

Award Justification Statement RFA# 202308186

- I. Summary** Volunteer Maine, the state service commission, awards *grants* of federal AmeriCorps program resources to community-based agencies (public and nonprofit). This RFA solicited proposals from organizations that would focus AmeriCorps service on community needs in one of the following areas:
- Public Health – including domestic violence, abuse or neglect, substance use, emergency preparedness/response, adverse childhood experiences, and mental health;
 - Workforce development – combining service with skill development or certifications that lead to post-service employment
 - Housing – affordable and safe housing; home energy conservation, weatherization, or repair including programs that perform the modifications, teach homeowners DIY skills, or help residents connect with programs that offer financial assistance to accomplish the projects
 - Climate action compatible with *Maine Won't Wait* (the state climate action plan) and Maine Climate Corps; and,
 - Environmental/community resilience, adaptation, and sustainability including emergency preparedness.

The Commission noted it would favor, via preference points, applications from:

- partnerships or coalitions whose members represent local organizations working together to implement a common evidence-based approach to a community problem.
- organizations led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people.

II. Evaluation Process

The Commission uses selection criteria and a process that incorporates the mandatory AmeriCorps weighting and scoring of various criteria published in the Code of Federal Regulations, as well as Commission policies on funding and performance, and the requirements of state contract selection rules.

All AmeriCorps proposals are assessed by the Commission's Grant Selection and Performance Task Force using a two-phase process. The text that follows is quoted from pp 19 and 20 of the RFA.

Phase One. Peer Review of application narrative, budget, and performance measure components using federally required scoring system. Reviewers are community service practitioners, educators, administrators, and specialists in the areas of environment, public safety, education, and other human needs who evaluate the quality of the proposals.

Volunteer Maine uses the mandated AmeriCorps weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 50% for Program Design, 25% for Organizational Capability, and 25% for Budget Adequacy and Cost Effectiveness for a possible total score of 100 Peer Reviewer points.

Peer Reviewers express their consensus recommendations to the Commissions' Grant Selection and Performance Task Force by assigning each proposal to one of the following categories:

- ◆ Strongly Recommend for Further Review (A comprehensive and thorough proposal of exceptional merit with numerous strengths; total score between 90 and 100)
- ◆ Recommend for Further Review (A proposal that demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support; it has some weaknesses. Total score between 80 and 89)
- ◆ Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation (A proposal with approximately equal strengths and weaknesses. Total score between 60 and 79.)
- ◆ Do Not Recommend for Further Review (A proposal with serious shortcomings. There are numerous weaknesses and few strengths. Total score 59 or below)

Applications not recommended for further review will be excluded from Phase Two consideration.

Phase Two: Applications recommended for some level of review will undergo further assessment by the Grants Selection and Performance Task Force. The Task Force will include in its review documents submitted as part of this competition plus data from publicly available information systems including SAM (the federal System for Award Management).

It also will consider information gathered in a structured interview of representatives of the grant applicant. The representatives must include the proposed project director plus personnel responsible for finances and human resources. The interview will be conducted through remote technology and recorded. Task Force members will review the recording as part of their assessment tasks.

The Task Force will use the following weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 25 points Funding Priority Alignment, 10 points Program Model, 15 points Commission Preferences (rural, partnerships, marginalized communities), 10 points Financial Plan, 15 points Fiscal Systems, 10 points Past Performance, and 15 points for Grant Readiness for a possible total of 100 points.

Upon completion of the Task Force review, the scores from Phase One and Phase Two will be combined to produce a single review score.

The Grant Selection and Performance Task Force will then make final recommendations for funding to the full Commission. Proposals that address Commission priorities and preferences will be considered first for awards. If there are sufficient funds remaining, proposals in other categories will be considered.

The Grant Selection and Performance Task Force will then make its final recommendations for funding to the full Maine Commission which retains the right to issue either full or partial awards at its discretion. The Task Force is not obligated to recommend funding of any proposals.

III. Qualifications & Experience. In this grant program, awards are made to support proposals that score in a range that shows there is sufficient readiness to execute the program and sufficient evidence the program sponsor has the resources and capacity to support implementation. The scoring is described above. Additional eligibility criteria were laid out on pg 18 of the RFA:

- Applicants must operate an AmeriCorps program only in Maine.

- Eligible types of organizations are public or private non-profits, State/county/local units of government, higher ed institutions, faith-based organizations, labor organizations, federally recognized Tribes, and regional organizations.
- All applicants must have an existing physical presence in the community where AmeriCorps members will serve.
- Organizations must have an official IRS employer identification number.
- Applicants will need to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier with the federal System for Award Management and have an active registration. Both can be done online and are discussed later in this document.
- Eligible organizations that are primarily female or minority managed or led, and agencies within or primarily recruiting from designated labor surplus areas are encouraged to apply.

NOT ELIGIBLE: Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime are disqualified from receiving assistance under an AmeriCorps grant. Pursuant to the Lobbying disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Sections 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 USC 501(c)(4), which engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

IV. Proposed Services

Operate the AmeriCorps program approved in the application for up to three years.

- V. Cost Proposal** This grant program awards a flat amount per 1700 hours of service by AmeriCorps members. The amount for this competition was on page 38 of the RFA and is \$28,800 per 1700 hours.

- VI. Conclusion** While both proposals identified community needs and a service activity to meet the need, only one gave evidence of being ready to implement. The applicant approved for funding has sufficient staffing, has been awarded funding from other sources for the program expenses not covered by AmeriCorps funds, has a well defined training program for the members that will result in credentials desired by post-service employers, outlined a supervision plan that ensures members will have proper guidance, and identified specifically the partners involved in implementation including the other Tribal offices.

Crofton, Maryalice

From: Crofton, Maryalice
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 1:33 PM
To: krystal@alphalegalfoundation.com
Cc: Ashmore, Michael
Subject: AmeriCorps Grant Competition
Attachments: Grant TF Report to full Board-ACFormula -ALF.pdf; AwardNotificationLetter-ALF.pdf

Dear Ms Williams,

Attached is notification of the Commission decision as voted on Friday, October 20, 2023. Along with the letter is the report from the grant selection committee that was distributed prior to the meeting.

Please feel free to connect with Commission staff with any questions.

Respectfully,

Maryalice Crofton

Executive Director, Volunteer Maine
Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism

19 Elkins Lane, Room 105
105 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0105
(207)624-7792
www.VolunteerMaine.gov





Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



October 23, 2023

Krystal Williams
Alpha Legal Foundation
110 Marginal Way, Ste 195
Portland, ME 04101-2442

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Grant Award(s) under RFA # 202308186, Maine AmeriCorps Standard Grants

Dear Ms Williams:

This letter pertains to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine, Commission for Community Service, for Maine AmeriCorps Standard Grants. The Commission evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Commission is hereby announcing its conditional grant award(s) to the following applicants:

- Penobscot Nation Housing Department

The applicant listed above received the evaluation team's highest rating(s). The Commission will be contacting the aforementioned applicant soon to negotiate the final award. As provided in the RFA, the Notice of Conditional Contract Award is subject to execution of a written contract and, as a result, this Notice does NOT constitute the formation of a contract between the Commission and the apparent successful vendor. The vendor shall not acquire any legal or equitable rights relative to the grant resources until a grant containing terms and conditions acceptable to the Commission is executed. The Commission further reserves the right to cancel this Notice of Conditional Grant Award at any time prior to the execution of a written contract.

