

## **Award Justification Statement**

### **RFP# 202102023**

#### **I. Summary**

Volunteer Maine, the state service commission, awards federal AmeriCorps program resources (position slots and funds to support the people who serve) for 3-year operating grants. Applicants must implement the program model described in the proposal, use standardized performance measures to demonstrate accomplishments, and comply with federal regulations for AmeriCorps. In this competition, programs must be designed to enroll between two and five full-time AmeriCorps members during each of the grant's 3 budget periods. Each AmeriCorps member service plan must require full-time service (40 hours/week) and all must serve within the applicant organization.

Eligible applicants were Maine 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 that will operate an AmeriCorps program entirely within Maine. They were required to have an existing physical presence in the community where AmeriCorps members would serve. Only organizations that had never been awarded an AmeriCorps grant or those completing their first 3-year award were eligible to apply in this competition. Proposals were only be accepted from applicants who attended and completed participation in both Part A and Part B of the Bidders Conference.

Four qualifying applications were received by the submission deadline of 11:59 pm. At the May 21, 2021 meeting and, upon recommendation of the grant selection committee, the Commission approved funding of all four applicants contingent on availability of funding. The Commission's allocation of ARP funds has not been announced but is expected before mid-summer. Unexpended funds from the current program year ending July 31 may also be applied to these proposals. The final scores determine the order of funding:

1. Town of VanBuren
2. Main Street Skowhegan
3. Trekkers
4. Maine Youth Alliance

#### **II. Evaluation Process**

(RFP pgs 14-15) 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 State proposals are assessed by the Commission's Grant Selection and Performance Task Force using a multi-step review process.

- 1) External Peer Review of application narrative, budget, and performance measure components using federally required scoring system.
- 2) Task Force assessment of applicant's financial plan, fiscal capacity, alignment of proposed target need with funding priorities as well as proposed performance measures, program model including implementation readiness, and past performance in other grant programs including those funded by foundations or other government agencies (if applicable). The assessment includes a review of documents and interview of applicant representatives.

**Peer Review.** 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 CNCS 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 not be submitted to the Task Force for consideration.

**Task Force Review.** 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, applicant organization's most recent IRS Form 990 as found on the central internet registry as well as data on other public registries such as the Excluded Parties List (debarment) and other publicly available materials. Members of the task force will also interview applicant representatives to assess elements of implementation readiness, program model and past performance, and to clarify information presented in documents submitted.

The Task Force will use the following weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 15 points Financial Plan, 25 points Fiscal Systems, 20 points Program Alignment and Model (5 of 20 points are rural preference points), 20 points Past Performance (in other grant programs) and Grant Readiness for a possible total of 100 points.

Upon completion of the Task Force review, the Peer Reviewer and Task Force Reviewer scores are then combined to produce a single review score.

The Grant Selection and Performance Task Force will then make its final recommendations for funding to the full Maine Commission. The Task Force is not obligated to recommend submission of any proposals.

### **III. Qualifications & Experience**

All four organizations qualified as eligible entities. They met the criteria of being new to AmeriCorps or in the final year of their first 3-year AmeriCorps grant. Service activities and community needs are federally allowable and fall within one of the funding priorities. The results of both peer review assessments and the task force assessment yielded scores in the range allowed for funding.

### **IV. Proposed Services**

The grantee will implement the AmeriCorps program as outlined in the proposal. They will recruit, select, supervise, and train people to serve as AmeriCorps members who will carry out the service activities needed to address the community issue.

## **V. Cost Proposal**

The size of AmeriCorps operational grants is determined by the number of member service years (MSYs) which are defined as 1700 hours per service year – similar to an FTE in the employment world. The federal agency annually sets a maximum contribution per MSY from grant funds and the amount for this competition was \$16,300 per 1700 hours. Each applicant specified the positions needed to meet performance targets and the term of service (number of hours) associated with each position type. When the various terms in each proposal were added together, the MSY for each applicant determined the level of funding (# of MSY X \$16,300 = total grant funds). In rank order by score, the approved proposals eligible for funding are

- Town of VanBuren (\$81,500 – 5 MSY)
- Main Street Skowhegan (\$81,500 – 5 MSY)
- Trekkers, Inc. (\$48,900 – 3 MSY)
- Maine Youth Alliance (\$65,200 – 4 MSY)

## **VI. Conclusion**

These grants have the potential to bring AmeriCorps resources to rural areas of Maine.

## Crofton, Maryalice

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**From:** Crofton, Maryalice  
**Sent:** Monday, May 24, 2021 2:19 PM  
**To:** 'Kristina Cannon'  
**Subject:** RFP 202102023 Grant Decision Notification  
**Attachments:** RFP202102023 Grant Decision Notice\_Skowhegan.pdf

Please see the attached document.

*Maryalice Crofton*

Executive Director  
Volunteer Maine, the state service commission  
*A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism*

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





# Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service  
*A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism*



May 24, 2021

Kristina Cannon  
Main Street Skowhegan  
48 Court Street  
Skowhegan, ME 04976-1864

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Awards under RFP # 202102023, Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants

Dear Ms Cannon:

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Proposals (RFP), issued by the State of Maine's service commission, Volunteer Maine, for Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants. The Commission evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria and process identified in the RFP. On May 21, 2021, the Commissioners voted to approve the following awards conditional on the availability of funds from the federal agency, AmeriCorps. The approved proposals are listed below in the order of final scores. The scores determine the order in which funding will be offered as it becomes available:

1. Town of Van Buren
2. Main Street Skowhegan
3. Trekkers
4. Maine Youth Alliance dba Game Loft

As stated in the RFP, following announcement of this award decision, all submissions in response to the RFP and the attached proposal evaluation 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, availability of federal funds, and the successful negotiation of the Cooperative Agreement. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see below.

Congratulations on being approved. The Commissioners hope to have the opportunity to follow your progress on improving the community issues through AmeriCorps members' service.

Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton  
Executive Director

## **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

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**From:** Crofton, Maryalice  
**Sent:** Monday, May 24, 2021 2:19 PM  
**To:** Ray Estabrook (r.estabrook@thegameloft.org); Patricia Estabrook  
**Subject:** RFP 202102023 Grant Decision Notification  
**Attachments:** RFP202102023 Grant Decision Notice\_MYA.pdf

Please see the attached document.

*Maryalice Crofton*

Executive Director  
Volunteer Maine, the state service commission  
*A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism*

19 Elkins Lane, Room 105  
105 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0105  
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# Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service  
*A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism*



May 24, 2021

Ray C. Estabrook  
Patricia Estabrook  
Maine Youth Alliance  
78A Main Street  
Belfast, ME 04915-6825

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Awards under RFP # 202102023, Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants

Dear Mr. Estabrook and Ms Estabrook:

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Proposals (RFP), issued by the State of Maine's service commission, Volunteer Maine, for Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants. The Commission evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria and process identified in the RFP. On May 21, 2021, the Commissioners voted to approve the following awards conditional on the availability of funds from the federal agency, AmeriCorps. The approved proposals are listed below in the order of final scores. The scores determine the order in which funding will be offered as it becomes available:

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Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton  
Executive Director

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## Crofton, Maryalice

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**From:** Crofton, Maryalice  
**Sent:** Monday, May 24, 2021 2:18 PM  
**To:** amie@trekkers.org  
**Subject:** RFP 202102023 Grant Decision Notification  
**Attachments:** RFP202102023 Grant Decision Notice\_Trekkers.pdf

Please see the attached document.

*Maryalice Crofton*

Executive Director  
Volunteer Maine, the state service commission  
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# Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service  
*A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism*



May 24, 2021

Amie Hutchinson  
Trekks  
325 Old County Road  
Rockland, ME 04841-5507

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Awards under RFP # 202102023, Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants

Dear Ms Hutchinson:

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Proposals (RFP), issued by the State of Maine's service commission, Volunteer Maine, for Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants. The Commission evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria and process identified in the RFP. On May 21, 2021, the Commissioners voted to approve the following awards conditional on the availability of funds from the federal agency, AmeriCorps. The approved proposals are listed below in the order of final scores. The scores determine the order in which funding will be offered as it becomes available:

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2. Main Street Skowhegan
3. Trekks
4. Maine Youth Alliance dba Game Loft

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This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee, availability of federal funds, and the successful negotiation of the Cooperative Agreement. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see below.

Congratulations on being approved. The Commissioners hope to have the opportunity to follow your progress on improving the community issues through AmeriCorps members' service.

Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton

Executive Director

## **STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS**

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## Crofton, Maryalice

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**From:** Crofton, Maryalice  
**Sent:** Monday, May 24, 2021 1:32 PM  
**To:** Nancy Troeger; David Cote  
**Subject:** RFP 202102023 Grant Decision Notification  
**Attachments:** RFP202102023 Grant Decision Notice\_VanBuren.pdf

Please see the attached document.

*Maryalice Crofton*

Executive Director  
Volunteer Maine, the state service commission  
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# Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service  
*A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism*



May 24, 2021

Nancy Troeger  
David P. Cote  
Town of VanBuren  
51 Main Street, S 101  
VanBuren, ME 04785

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Awards under RFP # 202102023, Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants

Dear Ms Troeger and Mr. Cote:

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Proposals (RFP), issued by the State of Maine's service commission, Volunteer Maine, for Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grants. The Commission evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria and process identified in the RFP. On May 21, 2021, the Commissioners voted to approve the following awards conditional on the availability of funds from the federal agency, AmeriCorps. The approved proposals are listed below in the order of final scores. The scores determine the order in which funding will be offered as it becomes available:

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This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee, availability of federal funds, and the successful negotiation of the Cooperative Agreement. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see below.

Congratulations on being selected. The Commissioners look forward to following your progress on improving the community issues through AmeriCorps members' service.

Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton

Executive Director

## **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).

	Applicant Sheet 1	Applicant Sheet 2	Applicant Sheet 3	Applicant Sheet 4
Application ID	21ES235613	21ES236362	21 ES235858	21ES236241
Applicant Name	Main Street Skowhegan	Trekkers	Maine Youth Alliance dba the Game Loft	Town of Van Buren
<b>Peer Reviewer Results</b>				
Program Design	36.75	29.5	40	40
Organizational Capability	18.75	18.75	18.75	21.75
Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy	25	18.75	18.75	18.75
<b>Peer Review Final Score</b>	<b>80.5</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>77.5</b>	<b>80.5</b>
<b>Recommendation to Grants TF</b>	80-89, Recommend for Further Review	60-79, Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation	60-79, Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation	80-89, Recommend for Further Review
<b>Task Force Review Results</b>				
Program Model	18.13	19.06	17.19	19.06
Past Performance	15	13.13	12.19	15
Financial Plan	15	11.25	11.25	15
Fiscal Systems	20.835	22.92	10.41	25
Grant Readiness	18.75	18.75	16.25	16.25
<b>Task Force Final Score</b>	<b>87.71</b>	<b>85.11</b>	<b>67.29</b>	<b>90.31</b>
<b>Final Application Score</b>	<b>168.21</b>	<b>152.11</b>	<b>144.79</b>	<b>170.81</b>
<b>Funding Requested</b>	81,500	\$48,900	\$65,200	\$81,500
<b>Rank order for funding (high to low)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

## Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet (STANDARD Formula)

**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

**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

**INITIAL**

**APP ID:** 21ES235613      **PROGRAM NAME:** Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Progr      **COMMENTS:** LINK TO DOC  
**APPLICANT NAME:** Main Street Skowl      **GRANTEE TYPE:** Recomplete Fixed Amount      **FUNDS REQUESTED:** 81,500

After peer reviewers discuss the proposal contents, quality, and responsiveness to requirements, record the group's consensus rating in column G for each section in the cells below. (Select from drop-down menu.) Then tab into H to trigger calculation (lookup).

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Program Design</b>						
<b>Need</b>	Adequate	Strong	Adequate		Adequate	3.75
<b>Intervention</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	6
<b>Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	12
<b>Funding Priority</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	0.75
<b>Member Training</b>	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	6
<b>Member Supervision</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Weak		Weak	3
<b>Member Experience</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	3.75
<b>Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification</b>	Substandard	Strong	Adequate		Weak	1.5

**Program Design Score** 36.75

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Organizational Capability</b>						
<b>Organizational Background &amp; Staffing</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	9
<b>Compliance/Accountability</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	9.75

**Org. Capability Score** 18.75

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Strong	25
	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Cost and Budget Score 25	

Plan Quality (Indicate Evaluation or Data Plan)	RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt			
	n/a for Rural					

**FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION**

Program Design	Organizational Capability	Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy	Evaluation Plan	Total Score
36.75	18.75	25	0	80.5

Final Consensus Score

**Recommendation:** 80-89, Recommend for Further Review

**End Peer Reviewer Work - Task Force Work Recorded Below**

INITIAL RATINGS> Below are the initial ratings offered by GTF Members 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.

