

Award Justification Statement
RFP# 202202015

- I. **Summary:** Volunteer Maine, the state service commission, awards *grants* of federal AmeriCorps program resources to community-based agencies (public and nonprofit). This RFP solicited proposals to design an AmeriCorps program including the systems, policies, and procedures essential to operate successfully. The goal of these planning grants is for organizations to submit a strong, shovel-ready proposal to a 3-year grant operating competition within 12 months. The funding only supports a 1-year planning process.

II. Evaluation Process

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

All AmeriCorps Planning Grant proposals are assessed by the Commission's Grant Selection and Performance Task Force using a two-phase process.

Phase One. Proposal narratives and budget submitted in eGrants along with the organizational chart are reviewed and assessed by Commission board members designated as Phase One reviewers. The Commission uses the mandated federal weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 50% for Program Design (Need and Rationale), 25% for Organizational Capability, and 25% for Budget Adequacy and Cost Effectiveness for a possible total score of 100 Phase One Reviewer points.

At the end of Phase One, the scores will determine whether proposals receive further consideration. The options for recommendations are:

- Strongly Recommend for Further Review (Total score between 90 and 100).
- Recommend for Further Review (Total score between 80 and 89).
- Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation (Total score between 60 and 79).
- Do Not Recommend for Further Review (Total score 59 or below).

Applications not recommended for further review are not be submitted to the Task Force for consideration.

Phase Two: Applications recommended for some level of review undergo further assessment by the Grants Selection and Performance Task Force. The Task Force includes in its review documents submitted as part of this competition plus data from publicly available information systems including SAM (the federal System for Award Management). The Task Force uses the following weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 15 points Financial Plan, 15 points Fiscal Systems, 35 points Funding Priority Alignment, and 35 points Commission Preferences (partnerships, support for rural and/or marginalized communities) for a possible total of 100 points.

Upon completion of the Task Force review, the scores from Phase One and Phase Two are combined to produce a single review score. The Grant Selection and Performance Task Force then makes its final recommendations for funding to the full Commission.

Peer Reviewers for planning grants are Commissioners (board members) who are not part of the grant task force. They are familiar with AmeriCorps programming and the potential for impacting a community need through intensive volunteering. The task force members are regular members of that

work group and have expertise in assessing finances, they are well acquainted with the Commission's funding priorities and goals for expansion, and they know the potential weaknesses of programs because they have ongoing oversight of operating programs.

III. Qualifications & Experience

In this grant program, the organizational criteria focuses on whether the applicant has connections to the community it proposes to serve, partners needed to carry out the planning, a logical mission-based connection to the issue and activity, as well as the resources to augment grant funds during the planning period. Both applicants provided information sufficient to ensure the reviewers that these criteria were met.

IV. Proposed Services

In a planning grant, the organization awarded the grant agrees to complete a schedule of planning activities. These were outlined on pages 11-14 of the RFP. The Commission provides them with training and coaching so they can accomplish the activities.

V. Cost Proposal

The RFP stated the cost for a six-month planning process (\$30,000) and a 12-month process (\$60,000). Both applicants in the competition submitted for 12-month (\$60,000) planning periods and grants.

VI. Conclusion

Of the six funding priority areas listed in the proposal, only 2 were addressed – one by each proposal submitted. Both the applicants were selected for funding.

Crofton, Maryalice

From: Crofton, Maryalice
Sent: Friday, May 20, 2022 5:15 PM
To: Krystal Williams
Subject: Notice of AmeriCorps Planning grant decisions
Attachments: Notice of Award Decisions-ALF.pdf; Grant TF Report to full Commission - AlphaLegal.pdf

Ms Williams,

The Commission voted on award recommendations for AmeriCorps Planning Grants at its meeting today. Attached is a letter notifying you of the decision.

Because you may not have seen the reviewers report that was posted and considered, I've attached that as well. Someone will be in touch with you next week to discuss the results and next steps.

Regards,

Maryalice Crofton

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

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





Volunteer Maine

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



May 20, 2022

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

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Grant Award(s) under RFP # 202202015, Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants

Dear Ms Williams:

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Proposals (RFP), issued by the State of Maine, Commission for Community Service (Volunteer Maine) for Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants. The Commission has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFP, and the Commission is hereby announcing its conditional contract award(s) to the following applicants:

- Alpha Legal Foundation
- Maine Department of Education

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton
Executive Director

STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

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

Crofton, Maryalice

From: Crofton, Maryalice
Sent: Friday, May 20, 2022 5:17 PM
To: Smyth, Julie A
Subject: Notice of AmeriCorps Planning grant decisions
Attachments: Notice of Award Decisions.pdf; Grant TF Report to full Commission - DeptOfEducation.pdf

Tracking:	Recipient	Read
	Smyth, Julie A	Read: 5/23/2022 3:44 PM

Ms Smyth,
The Commission voted on award recommendations for AmeriCorps Planning Grants at its meeting today. Attached is a letter notifying you of the decision.

Because you may not have seen the reviewers report that was posted and considered, I've attached that as well. Someone will be in touch with you next week to discuss the results and next steps.