As stated in the RFA, following announcement of this award decision, all submissions in response to the RFA are considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA). 1 M.R.S. §§ 401 et seq.; 5 M.R.S. § 1825-B (6).

This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee and the successful negotiation of a grant agreement. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see following page.

Thank you for your interest in developing an AmeriCorps program to serve the needs of Maine people.

Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton
Executive Director



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by an award decision may request an appeal hearing. The request must be made to the Director of the Bureau of General Services, in writing, within 15 days of notification of the contract award as provided in 5 M.R.S. § 1825-E (2) and the Rules of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of General Services, Division of Purchases, Chapter 120, § (2) (2).

Crofton, Maryalice

From: Crofton, Maryalice
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 1:34 PM
To: Gary Fearon
Cc: Ashmore, Michael
Subject: AmeriCorps Grant Competition
Attachments: AwardNotificationLetter-PNHD.pdf; Grant TF Report to full Board-ACFormula -PNHD.pdf

Dear Mr Fearon,

Attached is notification of the Commission decision as voted on Friday, October 20, 2023. Along with the letter is the report from the grant selection committee that was distributed prior to the meeting.

Please feel free to connect with Commission staff with any questions.

Respectfully,

Maryalice Crofton

Executive Director, Volunteer Maine
Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism

19 Elkins Lane, Room 105
105 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0105
(207)624-7792
www.VolunteerMaine.gov





Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



October 23, 2023

Gary J. Fearon
Penobscot Nation Housing Department
12 Wabanaki Way
Indian Island, ME 04468-1254

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Grant Award(s) under RFA # 202308186, Maine AmeriCorps Standard Grants

Dear Mr Fearon:

This letter pertains to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine, Commission for Community Service, for Maine AmeriCorps Standard Grants. The Commission evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Commission is hereby announcing its conditional grant award(s) to the following applicants:

- Penobscot Nation Housing Department

The applicant listed above received the evaluation team's highest rating(s). The Commission will be contacting the aforementioned applicant soon to negotiate the final award. As provided in the RFA, the Notice of Conditional Contract Award is subject to execution of a written contract and, as a result, this Notice does NOT constitute the formation of a contract between the Commission and the apparent successful vendor. The vendor shall not acquire any legal or equitable rights relative to the grant resources until a grant containing terms and conditions acceptable to the Commission is executed. The Commission further reserves the right to cancel this Notice of Conditional Grant Award at any time prior to the execution of a written contract.

As stated in the RFA, following announcement of this award decision, all submissions in response to the RFA are considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA). 1 M.R.S. §§ 401 et seq.; 5 M.R.S. § 1825-B (6).

This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee and the successful negotiation of a grant agreement. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see following page.

Thank you for your interest in developing an AmeriCorps program to serve the needs of Maine people.

Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton
Executive Director



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by an award decision may request an appeal hearing. The request must be made to the Director of the Bureau of General Services, in writing, within 15 days of notification of the contract award as provided in 5 M.R.S. § 1825-E (2) and the Rules of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of General Services, Division of Purchases, Chapter 120, § (2) (2).

RFP # 202308186

Fixed Amount

	Applicant Sheet 1	Applicant Sheet 2	Applicant Sheet 3
Application ID	23ES260284	23ES260444	#REF!
Applicant Name	Alpha Legal Foundation	Penobscot Nation Housing department	#REF!
Peer Reviewer Results			
Program Design	24.95	34.75	#REF!
Organizational Capability	13.25	21.00	#REF!
Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy	20.00	20.00	#REF!
Peer Review Final Score	58.20	75.75	#REF!
Recommendation to Grants TF	Further review with extreme hesitation	Further review with hesitation	
Task Force Review Results			
Proposal Alignment	18.75	25.00	#REF!
Program Model	5.63	8.75	
Preferences from RFA	7.50	10.00	
Past Performance	5.00	7.50	#REF!
Financial Plan	5.00	5.00	#REF!
Fiscal Plan	3.75	15.00	#REF!
Grant Readiness	7.50	11.25	
Task Force Final Score	53.13	71.25	#REF!
Final Application Score	111.33	147.00	#REF!
Funding Requested	\$196,000	\$280,000	#REF!
Funding recommendation Rank	Do not forward or fund 0	Forward or fund only if corrections can be negotiated 1	

- Strong** This section of the application is a thorough, compelling, and convincing response to criteria; additional information is relevant and enhances or strengthens argument significantly; the argument shows this element shows high levels of success or highly likely to be successful.
- Adequate** This section of the application responds to all criteria– no omissions or additions. The argument shows this element has had some success or could possibly succeed as described.
- Weak** This section responds to many but not all the required elements/criteria. Some text is not relevant or does not add to the argument. The argument does not demonstrate this element has succeeded or would succeed as described
- Substandard** This section barely responds to the criteria, has a significant flaw, or lacks any indication this element could succeed as described.
- Incomplete/Nonresponsive** This section of the application does not respond to the criteria.

APP ID: 23ES260284

PROGRAM NAME: Maine JusticeCorps

INITIAL COMMENTS: [LINK TO DOC](#)

APPLICANT NAME: Alpha Legal Foundation

FUNDS REQUESTED: \$196,000

Exec Summary Conforms?

INITIAL RATINGS --> Below are the initial ratings submitted by Reviewers after their independent reading and assessment of the proposals. These are the starting points for your determination of a final rating of the application narrative. After peer reviewers discuss each section's quality and responsiveness to requirements, record the group's consensus rating for each section in the cells below. (Select from drop-down menu.)

Program Design							
RATER ----->	Michael L. Williams	Matthew Williams	Anne Louise Rice			CONSENSUS RATING	Rating point value
Need	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	Weak	Adequate			Weak	3.5
Intervention	Adequate	Weak	Adequate			Adequate	5.25
Theory of Change, Evidence, & Logic Model	Adequate	Weak	Adequate			Weak	8
Funding Priority	Adequate	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	Adequate			Substandard	1
AC member training	Adequate	Substandard	Adequate			Weak	2
AC member supervision	Adequate	Substandard	Weak			Weak	2
AC member experience	Adequate	Weak	Strong			Adequate	3
Commitment to AC identity	Adequate	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	Substandard			Incomplete/Nonresponsiv	0.2
Organizational Capability							
RATER	Michael L. Williams	Matthew Williams	Anne Louise Rice			CONSENSUS RATING	Rating point value
Org Background & Staffing	Adequate	Weak	Strong			Adequate	10
Compliance/Accountability	Adequate	Substandard	Substandard			Substandard	3.25
RATER	Michael L. Williams	Matthew Williams	Anne Louise Rice			CONSENSUS RATING	Rating point value
Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy	Adequate	Weak	Substandard			Adequate	20

FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION

Applicant is not required to do an evaluation because they have not had an AmeriCorps operating grant before.