LINK TO COMMENTS

Program Model	Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Alignment of community need targeted and funding priorities	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		2.81	
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	Strong	Strong		3.75	
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Strong	Adequate	Strong		2.81	
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Strong	Strong	Adequate		3.75	
<b>STANDARD APP:</b> Proposal is from a partnership/coalition whose members are working together on program implementation <b>OR</b> <b>RURAL APP:</b> Communities to be served fall within one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	Strong	Strong		5.00	

**Prog Model Score** 18.13

Past Performance	Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		3.75	
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions	Strong	Strong	Adequate		3.75	
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated	Strong	Strong	Adequate		3.75	
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively	Strong	Strong	Adequate		3.75	

**Past Performance** 15

Financial Plan		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Plan anticipates operational costs and provides sufficient resources to implement program		Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Strong	15

Financial Plan	15
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Fiscal Systems		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements		Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	6.2475
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.		Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	6.25
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.		Strong	Strong	Adequate		Strong	8.34

Fiscal Systems	20.835
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Grant Readiness		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Program Integration		Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	5
Proposal Support		Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Strong	5
Applicant Readiness		Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	3.75
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience		Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	5

Grant Readiness	18.75
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<b>GTF Total Score:</b>	87.71
Peer Reviewer Score	80.5
<b>Combined Score</b>	<b>168.21</b>

of possible 200

\*hlookup pre-programmed

More detail on funds (in-kind) to be comfortable the costs are covered.

## Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet (STANDARD Formula)

**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.

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**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

**INITIAL**

**APP ID:** 21 ES235858      **PROGRAM NAME:** IKNOWME/AmeriCorps Mentor program      **COMMENTS:** LINK TO DOC  
**APPLICANT NAME:** Maine Youth Alliar      **GRANTEE TYPE:** Recompete Fixed Amount      **FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$65,200

After peer reviewers discuss the proposal contents, quality, and responsiveness to requirements, record the group's consensus rating in column G for each section in the cells below. (Select from drop-down menu.) Then tab into H to trigger calculation (lookup).

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Program Design</b>						
<b>Need</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Strong	5
<b>Intervention</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	6
<b>Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model</b>	Strong	Adequate	Weak		Adequate	12
<b>Funding Priority</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	0.75
<b>Member Training</b>	Strong	Weak	Adequate		Adequate	4.5
<b>Member Supervision</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	4.5
<b>Member Experience</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Strong	5
<b>Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	2.25

**Program Design Score** 40

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Organizational Capability</b>						
<b>Organizational Background &amp; Staffing</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	9
<b>Compliance/Accountability</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	9.75

**Org. Capability Score** 18.75



Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	18.75
					<b>Cost and Budget Score</b>	<b>18.75</b>

Plan Quality (Indicate Evaluation or Data Plan)	RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
	n/a for Rural					

**FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION**

Program Design	Organizational Capability	Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy	Evaluation Plan	Total Score
40	18.75	18.75	0	77.5

Final Consensus Score

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

**End Peer Reviewer Work - Task Force Work Recorded Below**

INITIAL RATINGS> Below are the initial ratings offered by GTF Members 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.

Program Model	Rater -- initial ratings				LINK TO COMMENTS	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Consensus rating	Point Value
Alignment of community need targeted and funding priorities	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonres	Strong		Strong	3.75
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Strong	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	2.81
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Strong	Weak	Adequate		Weak	1.88
<b>STANDARD APP:</b> Proposal is from a partnership/coalition whose members are working together on program implementation <b>OR</b>						
<b>RURAL APP:</b> Communities to be served fall within one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	5.00
					<b>Prog Model Score</b>	<b>17.19</b>

Past Performance	Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus Rating	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Consensus rating	Point Value
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	2.8125
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	2.8125
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	2.8125
					<b>Past Performance</b>	<b>12.1875</b>

		Rater -- initial ratings			
Financial Plan		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	
Plan anticipates operational costs and provides sufficient resources to implement program		Strong	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25

<b>Financial Plan</b>	<b>11.25</b>
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		Rater -- initial ratings			
Fiscal Systems		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements		Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.		Adequate	Weak	Adequate	
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.		Adequate	omplete/Nonrespons	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	6.2475
Weak	4.17
Incomplete/Nonrespons	0

<b>Fiscal Systems</b>	<b>10.4125</b>
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		Rater -- initial ratings			
Readiness		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	
Program Integration		Strong	Strong	Strong	
Proposal Support		Strong	Adequate	Adequate	
Applicant Readiness		Strong	Adequate	Adequate	
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience		Strong	Adequate	Strong	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Strong	5
Adequate	3.75
Adequate	3.75
Adequate	3.75

<b>Grant Readiness</b>	<b>16.25</b>
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<b>GTF Total Score:</b>	67.29
Peer Reviewer Score	77.5
<b>Combined Score</b>	<b>144.79</b>

of possible 200

\*hlookup pre-programmed

## Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet (STANDARD Formula)

**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

**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:** 21ES236362      **PROGRAM NAME:** Trekkers Building Relationships      **INITIAL COMMENTS:** LINK TO DOC  
**APPLICANT NAME:** Trekkers      **GRANTEE TYPE:** Recompete Fixed Amount      **FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$48,900

After peer reviewers discuss the proposal contents, quality, and responsiveness to requirements, record the group's consensus rating in column G for each section in the cells below. (Select from drop-down menu.) Then tab into H to trigger calculation (lookup).

RATER -- Initial ratings						
Program Design	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Need</b>	Weak	Adequate	Weak		Weak	2.5
<b>Intervention</b>	Weak	Weak	Substandard		Weak	4
<b>Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Weak		Weak	8
<b>Funding Priority</b>	Adequate	Weak	Adequate		Adequate	0.75
<b>Member Training</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	4.5
<b>Member Supervision</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	4.5
<b>Member Experience</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	3.75
<b>Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification</b>	Weak	Adequate	Weak		Weak	1.5

**Program Design Score** 29.5

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
Organizational Capability	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Organizational Background &amp; Staffing</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	9
<b>Compliance/Accountability</b>	Weak	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	9.75

**Org. Capability Score** 18.75

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Adequate	18.75
	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		<b>Cost and Budget Score</b>	<b>18.75</b>

Plan Quality (Indicate Evaluation or Data Plan)	RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		n/a for Rural	

**FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION**

Program Design	Organizational Capability	Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy	Evaluation Plan	Total Score
29.5	18.75	18.75	0	67

Final Consensus Score

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

**End Peer Reviewer Work - Task Force Work Recorded Below**

INITIAL RATINGS> Below are the initial ratings offered by GTF Members 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.

Program Model	Rater -- initial ratings				LINK TO COMMENTS	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Consensus rating	Point Value
Alignment of community need targeted and funding priorities	Strong	Incomplete/ Nonres	Strong		Strong	3.75
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Strong	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	2.81
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	3.75
<b>STANDARD APP:</b> Proposal is from a partnership/coalition whose members are working together on program implementation <b>OR</b>						
<b>RURAL APP:</b> Communities to be served fall within one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	5.00
					<b>Prog Model Score</b>	<b>19.06</b>

Past Performance	Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Adequate	2.8125
	Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Strong
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions	Strong	Strong	Adequate		Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated	Strong	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	2.8125
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively	Strong	Adequate	Adequate			
					<b>Past Performance</b>	<b>13.125</b>

Financial Plan	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	
Plan anticipates operational costs and provides sufficient resources to implement program	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
<b>Financial Plan</b>	<b>11.25</b>

Fiscal Systems	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Strong	Adequate	Strong	
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Strong	Adequate	Strong	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	6.2475
Strong	8.33
Strong	8.34
<b>Fiscal Systems</b>	<b>22.9175</b>

Readiness	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	
Program Integration	Strong	Adequate	Strong	
Proposal Support	Strong	Adequate	Strong	
Applicant Readiness	Strong	Strong	Strong	
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience	Strong	Strong	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Strong	5
Adequate	3.75
Strong	5
Strong	5
<b>Grant Readiness</b>	<b>18.75</b>

<b>GTF Total Score:</b>	85.11
Peer Reviewer Score	67
<b>Combined Score</b>	<b>152.11</b>

of possible 200

\*hlookup pre-programmed

## Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet (STANDARD Formula)

**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

**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

**INITIAL**

**APP ID:** 21ES236241      **PROGRAM NAME:** Americorps Five to Ninety Five      **COMMENTS:** LINK TO DOC

**APPLICANT NAME:** Town of Van Buren      **GRANTEE TYPE:** First Time Fixed Amount      **FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$81, 500

After peer reviewers discuss the proposal contents, quality, and responsiveness to requirements, record the group's consensus rating in column G for each section in the cells below. (Select from drop-down menu.) Then tab into H to trigger calculation (lookup).

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	Madelyn Hennessey	Alana Shapiro	Kayla Hartt		Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Program Design</b>						
<b>Need</b>	Strong	Adequate	Strong		Strong	5
<b>Intervention</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	6
<b>Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Strong	16
<b>Funding Priority</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	0.75
<b>Member Training</b>	Strong	Weak	Weak		Weak	3
<b>Member Supervision</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	4.5
<b>Member Experience</b>	Adequate	Weak	Weak		Weak	2.5
<b>Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification</b>	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	2.25

**Program Design Score** 40

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
					Consensus Rating	Point Value
<b>Organizational Capability</b>						
<b>Organizational Background &amp; Staffing</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Strong	12
<b>Compliance/Accountability</b>	Strong	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	9.75

**Org. Capability Score** 21.75

RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	Point Value
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	18.75
				<b>Cost and Budget Score</b>	<b>18.75</b>

RATER -- Initial ratings				Consensus Rating	Point Value
Plan Quality (Indicate Evaluation or Data Plan)	n/a for Rural				

**FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION**

Program Design	Organizational Capability	Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy	Evaluation Plan	Total Score
40	21.75	18.75	0	80.5

Final Consensus Score

**Recommendation:** 80-89, Recommend for Further Review

**End Peer Reviewer Work - Task Force Work Recorded Below**

INITIAL RATINGS> Below are the initial ratings offered by GTF Members 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.

Program Model	Rater -- initial ratings			LINK TO COMMENTS	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	Consensus rating	Point Value
Alignment of community need targeted and funding priorities	Strong	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	Strong	Strong	3.75
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	3.75
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	2.81
<b>STANDARD APP:</b> Proposal is from a partnership/coalition whose members are working together on program implementation <b>OR</b> <b>RURAL APP:</b> Communities to be served fall within one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	Strong		Strong	5.00
				<b>Prog Model Score</b>	<b>19.06</b>

Past Performance	Rater -- initial ratings			LINK TO COMMENTS	
	Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry	Consensus rating	Point Value
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	15
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions					#N/A
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated					#N/A
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively					#N/A
				<b>Past Performance</b>	<b>15</b>

Financial Plan		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Plan anticipates operational costs and provides sufficient resources to implement program		Strong	Adequate	Strong		Strong	15
						Financial Plan	15

Fiscal Systems		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements		Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	8.33
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.		Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	8.33
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.		Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	8.34
						Fiscal Systems	25

Readiness		Rater -- initial ratings				Consensus rating	
		Rob Meinders	Ed Barrett	Pameal Proulx-Curry		Point Value	
Program Integration		Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong	5
Proposal Support		Strong	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	3.75
Applicant Readiness		Strong	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	3.75
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience		Strong	Substandard	Adequate		Adequate	3.75
						Grant Readiness	16.25

GTF Total Score: 90.31  
Peer Reviewer Score 80.5  
**Combined Score 170.81**  
of possible 200

\*hlookup pre-programmed



# Grant Selection Process Report to Full Commission

**Legal Applicant:** Main Street Skowhegan **Program name:** Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps

**Recommendation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reviewers:** **TF:** Meinders, Proulx-Curry, Barrett **Peer:** Hennessey, Hartt, Shapiro

**Grant Category:**  Formula  Competitive  
 Other Competition **Performance Period:**  Year 1  Year 2  Year 3  
 Cost Reimbursement

**Grant Type:**  Planning **Start/End Date:** 01/01/2022 to 12/31/2024  
 Fixed Price  Ed Award Only

**Applicant Type:**  Recompete  New

**ME Priority Area:** Public Health **Fed Priority Area(s):** [ n/a ]

Request for New Resources	CNCS	Local
<b>New CNCS Funds:</b> <u>\$81,500</u>	<b>Cost sharing proposed</b> %	%
<b>Match Committed:</b> <u>\$n/a</u>	<b>Min. Match required</b> %	%
<b>Total Grant Budget:</b> <u>\$</u>		
<b>Cost Per Member:</b> <u>\$16,300</u>		

<b>AmeriCorps Member Service Years:</b> <u>5</u>				
FT	HT	RHT	QT	MT
5				
<b>Slots with living allowance</b>				
<b>Education Award only</b>				

**Total prior years with CNCS funding:** [ 3 ]

**Prior experience with CNCS funding:** The applicant will complete its first Rural AmeriCorps grant on 12/31/2021. Like all Rural AmeriCorps grants, the chief goal was building capacity to deliver services and learn to operate an AmeriCorps program. This grantee is applying for a second Rural grant under the new policy that allows for 2 opportunities in this category.