Regards,

Maryalice Crofton

Executive Director, Volunteer Maine
Maine Commission for Community Service
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Augusta, ME 04333-0105
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Volunteer Maine

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



May 20, 2022

Julie A. Smyth
Maine Dept. of Education
108 Sewall St.
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Grant Award(s) under RFP # 202202015, Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants

Dear Ms Smyth:

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Proposals (RFP), issued by the State of Maine, Commission for Community Service (Volunteer Maine) for Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants. The Commission has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFP, and the Commission is hereby announcing its conditional contract award(s) to the following applicants:

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	Applicant Sheet 1	Applicant Sheet 2
Application ID	22ES246894	Alpha Legal Foundation
Applicant Name	Education, ME Department of	22AC246985
Peer Reviewer Results		
Program Design	45	30
Organizational Capability	18.75	12.5
Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy	18.75	18.75
Peer Review Final Score	82.5	61.25
Recommendation to Grants TF	Recommend for Further Review	Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation
Task Force Review Results		
Proposal Alignment and Model	30	26.25
Preferences from RFP	14.25	22.75
Financial Plan	11.25	11.25
Fiscal Systems	13.75	7.5
Task Force Final Score	69.25	67.75
Final Application Score	151.75	129
Funding Requested	60,000	60,126
Rank order for funding (high to low)	1	2

Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet

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

INITIAL COMMENTS: [LINK TO DOC](#)

APP ID: 22AC246985 PROGRAM NAME: n/a FUNDS REQUESTED: \$ 60,126

APPLICANT NAME: Alpha Legal Foundation

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.)

RATER -- Initial ratings							
	Pamela Proulx-Curry	F. Celeste Branham	Jenni Tilton-Flood			Consensus Rating	
Program Design						Point Value	
Need and Target Community(ies)	Weak	Strong	Adequate			Adequate	11.25
Response to Need	Adequate	Weak	Weak			Weak	7.5
Readiness for Planning	Adequate	Weak	Weak			Weak	7.5
Expertise and Training	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate			Adequate	3.75
Program Design Score							30

RATER -- Initial Ratings							
	Pamela Proulx-Curry	F. Celeste Branham	Jenni Tilton-Flood			Consensus Rating	
Organizational Capability						Point Value	
Organizational Background & Staffing	Weak	Weak	Adequate			Weak	12.5
Org. Capability Score							12.5

RATER -- Initial ratings							
	Pamela Proulx-Curry	F. Celeste Branham	Jenni Tilton-Flood			Consensus Rating	
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy						Point Value	
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate			Adequate	18.75
Cost and Budget Score							18.75

FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION

	Program Design	Organizational Capability	Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy		Total Score
Final Consensus Score	30	12.5	18.75		61.25

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.

LINK TO COMMENTS

Proposal Alignment and Model (35%)	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Edward Barrett	Robert Meinders	Matt	#REF!
Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	
Potential for innovation	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	
Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Adequate	Weak	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Adequate	3.75
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	26.25

Preferences from RFP Announcement (35%)	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Edward Barrett	Robert Meinders	Matt	#REF!
Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Weak	Strong	Adequate	
Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Strong	Strong	Strong	
from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Adequate	Weak	Weak	
serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Substandard	0	Adequate	
from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people	Strong	Strong	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	3
Strong	4
Weak	4.5
Substandard	2.25
Strong	9
Section Score	22.75

Financial Plan (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Edward Barrett	Robert Meinders	Matt	#REF!
	Adequate	Weak	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	11.25

Fiscal Systems (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Edward Barrett	Robert Meinders	Matt	#REF!
capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Weak	Weak	Adequate	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management	Substandard	Weak	Weak	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Weak	Weak	Weak	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Weak	2.5
Weak	2.5
Weak	2.5
Section Score	7.5

GTF Total Score: 67.75
Peer Reviewer Score 61.25

Combined Score 129

of possible 200

*lookup pre-programmed

Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet

Strong This section of the application is a thorough, compelling, and convincing response to criteria; additional information is relevant and enhances or strengthens argument significantly; the argument shows this element shows high levels of success or highly likely to be successful.

Adequate This section of the application responds to all criteria– no omissions or additions. The argument shows this element has had some success or could possibly succeed as described.

Weak This section responds to many but not all the required elements/criteria. Some text is not relevant or does not add to the argument. The argument does not demonstrate this element has succeeded or would succeed as described

Substandard This section barely responds to the criteria, has a significant flaw, or lacks any indication this element could succeed as described.

Incomplete/Nonresponsive This section of the application does not respond to the criteria.

INITIAL COMMENTS: [LINK TO DOC](#)

APP ID: 22ES246894 **PROGRAM NAME:** n/a **FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$ 60,000

APPLICANT NAME: Education, ME Department of

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.)

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	Jenni Tilton-Flood	Pamela Proulx-Curry	F. Celeste Branham			
Program Design					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Need and Target Community(ies)	Weak	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	11.25
Response to Need	Adequate	Adequate	Strong		Strong	15
Readiness for Planning	Adequate	Strong	Strong		Strong	15
Expertise and Training	Adequate	Strong	Adequate		Adequate	3.75
Program Design Score						45

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
	Jenni Tilton-Flood	Pamela Proulx-Curry	F. Celeste Branham			
Organizational Capability					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Organizational Background & Staffing	Weak	Adequate	Strong		Adequate	18.75
Org. Capability Score						18.75

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	Jenni Tilton-Flood	Pamela Proulx-Curry	F. Celeste Branham			
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy					Consensus Rating	Point Value
	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate		Adequate	18.75
Cost and Budget Score						18.75

FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION

	Program Design	Organizational Capability	Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy		
Final Consensus Score	45	18.75	18.75		Total Score 82.5