Program Design	24.95
Organizational Capability	13.25
Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy	20
Final Consensus Score	Total Score: 58.2

Recommendation: Select from values in this list

Grant Task Force Tech Reivew and Assessment Section

INITIAL RATINGS> Below are the initial ratings offered by GTF Members after their independent reading and assessment of the proposals. These are the

LINK TO COMMENTS

Proposal Alignment (25%)		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	Point Value
		Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett				
Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	Adequate				Adequate	18.75
						Section Score	18.75
<hr/>							
Program Model (10%)		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	Point Value
		Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett				
Communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive				Incomplete/Nonresponsiv	0
Proposal adds to goal of being programmaticaly, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	Adequate				Adequate	1.875
Potential for innovation and/or replication	Adequate	Strong				Strong	2.5
Strength of evidence program can be sustained over time.	Weak	Weak				Weak	1.25
						Section Score	5.625
<hr/>							
Preferences from RFAAnnouncement (15%)		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	Point Value
		Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett				
from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Weak	Adequate				Weak	2.5
Proposal submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people.	Strong					Strong	5
serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Weak	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive				Incomplete/Nonresponsiv	0
						Section Score	7.5
<hr/>							
Past Performance (10%)		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	Point Value
		Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett				
Prior Grant management experience	Weak	Weak				Weak	5
						Section Score	5

		Rater -- initial ratings			
		Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett		
Financial Plan (15%)	Adequate	Weak		Consensus rating	Point Value
				Weak	5
				Section Score	5
		Rater -- initial ratings			
		Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett		
Fiscal Systems (15%)	capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Weak	Substandard	Consensus rating	Point Value
	strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management practices	Weak	Substandard	Substandard	1.25
	strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Weak	Substandard	Substandard	1.25
				Substandard	1.25
			Section Score	3.75	
		Rater -- initial ratings			
		Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett		
Grant Readiness (15%)	Weak	Weak		Consensus rating	Point Value
				Weak	7.5
				Section Score	7.5

GTF Total Score:	53.125
Peer Reviewer Score	58.2
Combined Score	111.325
	of possible 200

*lookup pre-programmed

The person who is driving the development is impressive but the systems to implement the grant are not in place yet. Proposal should come back when the organization is more defined or staffed or has a partner who would be the fiscal agent and provide some assurance of consistency and ?? In the case of personnel

Recommendation: Do not forward or fund

Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet

- Strong** This section of the application is a thorough, compelling, and convincing response to criteria; additional information is relevant and enhances or strengthens argument significantly; the argument shows this element shows high levels of success or highly likely to be successful.
- Adequate** This section of the application responds to all criteria– no omissions or additions. The argument shows this element has had some success or could possibly succeed as described.
- Weak** This section responds to many but not all the required elements/criteria. Some text is not relevant or does not add to the argument. The argument does not demonstrate this element has succeeded or would succeed as described
- Substandard** This section barely responds to the criteria, has a significant flaw, or lacks any indication this element could succeed as described.
- Incomplete/Nonresponsive** This section of the application does not respond to the criteria.

APP ID: 23ES260444
 Penobscot Nation Housing

PROGRAM NAME: Penobscot Nation Energy Efficiency Program

INITIAL COMMENTS: [LINK TO DOC](#)

APPLICANT NAME: department

FUNDS REQUESTED: \$280,000

Exec Summary Conforms?

INITIAL RATINGS -->

Below are the initial ratings submitted by Reviewers after their independent reading and assessment of the proposals. These are the starting points for your determination of a final rating of the application narrative. After peer reviewers discuss each section's quality and responsiveness to requirements, record the group's consensus rating for each section in the cells below. (Select from drop-down menu.)

Program Design	Michael L. Williams	Matthew Williams	Anne Louise Rice	CONSENSUS RATING	Rating point value
RATER ----->					
Need	Weak	Weak	Adequate	Adequate	5.25
Intervention	Weak	Weak	Adequate	Weak	3.5
Theory of Change, Evidence, & Logic Model	Weak	Weak	Adequate	Adequate	12
Funding Priority	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	Strong	4
AC member training	Weak	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	3
AC member supervision	Weak	Adequate	Weak	Weak	2
AC member experience	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	2
Commitment to AC identity	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	3

Organizational Capability					
RATER	Michael L. Williams	Matthew Williams	Anne Louise Rice	CONSENSUS RATING	Rating point value
Org Background & Staffing	Weak	Weak	Adequate	Weak	6
Compliance/Accountability	Adequate	Substandard	Adequate	Adequate	15
RATER	Michael L. Williams	Matthew Williams	Anne Louise Rice	CONSENSUS RATING	Rating point value
Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy	Adequate	Weak	Substandard	Adequate	20

FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION

Program Design	34.75
Organizational Capability	21
Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy	20
Final Consensus Score	Total Score: 75.75

Recommendation: 60-79, Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation

		Rater -- initial ratings			
Fiscal Systems (15%)	Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett			
capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Strong	Strong			Consensus rating: Strong, Point Value: 5
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management practices	Adequate	Strong			Consensus rating: Strong, Point Value: 5
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Strong	Strong			Consensus rating: Strong, Point Value: 5
					Section Score : 15
		Rater -- initial ratings			
Grant Readiness (15%)	Becky Hayes Boober	Edward Barrett			
	Strong	Adequate			Consensus rating: Adequate, Point Value: 11.25
					Section Score : 11.25

GTF Total Score:	82.5
Peer Reviewer Score	75.75
Combined Score	158.25
	of possible 200

*lookup pre-programmed

Specify source of funds

Recommendation: Forward or fund only if corrections can be negotiated

Grant Proposal Report to Commission from Task Force

Recommendation: Do not fund

Legal Applicant: Alpha Legal Foundation

Project Name: Maine JusticeCorps

- Category:** AC Formula -- Standard
 AC Formula – Rural State
 AC Competitive
 Other Competition

- Type:** Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Cost Reimbursement
 Ed Award Only

- Applicant type:** New (no prior AC experience)
 Re-compete (# of yrs: __)

Proposed Dates: 01/01/2024 to 12/31/2024
 Submitted request is for Yr [1]

Federal Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

Commission priorities: Workforce development

Local Share Required in Budget: Yes No

Source of Funds detail required: Yes No

Requested Resources: Funds and Slots (*indicates sections with calculation errors)

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating			
Member Support			
Indirect (Admin)			
CNCS Award amount	\$196,000	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	\$205,000
% sharing proposed			
% share required	n/a		
Cost-per-member proposed	\$28,000		
max allowed	\$28,000		

Total AmeriCorps Member Service Years: 7.0

	Slot Types Requested						
	1700	1200	900	675	450	300	Total
Slots With living allowance	4		6				10
Living allowance proposed	28000		14000				
Slots with only ed award							

Program Description (executive summary): Alpha Legal Foundation proposes to have 7 AmeriCorps members who will serve in courthouses, legal aid organizations, and community-based organizations to ensure Maine residents understand (1) their rights under U.S. law and (2) how to access the local courts to advocate for and protect their interests without lawyers (the "Program"). The AmeriCorps members will connect people to needed information and resources, ultimately increasing access to justice for all people. The Program will complement existing legal aid and court self-help resources and leverage the legal community's experience and network of legal resources to help low-income people to be served more holistically and effectively. Members will serve in courthouses in the Cumberland and Androscoggin counties. At the end of the first program year, the members will have made the civil justice system more accessible to at least 500 Maine residents who face

difficult legal issues that adversely impact their basic needs for housing, safety, and economic security. In addition, the members will leverage an additional 10 community volunteers who will provide educational seminars to Program members or partner with the Program to provide legal information and procedural guidance to Maine residents alongside members. The CNCS investment of \$196,000 will be matched with approximately \$125,000 in private funding and \$80,000 in in-kind services.

Service locations:

Not identified beyond Cumberland and Androscoggin Counties

Other than the legal applicant, please list the agencies or organizations that appear to be the major collaborators or partners in this grant.

