

Program Summary
Department of Emergency and Military Affairs
Project Challenge

Program Overview

Project Challenge, an educational program for at-risk youth, is administered by the Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA).

To be eligible to apply to Project Challenge, a potential applicant must meet the following criteria, which has been developed by the National Guard Bureau:

- between the ages of 16-18
- U.S. citizen or permanent U.S. resident
- resident of Arizona
- pass a drug test
- high school dropout
- no prior felony convictions
- not on probation or parole
- no pending legal action
- unemployed

Prospective students must volunteer for the program. Federal law prohibits using Project Challenge as an alternate sentencing program or court referrals of students to the program. Two full-time recruiters work with high school guidance counselors, teachers, ministers, and probation officers to locate potential applicants.

The program hosts approximately 100 students per class and holds 2 classes per year. Students who are admitted to the program do not pay any tuition or fees for enrollment in Project Challenge.

Since its inception in 1993, the Project Challenge curriculum has had a duration of 17 months, which is divided into a 5-month residential phase and a 12-month mentoring phase.

The residential phase is completed in a quasi-military environment at a facility located in Queen Creek, where students receive instruction in academics, career planning, citizenship, community service, health and hygiene, leadership, life skills, and physical training. Most students will earn their General Equivalency Diploma while enrolled in the program.

There are a total of 9 buildings on campus. Three buildings are used for operation and administration, 3 buildings are used as residences, 2 buildings are used for classrooms, and 1 temporary dining/classroom facility. The total square footage of all buildings on

campus is 33,872. Cafeteria services are provided through an agreement with the neighboring Boy's Ranch facility.

Project Challenge has a total staff of 51, which includes 4 teachers, 4 counselors, 5 recruiting and placement specialists, 1 medical specialist, 1 supply specialist, 4 administrative staff, and 32 cadre personnel, who provide training and constant supervision. The program did not provide requested information concerning current student to teacher ratios.

During the mentoring phase, each student is paired with an adult volunteer to assist the student in accomplishing their self-improvement goals made during the residential phase.

Each mentor must meet the following criteria:

- same gender as the student
- over 24 years old
- cannot live in the same household as the student
- not an immediate family member

In addition, mentors are required to submit fingerprints and must pass a background check. Approximately 100 volunteers are required for each class to serve as mentors for Project Challenge students.

Mentors are required to attend a 4-hour training session before the student enters into the mentoring phase, and students are required to attend a 3-hour mentor orientation session.

During the mentoring phase, mentors are expected to meet with students twice monthly, and are also to contact students at least 2 times each month either by telephone or e-mail. Each month the mentor reports to Project Challenge on the number of contacts with the student and on the student's progress in achieving academic and employment goals.

Program Funding

Project Challenge receives funding from 2 sources: the state General Fund and the Project Challenge Grant, a federal matching fund which provides funding based on a 60% federal and 40% state share agreement. However, the state's share of funding has exceeded its 40% minimum requirement in order to pay for an additional 5.5 FTE Positions.

In FY 2009, the program received funding in the amount of \$4,259,000. This represents an increase of 37.9% over the FY 2001 amount and a 2.3% decrease from the FY 2008 total, which is due to the elimination of a one-time allocation for a Multi-Purpose Facility on the Project Challenge campus. *Table 1* below displays funding information for Project Challenge by fund source for FY 2001, and FY 2006 through FY 2009.

Performance Measures

The only measure included in the State Master List of Government Programs regarding the performance of Project Challenge is the percentage of graduates who are either employed or pursuing an education. DEMA tracks this information for a period of 1 year after completion of the program. This measure is included in the General Appropriation Act and is shown in *Table 2* below.

Project Challenge has consistently met or exceeded its goal of placing 95% of its graduates in the workforce or in institutes of higher education.

To better evaluate the performance of the program, a performance measure which monitors the average number of mentor visits per month could be added to the State Master List. The department could also include a measure which tracks graduates for longer than a year to better determine the long-term effect of the program.

Additionally, the department may also consider adding a performance measure to track the percentage of entrants who graduate from the program, the percentage of favorable student evaluations, the average cost of the program per student, the percentage of students who demonstrate academic progress of 20% or more, the number of students who earn a General Equivalency Diploma, and the number of students who attend the program each year.

<u>Fund</u>	<u>FY 2001</u>	<u>FY 2006</u>	<u>FY 2007</u>	<u>FY 2008</u>	<u>FY 2009</u>
GF	\$1,400,000	\$2,115,000	\$2,205,600	\$ 1,869,800	\$ 1,770,100
Federal	<u>1,688,000</u>	<u>2,016,400</u>	<u>2,016,400</u>	<u>2,488,900</u>	<u>2,488,900</u>
Total	\$3,088,000	\$4,131,400^{1/}	\$4,222,000^{1/}	\$4,358,700^{1/}	\$4,259,000

^{1/} These totals include one-time appropriations of \$500,000 in FY 2006 and FY 2007, and \$100,000 in FY 2008, from the General Fund for the construction of a Multi-Purpose facility on the Project Challenge campus.

<u>Performance Measure</u>	<u>FY 2005</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>FY 2006</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>FY 2007</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>FY 2009</u> <u>Estimate</u>
Percent of graduates who are either employed or in school (1 year after graduation)	94	90	N/A	95