

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Goodwill Industries of Northern New England, The Great Strides Rural Education Corps	Application ID: 11ND125620
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>COMMENTS: The applicant discusses the problems of job losses and lack of educational attainment in Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire. They do not provide local need data for the targeted areas. The activities will include having AmeriCorps members do mentoring in area schools and lead service learning projects. This has shown in past programs to be a very successful strategy to improve student’s attendance, graduation rates, and future college admissions. The recruiting, hiring, orientation, training and supervision plans for AmeriCorps members are well developed and substantial. The applicant will have 30 300 hour positions; 15 450 hour positions; and 5 675 hour part time part time positions for AmeriCorps members. The use of a third party evaluator and a control group will help measure program success.</p>	
<p>COMMENTS: The Applicant has proposed a program to help students in rural communities throughout Northern New England. The program Great Strides will work in these communities to provide mentorship to at risk youth to facilitate an increase in educational grade scores, recruit volunteers and provide an increase in educational service learning opportunities to these impoverished communities. The applicant will provide for thirty three hundred hour positions, fifteen four hundred fifty hour positions, and five six hundred and seventy five hour part time educational awards to members who will serve in multiple capacities within the service learning project. The applicant has a plan in place for servicing the targeted communities however, it is unclear within the proposal due to the lack of statistical data on the demographic areas.</p>	
<p>COMMENTS: Applicant presents little data to illustrate the extent of the need to increase educational attainment rates among middle and high schools for people in specified rural counties in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. There is little data regarding the current educational attainment rate for this population. It is unclear what educational rate they would like to increase, whether high school or college. Applicant presents no data regarding the number or percentage of students who complete middle school or high school, yet that is where they propose to place the volunteers. There is very little data confirming how the identified problem exists within the specified rural counties. Applicant does not note the statistical</p>	

significance of the data that is present. Applicant presented no information to illustrate how AmeriCorps members and volunteers are particularly well suited to deliver the proposed solution, as opposed to other types of workers or other volunteers.

COMMENTS: Overall, the applicant presents a successful Program Design as evidenced by the compelling community needs to be addressed. Quotes from the Manufacturer's News, Inc. which emphasizes the change in jobs since the recession and the downward spiral of economic conditions all help to understand the changes in the communities. Companies will not relocate to the New England areas without a skilled workforce. The applicant does not however clearly depict the severity of the problem in the targeted communities. The plan for recruiting members is clear and strong because it is built on the same plan from another highly successful program of Goodwill's, called the College Access Corps Pilot Program. The recruitment process includes interviews and reference checks and specific qualifications for applicants. The applicant presents a strong orientation and training plan for its members which include webinars, orientation in the schools to include New Teacher Training and opening day training. The applicant has infused trainings that detail AmeriCorps history as well as prohibited activities. Training is continued throughout the school year and includes leadership training with a CNCS consultant and service learning through Kid Consortium. The applicant will provide an ethic of service through several community events such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Celebration of Service Recognition and September 11th. Through these events members will have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills and promote community service through the three leadership teams Goodwill has created. The applicant has also provided numerous opportunities for members to reflect on their experiences through journaling and other reflective activities. These opportunities were noted to be significant strengths during 09/10 periods of trainings as members developed a more involved and motivated ethic of service. The applicant provides a custom designed management system which will measure the impact of the program. Quarterly reports, conference calls and mid- term and end of term evaluations will all help to ensure the program is running efficiently and that there is satisfaction from members and sites. Clear and specific standardized performance target measures were selected by the applicant with the help of the Great Strides Advisory Board. Questions were developed in an effort to ensure the focus of the performance target measures were consistent with the desired outcomes of the program. The applicant presents a plan to sustain the proposed service activities in the community after the grant ends. Key features of this plan are strengthening the community and school partnership by spending a great deal of work on recruiting and training volunteers to support students. Camden Hills Regional High School, one of the applicant's partners has received a commitment from a local bank to provide a cash match for the program. The potential impact of this program on the community appears to be well-demonstrated.