Civil legal aid orgs., courts, universities, Maine Law, community NGOs, and private and public charities

Will the applicant place AmeriCorps members with other agencies? Yes No

Applicant proposes to deliver services:

- Within a single municipality Within a single County but not covering the entire County
 County-wide in a single County Multiple Counties but not Statewide Statewide

Performance measures (targets proposed for Year 1; targets for years 2 and 3 set in continuations):

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

OUTPUT: O1A: Number of individuals served

Proposed target: 500

OUTCOME: Individuals are better prepared to move forward in their legal matter and advocate for their rights

Proposed target: 7

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

OUTPUT: Increase legal skills and knowledge, making a career in public interest/law more likely

Proposed target: 7

OUTCOME: Employed in public interest or legal profession OR attending law school 3 years post-service

Proposed target: 10

CAPACITY BUILDING

(measures listed in the RFA not entered and targets were not proposed)

Scoring Detail:

Peer Reviewer Consensus Score. *Assessment of narrative using point distribution from federal agency. Major categories (Program Design, Organizational Capability, Budget and Cost) are dictated by CFR rubric for scoring.*

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Design		
Need	Weak	3.5
Intervention	Adequate	5.25
Theory of Change, Evidence, & Logic Model	Weak	8
Funding Priority	Substandard	1
AmeriCorps Member Training	Weak	2
AmeriCorps Member Supervision	Weak	2
AmeriCorps Member Experience	Adequate	3
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identity	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	0.2
Organizational Capability		
Organizational Background & Staffing	Adequate	10
Compliance/Accountability	Substandard	3.25
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	20
Evaluation Plan	n/a – no prior grant	
Total Peer Reviewer Score (100 pts possible)		58.2

Task Force Consensus Score. *The Task Force reviewers assess the additional technical criteria that states are directed to consider by the CFR.*

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Alignment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with funding priorities 	Adequate	18.75
Program Model		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve communities described in 2522.450(c) 	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse 	Adequate	1.875
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for innovation and/or replication 	Strong	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of evidence program can be sustained over time. 	Weak	1.25
Preferences from RFP Announcement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together 	Weak	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people. 	Strong	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum 	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	0
Past Performance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance 	Weak	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively 		
Financial Plan	Weak	5

Fiscal Systems		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements 	Substandard	1.25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc. 	Substandard	1.25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc. 	Substandard	1.25
Grant Readiness	Weak	7.5
Total Task Force Score		53.125
Peer Review Score		58.2
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		111.325

Final Assessment of Application:

- Forward or fund with no corrections/modifications
- Forward or fund with corrections/modifications
- Do Not Forward or fund

Referenced Conditions/Corrections

The following proposal issues need to be clarified or, in the case of missing required elements, added.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Section: Program Design (50 %)

Need

- AmeriCorps members will connect people to needed information and resources. Members will serve in courthouses in Cumberland and Androscoggin counties. I do have an issue with the Racial Demographics of the Maine State Bar Association numbers, 82.6% are white, 0.4% are Asian, 0.2% are American Indian, 0.2% are African American, 0.2% are Hispanic or Latino (should this not add up to 100% to be complete information?)
- The applicant provides a thorough and deep analysis of the need to be addressed by the Americorp members. There could be more localized data used to explain the need within the two counties targeted for service. There is little description of how the target service population was engaged to determine the need and the localized data could have come from work to gather that information.
- The applicant demonstrates knowledge of the underserved communities' needs for legal representation in the qualifying AmeriCorps priority areas. The application does not include local data to address the question of how many and what kind of legal services are needed by low-income Mainers. The frequently referenced and oft changing "3 in 4" Mainers comment is never cited and therefore is inadequate. However, the applicant does use national level data that serves as an acceptable proxy. The applicant merely mentions partnering with but does not provide any detail about the services already provided by other organizations.

Intervention

- the "boots on the ground approach"
- When discussing the program model implemented by Americorp, the applicant covers the following topics:
 - The core activities of members and describes them as being legal navigators who help low-income community members make their way through the legal system in civil cases.
 - The duration and intensity of the project is delivered in measurable timetables.
 - The demographics of the population served are described as primarily low-income Mainers. While most of these items are touched upon, there could be more detail for the population served by this program and how diversity plays a role in amplifying the service. The section lacks discussion of why this intervention is the best fit for the identified community need. The roles and specialized qualifications for Americorp members are discussed.
- The applicant demonstrates how it will use existing JusticeCorps models across the country and apply them to this pilot program in Maine. There is a clear definition of the distinction between the roles in the proposed program and partner organizations, along with a solid description of minimal qualifications of the

proposed program staff. the other organizations will undertake. However, there is no explanation for how at least one of the proposed program elements, a weekly lecture on navigating the legal system, is a fit for the target population. Further, the referral services offered in the courthouses, while intuitively appealing, when taken with the lecture program, have no documented connection to the target number of people reached, namely 500 in the first year.

Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model

- where it talks about one or both in civil cases in 3 out of 4 having not talked to a lawyer.
- There is a general discussion of how increasing the diversity of the legal field will enhance services provided to marginalized and underrepresented communities. The Logic Model is very thorough with an impressive amount of detail. Visually the diagram was difficult to follow, but this could be due to how the program created the display.
- The applicant references other JusticeCorps models but then states that there is no reliable transferability. This section requires the applicant to select a durable model for the Maine case but the applicant denies the existence of one. The reviewer uses business judgment to determine proxy models are sufficient. This section earns an adequate score.

Evidence of Effectiveness

- The applicant does not discuss how the solutions they propose have been proven effective in addressing this need claiming the previous programs from other States cannot be used as comparison. No citations to quality sources for statements presented as evidence. There is an appendix with performance goals, but adding this to the narrative would be helpful and clearer.
- The logic model itself covers most of the required areas sufficiently however, there is no alpha-numeric reference to performance outputs, measures or quantity of changes. This section is adequately addressed.

Funding Priority

- As far as this reviewer can see, no funding priority was addressed in the application.
- The applicant does describe in sufficient detail how the need for the program fits within AmeriCorps funding priorities and programmatic requirements. This is largely accomplished through multiple references to other programs.

Member Training

- 20% of MSY, required member training and conference attendance.
- Applicant provided only vague generalities as to what training will be provided to members and by which organizations. Seems to be no method for establishing consistent training outcomes.
 - The applicant demonstrates it understands the importance of legal training component, allocating the highest percent of time in a MSY to it. However, there is no evidence of quality of training. Further, there is no discussion of how the training will be customized to the target Mainer audience and the applicant already noted that it does not have local data. Notwithstanding, the applicant articulates effectively the applicability of the proposed program to future employment

Member Supervision

- The Program Manager will engage in regular compliance training to stay informed on potential compliance issues. If issues come up, JusticeCorps staff will immediately contact Volunteer Maine with the description of the situation and the resulting solution, action plan and timeline to address the issue.
- The applicant responds to the prompt, but they currently do not have established personnel to hire the supervisor for Americorp members. No knowing the qualifications of the individual to be hired or knowing the plan for supervision is concerning.
- While the applicant does discuss the qualifications of the proposed supervisor, which focus on people and project management, it does not identify resources for the 7 FTEs (4 FT and 6 PT) to call on for legal questions which require a subject matter expert. Perhaps the trainers will be available, but the applicant does not discuss this and it is a key point to the success of this program.

Member Experience

- There is good detail on the selection process. There is a mentioned preference for hiring members. Opportunities for growth and education outside of the Americorp assignment are not thoroughly discussed. More detail on how members will be given the opportunity to reflect on any personal/professional growth could be discussed. There is no discussion on how to connect to the broader National Service network.

- The applicant describes matching AmeriCorps members with the diverse communities it intends to serve and the applicant clearly describes how the program will benefit the volunteers in ways that support the AmeriCorps program, particularly as it aspires to inspire participants to become attorneys.