**Statement of Need (from application narrative):**

Health statistics for Somerset County, Maine are staggering. According to the most recent Community Health Needs Assessment, Somerset ranked 15th out of 16 counties in health outcomes and dead last for quality of life. Obesity rates have been rising among all age groups in Somerset County. More than a third (36.5%) of adults, nearly a fifth (18%) of high school students, and almost a quarter (22.7%) of middle schoolers are obese, significantly higher than state averages (29.9% of adults, 15% of high school students, and 15.3% of middle schoolers). Nearly a quarter (23%) of Somerset County adults lead a sedentary lifestyle, with no leisure-time physical activity in the past month, higher than the state average of 20.6%. Less than half (47.6%) of adults met aerobic physical activity recommendations (state average is 53.9%). The statistics are even more dire for children: less than a quarter (22.7%) of high school students met physical activity recommendations, and less than a third (28.5%) of middle schoolers met the recommendations, both just slightly above state averages.

AmeriCorps Members will play a critical role in improving the physical and mental health and wellness of residents of Skowhegan and Somerset County-- by the implementation of the Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program, a physical activity and outdoor recreation program designed to get community members outside, active, and engaged with nature. Through the execution of outdoor recreation programming, community gear library management, and volunteer management, members increase the capacity of and provide strategic support to nonprofit organization Main Street Skowhegan (MSS), and partner nonprofit organizations, Lake George Regional Park (LGRP), Somerset Woods Trustees (SWT), R.E.A.C.H. After School Program, and others. They'll serve at the direction of their supervisor and alongside

community partners to recruit volunteers, build local capacity to coordinate and sustain this program, and cultivate the growth of a love of a healthy, active lifestyle and respect for the outdoors in Skowhegan and neighboring communities.

**Program Summary (from application):**

Main Street Skowhegan proposes to have five AmeriCorps members who will coordinate and execute no-cost outdoor recreation programming designed to increase physical activity and engagement with nature for local community members in Skowhegan, Maine. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps program will have increased participation rates in outdoor recreation programming by 8.8 percent (725 individuals). In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 30 volunteers who will be engaged in and lead community outdoor recreation programming. This program will concentrate on the Healthy Futures Focus Area. The AmeriCorps investment of \$81,500 will be matched with \$34,000; \$0 in public funding and \$34,000 in private funding.

**Identified partners:**

- Lake George Regional Park,
- Somerset Woods Trustees,
- R.E. A.C. H. After School Programs

**Host sites (if applicable):** N/A

**SCORING DETAIL**

**I. Summary of Peer Reviewer Consensus Scores**

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
<b>Program Design Section (50%)</b>		
Need	Adequate	3.75
Intervention	Adequate	6
Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model	Adequate	12
Notice Priority	Adequate	0.75
Member Training	Strong	6
Member Supervision	Weak	3
Member Experience	Adequate	3.75
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Weak	1.5
<b>Organizational Capability Overall Rating      25%</b>		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Adequate	9
Compliance and Accountability	Adequate	9.75
<b>Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy      25%</b>		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Strong	25
<b>Total</b>		<b>80.5</b>
<b>Final Recommendation to Task Force:</b> Recommend for Further Review		

**II. Summary of Task Force Consensus Rating and Final Score:**

Category	Rating	Points
<b>Program Alignment &amp; Model</b>		
Degree to which the community need targeted by the proposal is aligned with one of the funding priorities stated in the RFP	Adequate	2.81
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Adequate	2.81
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Strong	3.75
Communities to be served fall withing one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	5
<b>Past Performance</b>		
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions	Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated	Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively	Strong	3.75
<b>Financial Plan</b>	Strong	15
<b>Fiscal Systems</b>		
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements	Adequate	6.25
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Adequate	6.25
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Strong	8.34
<b>Grant Readiness</b>		
Program Integration	Strong	5
Proposal Support	Strong	5
Applicant Readiness	Adequate	3.75
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience	Strong	5
<b>GTF Review Total:</b>		87.71 of 100 possible

**III. Final Combined Score**

<b>Total</b>	<b>168.21</b> of 200 possible
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**Final Assessment of Application:**

Fund with no Corrections     
  Fund with Corrections     
  Do Not Fund

**Referenced Conditions/Corrections:**

1. Clarify if all details on funds, including in-kind, are reflected in Source of Funds. Need to know that all program costs are accounted for and covered.

**PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS COMPILED**

**Section: Program Design (50 %)**

**Need**

- Backed with statistics indicating that increased physical activity might be helpful for local people.
- Defines rural community. Provides statistics about obesity in all age ranges within the county. AmeriCorps will address this through offering a physical activity and outdoor recreation program.
- Skowhegan and Somerset county meet the criteria of rural based on 2019 census data. AmeriCorps members would increase the capacity and provide strategic support for a physical/outdoor recreation program. Evidence for the community is based on a recent Community Health Needs Assessment is strong and include data related to prevalence of obesity, low quality of life, and lack of exercise engagement. Community planning occurred in 2015-2016 with engagement of 500+ citizens who identified a commitment to outdoor recreation as part of the Skowhegan Strategic Plan for Community Transformation.
- Hit all the points but were not very complete about how they would get community participants. Not sure how or if they could meet their targets.

## **Intervention**

- The programming seems strong, but I am unclear as to how the underserved youth and families in poverty will be recruited to participate.
- At least three events a week, can be from 60 min to full day. Break down of time by percentage. Very clear and easy to understand planned schedule, each day is broken down from 9:00-5:00. Identifies partners who will help with programming. Could go into more detail about who recruiting new volunteers will take place.
- Duration, intensity, and target population are adequately described. Key roles are defined and relevant to the intervention and reported in percentage of time spent in each role. A detailed example of a weekly schedule is provided with daily and hourly tasks. Roles of key partners are not described in this section. The proposed intervention aligns with the community identified need as a focus on outdoor recreation to improve health and quality of life. Community volunteers contribute to programming, supporting other volunteers, and ensuring the sustainability of the program.

## **Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model**

- The most recent study they can find that says the outdoor activity improves health is from 2013?
- 400 participants have been served already, AmeriCorps will grow this and have a minimum 156 program hours a year, this cannot be done without the team. Each year an increase of 7% individuals participating, but how did they come up with this increase. But there are target sets. 5 hours a week will be spent on capacity building, this will lead to 155 new volunteers at the end of three years.
- The quantity of service is described for AmeriCorps members, facilitators, and volunteers. The number of individuals engaging in program is expected to be 725 in year 1 and increase by 7% in each year. Relevant goals (e.g. increased community pride of program participants) are also presented. A description of how AmeriCorps members will support the problem is adequate. The mission of MSS is outlined and encompasses both health of citizens and long-term growth of the Skowhegan economy. The proposal describes briefly how the organization has responded to changing needs. The logic model describes the inputs needed, activities are broken down into duration, frequency and intervention. The target population is not described in the logic model. Goals (outcomes) are quantified and measurable.

## **Evidence of Effectiveness**

- The assumption seems to be if you build it, they will come...but I am not yet convinced.
- Cites the benefits of exercising and outdoor time, two sources. Outdoor recreation is a top priority for the strategic plan of Skowhegan. Ties into building a base for the future "Run of River" plan. Would like more information about the internal capacity for hosting a team.
- Two specific pieces of evidence were presented regarding the outcomes of outdoor activity. The Healthy Living source is not peer-reviewed. However, the second article by the American Public Health Association was highly relevant to the study as it had an emphasis on low-income areas.

## **Notice Priority**

- Assumes increased activity reduces obesity.
- Health Futures is the focus area.
- Funding priority is identified as the Healthy Futures Focus area.

## **Member Training**

- Opportunities for personal and professional growth seem rich.
- Members will complete a two-week training. Training will include outdoor skills, facilitations & community awareness. With a focus on facilitation tactics and risk management. Specialized trainings will be completed by local partners. Members will have the opportunity to become Wilderness First Aid and Red Cross Lifeguard certified. Prohibited activities will be gone over in training and posted at the host site.
- A survey will be conducted by the supervisor at the start of orientation to identify gaps in knowledge so that they may be addressed. Training is focused on learning about the community, group facilitation, and the organization(s). The proposal acknowledges AmeriCorps requirements including prohibited activities. Formal training, provided by a variety of community partners includes white water paddling, ACEs, WFA, lifeguard training, risk management, and the native history of Skowhegan.

## **Member Supervision**

- Prefer actual supervisors already in place.

- The team will be overseen by the Executive Director and will be directly managed by the program manager. The program manager will attend all the required conferences and trainings. Did not go into detail about how the organization will internally prepare.
- Weekly supervision will occur. The program director will train the supervisors. Specific details are lacking in this section.
- Supervisor not named so needed better explanation of how they will prepare internally and better detail on training supervisor.

### **Member Experience**

- Again, the possibility exists for a variety of experiences and growth in a variety of competencies, especially for someone interested in a career in outdoor recreation or recreational leadership.
- Members will gain experience in facilitation, collaboration, teamwork. Will also learn outdoor education and youth engagement. Members can volunteer in the community for meaningful opportunities outside of AmeriCorps. This makes it seem like it would be on their own time, opportunities could be built into the schedule since they will be working 40 hours a week. Members will have the opportunity to connect with other members throughout the state. Each week there will be a debrief for each individual program that will be used to reflect on the program and improve for the next one.
- Transferrable skills are adequately identified. A variety of meaningful service opportunities are available in the local area and adequate for outside service. Built-in reflection or 'debriefing' time is built into the programming time. More formal reflection will take place quarterly. This is an adequate learning experience. Members will be connected to the broader service community in Maine. Recruitment will take place both within the state and nationally.

### **Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification**

- The narrative says they have a strong identity but the front page doesn't use "AmeriCorps" in the name of the organization
- Will wear AmeriCorps logo when completing direct service, signage at the office about AmeriCorps, will be introduced as AmeriCorps members. An AmeriCorps banner will be at public events.
- Members will be identified with clothing, signage and table banners. Members will be introduced to community organizations as AmeriCorps members. Member profiles and photos will be posted on the MSS website. The program is called the Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program but that was only mentioned in one place.
- Title of the project on page one (face sheet) did not include AmeriCorps.

### **Organizational Capability Overall Rating      25%**

#### **Organizational Background and Staffing**

- The Main Street organization and leadership seems to focus on economic development, and the outdoor activity plan seems more geared to enhancing recreationally activity than enlisting people who have health difficulties in outdoor activities.
- The nonprofit exists to help revitalize Skowhegan. Over 100 volunteers, strong ED, marketing assistance and an engaged board of directors. Have utilized AmeriCorps in different programs. The ED will oversee the AmeriCorps program. Have had recent success recruiting new volunteers. Frequently seeks feedback and adjust programs based on suggestions. There will be a full-time program manager 1FTE and the ED will provide .15-.60 FTE depending on the season.
- MMS has a history of working with AmeriCorps members, has an experienced staff and over 100 volunteers. The recreation program has increased capacity in recent years. The organization is experienced in recruiting volunteers. The growth of the organization along with its ties to community partners demonstrates adequate resources for development activities. Information is collected after programs and constructive feedback is discussed and then implemented by the management team. Supervisor qualification criteria is delineated. The above is evidence for adequate organizational background and staffing.

#### **Compliance and Accountability**

- They say they have these things but they seem not to be specific about how things are done...
- Has written financial policies with checks and balances. All donations and income are handled by two people. ED compares all documented program expenses.
- The proposal describes adequate current financial policies, checks and balances, documentation, compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulation and capacity to hold themselves accountable.

## **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%**

- AmeriCorps member will be focused on providing activities as proposed.
- Fixed Budget.
- The cost per MSY is the maximum, \$16,300. Source of funds are adequate and MSS will cover any remaining costs.
- It is compelling to see a variety of funding sources.