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

Proposal Alignment and Model (35%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Robert Meinders	Edward Barrett	Matt	
Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	Strong	Strong	
Potential for innovation	Weak	Strong	Adequate	
Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Weak	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Strong	15
Adequate	3.75
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	30

Preferences from RFP Announcement (35%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Robert Meinders	Edward Barrett	Matt	
Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	Adequate	
Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Weak	Adequate	Adequate	
from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	Adequate	
serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	0	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	Adequate	
from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Incomplete/Nonresponse	0
Adequate	3
Adequate	6.75
Substandard	2.25
Substandard	2.25
Section Score	14.25

Financial Plan (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Robert Meinders	Edward Barrett	Matt	
	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	11.25

Fiscal Systems (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Robert Meinders	Edward Barrett	Matt	
capacity of financial management system to comply with federal	Adequate	Strong	Strong	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Strong	5
Adequate	3.75
Strong	5
Section Score	13.75

GTF Total Score: 69.25
 Peer Reviewer Score 82.5
Combined Score 151.75
 of possible 200

*lookup pre-programmed

Grant Proposal Report to Commission from Task Force

Recommendation: Fund only if corrections can be negotiated.

Legal Applicant: Alpha Legal Foundation

Application ID: 22AC246985

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

Type: Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Ed Award Only

Federal Focus Area: Education, Economic Opportunity, Capacity building

Commission Priorities: Workforce development

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

Proposed Dates: 08/15/2022 to 06/23/2022
 Submitted budget is 1 year

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

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating	57,117		19,500
Member Support	N/A		N/A
Indirect (Admin)	3,009		7,670
CNCS Award amount	\$ 60,126	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	27,170
% sharing proposed	69%		31%
% share required	100%		0%
Cost-per-member proposed	\$ N/A	RFP stated 6 mo planning grants could request max of \$30,000; longer (up to year) could request \$60,000.	

Program Description (executive summary): Alpha Legal Foundation (the "Foundation"), a BIPOC-led non-profit, proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program to serve the State of Maine. According to the American Bar Association's most recent profile of the legal profession, lawyers who are Black, Indigenous, or members of other people of color groups ("BIPOC Attorneys") represent 14.1% of U.S. lawyers. In Maine, where there are more than 3,500 licensed attorneys, approximately 1% are BIPOC Attorneys. The Alpha Legal Foundation submits this 10-month proposal to create and test the feasibility of a multi-faceted programming strategy that would address pipeline deficiencies (including K-12 and collegiate education), provide access to mentors and experiential opportunities, offer continuing legal education opportunities on bias and racism in the legal profession, and engage with business and legal leaders to lower the barriers, but not the standards to practice law in Maine. The direct beneficiaries of this Plan by program segment are as follows:

- (1) Pipeline programming would directly serve BIPOC youth (age K-12), beginning in three of the four counties with the highest population of BIPOC residents, according to 2021 U.S. Census Data: Androscoggin (10.1%), Cumberland (10.2%), and Penobscot (6.8%);
- (2) Experiential education would directly serve Maine-based BIPOC college students, BIPOC professionals interested in law school, and current BIPOC law school students;
- (3) Mentoring would directly serve Maine-based early-career BIPOC Attorneys and individuals across all other programming elements; however, the depth and level of mentoring contact may vary based on age-related professional development needs; and
- (4) Continuing legal education opportunities would directly serve the 3,500 members of Maine's legal community. Attorney attendance in continuing legal education is reported to the Bar of Overseers to fulfill continuing legal education licensing requirements. Indirectly, the publicly available continuing education opportunities would serve any Maine resident interested in social justice issues.

Service locations:

TBD during planning.

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

Maine Law School, Maine Judicial Branch, BIPOC section of the Maine Bar Association (potentially)
While the Foundation was unable to secure firm partnership commitments in time to submit with this application, the nature and strength of its informal partnerships suggest that, at the very least, members of Maine Law and the Judicial Branch would participate in the community advisory group.

Applicant proposes to deliver services:

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

- A. Does the Executive Summary format exactly match the template in the RFP? Yes No
- B. Does the applicant claim the rural preference? Yes No
- C. If the applicant claimed rural preference, is it substantiated by target area? Yes No N/A
- D. Does the applicant claim a preference because the application is from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together on a common goal? Yes No
- E. Does the applicant claim a preference because the proposal is from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people. Yes No

Scoring Detail:

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

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Design		
Need and Target Community(ies)	Adequate	11.25
Response to Need	Weak	7.5
Readiness for Planning	Weak	7.5
Expertise and Training	Adequate	3.75
Organizational Capability		
Organizational Background & Staffing	Weak	12.5
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
Total Peer Reviewer Score		61.25

Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation

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

	Quality Rating	Score
Proposal Alignment and Model		
• Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	11.25
• Potential for innovation	Adequate	3.75
• Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Adequate	11.25
Preferences from RFP Announcement (35%)		
• Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	3
• Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Strong	4
• from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Weak	4.5
• serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Substandard	2.25
• from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people	Strong	9
Financial Plan	Adequate	11.25
Fiscal Systems		
• capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Weak	2.5
• strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial management practices	Weak	2.5
• strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial status/stability	Weak	2.5
Total Task Force Score		67.75
Peer Review Score		61.25
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		129

Final Assessment of Application:

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

Referenced Conditions/Corrections

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

- Minor correction to bring request down to maximum of \$60,000. These funds do not require match so ask the organization to remove it for the planning grant period. Simplify financial reporting.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Program Design.