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

- The Program will work closely with community partners and site supervisors to make sure they are trained on AmeriCorps rules and regulations, and will be asked to be particularly mindful of situations that might put members in a position to engage in prohibited activity.
- As far as this reviewer can tell, there is no discussion of commitment to AmeriCorps identification.
- The applicant does not include any descriptions of AmeriCorps identification in its program, rather leaving it to the reviewer's imagination that the set-ups in the court houses and the collateral materials will include such branding.

Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%

Organizational Background and Staffing

- ALF provides space to convene BIOP attorneys in Maine to develop deeper relationships and community among the few BIOP attorneys currently practicing in Maine.
- The applicant does discuss how Americorp fits into their strategic goals, but it feels as though this application is putting the cart before the horse. The organization hopes to hire two full time employees including an executive director and the staff person responsible for overseeing the Americorp members. However, this means there are many questions left up in the air surrounding the quality of experience for members at an organization relying on one person who works another full time job. While there is ample discussion of how marginalized communities can benefit from this program, this organization may not be ready to head it. The Americorp members' supervisor is currently unknown.
- The applicant does discuss robustly how the program fits into the ALF mission, goals and even its current and aspirational programmatic structure.

Compliance and Accountability

- The Program Manager will engage in regular compliance training to stay informed on potential compliance issues. If issues come up, JusticeCorps staff will immediately contact Volunteer Maine with the description of the situation and the resulting solution, action plan and timeline to address the issue.
- There are no current policies or practices in place at the organization as it is theoretical based on the hiring of a Program Manager. There is no discussion of existing protocols for the organization even though it is volunteer based.
- The applicant does not discuss any of its internal policies, procedures controls or otherwise to ensure compliance and accountability. Having these measures in place is a program requirement, regardless of where the applicant is in a business lifecycle.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%

- The usage of the MSYs in employment and other economic opportunity.
- Budget is incomplete without assigning a number of Americorp members into their appropriate category and no average amount of allowance for those members is entered. Non-Americorp funding is discussed.
- The applicant does nothing more than demonstrate how it arrived at the 7 MSY positions per guidelines. There is no budget.

SUMMARY APPRAISAL

Comments:

- the legal help they would be supplying to people to navigate the court system on their own.
- The applicant has found a program that could be implemented in Maine and established a thorough understanding of that need. However, the organization seems to be ill-prepared to take on 7 full-time

AmeriCorps members. There is no Executive Director and no Program Manager to oversee operations. Members would be scattered to multiple other organizations without clear standards for training and how the AmeriCorps members would be checked-in on. Modeling a program after existing AmeriCorps projects was smart, but this organization needs to establish its own foundations first.

- The applicant relies on a tested model of JusticeCorps and understands statewide legal need, making this a sound proposal. However, the applicant will need to provide multiple missing application requirements, including an evaluation plan, a budget, compliance or accountability and AmeriCorps identification

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- 82.6% are white, 0.4% are Asian, 0.2% are American Indian, 0.2% are African American, 0.2% are Hispanic or Latino (should this not add up to 100% to be complete information?) 2 of Maine's 12 Counties (where did the other 4 go?)
- Whether due to the complicated nature of the budget device available to the applicant or otherwise, the budget is lacking and needs more details. The application is not organized by the categories presented in the RFP and several categories could arguably be missing. There was not much emphasis on the AmeriCorps member experience.
- What subject matter legal expertise resources will AmeriCorps staff have beyond the training sessions, they will need these in real time.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- Where did the other 4 counties go? one should know how many there are when talking that point.
- I would be worried about placing AmeriCorps members at a site with such little foundation and support for them, relying on non-specified third party organizations to look after them.
- The applicant notes in multiple sections that local data is unavailable, which suggests the previously approved planning grant did not address the needs of the target population. There may be a very steep learning curve and a number of surprises along the way with this worthy project proposal.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Proposal Alignment and Program Model

- This proposal will arrange workforce development for diversified (racial is priority; also LGBTQ+) college graduates in Cumberland and Androscoggin Counties. It proposed to expand legal navigation services to low-income populations, using 10 AmeriCorps members. It builds on a JusticeCorps model used in 5 locations including California, but will require modification to implement in Maine. The legal focus expands the grant portfolio programmatically but not geographically. It expands diversity grantmaking by supporting an organization run by a 3-member volunteer BIPOC board.

While this is a solid concept, the interview clarified that it is basically an idea developed by the lead volunteer with little input from potential partners, the rest of the board (except to sign off on the idea), or the community to be served. There is little evidence that the court or organizations where the AmeriCorps members will be placed have agreed to those placements and to the responsibilities required.

The organization has no staff and does not have the capacity to succeed with overseeing the members. They plan to secure private funding to hire a program director but how they will accomplish that is not included in the proposal. Also, there is no upper management to supervise the program director. A periodic meeting and access through email and text to a busy, practicing professional volunteer leader is inadequate for the complexity of overseeing this grant proposal. Recruitment, onboarding, supervision and management of 10 members is beyond the scope of this young organization with no staff hired yet.

Starting with a single member as a pilot might be more feasible. Otherwise, they might consider waiting until after a full-time Executive Director is hired in 1-2 years, pending fundraising. Developing internal policies and procedures is essential before taking on a project this large. If we approved the proposal now, I

fear we would be setting them up to be unsuccessful.

- The proposal aligns with the economic opportunity federal priority and the commission's workforce development priority. Depending on the clients served, it could also address some of the other priorities such as housing.

The application makes a strong case for the need for such a program.

The proposal would add a new demographic to our service mix through its focus on BIPOC and other marginalized groups.

The Justice Corps model could become an example for expanding the program into other areas of the state. The applicant notes that the JC model in other states is not directly transferable to Maine because of some of Maine's unique characteristics; however, those are not explained. It would be interesting to have that information.

The program is well aligned with the sponsoring organization's mission and plans, although the director noted that introducing this program was not initially anticipated at this time until this opportunity came along.

Given the start-up nature of Alpha Legal, its financial stability and ability to raise the local match to support the program are unproven, so this is a weak area.

As basically a one-person operation, staff stability is not assured. While there is a plan to hire a program director, which apparently is underway, that will be a part-time position which may make it more likely to see turnover. This program will be highly dependent upon the Executive Director with no clear backup plan should she leave.

It appears that other organizations were involved in developing the program and will likely provide placements. These were not specified in the application but Pine Tree Legal, ILAP, and Legal Services for the Elderly were mentioned.

As a new organization, it has had limited experience in using volunteers and has only informal processes in place to manage and track volunteers.

Preferences from RFA

- While the application and interview indicate there will be partnerships and placement within the courts and legal aid organizations, there is no evidence they were engaged in the development of the plan.
- While not fully listed, the proposal does appear to involve a number of partners. Program is not operating in a designated rural county

Past Performance

- Since the organization had a planning grant, I would have anticipated that they would have engaged partners more extensively than was reflected in the proposal or interview. Staff indicate the applicant participated fully in the planning year and submitted reporting on time. However, there were issues with financials. The lead volunteer is seeking a new finance contractor who can better understand the federal and state requirements for financial oversight.

The project, while an excellent idea, will require greater capacity than the organization currently has.

- The applicant noted that the local match has not yet been confirmed;

A new project director will be hired on a part-time basis, which may be insufficient and/or difficult to fill or retain;

There appears to be a strong commitment on the part of the agency director to ensure the program's success and to meet the performance targets.

