

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: B.E.L.L. Foundation/BASICS, BELL AmeriCorps	Application ID: 11ND126010

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: The applicant presents data that clearly identifies low academic achievement and low graduation rates of students in the targeted communities. The applicant cites recent data in the targeted communities (such as 2009 graduation rates in Detroit of 52% and in New York of 61%) to validate the low graduation rates. The applicant presents a comprehensive recruitment plan that includes extensive year round outreach to community based organizations, such as churches, community centers, colleges and universities. In addition to the typical recruiting tools (such as job fairs and web based recruitment portal), applicant leverages partnerships with other local after school and youth programs (such as After School and Beyond Youth & Development Corporation) to disseminate recruitment material. The applicant describes how members will replica a comprehensive program to increase learning skills. Current data is cited (Springfield Public Schools, 2010; National Heritage Academies, 2009) that demonstrates the Building Educated Leaders for Life Summer & After School programs increase reading skills faster among child who participate than those who do not. Proposed activities fully address the identified needs of low academic achievement and low graduation rates. The applicant proposes to replica successful models, making needed adjustments for the targeted community. Models include research-based academic instructions in literary and math (academic under-performance areas). BELL Summer and BELL After School programs have demonstrated past success.

COMMENTS: (+) The applicant makes a compelling case for the need for after school programs as well as summer school and summer enrichment activities that will contribute to higher high school graduation rates greater literacy and greater retention of knowledge between school sessions. Citing national, state and city level reading and math proficiency statistics, the applicant demonstrates the need and citing its current programs, shows that the proposed solution of summer school and activities can address the problem. (+) Selection qualifications and characteristics of AmeriCorps members are clearly outlined and justified. Experience, education, languages other than English are all qualifications that are appropriate and will enable members to succeed. (+) Training is clearly outlined with respect to the topic and the hours required, and include orientation to the community and to AmeriCorps and to appropriate teaching techniques suitable for the program. (-) Although there is some information given as to how AmeriCorps members will

recruit community volunteers it is somewhat general and not adequately described. (+) Goals for AmeriCorps Members are clearly outlined in terms of children enrolled and expected progress. For example: the total AmeriCorps member output is expected to positively affect at least 4,200 children by increasing their academic performance

COMMENTS: The applicant provides compelling data (such as graduation rates, reading proficiency, and math performance) to suggest a need for project services, and data is provided for each of the proposed service sites. As part of a community-based collaborative effort, the project demonstrates the need for after school and summer programs due to overcrowding and insufficient space and resources to match the need within the school districts. Project activities provide clear, measurable outcomes based on short and intermediate goals, however, long-term goals of graduation and college-going rates are not specific. There will be a diverse and expansive outreach effort to recruit members with relevant experience with an emphasis to recruit members from within the communities to be served and there will be and thorough time dedicated to the training and orientation of AmeriCorps members. To make the service meaningful, the host organization will provide continued support and engagement though dedicated member retention efforts as well as solicit regular feedback. The proposed project activities will support and expand an existing, successful structure with an opportunity to establish greater instructional capacity.