

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: ReServe Elder Services, Inc., ReServED	Application ID: 11ND124797
---	--------------------------------------



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 community needs to be addressed are compelling and well-documented as evidenced in the citing by NYC DOE, U.S. Census, EPE Research Center, BERC and Multiple Pathways to Graduation. Support for the need of post-secondary education is well-documented in the citing of Gates Foundation, U.S. Census, Miami-Dade Department of Planning, BERC, Community Service Society and NCES. The exact target community is hard to define as labeled by the applicant as serving communities in NYC, Baltimore and Miami. The applicant draws members exclusively from 55+ years of age and older pool to build on three successful pilot programs and expand existing community services. Both the pilot programs and community services are shown to have previous success. The anticipated AmeriCorps members will be individuals who have succeeded in education and career goals. The applicant outlines an excellent screening process that consists of a multi-step process. The proposal outlines an effective and appropriate multi-step training module. The members will receive a 2-day orientation to ensure their understanding of AmeriCorps, ReServe's mission/program model and goals and objectives of the project. It is then followed by three-day training and subsequent sessions throughout the program cycle. Each member will be engaged in recruiting at least 10 volunteers focusing on parent and student volunteers among others to provide service while instilling in all an ethic of service and civic responsibility. The applicant has a five-year history of enhancing the lives of older adults and strengthening NYC communities through volunteer services. The applicant provides data to support the successful initiatives and has already developed stakeholder support in the additional communities to be served. While the applicant desires and has a demonstrable successful program to expand and enhance, the targeted communities are not as clear or defined as they should be, especially the Baltimore and Miami sites. Proposed activities clearly address the compelling needs (post-secondary education pathways for those students in seriously under-resourced systems). The applicant will utilize a proven model to enhance and expand adult learning education opportunities, READY College Access, and Success Mentors. The applicant sets a measurement analysis of success around quantitative data based on program participation and follow-through, however, the design and execution of an internal evaluation is yet to be developed and is to be financed through the grant.

COMMENTS: The proposal has excellent data references. Community needs are compelling and are well-documented. Almost every statement is backed up with references which support the assertions being made.

This demonstrates the proposer is working from empirical evidence, rather than anecdotal or "gut check" evidence. There is a good description of recruiting methods, sources and anticipated outcomes. Good attention is being paid to upfront training and continuation training. The proposal makes a solid case that the program will offer a powerful service experience, both for the AmeriCorps members and the people they will serve. Recruiting additional volunteers can be a powerful part of the service experience. This proposal presents a realistic program model with realistic goals. The use of a post-55 year old population as part time members is a program design which needs to be replicated around the country. Partnerships and linkages are critical to the success of an ambitious project such as this and this project seems to have these well established in order to expand the pilot programs into this multi-state proposal.

COMMENTS: The applicant is using a new way of recruiting key experienced volunteers to solve critical community problems. This also provides the volunteers with a stipend and value to serving their community. The applicant has experience in these (3) communities and the expansion will be successful. The measurement tool is realistic yet does not include sufficient criteria.

COMMENTS: The applicant includes pertinent data indicative of the pressing needs of disadvantaged youth and students at risk in three urban areas: New York City, Baltimore and Miami. In addition, poor outcomes for potential adult learners are cited. The growing needs of these populations are substantiated by current graduation and dropout rates, Title 1 funding, the increase in immigrant populations, poverty levels, and frequent school absences. The applicant's recruitment for ReServED will expand and replicate the success of three pilot programs in New York City which taps into the population of adults ages 55+ who have completed their primary careers and work part-time for ReServe, an emerging national network based in NYC. The ReServists have been highly effective as Success Mentors, Ready in the Community members supporting students in preparation for college, and in working with adult learners in the Adult Education Corps. The applicant includes sufficient training for the members which includes a two-day orientation and three days of training specific to the program goals. The training for the READY, Success Mentors, and AEC programs will be adapted from the existing curricula used in the NYC pilots and ongoing training and development will be through weekly phone check-ins and monthly meetings. Additionally, the applicant proposes an appropriate supervisory structure with each site having a designated supervisor for day-to-day oversight and regular contact with the Program Director. The applicant clearly demonstrates the success of the pilot programs in improving education and opportunities for community residents. The use of ReServists is a successful strategy which provides a strong base of experience coupled with a commitment to service. The addition of skilled service corps has been crucial in supporting the work of educators and professionals in the disadvantaged communities. The applicant will participate in the National Performance measures pilot in the Education and Opportunity focus areas. The applicant includes projections for the three initiatives noting that 28% of the students served by Success Mentors in the pilot program have improved attendance and it is estimated that an increase of 10% of students in the READY program will attend college in comparison with low-income students in general. The AED program will target increasing the capacity of adult learners by 10%.