Need and Target Community(ies)

- Provides some statistics re: representation but does not outline consequences of lack of representation.
- A lot is missing, even the information on the consequences of having BIPOC community underrepresented in the profession.
- The proposal is quite specific as to the population to be served, namely groups of BIPOC students--K-12, college and law school; BIPOC professionals interested in law school and those in early legal careers; and, more generally, members of the legal community in Maine. Both national and local data of limited availability were provided to document the paucity of BIPOC representation in the legal arena. While there may be a broader awakening of the needs described in this proposal, for example through the Maine Bar Association and the Foundation's collaboration with the Maine Humanities Council to provide related legal education to Maine lawyers, documentation suggests few, if any, similar efforts are underway statewide. A series of interviews with BIPOC attorneys was conducted in 2021 to confirm needs described in the application.
- Data collection and acknowledgement of the disparity or representation of the community in the field and profession of Maine lawyers was clearly demonstrated, defined, and shared. The detriments of this disparity and the consequences of lack of representation are easily inferred (or should be), however, they were not specifically conveyed by the applicant in the narrative.

Response to Need

- Plan targets BIPOC population in Maine Legal community (including pipeline to it) over a continuum with appropriate strategies for each category
- The significant lack of diversity in Maine's legal profession is documented. The demonstrated need, as the application suggests, requires a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional approach to address several deficiencies. This proposal seeks to study the four areas of concern identified: 1. Pipeline issues (K-12); 2. Experiential education (BIPOC college and law school students, and BIPOC professionals interested in law school); 3. Mentoring (Early career BIPOC attorneys); 4. Continuing education (3,500 members of Maine Bar Association, and other residents interested in social justice issues). The proposed project coordinators will document "options and tradeoffs" that primarily affect the first area of concern. What appears to be lacking here is a description of the activities to be undertaken by AmeriCorps members, where within the three counties identified they are likely to occur, or how the connections will be made by the AmeriCorps members to service beneficiaries. What this applicant has failed to do in any specific way is to anticipate the number of AmeriCorps members required going forward or what their role and responsibilities might entail in responding to the need described. There is no clear picture of how all of this is envisioned going forward.
- The Response to Need section was succinct in providing rationale, but did not detail possible partners and funders, nor did it explain how it would measurably improve the community the need in the community. HOWEVER, the applicant clearly stated the conceptual nature of The Plan and the limitations of the limitations of more in depth information due to a lack of organizational capacity which it is trying to solve with this planning grant. The applicant has continued ,in this section and throughout the application, to provide the well thought out strategy and the work and research already done to substantiate the need and the possible approaches to meet their challenges and goals.
- No mention of whether the potential partners know about the concept or have agreed to participate.
- Did not address many of the criteria listed.

Readiness for Planning

- Has well developed concept & experience with strategic planning
- The Foundation is a self-described volunteer operation, in fact a one-woman-band. Given the size of the Foundation, its relative infancy (only two years old), its current volunteer organizational structure, assistance in planning to achieve the Foundation's goals is essential. Additionally, however, with respect to partners and funders, informal partnership agreements were not solidified at the time of application submission and need to be firmed up. In fact, it would be appropriate to include representation from the BIPOC section of the Maine Bar Association as part of the community advisory group to broaden the representation of those directly affected by the Foundation's mission, and the specific planning effort. What appears to be lacking here is a description of the activities to be undertaken by AmeriCorps members, where within the three counties identified they will focus their attention, or how prescribed connections will be made by AmeriCorps members to the service beneficiaries. What this applicant has failed to anticipate is the number, roles and responsibilities, location, and connections of AmeriCorps members in fulfilling the program need and design. The relevance of negotiating agreements with partners as to their roles, responsibilities, and eventually a commitment of resources is also germane. Interestingly, informal agreements were not solidified by the time of the application deadline and will need to be firmed up. Also, I note the omission of representation from the BIPOC section of the Maine Bar Association that would be particularly appropriate to include among their community advisory group.
- The two project managers seem only related to the pipeline portion of the program concept. What about the rest.
- Give a lot of credit for being very open about organizational need but presumed we knew a lot that went not discussed. Concern about single person organization.
- This section is well thought out and provides more proof that the applicant has done the necessary work to identify need and acknowledges the requirement of organizational capacity to progress and implement The Plan, and provides most of the section's required information. While the mission stated is to address the lack of diversity in Maine's legal profession this section fails to explain how that mission would directly & indirectly impact economic opportunity, education, and workforce development EVEN THOUGH that knowledge should be well understood and recognized by the reviewers and others.

Expertise and Training

- Has experience in planning and operations.
- By the Foundation leadership's own admission, she is not well versed in developing Theory of Change, Logic Models or AmeriCorps member training and supervision plans, or policies, procedures, and documentation systems pertaining specifically to AmeriCorps members. I do not, however, expect that level of expertise from an organization in its infancy. The Foundation Director expressed her willingness to undertake extensive training, and I am not penalizing their lack of exposure to these requirements.
- The honesty and transparency of the applicant with regards to expertise, or lack thereof, and training need is so appreciated and valuable and demonstrates the importance of Planning Grant opportunities. Staff comments and expertise regarding this section and the applicant overall will be crucial and important in making final recommendations.

Organizational Capability.

Organizational Background and Staffing

- All volunteer organization with no information provided about # of volunteers or scope of service
- One of the Achilles' Heels of this planning grant request has to do with the organization's structure, mentioned above. The staff is limited to one person with little to no experience engaging volunteers in the operational aspect of the Foundation. It is unclear to what extent decision-making in the organization is data-driven, though it is understood that this particular area of study and remedy does have much data upon which to rely. The only criterion about which we are aware is the Foundation's attempt to connect with BIPOC attorneys and to initiate related coursework for all Bar Association members.