It should be noted that some of the performance targets may extend beyond the grant time-frame (e.g., law school enrollments).

Financial Plan

- The budget supports the cost of the members. They indicate they will have \$125,000 in private funds to hire a Program Director. However, they don't explain how they will raise the funds. Also, it appears all trainings will be pro bono.

Fiscal Systems: Only the 990 post card is used, and there is no audit. Essential best practice internal controls are not all in place.

- The local sources of funds have not been identified and the applicant notes that they are not yet confirmed.

Fiscal Systems

- Only the 990 post card is used, and there is no audit. Essential best practice internal controls are not all in place.
- Alpha Legal is a new organization with a limited budget. It has depended on an outside bookkeeper and is now seeking a new firm with greater abilities. The organization is not audited and files a simple form 990.

Grant Readiness

- They still need to develop policies and procedures and other internal operating management and support systems.
- It is clear that Alpha Legal's director is strongly committed to the organization and the proposed AC program. If her continued involvement and presence could be guaranteed for the full three years, I would be more confident of success. However, the agency currently has no paid staff, a small budget, and a limited volunteer base. The application would be stronger if Alpha Legal could partner with another organization that could provide the stability and systems to increase my confidence that the program would be successful, not only in its first year, but over the full three-year grant cycle.

Grant Proposal Report to Commission from Task Force

Recommendation: Forward or fund only if corrections can be negotiated

Legal Applicant: Penobscot Nation Housing Dept

Project Name: Penobscot Nation Energy Efficiency Program

Category: AC Formula -- Standard
 AC Formula – Rural State
 AC Competitive
 Other Competition

Type: Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Cost Reimbursement
 Ed Award Only

Applicant type: New (no prior AC experience)
 Re-compete (# of yrs: __)

Proposed Dates: 01/01/2024 to 12/31/2024
 Submitted request is for Yr [1]

Federal Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

Commission priorities: Workforce development, Climate action/energy efficiency, Housing

Local Share Required in Budget: Yes No

Source of Funds detail required: Yes No

Requested Resources: Funds and Slots (*indicates sections with calculation errors)

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating			
Member Support			
Indirect (Admin)			
CNCS Award amount	\$280,000	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	\$306,000 from Source of Funds
% sharing proposed			
% share required	n/a		
Cost-per-member proposed	\$28,000		
max allowed	\$28,000		

Total AmeriCorps Member Service Years:

	Slot Types Requested						
	1700	1200	900	675	450	300	Total
Slots With living allowance	10						10
Living allowance proposed	21,675						
Slots with only ed award							

Program Description (executive summary):

The Penobscot Indian Nation proposes to have 10 FT AmeriCorps members who will support the Tribal Nation in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. This includes splitting up the 10 AmeriCorps members into two tracks. The first would be getting certified as North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NACEP) PV Apprentice Certified and carry out community solar projects. The second track would be getting members Building Science Principle Technician Certified to conduct Home Energy Audits and be able to provide reports, allowing for our Housing Department to make the required changes to ensure home energy efficiency. These services will be carried out primarily on the Penobscot Nation and extended out to the other 3 Tribes in the State of Maine. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps program will have all members certified and trained and begin working on our solar grid resilience program and to initially have 50 home energy audits done for our low-income Tribal Citizens. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 8

community volunteers who will be engaged in assisting with home energy audits and weatherization projects within the community. The AmeriCorps investment of \$280,000 will leverage our \$306,000 in public grant funding.

Service locations:

Not specified but partner communities referenced

Other than the legal applicant, please list the agencies or organizations that appear to be the major collaborators or partners in this grant.

Passamaquoddy Nation, Maliseet Nation and Mi'kmaq Nation, Revision Energy and Build Green Maine

Will the applicant place AmeriCorps members with other agencies? Yes No

Applicant proposes to deliver services:

Within a single municipality Within a single County but not covering the entire County
 County-wide in a single County Multiple Counties but not Statewide Statewide

Performance measures (targets proposed for Year 1; targets for years 2 and 3 set in continuations):

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Energy Audit Team

OUTPUT: EN1: Number of housing units or public structures weatherized or retrofitted

Proposed target: 30

OUTCOME: EN1.1: Number of housing units/structures with reduced energy consumption or reduced energy costs

Proposed target: 10

Solar AssessmentTeam

OUTPUT: EN1: Number of housing units or public structures weatherized or retrofitted

Proposed target: 3

OUTCOME: EN1.1: Number of housing units/structures with reduced energy consumption or reduced energy costs

Proposed target: 3

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

(Measures listed in the RFP not entered and targets were not proposed)

CAPACITY BUILDING

(Measures listed in the RFP not entered and targets were not proposed)

Scoring Detail:

Peer Reviewer Consensus Score. *Assessment of narrative using point distribution from federal agency. Major categories (Program Design, Organizational Capability, Budget and Cost) are dictated by CFR rubric for scoring.*

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
Rationale & Approach/Program Design Section (50%)		
Need	Adequate	5.25
Intervention	Weak	3.5
Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model	Adequate	12
Funding Priority and Preferences	Strong	4
Member Training	Adequate	3
Member Supervision	Weak	2
Member Experience	Weak	2
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Adequate	3
Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Weak	6
Compliance and Accountability	Adequate	15
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	20
	Total	75.75

Task Force Consensus Score. *The Task Force reviewers assess the additional technical criteria that states are directed to consider by the CFR.*

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Alignment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with funding priorities 	Strong	25
Program Model		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve communities described in 2522.450(c) 	Adequate	1.875
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse 	Strong	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for innovation and/or replication 	Adequate	1.875
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of evidence program can be sustained over time. 	Strong	2.5
Preferences from RFP Announcement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together 	Weak	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people. 	Strong	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum 	Weak	2.5
Past Performance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance 	Adequate	7.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions 	n/a	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated 	n/a	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively 	n/a	
Financial Plan	Weak	5
Fiscal Systems		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements 	Strong	5

• Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Strong	5
• Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Strong	5
Grant Readiness	Adequate	11.25
Total Task Force Score		82.5
Peer Review Score		75.75
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		158.25

Final Assessment of Application:

- Forward or fund with no corrections/modifications
- Forward or fund with corrections/modifications
- Do Not Forward or fund

Referenced Conditions/Corrections

The following proposal issues need to be clarified or, in the case of missing required elements, added.

- Clarify that the public funding referenced is in hand and approved for program support.
- Clarify that the tribal authorities who must support the grant have given their approval. The process was described but it is unclear whether the process occurred or was pending.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Section: Program Design (50 %)

Need

- Need “By being create with Renewable Energy and making homes more energy efficient we our reducing operating costs of home for our Tribal Citizens”
- The applicant does a good job of describing the need the Americorp program will address and the inequities faced by the Penobscot Indian Nation. The disparity in median income and unemployment rates shows a true economic disadvantage for the community when affording basic needs. Showing that the average household will have to spend roughly 1/13th of their annual income on heating fuel carries this point even further. However, the section seems to lack discussion and details on how the community was engaged to identify the need as a priority. Also, there is mention of the LI-HEAP as a safety net, but not much detail on the existing services, organizations, or planning efforts already working to address the stated need.
- The applicant provides a succinct problem statement with a robust solution of certification and then implementation. The data is sufficient to help convey the need and this applicant, the housing authority, already provides services in this area, as noted in the mention of the energy resilience program. There was no mention of eliciting community input into building the proposed program.