### **TASK FORCE REVIEWER COMMENT DETAIL:**

#### **Program Alignment and Model**

- Federal focus is Healthy Futures, and meets Maine priority on Public Health. Strong commitment with Skowhegan community and local park communities
- Give this program credit for addressing a Commission priority in that it focuses on healthy futures by improving the physical and mental health of residents through outdoor recreation, even though this is not specifically related to Covid.
- The program is serving a rural area that has limited AmeriCorps presence historically
- The program's focus on health through outdoor activities is not particularly innovative, although the organizations effort to connect this with community and economic development is an interesting additional element. The program is capable of replication elsewhere.
- The program is well aligned with the organization's overall mission. Maine Street Skowhegan lead an impressive community wide strategic planning effort and has taken on the mission of implementing that plan. One major pillar of that plan is outdoor recreation as an element of community health, sustainability, and development.
- Given how the strategic plan and its elements were developed, there was significant community involvement and the agency has developed strong relationships with others in the area including Lake George Regional Park, Somerset Woods Trustees, REACH after school program, the High School Outing Club, and others.
- While a small agency with limited staff, it's finances are very strong with a very health cash balance and limited liabilities. Existing cash balances along with on-going funding from other organizations and activities appear more than sufficient to sustain the program.
- The executive director has been with the program for some time and indicates anticipating staying in her position. At the same time, she is currently the only staff member with the organization having downsized as a result of the pandemic. The site supervisor is a former AC member who will be leaving with those duties going to the executive director.
- As noted, there was significant community input into developing the strategic plan and this has continued during the implementation phase, including the outdoor recreation effort.
- The organization regularly has 120 or so volunteers in a variety of areas and roles including 16 on-going and 15 episodic volunteers for the outdoor recreation program. The organization has a system to communicate regularly with volunteers and is looking to implement new CRM software to better track. Volunteer coordination is currently done by an AC member and the plan is to split this in the continuation period between the executive director and a new AC member who will devote 50% of time to it.
- Good proposal. Addresses health needs indirectly. Fits in very well with the communities other social/economic development efforts. Some cut back in funding during pandemic - reduction in staff.

#### **Past Performance**

- Strong record of engaging local volunteers and meeting performance targets.
- The agency has run a successful program during its initial grant period and has shown strong enrollment and retention.
- Although the program acknowledges that the first year of the program posed compliance and reporting systems, it has improved over time and should have no significant problems meeting the reduced requirements given a fixed amount grant, recognizing that this could be challenged should there be a leadership change.
- Even with the Covid challenges, the program performed well in addressing its performance measures and has seen a significant uptick in program participation once it returned in person programming.
- The program continued to offer services during the pandemic through adapting to creative at-distance techniques.
- Project affected by the pandemic. Organization did a good job of pivoting and saving what it could of the program, adjusting to virtual programming, and using the time to plan for the future.

#### **Financial Plan**

- Program will be in a fixed amount grant. Local match was not fully outlined, indicating only \$34,000 in local funds. We should require them to detail the source and amount of other funds necessary to sustain the program. Given the agency's financial status, this should not be a major issue.

### **Fiscal Systems**

- Uses a manual accounting system, but effective and accurate
- As noted above, the financials look good; the agency complied with financial reporting over the first grant period, and the financial review showed no significant issues. The only concern is that the Treasurer is a board volunteer and how finances will be handled should that change.
- Audit report. Small organization that has had to cut back on staff due to loss of revenue due to pandemic. Managed to stay afloat non-the-less.

### **Grant Readiness**

- The interview was solid on all points
- As noted above, the program grew out of a community-wide strategic plan and is an element of its implementation. As such, it is well aligned with other efforts programs and supports not only healthy futures and sustainability but community and economic development based on outdoor recreation.
- A number of partners agencies are involved in the effort and it appears to have good community support
- The agency successfully weathered the pandemic shut down through creative use of at a distance programming and used the time to enhance its marketing and outreach efforts.
- Strong volunteer engagement exists and the agency is implementing improved tracking software.
- The only concern is limited agency staff and potential turnover in the key executive director position or Treasurer. There is a transition plan, but if there is a change, I suspect it will be a challenge to implement.
- Other Comments:
  - RFP response was well organized and clearly and directly addressed required topics
  - Need was well documented
  - Additional AC slots will assist in expanding program from 39 to 52 weeks
  - This has been a successful and well-run program during its first grant cycle and I would anticipate that to continue if refunded.
  - Sources of local match should be detailed
- Organizations strategic plan derived from community's strategic plan. Program is well integrated into the social/economic development efforts of the community. Departing VISTA volunteer who helped manage the program appears to be very well organized.

# Grant Selection Process Report to Full Commission

**Legal Applicant:** Maine Youth Alliance dba Game Loft      **Program name:** I KNOW ME AmeriCorps

**Recommendation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reviewers:** **TF:** Barrett, Proulx-Curry, Meinders      **Peer:** Hartt, Hennessey, Shapiro

**Grant Category:**       Formula       Competitive  
 Other Competition      **Performance Period:**  Year 1  Year 2  Year 3  
 Cost Reimbursement

**Grant Type:**       Planning      **Start/End Date:** 01/01/2022 to 12/31/2024  
 Fixed Price       Ed Award Only

**Applicant Type:**       Recompete       New

**ME Priority Area:** Education      **Fed Priority Area(s):**

<b>Request for New Resources</b>	<b>CNCS</b>	<b>Local</b>
<b>New CNCS Funds:</b> <u>\$65,200</u>	<b>Cost sharing proposed</b> %	%
<b>Match Committed:</b> <u>\$n/a</u>	<b>Min. Match required</b> %	
<b>Total Grant Budget:</b> <u>\$</u>		
<b>Cost Per Member:</b> <u>\$16,300</u>		

<b>AmeriCorps Member Service Years:</b> <u>4</u>				
FT	HT	RHT	QT	MT
<u>4</u>				

**Slots with living allowance**  
**Education Award only**

**Total prior years with CNCS funding:** 3

**Prior experience with CNCS funding:** Maine Youth Alliance applied for its first direct AmeriCorps grant 3 years ago and was funded as one of the rural programs. This proposal is submitted under the new policy that permits inexperienced organizations to have 2 full grants before moving into the standard competition. Their program model is unchanged.

**Statement of Need (from application narrative):**

Waldo County meets the criteria as rural because it has the Rural U.S. Department of Agriculture (RUCA) code of 6. All youth in RSU 3 (the 11 towns in western Waldo County, Maine) lack the knowledge, attitude, behaviors, skills and aspirations necessary for success in school and in later life according to David Holinger, RSU 3 middle school principal in Thorndike, Maine. The social, academic, and behavioral set-backs of Covid-19 are prevalent and severe and the duration will last for at least a decade. His estimate is that 100% of the student body of RSU 3 has been adversely affected but that many students in the IKME program have been particularly impacted by the social isolation and disruption of 2020-2021.

Rural Waldo County has low-achieving middle and high schools with disadvantaged students. The I Know ME program has served this school district for the past three years using the services of AmeriCorps members. During that time significant progress has been measured in the students in the program by the Holistic Student Assessment, teacher comments, parent satisfaction, and student satisfaction but the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has been a great set-back to the progress of these students. In the fall of 2021, 31 students were surveyed using the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA) from the Pear Institute at Harvard University. Using that study, IKME students were below the national average in: action orientation, emotional control, assertiveness, perseverance, trust, empathy, reflection, optimism, relationship with peers, relationships with adults, learning interest, critical thinking, academic motivation, school bonding, hyperactivity/inattention, conduct problems, emotional symptoms, peer problems, and prosocial behavior. Pamela Smith, guidance counselor at RSU 3, said that all of these problems were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Students in RSU 3 are economically disadvantaged. The 11 western Waldo County towns that make up RSU 3 have levels of poverty in families with youth under the age of 18: Brooks 36%, Freedom 36%, Jackson 44%, Knox 30%, Liberty 18%, Monroe 33%, Montville 12%, Thorndike, Troy 30%, Unity 19% and Waldo 37%. This compares to Maine's rate of 18%. (Waldo County Community Needs Assessment 2018). The former industry was raising chickens for processing in Belfast but by 1990 the chicken industry closed and coastal Waldo County became gentrified. Low-income families moved to western Waldo County where there were few jobs and little access to community services. Today the median household income for the 11 towns \$37,500 compared to the median household income in Maine of \$58,924 and median U.S. household income of \$68,400. According to the 2020 Kids Count Data Book Waldo County has 18.6% poverty rate for children from birth to 18. In RSU 3, 100% of students receive free lunch. Of the four school districts in Waldo County RSU 3 has the highest poverty level and the greatest amount of community need for support services. Youth in this area are geographically, socially, and technologically isolated. Broadband services are limited and difficult for students to access as was particularly evident during the recent pandemic. There is no public transportation that serves youth in this area. Social support services center on the school and a handful of after-school activities and sports. EVIDENCE OF LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. Tests show that RSU 3 performs poorly compared to schools in other regions of the state. At RSU 3 there are 275 middle school students and 320 in grades 9-12. In RSU 3, 13% of students do not graduate on time. RSU 3 middle and high schools fit the definition of low achieving schools. According to the Maine Educational Assessment in RSU 3, 55.5% of all students are below or well-below the state expectations in English/Language Arts and in RSU 3 High School students the number is 58.5% below state expectations. In Math, for all RSU 3 grades, 79.4% are below state expectations and 82.5% of high school students are below state expectations. In Science, all students are 50.5% below the state expectations, and 57.6% of high school students are below state expectations.

**Program Summary (from application):**

The Maine Youth Alliance dba The Game Loft/I Know ME proposes to have 4 AmeriCorps members who will serve as mentors for youth in grades 7-12 in Waldo County, ME. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps program will have improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged youth, and will improve educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving middle and high schools. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional ten volunteers who will be engaged in youth mentoring. The I Know ME Program will concentrate on the Education Focus Area. The AmeriCorps investment of \$65,200.00 will be matched with \$135,250.00 in private funding.

**Identified partners:**

- Long Range Planning Committee of the Maine Youth Alliance (MEYA),
- RSU 3 school district,
- IKME Community Advisory Board,
- The Lerner Foundation,
- Trekkers Training Institute,
- JMG program

**Host sites (if applicable):** n/a

## SCORING DETAIL

### I. Summary of Peer Reviewer Consensus Scores

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
<b>Rationale &amp; Approach/Program Design Section (50%)</b>		
Need	Strong	5
Intervention	Adequate	6
Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model	Adequate	12
Notice Priority	Adequate	0.75
Member Training	Adequate	4.5
Member Supervision	Adequate	4.5
Member Experience	Strong	5
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Adequate	2.25
<b>Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%</b>		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Adequate	9
Compliance and Accountability	Adequate	9.75
<b>Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%</b>		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77.5</b>
Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation		

### II. Summary of Task Force Consensus Rating and Final Score:

Category	Rating	Points
<b>Program Alignment &amp; Model</b>		
Degree to which the community need targeted by the proposal is aligned with one of the funding priorities stated in the RFP	Strong	3.75
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Adequate	2.81
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Weak	1.88
Communities to be served fall withing one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	5
<b>Past Performance</b>		
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Adequate	2.81
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions	Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated	Adequate	2.71
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively	Adequate	2.81
<b>Financial Plan</b>	Adequate	11.25
<b>Fiscal Systems</b>		
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements	Adequate	6.25
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Weak	4.17
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	0
<b>Grant Readiness</b>		
Program Integration	Strong	5
Proposal Support	Adequate	3.75
Applicant Readiness	Adequate	3.75
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience	Adequate	3.75
<b>GTF Review Total:</b>		<b>67.29 of 100 possible</b>

### III. Final Combined Score

<b>Total</b>	<b>144.79 of 200</b>
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**Final Assessment of Application:**

Fund with no Corrections

Fund with Corrections

Do Not Fund

**Referenced Conditions/Corrections:**

1. 990 and audit must be up to date. Financial information was old.
2. Clarify the amount of time dedicated to member training
3. Target for volunteers is low - adjust

**PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS COMPILED****Section: Program Design (50 %)*****Need***

- The statistical information was thorough and local educators confirm statistics.
- Meet the Rural U.S Department of Agriculture code of 6. Covid 19 has negatively impacted students in the district through social isolation and academic and behavioral setbacks. Low achieving middle and high school and high levels of poverty. Spoke with the school principle and staff to receive first-hand account. Youth, parents and board members helped to create the program.
- The rural status of RSU 3 (category 6) is described along with the need to provide social, academic and behavioral support. Local data is included and relevant that 100% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch, lower than average achievement and average income. Progress made by participating students according to the Holistic Student Assessment is depicted. Both the board and youth board were involved with planning.

***Intervention***

- The plan is clear; what does not seem clear is how student participants will be chosen, when according to needs statements every student in Waldo County could benefit. Also not quite clear about how community volunteers are being involved.
- AmeriCorps member will increase the participation from 20 to 60 students worked with. Students enrolled in the program will participate for 7 years. They will have weekly cohort meetings lasting 2 hours per week as well as peripheral programming and field trips.
- The population, duration, and frequency are adequately described. Roles are specifically described with examples of what a week would look like.

***Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model***

- The planning is detailed and has assessment as part of the programming
- They will use the DOSAGE mentoring services for at least one hour per week. The permanent change is that there will be more youth mentored by members. Each year the program will recruit more program participants. Families will also report increased satisfaction as the program continues. There was no clear reasoning behind the increase in participant numbers each year.
- The proposal indicates that the program would increase the number of youth who can access the program. Measurable outcomes include changes on student scores based on the HSA. (The proposal indicates that improvement would be successful though more specific evidence could be collected quantified the scores into a standard deviation). The role of the members is described as serving more students as well as training more volunteers. The description of how the AmeriCorps program fits into applicant organizations goals is adequate.
- Rationale behind target increases was not provided. What will change that makes that possible.
- The evidence wasn't strong. There is a lot more evidence-based literature that could have been used.

***Evidence of Effectiveness***

- The plan for growth is specific, and effectiveness seems to be backed by research
- They will be using designed mentoring. They will work to create youth skills and aspirations. The Lerner Foundation recommends a 1:3 ration for youth to adult mentors, hosting AmeriCorps will allow them to reach this ratio. They will add to the community because it allows for more small group work which has been proven to be more effective.
- The proposal uses two citations. One is for a definition. This is not sufficient evidence by subject experts.

***Notice Priority***

- The funding priority is education. The goals of the program are to help increase education and behavioral outcomes.

- Although the stated focus is education, one of the federal foci, a case might be made that with its emphasis on social, and emotional growth, as well as academics, the program will also lead to workforce development. The possibility exists that healthy workers are better workers.
- The proposal defines the funding priority as education which is appropriate given the intervention and target population.

### ***Member Training***

- In addition to the required training from AmeriCorps, members will be given additional training for working with youth, public speaking and more.
- Members will receive 170 hours of training. If they are planning on doing such an in-depth training I would like to see more information about what this training will entail and the capacity the organization has to offer a 4 week training. Members will be trained in AmeriCorps requirements and prohibited activities.
- 170 total hours in Positive Youth Development; mentoring; first aid/CPR; volunteer Maine; lifeguard; public speaking; poverty and community training. The proposal indicates that the members will be trained in prohibited activities
- For an organization that acknowledged a weakness is staffing later in narrative, the planning/preparation needed to deliver 170 hours of training is significant. Did not identify how they would accomplish training given they are such a small organization.

### ***Member Supervision***

- The design of the program includes multiple levels of supervision, and specifies hours with supervisors and supervisor qualifications.
- The members will be managed by a past AmeriCorps Member. Everyday they will have a morning check in as a group, and will meet with the manager for at least one hour individually a week.
- Strong alumni network. Staff is familiar with programing as a supervisor. Daily group meetings and weekly individual supervision meetings will occur. Supervisor involvement w/ cohort meeting, support for student programming/plans allows for adequate supervision.
- Skeptical of training. One person as supervisor is going to lead 14 skill trainings. Where is person going to have the time.
- They have good ideas but do they have the resources in such a small organization to implement them.

### ***Member Experience***

- The plan for member experience is thorough and the opportunities for growth seem expansive.
- Proposal states the program manager will be leading trainings on the 14 things that Indeed how will the program manager be learning these skills. How will the program manager create this training to make sure they are meaningful experiences for the members. They will have the opportunity to participate in a day of service on MLK day. Reflection will be built into the program. They will attend an AmeriCorps conference with other members serving in the state.
- AmeriCorps members will touch base with their supervisor every three months to rate self-perceived progress on listed top employment skills. Meaningful service will occur through the Game Loft program and learning about the community. A strong focus on scheduled time for reflection is indicated. The connection to the broader service and local and national recruitment were each described adequately.
- Connection to National Service network is not well addressed.
- Public speaking training is a good preparation for future work. Impressed by quarterly reviews.

### ***Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification***

- The name of the Project incorporates AmeriCorps name, members and workplaces will be "branded."
- Will be referred to as AmeriCorps members not staff. The members will wear AmeriCorps clothing and have the logo on their business cards.
- The proposal describes using language, branding with logos and signage to demonstrate the affiliation. The descriptive title contains "AmeriCorps."
- Checked all the boxes but nothing outstanding.

**Organizational Capability Overall Rating      25%**

### ***Organizational Background and Staffing***

- The organization has community backing, is long standing, and staff is already in place.

- There is a current program manager for IKME and will receive guidance from the Founding Directors. The board also closely oversees the program. The proposal was a group effort including all of the previously mentioned entities. The program recently split from the Game Loft. Now there is dedicated staff for both aspects of the program. The board and management will meet have strong control over the program. The program founders will dedicate .75 FTE to the program and the Program Manager will be fully dedicated to the IKME program.
- The program demonstrates experience, growth and history of AmeriCorps service and funding from other grants, along with volunteer community involvement. There is an organized board w/committees reporting to the full MEYA board. Board, management, and staff work together but does not describe specifics re: how the board collects and uses information for learning and decision making other than providing the overall structure and priorities of each committee. The directors are named and each are .75 FTE and the program manager is full time.

### ***Compliance and Accountability***

- The compliance and accountability section seems to rest on the organization's interactions with other organizations. I would have likes specifics about who handles what aspect of accountability.
- They have monthly financial reporting. Management and staff make monthly financial and programmatic reports to the board. Board members review policies annually. There are three authorized signers. They use a bookkeeping service for consulting on monthly reports.
- Organizational policies are described in detail and currently in place. Reporting methods and internal controls are also described as well as accountability for staff.

### ***Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy***      **25%**

- Fixed Amount funding.
- The MSY cost is \$16,300, equal to the maximum amount. Local match nearly doubles the AmeriCorps funds requested. Funds and resources are sufficient to support the program.

### **TASK FORCE REVIEWER COMMENT DETAIL:**

#### ***Program Alignment and Model***

- This program fits education focus for federal funding but doesn't directly line with Maine priorities
- The proposal does not address any of the Commission's priorities for this competition
- The program will be operating in a rural area in which the Commission has no other grantees.
- The program is based on a mentoring model designed to improve student performance. As such, it is similar to other mentoring programs supported by the Commission and I would not consider it particularly innovative. As a part of a wider Lerner Foundation effort involving six communities, it is perhaps more likely than some others to provide a model to be emulated elsewhere in the state.
- While the program clearly aligns with the organization's overall mission and has a strong level of local support, it is not financially strong, frequently operating in the red although there has been some reported improvement over the years. The most recent audit is from 2018, so recent financial information is based on statements that are not verified by outside sources. The agency is also in violation of a contract requirement for an annual outside financial review and it is unclear when more recent information will be available. There are some indications that accounting systems and standards are weak. As a result, it is unclear to what extent the agency will be able to sustain the program after this grant ends and the Lerner Foundation grant runs out. In addition, the success of the agency has been closely related to the co-founders who have plans to retire within the next three-year grant period. While efforts have been made to strengthen the organization's board in recent years in light of the needed transition, this will still likely pose a significant challenge.
- The program does have a strong history of volunteer involvement and community support in developing and implementing its programming.
- On a positive note, there is a new program manager position to supervise the program. This position may be helpful in transitioning the agency to new leadership in the future.
- Well documented need and theory of change. Well designed program

#### ***Past Performance***

- Grantee indicates \$135,250 in local funds will be used to support the program; however, the sources of these funds are not specified.
- The addition of a program manager position should help with program management and member supervision as well as potentially assist with the looming leadership transition facing the organization
- The agency has shown success in the past in meeting its program performance targets

- The start-up plan is fairly weak and seems to largely depend on what has been done in the past, which shows some gaps in certain areas such as member recruitment and evaluation, selection qualifications, and required policies. Many of these should already be in place.
- There have been some past reporting problems, although they have not resulted in major issues.
- The program has been generally successful in recruiting and retaining members who have reported a positive experience.
- As noted, the program generally appears to be achieving its goals and objectives although it has had some issues with reporting and meeting all administrative requirements.
- The program directors noted during the interview that the AmeriCorps requirements have moved the organization to a higher level of administrative and financial performance. This is certainly a positive for the organization and shows that it has put effort into upgrading these areas, although at times still not fully meeting requirements in a timely manner.
- Peer review. Organization has undergone reorganization due to issues in the past. No history yet with reorganized structure.

### ***Financial Plan***

- If funded, program will move to a fixed amount grant. This will eliminate many of the financial reporting obligations. Cost per member is ok. Local match is to be provided from private sources, which are not specified.
- Reorganization appears to be logical and workable.

### ***Fiscal Systems***

- They will be using Quickbooks, but unsure of their expertise.
- As noted elsewhere, financial and accounting systems seem to be weak but are likely adequate for a fixed amount grant.
- Audit report and 990 are outdated and agency is not in compliance with audit/financial review requirement. If funded, this must be addressed
- The agency's financial situation is not strong, although based on undocumented but likely reliable statements during the interview, the financial condition has improved in recent years and during the period of pandemic impact. However, this improvement may weaken at the end of the Lerner Foundation grant. It's not clear how much of an impact this will have.
- audit report and description of organizational restructuring.

### ***Grant Readiness***

- Their answers were strong in their interview
- This program integrates well into the agencies overall mission and other programs.
- The program seems to be well supported by the community and schools with which it works. Past financial reporting issues should be mitigated by a fixed amount grant. Local match seems to be available.
- The agency has a long history of volunteer support.
- Community support and readiness seem to have strengthened due to the agencies' response to the pandemic. While maintaining the basic AC program via remote platforms, additional time was spent on basic support/food issues which increased agency visibility and contacts with community members.
- Agency has strong volunteer support but has fairly minimal systems in place for tracking and reporting volunteer efforts and currently lacks a single position to oversee/manage the program's volunteers. Agency seems aware of this and is discussing how to improve.
- Other Comments
  - If funded, agency should be required to bring its 990 and financial review up to date and comply with its contractual agreements in this regard.
  - Organization should document that they actually have acceptable accounting practices in place and appropriate safeguards to ensure expenditures are appropriate.
  - The amount of time devoted to member training should be clarified
  - Clarification is needed on how members will allocate/spend their time in light of the request for increased slots.
  - The target for volunteers seems low
- Good member training and experience.

# Grant Selection Process Report to Full Commission

**Legal Applicant:** Trekkers **Program name:** Trekkers Building Relationships

**Recommendation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reviewers:** **TF:** Barrett, Meinders, Proulx-Curry **Peer:** Shapiro, Hennessey, Hartt

**Grant Category:**  Formula  Competitive  Other Competition  Cost Reimbursement  
**Performance Period:**  Year 1  Year 2  Year 3

**Grant Type:**  Planning  Fixed Price  Ed Award Only  
**Start/End Date:** 9/01/2021 to 8/31/2024

**Applicant Type:**  Recompete  New

**ME Priority Area:**    **Fed Priority Area(s):**   

<b>Request for New Resources</b>		<b>CNCS</b>	<b>Local</b>
<b>New CNCS Funds:</b>	<u>\$48,900</u>	<b>Cost sharing proposed</b>	<u>%</u>
<b>Match Committed:</b>	<u>\$n/a</u>	<b>Min. Match required</b>	<u>%</u>
<b>Total Grant Budget:</b>	<u>\$</u>		
<b>Cost Per Member:</b>	<u>\$16,300</u>		

	<b>AmeriCorps Member Service Years:</b> <u>3</u>				
	FT	HT	RHT	QT	MT
<b>Slots with living allowance</b>	3				
<b>Education Award only</b>					

**Total prior years with CNCS funding:** 3

**Prior experience with CNCS funding:** Trekkers applied for its first direct AmeriCorps grant 3 years ago and was funded as one of the rural programs. This proposal is submitted under the new policy that permits inexperienced organizations to have 2 full grants before moving into the standard competition. Their program model is unchanged.

**Statement of Need (from application narrative):**

Trekkers AmeriCorps Mentors program will take place primarily within six towns, Rockland, Thomaston, South Thomaston, Cushing, Owls Head and St. George in Knox County Maine. Knox County is classified as rural using the Rural-Urban Continuum Codes. The need to be addressed by AmeriCorps service: Youth living in homogeneous and rural communities experience an opportunity gap (lack of resources, opportunities and coordinated enriching experiences). In our rural community of Knox County 17.9% of children under 18 live in poverty (higher than the Maine State average). Within our six town direct service area 55% of students are eligible for subsidized school meals (higher than the Maine State average). Youth experience lower aspirations, achievement and attainment; feel disconnected from their community and lack self-confidence when: they are not given the skills to develop aspirational goals and work towards them; they have limited opportunities for positive adult-youth connections in the community; their strengths are not nurtured and lifted up; they experience challenges that are not addressed or supported by peers, family, schools or the community. Oceanside High School, the primary High School for students in our service had the second lowest graduation rate in the State at 74.1% according to 2016 State data. The graduation rate has risen steadily since 2016, coinciding with Trekkers expansion within the high school. Many of Trekkers' students are the first in their families to attend college. Many of our students lack primary role models and a direct connection to their areas of interest and experience a disconnect between their aspirations and the road to getting there. Trekkers was created by concerned community members 26 years ago to address the needs they saw for local students. Trekkers responded to community need by recently completing an expansion project to double the number of students served. The organization engaged community members in designing the proposed AmeriCorps program and the community will be involved in program

implementation. We have experienced increased demand for caring adult role models, academic assistance, social-emotional supports and local community service opportunities. The social-emotional needs of our students have been increasing steadily. According to the results of the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA), a survey designed to measure social emotional strengths and challenges, the number of Trekkers students identifying the need for Tier 3 supports has more than double in the past 3 years, to 18.5%. Students in need of Tier 3 supports identify only challenges on the HSA, no strengths. Trekkers AmeriCorps Relationship Building Program has been designed to address these needs. These strategies are designed to address the opportunity gap and set students up for long term success by graduating high school and having post-secondary aspirations and plans.