- While the Foundation currently lacks extensive experience with regards to staffing and management structure the comprehensive and detailed planning with regards to structure and future operational and organizational capacity is not to be ignored. In this section that which may not be easily quantifiable seems to me compelling and valuable.
- Organization is in its infancy. Vision and concept is clear but case not made organization is able, at this point of development, to take on planning of AmeriCorps program.
- Very, very concerned about dependence on one individual as the only person in the organization.

Budget Adequacy and Cost Effectiveness. (CNCS no longer allows narrative for this section. They directed reviewers to consider the budget narrative and its formulas, accuracy, expense items.)

Section: Cost and Budget Adequacy (25 %)

- Reasonable cost for plan as proposed.
- The budget presented in this grant is a simple construct. Not much detail is provided.
- I have no comments on this section.

SUMMARY APPRAISAL 1. Having reviewed all elements of the proposal provided to you, do you think that this applicant would be effective in this category of grant? Yes (3) No (0)

Comments:

- Has well developed concept that targets continuum of BIPOC population involved w/Maine legal system. Understands strategic planning.
- As defined in the application, I believe the need is of singular importance. Where the grant is not as strong is in its response to the need, its expertise and training, and its organizational background. I am tempted to give a pass to a two-year-old volunteer organization, but then I grow concerned that even in the remaining ten months, this one-woman-band with a project coordinator or two will have too many hurdles to overcome. Perhaps with the addition of two project coordinators and extensive training from the Commission staff, they may be able to rise to the next level of preparedness.
- I feel the applicant has provided compelling and well thought out strategies for tackling a lack of diversity in Maine's legal profession, that fails to accurately or equitably represent Maine's communities, by seeking out the root issues and causes and working to mitigate and prevent those issues. In doing so, the work proposed would help address workforce development, educational opportunities, and economic opportunities that not only inequitably affect economically disadvantaged people but also prevent Maine from being stronger and more resilient. Whatever details and quantifications certain sections may lack the need and appropriateness of the application and the planned use are undeniable and just.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- Need is not well developed. Limited statistics available. Consequences of under-representation is not addressed.
- None
- I am unclear about the 2 positions with regards to responsibilities and specific roles (just for clarification) and also curious about the capacity of the Foundation's Founder/President to direct and oversee the proposed 10 month scope of work.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- Increase in attention to DEI issues in Maine legal system would be valuable.
- Prior to our telephone conference, my initial thinking is that I am willing to recommend with hesitation.
- I feel the project is a sound and needed one that would benefit Maine as a whole while addressing the specific concerns of both Federal and Commission priorities. I also feel my scoring, while justified, may not reflect the true opportunity and abilities that this proposal presents. I feel that the advice and expertise of staff will be integral in guiding recommendations of the task force and the Commission.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Proposal Alignment and Model.

- The proposal targets a number of federal focus areas including economic opportunity and education. It primarily focuses on capacity building – with priority on building the capacity of a relatively new organization but through which the capacity of a disadvantaged demographic in our state will build its own capacity.
- The program could be innovative in that it addresses an issue – lack of minority representation in our state’s legal community and structural elements of the legal system that may have disparate impact – in a comprehensive manner starting with building potential interest in a legal career among elementary students through mentoring and support for college/law school students and young professionals, through overall legal system education of DEI issues. As such, it proposes a multi-faceted approach to the problem.
- The innovative element is the range of generations the concept wants to impact – kids through professionals. Hesitancy is how much the applicant could put into an actual program and whether AmeriCorps members could be involved in all the elements. What will their volunteer pool be?
- There is a real mixed bag regarding the presentation of evidence that the program planning can be successfully carried out. The strongest element is the alignment of the proposed program with the organization’s mission. There is adequate evidence of the existence of relationships with those to be served and of community engagement and close to adequate evidence that the potential partners are prepared to participate in the work. Weak areas include: the overall financial stability of the organization given its short history; the stability of leadership given its dependence upon one primary individual; and lack of volunteer management experience. Given that this is a planning grant, some benefit of the doubt is appropriate, so this category would rate as adequate.
- The application lacked details on how things will get done and transition to a AmeriCorps program.
- The applicant's proposal is interesting and potentially innovative. It is unclear to me whether or not there is sufficient capacity by the applicant to conduct this planning process, nor is it clear if there is sufficient interest or engagement by the sectors the applicant proposes to effect as part of a future implementation process.

Preferences from RFP

- 2522.450 (c) seems to focus on disadvantaged geographical areas or communities where this proposal focuses on a disadvantaged demographic that potentially cuts across geographical boundaries, including both advantaged and disadvantaged areas. This is simply a limitation imposed by the federal definition. However, it is clear that this proposal would add significantly to the diversity of the commission’s portfolio.
- The proposal would be focused on the larger communities in the state – Cumberland, Androscoggin, Penobscot. Not going to be rural focus.
- The proposal proposes a coalition; however, that coalition has not yet been formalized. This is not a huge problem for a planning grant.
- While the program has elements that are state-wide, others are more likely to focus in non-rural areas where significant minority populations exist, particularly in Cumberland and Androscoggin Counties.
- Alpha Legal is a BIPOC lead non-profit corporation.
- This project supports DEI ideals, but in this planning phase basically a one person show, initially. But has promise.
- The applicant is proposing to increase the racial/ethnic diversity of the Maine workforce, which is unique among Volunteer Maine programs. It does not, however, appear to have built a coalition which will aid in the planning process and is representative of the programmatic areas that they propose to address. The organization, being only two years old, has little history itself and therefore little to no history of supporting marginalized communities.

