

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: University of Mississippi, UM College Corps	Application ID: 11ES124566
<p>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>	
<p>COMMENTS: (+/-) Community needs to be addressed are well-documented in the area of unemployment/poverty, but only 7 of the 42 proposed AmeriCorps members are to work in this area. (-) Applicant does not present compelling evidence of the need for tutoring services in the county, simply stating that these programs are now in existence and operating on a limited budget with few volunteers. (+) The target community appears to have been effectively involved in planning the applicant’s program, as evidenced by the community partners’ contribution to the planning of this application.(-) Training for members appears to be limited to a one-day (or less) orientation, and a mid-year workshop, with all other training to be conducted on-site by community partners, although what this training consists of is not addressed.(-) The need for background checks for those working with children is not addressed by the applicant. (+) The applicant describes a process by which members will be a conduit for attracting more volunteers to the partner community organizations, and will then work to place volunteers in locations where talents can be put to their greatest use.</p>	
<p>COMMENTS: (+) This is a very good plan because of the excellent partnership of the university and its community. (+)Both the partners and university appear to have a strong commitment to addressing their community needs. (+)Both the mayor of Oxford and chancellor of the university support the program. (+)The plan includes ongoing communication with them to assure that it is successful. (+) They demonstrate a strong commitment to listening to each others’ concerns and addressing them accordingly. This was evident when partners had a problem with the fragmentation of hours between students working with them. The university has recently put in place service learning classes as a response to these concerns. (+) The organization met prior to writing this proposal and they have plans to continue to meet after the granting cycle ends. (-) There was not a provision for background checks in the proposed plan for working with children. It appears as though it may not be a problem. (+) The organization realizes that their plan make take a little work but they express a willingness to do whatever it takes to make things happen. All of these make this a very good plan.</p>	

COMMENTS: (+) By deploying AmeriCorps members to six community partner organization the University of Mississippi (UM) and experiential community-based service-learning program will address the education and opportunity issues of Oxford and Lafayette County, Mississippi. The sites are the LOU Homeless Task Force, ICM, The Leap Frog Tutoring Program, the Oxford Public School Homeless children and Youth Tutoring Program and the Oxford Boys and Girls Clubs, and More Than a Meal. All of which work to fill existing needs in the areas of education and opportunity. Each of these organizations have expressed an interest in a partnership with the UM to develop a more purposeful and intentional approach to the issues of education and self-sufficiency. It is presented that the addition of reliable AmeriCorps members will add a new layer of strength to these organizations. (+) The applicant states that it is expected that 80% of the members will achieve on-time completion of the course. Other program measures are related to the goals of the partnership such as alleviating food insecurities. It is expected that 90% of the AmeriCorps members will meet the national performance measure. (-) The applicant provides little evidence for tutoring and mentoring projects.

COMMENTS: The applicant has developed a proposal that was well planned and will engage AmeriCorps members in the community. The ability for this program to be successful is supported by a two stage format; it will introduce members to AmeriCorps, to program expectations and procedures, and to the community service landscape in the community. The design and integration of the Corps members in the College of Liberal Arts allows for greater buy-in and commitment to the culture of service.