Intervention

- Intervention “in meeting solar and home energy needs on the primarily Penobscot Nation
- When discussing the program model implemented by AmeriCorps, the applicant covers the following topics:
 - The core activities of members and describes them as engaging in Home Energy Audits, community solar projects, minor home repairs, training the community in software uses, and connecting with the community.
 - The duration and intensity of the project is absent from this narrative section. - The demographics of the population served are described as primarily the Penobscot Nation, but with some support for the Passamaquoddy Nation, Maliseet Nation, and the Mi’kmaq Nation. While most of these items are touched upon, there could be more detail for the core activities, particularly for what and where the community solar projects could be used for, what sorts of minor home repairs and how do they further the goal of energy efficiency, and what sort of software training and how will this advance the goals of the program receiving funding. The section lacks discussion of why this intervention is the best fit for the identified community need. The roles and specialized qualifications for AmeriCorps members are discussed. There is no discussion of the role community volunteers will play.

- The applicant offers a clear description of core activities, along with some discussion of the duration, intensity and demographics of the beneficiaries. It quantifies the maximum amount that will be provided for repairs, but does not put this in context of a measurement of improvement resulting from the investment. The minimum qualifications for the AmeriCorps positions were not included nor was there any discussion about how the roles of the community volunteers will be distinct or the same as the requested AmeriCorps positions.

Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model

- Has the same type of grammar problems.
- There is little discussion on the theory behind the declared solutions.
- The applicant makes a sufficient argument for the proposed invention reducing energy costs and fossil fuel reliance. There is also use of the climate study as an anchor for evidence of effectiveness. All elements of the logic model are complete and tie appropriately to the narrative.

Evidence of Effectiveness

- Referenced 20% below poverty, in need section referenced 19.1% (which is correct?)
- The applicant adds to the “need” for the program, but does not discuss how the solutions they propose have been proven effective in address that need. No citations to quality sources for statements presented as evidence. There is an appendix with performance goals, but adding this to the narrative would be helpful and clearer. The Logic Model contains most elements required. There could be more detail for certain items such as locations and number of members delivering the interventions, but overall it followed the expected criteria. Did not see reference to performance measures for all outcomes presented.
- The logic model provides adequate descriptions in all sections, however there is no alpha-numeric reference to national performance nor outcome measures. Further, there is an inconsistency between the narrative describing 50 home audits in the first year and the logic model identifying 40 homes.

Funding Priority

- Listed their priorities fully.
- Addressed funding priority as a Maine Won’t Wait goal.
- The proposed program meets more than one of the funding priorities as well as the requirements of the AmeriCorps program, however, the citation should be a federal level reference rather than the State of Maine as the RFA is federally issued.

Member Training

- “Auditor training which 2-day training” “This training will allow for AmeriCorps members to conduct independently home energy audits”
- Applicant provided details on the specific qualifications and trainings the AmeriCorps members would have to obtain to complete the stated goals.
- The description of training is sufficient, with references to national certifications. Additionally, the applicant notes that the long-term jobs could result from the envisioned program. There is no mention of policies or even a check list to ensure the grant rules are followed.

Member Supervision

- “member will be receiving supervision for multiple entities” “members going through the Solar Track with be working closely with” “members in the Home Energy Audit Track with will closely with Build Green Maine”
- The applicant responds to the prompt, but very broadly. More information on a plan to report and check-in with a supervisor would be appreciated. How will AmeriCorps members needs be assessed if they do not self-report issues? Who within the Tribe is responsible for ensuring weekly meetings occur?
- This section describes sufficiently how the AmeriCorps staff who are supervised will be trained, however, it does not describe how the Nation supervisors will be trained.

Member Experience

- “once applications are receiving they are screened our Tribe’s Personnel Committee”
- There is good detail on the selection process outside of discussions on diversity of applicant backgrounds, talents, etc. Equitable hiring is mentioned. Opportunities for growth and education outside of the Americorp assignment exist. More detail on how members will be given the opportunity to reflect on this growth could be discussed. There is no discussion on how to connect to the broader National Service network.
- The member experience is addressed by the discussion of weekly training; however, there is no discussion about recruiting and training a pool of diverse Americorps volunteers nor is there a discussion of connecting to a broader national service network.

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

- They have several ways to identify the AmeriCorps folks.
- The applicant addresses all prompts. Could have more detail on co-branding, but it is inferred through some activity descriptions.
- This section provides a succinct description of how the program will be AmeriCorps branded.

Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%

Organizational Background and Staffing

- “Gary Fearon will be the overall supervisor is the Executive Director of Housing” Form ID Home Energy Deviancies’ Form talks about 30 units retrofitted and 10 units with reduced energy consumption. 50 mentioned in Executive Summary (see form)
- The applicant does not discuss how Americorp fits into the applicant organization’s mission and strategic goals. The applicant thoroughly describes the Tribe’s experience serving the community. Internal capacity is described in measurable terms and an organizational chart is provided. The organization’s relationship with volunteerism is described well. The training program and those involved are discussed, but the Tribe HR employees who will help oversee the members are not specifically talked about.
- The applicant does address how the proposed program fits into its overall goals, program beneficiaries and internal capacity. However, the application does not describe the credentials of the Department’s staff who will lead these two tracks.

Compliance and Accountability

- Looks to have all areas covered in case of a problem.
- The only organizational policy or practice discussed is an annual audit. No detail on what systems to ensure compliance with federal, state, and tribal laws and policies are.
- This section provides a brief description of how the organization works to ensure compliance, along with methods for correction.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%

- I did not see that form
- Budget is incomplete without assigning a number of Americorp members into their appropriate category and no average amount of allowance for those members is entered. No discussion of non-AmeriCorp funding except at the beginning of proposal.
- There is no budget for this program, and only a brief reference to other federal funding sources.

SUMMARY APPRAISAL 1. Having reviewed all elements of the proposal provided to you, do you think that this applicant would be effective in this category of grant? Yes (X) No

Comments:

- The applicant has clear goals and partners who can help carry those goals to fruition. While the application is rather unclear or vague in many places, the project is simple and revisions to the application can be made. The experience and education provided to Americorp members through the program would be valuable.
- The program described, including objectives, measures and resources are realistic for the size of the grant request.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- The grammar is very shaky.
- Whether due to the complicated nature of the budget device available to the applicant or otherwise, the budget is lacking and needs more details. The lack of updated information on additional funding would change this reviewers opinion of whether the applicant can effectively provide the service it seeks.
- There is no evaluation plan identified, even though elements of it are included in the narrative.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- Knowing and have worked with many people from the Nation I would have thought the application would have been better completed.
- The application could use tightening up and more information in key places. However, the project is good and due to the amount of collaboration with other entities, there should be enough support to carry out the project.
- This application had some strong elements, particularly the need and intervention descriptions, along with a complete theory of action matrix. However, typos, along with absence of some required items reduced what would have otherwise been an outstanding set of scores.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Proposal Alignment and Program Model

- This proposal combines workforce development, housing, and environment components in a project run by and benefitting the Penobscot Nation and expanding to the other Maine Tribal Nations. The focus on solar and other housing energy improvements will assist low-income Tribal citizens while developing community members’ work expertise and certification while reflecting the Nation’s commitment to the environment. Training will include sensitivity and cultural competencies.

The proposal builds a strong needs rationale. It is well-integrated into the HUD-funded Tribal Housing strategies and programming with sustainability plans built in. Since the department already operates federally funded programs, it has strong financial and programming systems in place, which will facilitate meeting AmeriCorps requirements. Additionally, the Director of Housing, the Housing Commission (elected by tribal members), the Tribal Council and the Tribal Chief support the proposal. Servicing 100 homes in three years is ambitious, but probably attainable, given the relationships already built with homeowners, contractors, and other partners already built.