**Program Summary (from application):**

Trekkers proposes to have three AmeriCorps members who will provide mentoring to 7th -12<sup>th</sup> grade students, recruit volunteers and cultivate community partnerships in Knox County, Maine. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps program will have increased the number of hours each Trekkers participant has spent with a mentor, and increased the number of Trekkers participants receiving other local supports and participating in local community service activities due to an increase in organizations working collaboratively with Trekkers. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage and additional 60 volunteers who will be engaged in mentoring. The program will concentrate on the Education Focus Area. The AmeriCorps investment of \$48,900 will be matched with \$0 in public funding and \$46,539 in private funding.

**Identified partners:**

- Oceanside High School

**Host sites (if applicable):** n/a

**SCORING DETAIL**

**I. Summary of Peer Reviewer Consensus Scores**

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
<b>Rationale &amp; Approach/Program Design Section (50%)</b>		
Need	Weak	2.5
Intervention	Weak	4
Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model	Weak	8
Notice Priority	Adequate	0.75
Member Training	Adequate	4.5
Member Supervision	Adequate	4.5
Member Experience	Adequate	3.75
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Weak	1.5
<b>Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%</b>		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Adequate	9
Compliance and Accountability	Adequate	9.75
<b>Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%</b>		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
<b>Total</b>		<b>67</b>
Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation		



**II. Summary of Task Force Consensus Rating and Final Score:**

Category	Rating	Points
<b>Program Alignment &amp; Model</b>		
Degree to which the community need targeted by the proposal is aligned with one of the funding priorities stated in the RFP	Strong	3.75
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Adequate	2.81
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Strong	3.75
Communities to be served fall withing one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	5
<b>Past Performance</b>		
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Adequate	2.81
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions	Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated	Strong	3.75
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively	Adequate	2.81
<b>Financial Plan</b>	Adequate	11.25
<b>Fiscal Systems</b>		
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements	Adequate	6.23
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Strong	8.33
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Strong	8.34
<b>Grant Readiness</b>		
Program Integration	Strong	5
Proposal Support	Adequate	3.75
Applicant Readiness	Strong	5
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience	Strong	5
<b>GTF Review Total:</b>		85.11 of 100 possible

**III. Final Combined Score**

<b>Total</b>	152.11 of 200 possible
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**Final Assessment of Application:**

Fund with no Corrections     
  Fund with Corrections     
  Do Not Fund

**Referenced Conditions/Corrections:**

1. Need to explain how an AC member would be able to mentor 50 people.
2. Need to explain what an HAS tier 3 is.
3. Performance measures -- math for target on outcome doesn't work; revisit Performance Measures and whether they are best for project.
4. Meet requirement for AmeriCorps to be part of program name.

**PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS COMPILED**

**Section: Program Design (50 %)**

**Need**

- With a large number of students living in poverty, many needs are present. Low HS graduation rates need attention. These needs are stated in condescending ways, however. And what is a Tier 3 support? No explanation of what this means.
- The program will take place primarily in six towns, Rockland, Thomaston, South Thomaston, Cushing, Owls Head and St. George. Knox County is defined as rural using the USDA definitions. The Need: Youth in rural communities experience an opportunity gap. 17.9% of children in Knox county live below the poverty, which is higher than the Maine state average. Youth have limited opportunities for positive adult connections and have lower aspirations. The

main high school serviced has the second lowest graduations rate in the state. Using program data (Holistic Student Assessment) it has shown Trekkers need for Tier 3 supports has more than doubled. Says community members were engaged in creating the AmeriCorps program but doesn't say who.

- Knox county meets the RUCC classification for rural. The specific rating is not described. The data supporting the need includes low graduation rates (particularly at one high school where the graduation rate is the second lowest in Maine) and the number of Trekker students identified as having needs on the HAS has doubled over recent years. The evidence could have been further supported with more relevant data. The proposal identifies Trekker as an organization that came about by community members to address community needs 26 years ago. The role that the community members had in program design was not described.
- Often just made statement with no detail as if affirming they would do something like involve community.

### ***Intervention***

- The term "opportunity gap" is offensive. Seems an elitist attitude towards youth in rural communities. Also question whether anyone can successfully mentor 50 students...not even an hour a week with each person.
- No information on how youth would be identified and enlisted to participate.
- Doesn't clearly define project duration. Gives a typical week, but doesn't break down by hours to get an understanding of what which day will look like, not apparent it will equal apx. 40 hours per week. Each member will spend 10 hours a week mentoring in a small group or one on one. Trips and expeditions will be a large part of service (700 hours). But gives no indication of what happens on a trip, a lot of time not accounted for. The target population is young adults who face an opportunity gap and lack positive adult role models in their lives. Will serve 240 students a year.
- The organization has been around a long time and probably developed with community involvement but it seems to rest heavily on that history. Doesn't talk about community involvement now.
- The duration and intensity of the intervention are not described in this section. The target population is not described in this section. The proposed roles of AmeriCorps members is given in a general manner (ex. attending cohort meetings, weekly supervision, meetings with community partners) but specifics are not described. The proposed intervention is described in terms of how it aligns with the community need. The role of community volunteers in the program is not described but the recruitment of volunteers by AmeriCorps members is described.

### ***Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model***

- The studies and statistics would have been made stronger by having an endorsement of the program by a participant. If 2020 graduation rates really reflect Trekkers influence, that would have been a strong argument.
- Each AmeriCorps will meet with a minimum of 50 youth. The goal is to use the "step ladder" approach creating small purposeful learning communities. They will work to recruit volunteers to have sustainability post AmeriCorps.
- The number of children served and specific targets are not set. Evidence of the intervention is adequate and includes the five principles that the program was designed around. There is a description of how the addition of AmeriCorps members in the past has had a significant impact on the organization and how having AmeriCorps members boosts their ability to recruit and retain volunteers. This is described as essential to Trekkers fulfilling their mission. Trekkers leaders have participated in training and is committed to the Service Enterprise training. The logic model describes activities and inputs sufficiently but does not quantify outputs (eg. specific number of hours an AmeriCorps member will engage with a student) nor a tool for measuring outcomes.

### ***Evidence of Effectiveness***

- Studies cited, not local experience, which they have.
- Mentoring programs have been proven effective. Uses many citations to prove effectiveness. Using AmeriCorps will double the amount of mentoring time with each student.

### ***Notice Priority***

- Straight-forward statement of goals and hoped for outcomes.
- Education Focus. strategies will improve education and behavioral outcomes for students. Doesn't have AmeriCorps in the program name.
- The funding priority is described as Education Focus. This fits within the AmeriCorps funding priority outlined in the RFP.

### ***Member Training***

- The members will have access to high quality education in relationship building, certification in wilderness first aid is a valuable commodity, as well as AmeriCorps educational opportunities.

- Doesn't indicate how long the training will be. There will be site specific training from the Trekkers Training Institute. Will be trained in Wilderness First Aid, mandated reporting, mental health first aid, ACES and trauma informed program development.
- Trekkers has an existing training institute where AmeriCorps members will receive their training. Training is expected to include Wilderness First Aid, mandated reporting, ACES, trauma-informed care, mental health first aid and best practices for volunteer management. Orientation to the AmeriCorps program will be included.
- No indication how long training is. How will they tailor training for less experienced people.
- The training listed is basic. It is not particularly skilled.

### ***Member Supervision***

- There is an existing staff with experience in their own program and with AmeriCorps. The plan for individual supervision is more than adequate in terms of time allowed.
- Two AmeriCorps Alum will serve as the direct supervisors. The program as a whole will be over seen by the program manager and executive director. There will be weekly individual supervision meetings, and members will attend program manager meetings and staff meetings. ED will provide formal check ins at 2 month and 6 months. Training will provide orientation, and attempt to connect members throughout the state. Would have liked a little more detail surrounding the program training and preparing supervisors.
- Each AmeriCorps member will have their own direct supervisor (a change recommended by the Program Committee for program improvement). There will be weekly individual supervision meetings. Training and supervision for supervisors will be provided by the program director and executive director and includes orientation to AmeriCorps as well as connection to other members in the state.

### ***Member Experience***

- Has the possibility of being professionally expansive and personally rewarding.
- Members will have the opportunity to meet with community partners, public speaking and serve on committees. Will go through training on professional development. Will become Wilderness First Aid certified, Mandated Reporters, and Mental Health First Aid. Reflection is part of the experience. Will be connected to broader AmeriCorps network. Will have option to volunteer on MLK day. Will use MANP, Idealist and networks for recruitment.
- The proposal describes connecting members to the strong alumni program that Trekkers has as well as national service members. Recruitment methods are adequately described and include a local and national ads. The experience of the members is described as the opportunity to "meet regularly with community partners .... give presentations..... practice public speaking and sit on youth engagement committees." This experience list adequately describes transferrable skills. Service opportunities (and recruitment of volunteers to join in) is described.

### ***Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification***

- Leaving "AmeriCorps" out of the name of the project on the title page is bad...but members get the T shirt... They mostly refer only to Trekkers instead of Trekkers AmeriCorps in the body of their documents.
- Position will be clearly identified as AmeriCorps. Trekkers displays AmeriCorps signage; members wear clothing with the logos. Press Releases and social media to introduce members.
- This proposal adequately describes commitment to AmeriCorps identification through signage and apparel. The applicant project does not include the AmeriCorps name in it.

## **Organizational Capability Overall Rating      25%**

### ***Organizational Background and Staffing***

- It's clear they know who their staff are,, and they are well qualified. They seem to have standard corporate structure.
- 9 full time and part time staff. All have experience with outdoor education and relevant experience to the position. 5 will be involved in the AmeriCorps program, does not break down the FTE for each staff person. Does not say who developed the proposal. Organization does have experience engaging volunteers.
- Staff experience and management are relevant to the program, and strong in non-profit and youth development. The description of the organizational capacity is strong: Several organizational policies are in place including policies related to funding, management, documentation and decision making. A strong alumni presence exists within the organization. FTE of the director and supervisors is not described.

### ***Compliance and Accountability***

- Response reads as if they ran out of steam The list of ways that they stay accountable is a list. No process description – who does it.

- Board bylaws reviewed annually, volunteer onboarding, updated personnel policy, board committees oversea. Finance committee regularly reviews handbook. Asset and cash management policies, segregation between grant and donated funds, signature authority, spending limits. Says they do these things but does not describe the policies themselves.
- This application describes several internal controls to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse, including an external review of finances, documentations, and policies related to spending. The proposal indicates that it will be held accountable if instances of noncompliance are identified.

**Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%**

- It's there. fixed budget, numbers align.
- The source of funds screen indicates sufficient non-AmeriCorps funding. The cost per MSY is \$16,300, and equal to the maximum cost.

**TASK FORCE REVIEWER COMMENT DETAIL:**

***Program Alignment and Model***

- Fits federal focus of Education but not Maine priorities directly. Perhaps Workforce Development indirectly
- While education is an allowable program area, the proposal does not address a Commission priority area.
- The program is addressing a rural area that is not otherwise addressed by Commission grant funded programs.
- While the program itself could be duplicated elsewhere (see for example the Maine Youth Alliance program also funded by the Commission which is generally a similarly structured mentoring program), it is not particularly innovative given the number of mentoring programs that exist elsewhere.
- There should be no major concern about the program continuing in future years given that this grant is for a second three years of funding for an existing program operated by an agency that has been in existence for some time. I initially had some concern over the agency's finances given the negative revenue impact of the pandemic and an increase in agency liabilities. However, based on information provided in the interview, one Payroll Protection Program loan has already been forgiven and a second qualifies for forgiveness. In addition, the long-term debt that was incurred was for purchase of a capital asset to be used for the agency's programming. I'm comfortable that the program can operate for the coming three-year cycle. Much of the covid revenue impact was due to a board decision to waive program dues as a result of the pandemic. These should be reinstated at some point in the next grant cycle.
- The proposal aligns with program mission in that it basically allows the agency to serve more students.
- The current executive director has been with the program for five years and the agency has a succession plan in place that addresses continuity in light of staff turnover.
- Community engagement was not specifically addressed in the grant application; however, information on this was presented during the interview. The agency has a program committee composed of staff/board members/student and parents. Programs must be approved by the Board if they involve non-budgeted funds or acceptance of new grants.
- The agency has a large number of volunteers in various agencies including administration/programming-mentoring/and special events and a data system that allows for tracking volunteers that is planned for an upgrade that will increase the ability to track volunteered hours and the value of volunteer time. One staff member has primary responsibility for the administrative end of volunteer processing while staff in various areas are involved in on-boarding and volunteer training.
- The program has traditionally worked closely with the school system that, in the past, has provided program space. This was obviously affected by the pandemic and the agency has purchased program space that it can control. The issue of partnerships was not addressed much in the application and could be strengthened going forward.
- Some of my comments above reflect information provided during the interview process that was not clearly addressed or covered in the actual RFP response. The RFP response was poorly organized and hard to follow and did not cover sufficiently cover all of the areas requested.
- Mentorship need well documented. Program directly addresses need, and has strong track record for doing so.

