

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

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| Legal Applicant: Teach For America - Louisiana | Application ID: 11AC123008 |
| 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 is well thought out and well written. It covers all components with detailed and thorough information. It is especially strong in recruitment and training of Corps members and in previous community outreach and substantial community support. Its past success is evident and suggests future success. | |
| COMMENTS: (+) The applicant clearly defines the problem of low academic achievement for children who live in low income areas, partly due to lack of high quality teachers. The applicant has presented information that supports the need for the proposed program in the targeted service area using local data such as: 30% of the student populations in 2 parishes do not graduate from high school and nearly 45% of those children live in poverty. (+) The applicant demonstrates that Corps members continue to be engaged after their years of service such that 63% of alumni currently work in education and 99% of alumni still volunteer or donate to education organizations. (+) This application presents a thorough description of the proposed TFA - Louisiana program and appears to be likely to meet its goals and objectives. Recruitment, screening, training and supervision all appear to be comprehensive; local partnerships, including fund raising support, are in place that will ensure program success. Other indicators such as retention rates (90%) reflect the positive accomplishments of this program. | |
| COMMENTS: (+) In 2010, 12 of the 14 districts where Members were placed were ranked two stars or lower for performance (on a 5 star scale) by the School or District Performance Score. (+) Data show that there is a positive correlation between clustering members and a school's achievement, so four or more Members will be placed in a school. (+) The applicant screens potential members for high GPA and SAT scores. In personal interviews, qualities such as perseverance, critical thinking skills, and ability to motivate, organize and communicate are determined. (+) People of color are recruited from historically black colleges and universities and target campuses. The applicant recognizes the importance of role models with similar backgrounds to the children they teach. (-) Each Program Director is paired with 30-40 Members for ongoing feedback and support. (+) Based on Louisiana student achievement data, Members | |

were outperforming other new teachers and were as effective as veteran teachers in math, science, reading and language arts. These findings were supported by data from other states and national research organizations. (-) The applicant refers to internal gains measures, but does not provide a description or examples of what is measured.

COMMENTS: The applicant clearly describes the problem identified within the community using creditable support sources and effectively links the problem to a solution utilizing AmeriCorps Members and volunteers. The applicant (TFA) has a history of attracting college graduates with a high academic record and leadership skills and placing them within struggling school system as educators. The applicant provides a clear picture of the process and goals of the project. The applicant provides evidence that the Louisiana school districts chosen for the project area are at or below the federal poverty guidelines. The applicant demonstrates clearly the low academic performance of students in the targeted schools by comparing these schools with other local schools. The applicant has a clear description of the hiring process between members and the identified school districts. The applicant outlines the process of hiring members by the school district as teachers without adversely impacting the hiring of local non-member candidates who are equally qualified. The applicant provides the member with a highly structured experience by placing them within an improvised and limited resource school district. The experience has the potential to impact the member's perspective and awareness regarding poverty, working with a limited resource environment, social justice and cultural issues while closing the achievement gap of student over the course of the service experience. The member is provided with opportunities to process their learning experience with an established support system on a regular basis provided by the project. In addition, the member has access to the national TFA web based resources and networking opportunities.

COMMENTS: The applicant offered a good proposal-giving example of intensive teacher training. The applicant indicated that Teach for America members will and have received intensive training and are given appropriate supervision to measure the teaching effectiveness. The applicant proved that the system of training TAs works because data reflect that the training has been previously successful. However, the applicant's plan did not provide sufficient detail about a recruiting model of local community members which would have demonstrated more community support. The applicant did a good job in meeting the program design,