Assessment of Financial Plan

- The budget for a planning grant is fairly simple and straightforward. Expenses are allowable; budget generally accurate; match is not required but is proposed.
- There is little detail regarding how funds will be spent, but the request is in line with the scope of the proposed work.
- Would like to see the program work but organization is so new, have high concern.

Fiscal Systems

- Alpha Legal is a relatively new organization which until now has operated through a fiscal agent. As a result, it has limited history in financial management and established financial practices, such as an audit.
- Fiscal management expertise for this program is weak but I believe it can be done.
- The organization lacks formal policies and procedures and has not received federal funds in the past. It has only received its non-profit status in March 2022. It has little to no expressed history of managing grant funds.

Grant Proposal Report to Commission from Task Force

Recommendation: Fund only if corrections can be negotiated

Legal Applicant: Maine Dept. of Education

Application ID: 22ES246894

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

Type: Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Ed Award Only

Federal Focus Area: Education, Healthy Futures, Economic Opportunity, Capacity building

Commission Priorities: Public health, Workforce development

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

Proposed Dates: 08/15/2022 to 08/14/2023
 Submitted budget is 1 year

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

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating	58,339		N/A
Member Support	N/A		N/A
Indirect (Admin)	Not budgeted		N/A
CNCS Award amount	\$ 58,339	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	N/A
% sharing proposed	100%		0%
% share required	100%		0%
Cost-per-member proposed	\$ N/A	RFP stated 6 mo planning grants could request max of \$30,000; longer (up to year) could request \$60,000.	

Program Description (executive summary): The Office of School and Student Supports at the Maine Department of Education proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program to serve York County, ME. It will address teacher shortages, mental health and well-being, and access to resources that impact the lives of students PK-12, parents/families, and school personnel in the AmeriCorps focus areas of Economic Opportunity, Education, Healthy Futures, and Capacity Building. The AmeriCorps federal ARP investment of \$60,000 will support planning activities carried out in collaboration with several other offices within the DOE – Early Learning Team, Educator Effectiveness, Higher Education, and Innovative Pathways - as well as potential post-secondary partnerships with the University of New England and York Community College.

Service locations:

TBD during planning.

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

DOE - Early Learning Team, Educator Effectiveness, Higher Education, and Innovative Pathways; University of New England and York Community College; Region 9 Superintendents; York County members of ME Curriculum Leaders; Biddeford/Sanford CTEs; YCCC; York County Head Start

Applicant proposes to deliver services:

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

A. Does the Executive Summary format exactly match the template in the RFP? Yes No

B. Does the applicant claim the rural preference? Yes No

C. If the applicant claimed rural preference, is it substantiated by target area? Yes No N/A

D. Does the applicant claim a preference because the application is from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together on a common goal? Yes No

E. Does the applicant claim a preference because the proposal is from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people. Yes No

Scoring Detail:

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

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Design		
Need and Target Community(ies)	Adequate	11.25
Response to Need	Strong	15
Readiness for Planning	Strong	15
Expertise and Training	Adequate	3.75
Organizational Capability		
Organizational Background & Staffing	Adequate	18.75
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
Total Peer Reviewer Score		82.5

Recommend for Further Review

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

	Quality Rating	Score
Proposal Alignment and Model		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with Funding Priorities 	Strong	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for innovation 	Adequate	3.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of evidence planning process will succeed 	Adequate	11.25
Preferences from RFP Announcement (35%)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve communities described in 2522.450(c) 	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse 	Adequate	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together 	Adequate	6.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum 	Substandard	2.25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people 	Substandard	2.25
Financial Plan	Adequate	11.25
Fiscal Systems		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements 	Strong	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial management practices 	Adequate	3.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial status/stability 	Strong	5

Total Task Force Score	69.25
Peer Review Score	82.5
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)	151.75

Final Assessment of Application:

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

Referenced Conditions/Corrections

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

- Proposal needs to be transferred to the correct federal application. It was submitted as a Fixed Amount proposal which provides reimbursement based on hours served by AmeriCorps members. Planning grants have not members. The funds used for this award do not require a match under Cost Reimbursement.
- The budget in cost reimbursement will increase slightly to cover the allowed indirect of 5%.
- The section on organizational capability needs to be edited to describe the organization applying rather than the lead planner. It is an opportunity for other issues to be addressed which are less critical.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Program Design.