***Past Performance***

- This program has a good track record and is expanding this period with an additional AmeriCorps member.
- The agency ran a generally successful program during its initial three years where it operated under a cost reimbursement budget that required substantially more reporting/compliance than the proposed fixed cost application now being reviewed.
- The program was generally successful in filling its positions (100%) and retaining members (85%).

- While there were some minor reporting issues related to staff turnover, the program was generally compliant. It also did a good job in pivoting its program to meet the challenges of Covid, moving to remote mentoring and an emphasis on community service by the AC members.
- I can't judge whether the program achieved its targets based on the information available. I would assume there may have been some slippage given the effects of the pandemic.
- The organization seems to have a full range of administrative and personnel systems and policies in place.
- Able to continue programming during pandemic. Did not have to layoff staff. Graduation rates increased. Able to pivot, redirect activity, and generate new sources of revenue.

#### **Financial Plan**

- This is a fixed cost grant, so most of what is listed above as considerations does not apply. The agency was not specific as to the exact sources of funding to meet the match requirements; however, it is likely to come from the same general sources used during the first three-year grant cycle.
- Has good sense from prior year of what costs will be.

#### **Fiscal Systems**

- The agency generally has sound financial management systems in place with minor exceptions, such as the inability to track governmental grants separately. There could also be a segregation of duties issue given the small size of staff, but the agency appears to have appropriate policies in place to address this.
- The agency is not required to have an annual audit given the small size of this grant. They do provide an annual financial statement review that, on first glance, raises some questions given the impact of Covid on operations. However, as noted in the interview, it appears that these concerns have been addressed.
- 2020 990 does not reflect PPP loan forgiveness although that has happened. Financial position stronger than 990 suggests. Able to secure PPP and other grant funding to make up for other revenue losses. Able to buy a building.

#### **Grant Readiness**

- The program is designed to expand the agencies existing programs by serving more students and adding volunteers, so it is aligned with core functions.
- The agency has good support from its partner school district. It does not have a full range of community partners to address student needs beyond the agency's areas of expertise; however, it has a goal of developing such partnerships and plans to develop at least one in the coming cycle.
- The agency has operated an AC program for the last three years and has presented a complete start-up plan. • The agency has a large number of volunteers in various capacities. Volunteers are tracked through a data base system and has plans to upgrade this system to better track volunteer hours and assign them an in-kind value. A staff member oversees volunteer applications and background checks with on-boarding done by program or administrative staff depending on the area volunteering in.
- Other comments:
  - The proposal is unclear as to how one AC member can mentor 50 students. Presume that much of this will be done in concert with other volunteers, but it really isn't well explained.
  - In the information on need, statistics are presented on demographics/poverty indicators for the area served with only a few state-wide/national comparisons. More comparison data would be useful on things like school performance.
  - The evidence base presented is extensive, but not helpfully formatted for the reviewer. Some of this might be a result of egrants formatting issues. Perhaps fewer citations with more specific information would improve this.
  - Statement that 100% of their 2020 cohort graduated was useful. More data on local results would strengthen proposal.
  - HAS tier three interventions not explained.
  - ED 9 – Sets an outcome of 30 students graduating and states 95% rate among their students. Confusing because the program is intended to serve 150. At 30 graduates a year, that results in 120 of the 150, which is not 95%.
  - Failure to include AmeriCorps in program name.
- Overall, the response to the RFP was not well organized and does not clearly address some areas. Some of this was filled in during the interview process, where new or improved information was provided. Of the 4 proposals, this is the only one where the interview provided significantly better insights into the program and its design/operation than was provided in the RFP response. As a result, the program is most likely stronger than it was presented in the written RFP response.
- Updating database will allow to strengthen volunteer impact evaluation.
- Formatting of their response and response to prompts was really inadequate

# Grant Selection Process Report to Full Commission

**Legal Applicant:** Town of VanBuren **Program name:** AmeriCorps Five to Ninety Five

**Recommendation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reviewers:** TF: Barrett, Meinders, Proulx-Curry Peer: Shapiro, Hennessey, Hartt

**Grant Category:**  Formula  Competitive **Performance Period:**  Year 1  Year 2  Year 3  
 Other Competition  
 Cost Reimbursement

**Grant Type:**  Planning **Start/End Date:** 9/1/2021 to 8/31/2024  
 Fixed Price  Ed Award Only

**Applicant Type:**  Recompete  New

**ME Priority Area:** Public Health **Fed Priority Area(s):**

<b>Request for New Resources</b>		<b>CNCS</b>	<b>Local</b>
<b>New CNCS Funds:</b>	<u>\$81,500</u>	<b>Cost sharing proposed</b>	<u>%</u>
<b>Match Committed:</b>	<u>\$n/a</u>	<b>Min. Match required</b>	<u>%</u>
<b>Total Grant Budget:</b>	<u>\$</u>		
<b>Cost Per Member:</b>	<u>\$16,300</u>		

<b>AmeriCorps Member Service Years:</b> <u>5</u>				
	FT	HT	RHT	QT
<b>Slots with living allowance</b>	5			
<b>Education Award only</b>				

**Total prior years with CNCS funding:** [ 0 ]  
**Prior experience with CNCS funding:** None.

**Statement of Need (from application narrative):**

Recently the Rural Resilience Community Alliance (RRCA) surveyed people in contiguous ZIP codes 04750 and 04785, each coded 10.6 (rural) in the USDA Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) code listing, to determine what they believed to be the most pressing needs for area children, families, and elders. The 196 responses set the most critical perceived need to be a safe, supervised outside school time (OST) program for those among the area's 440+ elementary and middle school students with working parents or unsafe home situations. The second most critical perceived need exists among the elderly who must travel a 25-80 mile round trip to meet needs for health care, home maintenance, and financial and welfare services and who are isolated, lacking socialization and meaningful activities. The perceived need is for a center where elders can socialize and helping agencies can assist them on-site. AmeriCorps members will aid RRCA to serve the north-central Aroostook county towns (Limestone, Caswell, Hamlin, Van Buren, and Cyr Plantation). The total population of the area (2017) is 5,107, of whom 1,040 are over 65, and 443 are between 5 and 14 years old. The combined poverty rate is 29.6% as of July 2020 (24.8% in ZIP 04750 and 34.5% in ZIP 04785), more than double Maine's 12.9% rate. We are in the least favorable 2% of Maine ZIPs with respect to Per Capita and Median Household Income. Approximately two-thirds of the elementary and middle school students are eligible for free or reduced school lunch. Food insufficiency is widespread: in the past year, the local food banks' clients have nearly doubled from 2019 and food pantry staff estimate they are serving 30 to 40 percent of our residents.

With respect to area children, the most recent (2018-19) Department of Education public report, "Maine Student Performance on State Assessments" states that the academic performance of students in our three K-8 schools (Limestone, Caswell, and Van Buren) averages approximately 56% "below or well below state expectations" in language arts, 76% in math, and 49% in science. Recreation Department offerings are very limited, and scouting is seen as too expensive for many children.

RRCA was formed as the Van Buren Resiliency Project in 2019 by citizens concerned about the prevalence of the lifelong negative physical and mental health effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) within the community among people of all ages. In 2020 we received an AmeriCorps planning grant and formed a planning team of nine members to examine the challenge of ACEs and feasible and sustainable means of combatting its negative effects through promoting community and individual resilience. The team met twice monthly to consider needs, (in)adequacy of resources, and potential programs to address those needs. Over 50 people helped to plan and write this proposal through membership on the planning committee or by providing valuable information and insights. This proposal reflects the results of their work in a significantly underserved area of the state where no services are currently available to meet these identified critical needs.

### **Program Summary (from application):**

The Rural Resiliency Community Alliance (RRCA) program proposes to have five AmeriCorps members who will assist the RRCA director to (1) form and staff a nine-member advisory council of stakeholders in ZIP Codes 04750 and 04785: at least three will be persons negatively affected by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). They will provide critical local input for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of an integrated program to jointly assist both at-risk children living in poverty and the marginalized and isolated elder citizens of the area. The program goals, based on a 2020 area needs survey conducted by RRCA, are to provide (a) opportunities for healthy individual mental, physical, and social development and (b) meaningful, mutually beneficial intergenerational relationships among children and elders of the community. This council will continue the work of the AmeriCorps-funded RRCA planning team by overseeing the formation of two coordinated programs: a year-round out of school time (OST) program for elementary and middle school children, and an associated drop-in center(s) for elders. Both are programs deemed essential by survey participants. (2) establish and assist in the operation of one or more drop-in centers for elders. The center(s) will (a) serve as locations for County social service agencies to assist elders on-site and reduce the need for out-of-town travel; (b) provide elder-generated activities, classes, and socialization to promote mental and physical health; and (c) link elders to the OST program as volunteers. (3) serve as youth leaders in the OST program and provide training and support to volunteers. (4) assist in providing information and education about ACEs and resiliency for area residents. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps program will have: (1) formed and staffed an active, involved advisory council; (2) established an evidence-based, feasible, and sustainable OST program for 18-30 participants with five trained AmeriCorps members as primary youth leaders; (3) established one self-governing elder drop-in center with four major on-going activities and six members serving as volunteers in the OST program; and (4) managed six community educational forums with at least 25 attendees at each presentation. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional nine community volunteers who will be engaged in tutoring and mentoring in the OST program, and delivering specialized programs and activities in both the OST and the elder programs. This program will concentrate on the focus areas of Education and Healthy Futures. The AmeriCorps investment of \$81,500 will be matched with \$145,119, \$96,939 in public funding and \$ 48,180 in private funding.

### **Identified partners:**

- Elder Governing Council
- Aroostook Area Agency on Aging
- Maine State Department of Education
- TRiO
- APEX
- St Peter Chanel Parish
- Sanctuary Caswell
- Van Buren Ambulance Service
- school administrators

**Host sites (if applicable):** n/a

**SCORING DETAIL**

**I. Summary of Peer Reviewer Consensus Scores**

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
<b>Rationale &amp; Approach/Program Design Section (50%)</b>		
Need	Strong	5
Intervention	Adequate	6
Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model	Strong	16
Notice Priority	Adequate	0.75
Member Training	Weak	3
Member Supervision	Adequate	4.5
Member Experience	Weak	2.5
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Adequate	2.25
<b>Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%</b>		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Strong	12
Compliance and Accountability	Adequate	9.75
<b>Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%</b>		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
<b>Total</b>		<b>80.5</b>
Recommended for Further Review		

**II. Summary of Task Force Consensus Rating and Final Score:**

Category	Rating	Points
<b>Program Alignment &amp; Model</b>		
Degree to which the community need targeted by the proposal is aligned with one of the funding priorities stated in the RFP	Strong	3.75
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Strong	3.75
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Adequate	2.81
Communities to be served fall within one of the non-metro RUCC codes	Strong	5
<b>Past Performance</b>		
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Adequate	15
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions		
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated		
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively		
<b>Financial Plan</b>	Strong	15
<b>Fiscal Systems</b>		
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements	Strong	8.33
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Strong	8.33
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Strong	8.34
<b>Grant Readiness</b>		
Program Integration	Strong	5
Proposal Support	Adequate	3.75
Applicant Readiness	Adequate	3.75
Volunteer Management Strength and Experience	Adequate	3.75
<b>GTF Review Total:</b>		<b>90.31 of 100 possible</b>

**III. Final Combined Score**

<b>Total</b>	<b>170.81 of 200 possible</b>
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**Final Assessment of Application:**

Fund with no Corrections     
  Fund with Corrections     
  Do Not Fund



**Referenced Conditions/Corrections:**

1. Performance Measures - reconsider the ones selected
2. Need better sense of how members time will add up to 1700
3. Locate different funds for \$5000 unspent planning grant funds

**PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS COMPILED****Section: Program Design (50 %)*****Need***

- Isolated elderly and children living in poverty clearly have needs, and “no services are currently available to meet these identified critical needs.”
- Is a rural community. Rural Resilience Community Alliance survey used to identify most pressing community needs. Need was identified to be safe supervised outside school time and services for elderly. High poverty rates, food insecurity, lower academic performances. Van Buren Resiliency Project came together to plan for the program. Doesn't say how the community will be involved in program implementation.
- The RRCA conducted their own local study with residents depicting the largest perceived needs in the community and selected features of their program based on that. The elderly component of the program was designed based on the rural setting- indicating that seniors needed to travel 25-80 miles for basic services. Strong demographics regarding poverty, citizen age, and food insufficiency supported these statistics. Community input was central in identifying the problem and are planned to be involved with planning, implementation, and evaluation. This section of the application was strong and compelling.

