsibilities assigned these members. Training is extensive covering many major topics necessary for the accomplishment of the tasks as well as meeting the needs of children. The applicant did not mention curriculum development as part of the training or the development of what STEM process skills are within the training plan. Members are part of a team of experienced educators on staff at PC and thus members are supervised on a daily basis. Members do engage in powerful service experiences by working with the children in the Learning Clubs, and connecting with families through the newsletter and through family nights. The everyday requirement to reflect on their experiences is an important aspect of internalizing the experience.	
COMMENTS: The Providence Children's Museum details, evidences and addresses a clear problem and goes beyond what was requested by providing a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested. PCM 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.	

COMMENTS: (+) The application documents strong need in the community as evidenced by high poverty and unemployment rates and low math and test scores. Problems are exacerbated by an ailing education system where, in one area served by the applicant, only 27% of public elementary schools met Adequate Yearly Progress standards.

(+) The application evidences a well-thought out plan for recruiting and selecting members for the project. A diverse team of members will be recruited from college career placement offices, minority serving colleges, various websites and job fairs, among other places (page 16). Applicants with bilingual and other special skills (such as working with disabled children) will be aggressively recruited. (+) The applicant aptly expresses its ideal candidate--one that is “mature, outgoing and self-confident, socially responsible, truly enjoys and respects children and their caregivers, and speaks Spanish as well as English.”(+) The applicant’s engagement plan highlights a number of avenues to a powerful experience that will motivate members to continue civic engagement participation. The plan begins with pre-service training that includes development, training and supervision to ensure thorough integration into the organization’s culture.

(+) Throughout the year, the application employs various mechanisms to ensure a powerful experience for members, including mentoring, coaching, ongoing development, team building and incentives.

(+) The applicant presents a strong case that engaging members in the task of assisting children and families in making the most of hands-on exhibits to facilitate learning and academic enhancement is an effective means of addressing low test scores and lack of parental involvement. The fact that members will have input in the process of designing and implementing the program strengthens the assertion.(+) Overall, the applicant does good job of fully disclosing how the identified problems, such as low math scores and summer learning loss, will be addressed through hands-on Learning Clubs dedicated to STEM activities. Well-qualified members with notable transferable skills will be sought to deliver the solution, and outcomes are well aligned with the activities intended to produce anticipated results.