The Director recognizes his need to develop volunteer management skills and has arranged for support from other Tribal departments who work with volunteers. The Director has a clear vision of how to implement this program.

- The proposal addresses the community needs for safe and affordable housing and workforce development and is aligned with several funding priorities.

The program will serve an historically underserved population in a high poverty, low-income community.

The proposal will serve the Penobscot Indian Nation with the potential for expansion to Maine’s other tribes, a group Volunteer Maine has not recently supported.

The program is well aligned with the mission of the organization, is to be operated through the Tribal government, which has a strong relationship with its community and which is financially strong and stable supporting the likelihood of continued local funding support.

The Housing Department has limited to no experience in using and managing volunteers and will need to develop skills in this area. This is the only significant weakness in the proposal.

Preferences from RFA

- They are already working with other Tribal Departments, three other Maine Tribal Nations, Revision Energy, Build Green Maine, and the Penobscot Climate Action Corp. The proposed spread to the other Tribal Nations will serve counties in the rural-urban continuum.
- The proposal is not from a partnership or coalition, per se, although it will be drawing on the resources of other organizations to train members in energy auditing and alternative energy.

The proposal is from an organization lead by an historically marginalized community and should receive preference points. While the program will begin in Penobscot County, it may expand to other tribes located in rural counties; so, a weak rating rather than nonresponsive.

Past Performance

- They have extensive experience administering federal HUD grants and other federal programs. Because of this, they have strong HR, finance, and programmatic systems in place. The Housing Department will work with others to enhance its management of volunteers.
- In some areas, the application is strong, but there are several weak elements. The applicant did not identify the specific sources of local funds; the program manager may be a bit overloaded with supervision and, generally, supervision of the members was not fully defined as to roles and responsibilities between the program director and the outside consultants. The organization lacks experience with volunteer management. At the same time, it appears able to meet the performance targets and objectives and evaluate the impact of the project given the close relationship between the department and program beneficiaries, particularly those residing in Housing Department properties.

Financial Plan

- The applicant receives funds from eight federal agencies with significant growth in the past 20 years. The Housing Department has stable funding primarily through HUD, and they capitalize on the resources and expertise of partners. They have proven fiscal systems for administering federal grants. They had no findings in the last audit. The specific source of local share is not identified.
- Sources of local funds were not detailed.

Fiscal Systems

- The applicant receives funds from eight federal agencies with significant growth in the past 20 years. The Housing Department has stable funding primarily through HUD, and they capitalize on the resources and expertise of partners. They have proven fiscal systems for administering federal grants. They had no findings in the last audit. The specific source of local share is not identified.
- The housing department and tribe have significant experience in handling federal grant requirements and reporting.

The tribe's finances appear sound, while noting the relatively heavy debt burden and that one reporting unit was not included in the audit; also, the audit is a bit old with the most recent years' still in progress

Grant Readiness

- Because of its history with administering federal grants and programs, the applicant has solid systems, policies, HR and fiscal support and program experience. Leadership support has been demonstrated by approval of the proposal by the Housing Department leadership, the Housing Commission, the Tribal Council and the Tribal Chief.
- Could be rated strong, although I've taken the lack of volunteer management into account in this rating. Could move higher.



Volunteer Maine

19 Elkins Lane, 105 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333

voice: (207) 624-7792

service.commission@maine.gov

www.MaineServiceCommission.gov



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Before you begin to review applications:

1. Check each statement to indicate you agree.
2. Sign the form and send to Commission staff. Digital signatures are accepted. Scans may be emailed to the address above. Hard copies should be sent to 105 SHS.

- I have read the Commission policy on Conflict of Interest as outlined in the Reviewer Handbook and understand that I must contact the appropriate Commission staff if a conflict arises during my service as a reviewer.
- I also will not divulge any confidential information I may become aware of during the grant review process.
- Upon completion of this work, I will return to the Commission or destroy any application hard copies or digital files and not share them with anyone or hold them.
- I fully understand that I must sign and return this Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement to the Commission Office before I begin review of grant applications.

Name (please print): Anne Louise Kice

Signature: Anne Louise Kice

Date: 10-2-23

[For Commission use only - - Date received: _____]



Volunteer Maine

19 Elkins Lane, 105 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333

voice: (207) 624-7792

service.commission@maine.gov www.MaineServiceCommission.gov



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Before you begin to review applications:

1. Check each statement to indicate you agree.
2. Sign the form and send to Commission staff. Digital signatures are accepted. Scans may be emailed to the address above. Hard copies should be sent to 105 SHS.

- I have read the Commission policy on Conflict of Interest as outlined in the Reviewer Handbook and understand that I must contact the appropriate Commission staff if a conflict arises during my service as a reviewer.
- I also will not divulge any confidential information I may become aware of during the grant review process.
- Upon completion of this work, I will return to the Commission or destroy any application hard copies or digital files and not share them with anyone or hold them.
- I fully understand that I must sign and return this Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement to the Commission Office before I begin review of grant applications.

Name (please print): Matthew Williams

Signature: Matthew William

Date: 10/2/2023

[For Commission use only - - Date received: _____]



Volunteer Maine

19 Elkins Lane, 105 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333

voice: (207) 624-7792

service.commission@maine.gov www.MaineServiceCommission.gov



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Before you begin to review applications:

1. Check each statement to indicate you agree.
2. Sign the form and send to Commission staff. Digital signatures are accepted. Scans may be emailed to the address above. Hard copies should be sent to 105 SHS.

I have read the Commission policy on Conflict of Interest as outlined in the Reviewer Handbook and understand that I must contact the appropriate Commission staff if a conflict arises during my service as a reviewer.

I also will not divulge any confidential information I may become aware of during the grant review process.

Upon completion of this work, I will return to the Commission or destroy any application hard copies or digital files and not share them with anyone or hold them.

I fully understand that I must sign and return this Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement to the Commission Office before I begin review of grant applications.

Name (please print): MICHAEL L. WILLIAMS

Signature: *Michael L. Williams*

Date: 9-29-23

[For Commission use only -- Date received: _____]



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Please sign this form and return it to Commission staff, as instructed, at the address below *before* you begin to review applications.

I have read the Commission policy on Conflict of Interest as outlined in the Reviewer Information Package and understand that I must contact the appropriate Commission staff if a conflict arises during my service as a reviewer. I also will not divulge any confidential information I may become aware of during the grant review process. Upon completion of this work, I will destroy all digital and/or hard copies of applications and not share them with anyone or hold them.

I fully understand that I must sign and return this Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement to the Commission Office before I begin review of grant applications.

Name (please print): Edward A. Barrett

Signature: Edward A. Barrett

Date: 10-8-23

[For Commission use only - - Date received: _____]



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Please sign this form and return it to Commission staff, as instructed, at the address below *before* you begin to review applications.

I have read the Commission policy on Conflict of Interest as outlined in the Reviewer Information Package and understand that I must contact the appropriate Commission staff if a conflict arises during my service as a reviewer. I also will not divulge any confidential information I may become aware of during the grant review process. Upon completion of this work, I will destroy all digital and/or hard copies of applications and not share them with anyone or hold them.

I fully understand that I must sign and return this Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement to the Commission Office before I begin review of grant applications.

Name (please print): Becky Hayes Boober

Signature: Becky Hayes Boober

Date: 10/9/2023

[For Commission use only -- Date received: _____]