***Intervention***

- The narrative fills all criteria, and the list of “Key Partners” is extensive with roles well defined.
- Goal is to bring together older and younger generation through out of school activity, establishing a drop in center, and creating multigenerational activities. This is a brand new program so the first two months will be spent training members. 12 month duration, the goal is to have 30 participants by the end of the year. The after school program will go every day from the end of the school day until 5:30. The drop in center will be open for 25 hours per week. Members will spend 60% of their time with the out of school program, 10% with the Elder Governing Team, 10% volunteering training, and 20% doing member development. Many community partners: school district, Aroostook Agency on Aging, Maine After School Alliance and more. Includes daily schedule.
- Intervention duration, intensity, and target population and recruitment were sufficiently described. Key partners were identified along with their associated roles. A detailed daily schedule along with member responsibilities is provided for AmeriCorps members for both the school year and summer. The proposal connects the identified community need with the proposed program and then connects the two components of the program to demonstrate how they are mutually beneficial.

***Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model***

- The explanation and documentation of the planned program is clear, and documentation recent. AmeriCorps members will have specific roles in program delivery.
- Comments: The goal will be to have the proposed program serving 18-30 children in year one and 25 adults. Will increase incrementally each year based on formative evaluations. Elders program is governed by Elder Governing Team.
- The narrative describes the number of students and elders the program expects to serve in years 1-3. Projected change is realistic and identifies strengths and barriers to growth. AmeriCorps members are identified as integral to the program. The mission of RCCA is described and goals are described adequately. The internal capacity to support AmeriCorps members includes fiscal and programming needs including training, administration, and specialist support including a LCSW and teacher. In addition, planned events for community awareness made the internal capacity portion strong. The logic model adequately sums up the problem, program resources, and outputs for both the OST and elder program along with member development and capacity building. The logic model contained short, mid-term and long-term outcomes that were sequential and reasonable.
- Proposal trying hard to meet two needs that are intergenerational. It is a creative approach to the two issues.
- Evidence was carefully selected.

### ***Evidence of Effectiveness***

- U. S. DHHS citation of a “growing body of evidence that Positive Youth Development can prevent a variety of risk behaviors.. is a strong suggestion that this can work.
- Using strength-based approach. Social Emotional Learning and Positive Youth Development. CASEL is the source cited for the use of evidence based practices. Will be replicating the SAFE strategy. Long term and short term benefits to the learning strategy. Members fit into the mission of the organization through preparing trainings on childhood trauma, recruiting participants, and collecting data. The town has a track record of fund and grant management.
- Evidence presented was strong and reflected both the SEL and PYD program components. Evidence for SEL comes from CASEL with an emphasis on peer-reviewed literature and evidence-based programing. The author also cites a meta-analysis with 82 articles to emphasize the long-term gains on a SEL intervention. The evidence for PYD was adequate but determined that more research is needed.

### ***Notice Priority***

- Tutoring is a demonstrated means of improving academics, and an after-school program can keep kids safe: there you have education and healthy communities. Engaging older adults in community activities leads to better health as well, as does helping people to understand the effect of trauma can also improve mental health.
- Education and Healthy Futures.
- The funding priority focuses on areas of education and healthy futures. This fits in funding priorities as outlined in the RFP.

### ***Member Training***

- The Criteria are all met, with specialized trainings provided.
- 4 -6 week training period. There is a big difference between 4 and 6 weeks, 6 weeks adds in an extra 80 hours of training. Training in tutoring. Earlier in the proposal it is stated this is a new program and training will be a major aspect, does not go into much detail about what this training will include.
- While the specialized training for tutoring is accounted for, this section does not describe how the members will be educated about the community and need (though this is described in the initial narrative).

### ***Member Supervision***

- The requirements are met: concerned that members working with the ACE experience may need further support, as hearing about trauma can be traumatic.
- The director will provide supervision. Weekly individual meetings and trainings. Training of supervisors through AmeriCorps and Volunteer Maine Staff.
- The proposal briefly discusses member supervision without any omissions

### ***Member Experience***

- The potential professional growth is stated; I am concerned that in an area that has generally isolated, opportunities for social enrichment should be added...other service opportunities are not mentioned.
- Members will obtain Maine Youth Development Certification. Opportunity to attend seminars from local higher education. One reflection day in spring and fall. For a new program more reflection on the process could be needed. Does not go into skills learned through AmeriCorps year that will be used for employment after service.
- This proposal does not describe specific skills that will be transferrable to future employment. There is also an omission of how the members will be connected to the broader National Service Network.

### ***Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification***

- These members will have the T shirt...programs and offices will have signage. The program has “AmeriCorps” first.
- Will wear AmeriCorps clothing, signage at offices. AmeriCorps is in the project title
- All items were adequately described. AmeriCorps branding will be represented through clothing, signage, and the program title.

**Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%**

***Organizational Background and Staffing***

- The interplay between the RRCA and town government will provide accountability and the staffing is headed by experienced professionals.
- Two core staff involved, the volunteer director of RRCA and a certified special education teacher. The proposal was developed by the RRCA Planning Team. Previous volunteer experience involves running a one-week camp experience for children. Self-identified strengths are dedicated volunteers, and community network, challenges are limited staff, opportunities are unused space for development and the room for existing programs to expand into the area. Planning to partner with a local university for data collection and analysis. .8 FTE dedicated by the program director.
- All criteria was responded to. There is an indication of significant staff experience to support the program and the program director is identified. Strengths and challenges are identified and a plan for sharing information is proposed.

***Compliance and Accountability***

- The town government will have high standards of financial accountability, and a school based program will have lots of scrutiny as well.
- They have strict fiscal control and personnel policies but do not describe them. They are available for viewing at the town office.
- Internal controls are in place to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse of public funds (by the town of Van Buren). The ability to ensure compliance and hold sites accountable if needed is adequately described.

***Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%***

- Information seems complete and they have enough funding to support the program
- Fixed budget, numbers align
- Funds are sufficient to support the program and the cost per MSY is \$16,300.

**TASK FORCE REVIEWER COMMENT DETAIL:**

***Program Alignment and Model***

- The federal focus is Education & Healthy futures, and indirectly addresses Maine priorities under Public Health
- The program is in a very rural area with little AmeriCorps presence.
- This program is somewhat innovative in several ways. First, it attempts to bring together youth and seniors in a way that meets each group's needs. This is something that is frequently talked about but seems to seldom ever actually happen. Second, it is a deeply grassroots effort in an extremely rural area with limited service availability. If successful, it could serve as a model for other very rural efforts looking to address community sustainability.
- The program is well aligned with the sponsoring organization, recognizing that the town has been deeply involved in the Rural Resilience Community Alliance, the non-profit that is actually the driving force behind this effort. As noted, the Town is supportive and is the legal applicant and fiscal agent; however, it is simply one of the many stakeholders represented in the RRCA.
- The program developed out of a community survey designed to identify the most pressing community needs; as such, it is an effort to implement programs aimed at those needs.
- This is a grassroots effort involving a variety of stakeholders with on-going efforts to encourage other organizations/agencies to become involved.
- The Town of Van Buren is financially sound; however, the RRCA is a much newer organization without a significant track record and will likely be called upon to continue financial support in the future. This may be a challenge. Knowing the degree of Town commitment to financially support the program in future years would be helpful.
- The Town should provide stability in leadership; however, the RRCA is largely dependent upon one highly committed volunteer staff member. While that individual has no plans to leave the organization, it is also clear that the organization has not yet come to grips with the issue of potential transition.
- At the moment, the RRCA is totally volunteer based, with that base largely made up of the board and planning committee. It has not yet developed an organizational approach to managing program volunteers and looks to be anticipating much of this work will be done by an AC member if the grant is awarded.
- Although the RRCA has a very limited track record, there is a strong level of commitment to this project.
- The proposed program appears to have been developed with strong community input and the support of many community organizations. The proposed project provides a systemic solution to a real community need.

### ***Past Performance***

- The project is getting started, but the Town Manager has prior experience with other grants (mostly public infrastructure). They worked with AmeriCorps in the planning project.
- Again, the largest challenge here is the lack of a track record for the RRCA. This effort has, however, benefitted from a Planning Grant that has allowed it to advance to a level where it has a reasonable likelihood to succeed, especially with the more simplified requirements of a fixed amount grant.
- It appears to have the local share in line.
- Clarification of the extent to which the Town of Van Buren will be willing/able to provide support should there be a transition in the RRCA director position would be helpful and might be something the RRCA may wish to explore with the town.
- The Town of Van Buren has a good record of managing complex federally funded projects with multiple source of funding.

### ***Financial Plan***

- Fiscal management by the town has been strong and the town manager is strongly in support of this project.
- The fixed amount budget and the involvement of the town as the fiscal agent should handle this area.
- Sufficient detail is provided to suggest that the proposed project has been well thought out.

### ***Fiscal Systems***

- The financial systems survey response indicated financial reports, accounts are strong and can track federal funds.
- The Town has substantial experience with managing state and federal grants and has a financial system that meets the requirements.
- The Town has a clean audit and is in sound and stable financial condition.
- Audit report and applicants past experience with complex federally funded projects.

### ***Grant Readiness***

- The last two questions, I'm torn between adequate and strong rating. This is project is brand new and start up may be challenging, and they lack some experience. But I think they can do it.
- As noted elsewhere, the program grew out of a community based survey that identified the areas of need and was designed to address those area.
- The proposal has strong community-based support but limited staff with the need to develop a plan that will allow the program to continue to operate should the director, for some reason, be unable to continue.
- On a positive note, the Director is highly experienced and strongly committed to the program.
- Other Comments: • If successful, this program would be a great example of what the Commission is attempting with its rural grant program and might serve as an example for other such heavily rural areas with limited established non-profit organizations. • The RFP response was well organized and addressed all of the prompts/required elements. • It's clear that the Planning Grant was essential to the development of this proposal. • Strong statement and documentation of need • Staff report request clarification of a comment on using planning grant funding for training for this grant. • Staff report questions the need for 5 1700-hour positions based on a concern that all AC member time is not fully explained and accounted for. Suggests reducing to 1200 hours or requesting additional information on how their time will be used. • The staff report also suggests adjusting the performance measures and eliminating several -- ED7a and ED5a -- because they are challenging to measure and the data may not be available to the program.
- Clear from interview that the applicant has the experience needed to manage this grant and that the project has been developed with good community input, has strong community support, and provides a system approach to dealing with a community issue.



## Volunteer Maine

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

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[www.MaineServiceCommission.gov](http://www.MaineServiceCommission.gov)



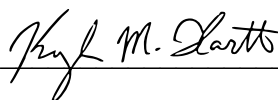
### APPENDIX F: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Please sign this form and return it to Commission staff, as instructed, at the address above *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 return to THE Commission the 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): Kayla Hartt

Signature: 

Date: 4/15/2021

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# Volunteer Maine

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Name (please print): Madelyn Hennessey

Signature: Madelyn Hennessey

Date: April 22, 2021

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copies of applications and not share them with anyone or hold them.

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Name (please print): Robert Meinders

Signature: RAM

Date: 04/21/21

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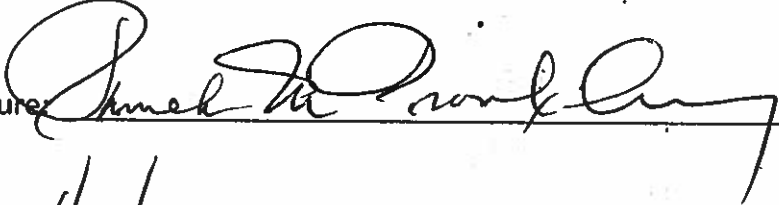
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I fully understand that I must sign and return this Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement to the Commission Office before I begin review of grant applications.

Name (please print): Pamela M. Proulx-Curry

Signature: 

Date: 4/21/2024

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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: 4-27-2021

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