Need and Target Community(ies)

- While the need for educational staff in Maine schools is well documented and assumed, this section of the narrative did not provide specific data to detail the claims and the ramifications other than a reference to a programmatic staffing issue at a school/for a program. There was also a lack of specificity documentation of engagement with residents with regards to the "brainstorming". I am not entirely sure the details of how this planning grant will specifically accomplish the goal of teacher recruitment, based on this section of the narrative, assuming teacher recruitment is the goal. However, I see, holistically, the benefit of providing support to mentees and mentors involved in programs specifically designed to engage and encourage further educators-but again, I am assuming that this is the purpose as it does not seem clearly described in this section.
- This was a case of assuming common knowledge but they did not provide any evidence to document the needs. They make assumptions we will know things. In terms of a grant application, they barely made the case. Interesting because the Dept has all kinds of data that could have been used to describe.
- Target Community well defined. Addresses 2 well defined needs, but documentation of need is weak
- The narrative relies upon common knowledge relative to the teacher shortage within the State of Maine, though it derives its information from data collection within DOE that identifies the breadth of the problem within the State. Also, a TeachME program, motivated by the shortage, is expected to launch imminently to showcase teachers and generate additional interest in the profession. Similarly, the planning grant as written refers to the declining mental health and well-being of students post-pandemic. I do not dispute either of these claims, but no data was supplied to confirm either statement; an assumption was made that we, the reviewers, are aware of the extent of the problem. Additionally, the rationale for focusing on York County is not documented other than to say the SAUs within that geographic region have varying degrees of strength and need for opportunity. Since this is a pilot project, I have no objection to the selection of a county in which their collaborative networks are strong and bode well for the implementation of the plan. Assuming success, the DOE can extrapolate from that experience to apply to other counties. The idea for the planning grant was born of a conversation with the Head Start Director. Current mentorship programs exist in high schools throughout the region, and Career Days within those high schools promote the teaching profession. This program is differentiated from those, however, by virtue of the level of training provided to

mentors, the selection of particular mentors, and the incorporation of trauma-informed instruction. The application is very clear that the beneficiaries are school personnel, students, and parents.

Response to Need

- I see the effort and thought for the envisioned program clearly detailed but I am still unsure of the specific allocation and application of the planning grant i.e. the position(s), goals, duties, etc...My lack of understanding does not detract from the well thought out preparation for the proposed utilization of AmeriCorps members as part of the proposed program.
- Well defined plan to address needs. Plan is creative and kills 2 birds with one stone.
- The described need is addressed in the effort to attach AmeriCorps members to 12 SAU districts in York County with support, training, and trauma-informed practice for the purposes of: 1. Providing social-emotional support to students, educators, and mentors; 2. Attracting high school students to the field of education; 3. Attracting high school students to the AmeriCorps Program. Pre- and post-climate surveys of students and potentially parents will yield information, as will analysis of classroom data; however, data collection strategies for determining how many high school students enter teacher education programs or become AmeriCorps members upon graduation will need to be specified. Similarly, measurements for determining improved mental health and well-being need to be identified. Partners in the planning initiative, especially those with direct expertise, are listed and are numerous. Funders still need to be uncovered, but a plan to approach entities, such as chambers of commerce, and rotary and other service clubs, is mentioned.

Readiness for Planning

- I feel like the actual details of the lead planner's job description has been implied but not specifically outlined ... either that or I have totally skipped a section or paragraph. However, I can't seem to fault anything in particular in this section and feel persuaded to offer only positivity here.
- Applicant has strong planning and organizational background.
- The infrastructure is in place for the delivery of an initial plan, and ultimately a formal program, but additional resources are required to formulate the plan. The infrastructure runs the gamut from various units within the DOE to teachers in the classroom, as well as the Maine Curriculum Leaders and the Director of the Office of School and Student Supports. Currently the SAUs do not have the capacity to undertake the planning for the proposed program. The lead planner will be a new hire vested with the responsibilities for conducting surveys, analyzing data, networking with experts in the field, setting forth a vision for training, support, leadership activities for AmeriCorps members, and plans as to how to embed trauma-informed practices in their work.

Expertise and Training

- While adequate I caution the confidence with regards to the anticipated small scope of need for training or guidance. That being said I would lean heavily upon VM staff for their opinions and experience with the applicant/organization with regards to the expectation of need. I am also still confused as to whether this about providing mental health support to students or to increasing teacher/educator recruitment.
- Applicant has strong training/educational background. Good plan for member development.
- Again, an assumption is expected regarding the Department's appropriate knowledge of Theory of Change, Logic Models, evidence-based decision-making, establishing monitoring and documentation systems, etc., but there is no direct mention in the application itself. My rating is based upon the general knowledge that the Department has extensive experience in this area in its myriad grant application experiences.

Organizational Capability.

Organizational Background and Staffing

- This section, to me, fails to detail the organization's experience level with engaging volunteers in its mission related services and the organizational capacity, etc...I can assume but it's not included. The applicant has certainly described their qualifications and capabilities in detail. And the enthusiasm is clear.

- Many collaborators with necessary skills/knowledge. Supervisor for intended new hire has not been identified.
- Text switches to first person and away from the organization. The criteria are asking about the organization rather than the author. The fact the author indicates there will be someone else doing the planning, it confuses the reader. Will the planning lead have the same experience? Won't the department's capacity be available?
- The applicant's expertise and experience are significant. She has 29 years in PK-high school, and 16 of those years in leadership with experience in hiring, training, supervision, supporting professional development in all content areas, budgetary management, and creating instructional coaching programs. The agency, in this case DOE, is well equipped to manage the collection and interpretation of data, as well as to undertake data-driven decision-making and the regular oversight of program implementation.
- Can infer the infrastructure is there in the organization.

Budget Adequacy and Cost Effectiveness. (CNCS no longer allows narrative for this section. They directed reviewers to consider the budget narrative and its formulas, accuracy, expense items.)

Section: Cost and Budget Adequacy (25 %)

- I assume the allocations for various line items are accurate and appropriate.
- Reasonable cost for new hire. Budget listed as Fixed Amount. No AC members. Should be cost reimbursement.
- The budgetary construct is straightforward, if not a little spare on detail.
- Should be given credit for getting egrants to do something it wasn't intended to do.
- As a cost reimbursement grant, will they have the cash on hand to start the process and be reimbursed.

SUMMARY APPRAISAL 1. Having reviewed all elements of the proposal provided to you, do you think that this applicant would be effective in this category of grant? Yes (3) No (0)

Comments:

- While I am still unsure about some details I feel the intent and strategy for implementing the program and the necessity of the planning grant is clear. The proposal clearly seeks to carry out specific Federal and State priorities.
- Applicant has strong planning and organizational background, Has strong training/education background, and is well connected to potential partners/collaborators.
- Given the adequacy of the described need, the response to the need proposed, the existing collaborative network to set the planning scheme in motion, the extensive advisory committee participating in the planning, the expertise and experience of the applicant and the applicant's agency who will lead or at least advise on the project, the elements are in place for a successful planning initiative, in my view.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- I am still unclear as to the details of the funded position's role and and expected outcomes. Maybe I expected more detail than I should-maybe I clearly overlooked it...While unclear I am in no way doubtful of the necessity and need of the proposal and the appropriateness of the application.
- Need is not well documented.
- None

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- I am overall very enthusiastic about this proposal, though I do not think I can say I am as enthusiastic as the applicant. However, I have concerns about the reliance upon the applicant being so integral to the proposal and while that caution may be easily alleviated I feel it is important to note. Also, I would defer to the counsel and guidance of VM staff with regards to any questions or concerns they may have with the application as proposed.

- Good proposal. Combination of career development/recruiting teachers with support for SEL is very creative. Good evaluation plan.
 - There is a general lack of specificity in the budget proposal, which is not uncommon in planning grant applications, but that fact does not diminish the relevance of the planning process and potential important outcomes as described.
-

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Proposal Alignment and Model.

- The applicant for this grant proposal seemed to be applying for the job. I'm not confident, that training students to be mentors to other students is the best option. Seems some of this work is for trained educators, not student mentors.
- The need aligns with the federal priorities of Education and Economic Opportunity, the later via its focus on interesting mentors in pursuing a career in education. It aligns with the Commission's priorities of workforce development and public health via its focus on mental health and social emotional learning.
- The program could be innovative in its dual approach of addressing student needs (mental health/sel) while working to expand the interest of high school student mentors in pursuing a career in education. While piloting in one county, if successful, the program could be expanded to other areas of the state, particularly if state DOE champions and supports this approach.
- The program aligns well with the DOE's overall mission and complements other Departmental efforts. Both through the Department and the primary staff member involved, relationships already exist with key elements of the educational system in York county. Non-K-12 based relationships may need to be expanded/developed.
- While there is a regional structure in place for the proposed partners, the extent to which the partners have been involved in preliminary discussions is not clear.
- MDOE is not familiar with or experienced in volunteer management and the proposal does not indicate the extent of such programs/experiences among partner districts in York County, although Maine School Districts generally lack significant programs in this area.
- While no local share is required, it is not clear that future financial support for the program will be available or available for all of the potential partner school districts. This will obviously need to be explored during the planning process.
- The MDOE is financially stable as a part of state government as are the school districts involved.
- The civil service leadership of the Department is fairly stable; however, political appointees are subject to change, particularly if a new Governor is elected this fall. Such changes can impact departmental programs and priorities.
- Education is in crisis when it comes to student and adult mental health, so the need is definitely there. While the proposed idea is good, it is not fundamentally innovative, but could easily be replicated. It is not clear if there is strong local buy-in for the initiative giving evidence that it will be successfully carried out, but given the need, it is assumed that there will be sufficient interest.
- Proposal needs to be edited to remove extensive section where author refers to self rather than organization – especially in section on organization's capability. Overall, poorly written (3x). There is potential but reviewers had to do a lot of reading between the lines and making deductions.

Preferences from RFP Announcement

- The proposal does not serve the identified communities; is not from a partnership or coalition although implying such a coalition will be created, does not propose serving rural counties, and is not from an organization lead or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities or people. It would, however, add to the commission's portfolio by providing service in an in-school educational environment.
- The applicant gives only a very basic description of the effort, its target audience, and the proposal is largely unsupported by empirical data. It would seem that the applicant assumed the reader will take it on good faith that it has done its due diligence.

Assessment of Financial Plan

- Program is proposing fixed cost.
- The costs are reasonable.
- Applicant filled out the incorrect proposal template. The proposal needs to be moved to the Cost Reimbursement template.

Fiscal Systems

- Applicant is a state agency with significant grant experience showing that its systems can comply with federal requirements. While some issues were identified in the department's single audit, this is not unanticipated given the number and range of federal grants managed.
- First, the department is not required to file a 990 given that it is a state government entity. It's audit indicated some findings that were not severe, but should be noted. DOE handles \$2B in funds, so it has substantial financial capacity.



Volunteer Maine

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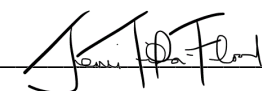
APPENDIX E: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

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): Jenni Tilton-Flood

Signature: 

Date: 4/19/2022

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



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Name (please print): F. Celeste Branham

Signature: 

Date: 04/20/2022

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Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



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Name (please print): Robert Meinders

Signature: 

Date: 12/02/21

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



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

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

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

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

Name (please print): Matthew L'Italien

Signature: Matthew L'Italien

Date: 05/09/2022

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



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



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Name (please print): Edward A. Barrett

Signature: Edward A. Barrett

Date: 5-2-2022

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