

Award Justification Statement
RFA # 202303048 Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants

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. The text that follows is quoted from pp 18 and 19 of the RFA.

Phase One. Proposal narratives and budget submitted in eGrants along with the organizational chart are reviewed and assessed by peer 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 (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. However, the weaknesses are not offset by strengths. Total score between 60 and 79).
- Do Not Recommend for Further Review (A proposal with serious shortcomings. There are numerous weaknesses and few strengths. Total score 59 or below).

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

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

It also will consider information gathered in a structured interview of representatives of the planning grant applicant. The interview will be conducted through remote technology and recorded. Task Force members will review the recording as part of their assessment tasks.

The Task Force will use the following weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 30 points Funding Priority Alignment, 30 points Commission Preferences (partnerships, support for rural and/or marginalized communities), 10 points Financial Plan, 15 points Fiscal Systems, and 15 points for Grant Readiness for a possible total of 100 points.

Upon completion of the Task Force review, the scores from Phase One and Phase Two will be combined to produce a single review score. The Grant Selection and Performance Task Force then makes its final recommendations for funding to the full Commission. Proposals that address Commission priorities and preferences will be considered first for awards. If there are sufficient funds remaining, proposals in other categories will be considered.

III. Qualifications & Experience

In this grant program, the organizational criteria focus 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 14-18 of the RFA. The Commission provides them with training and coaching so they can accomplish the activities.

V. Cost Proposal

The RFP stated the total cost for the 10-month process (\$60,000). All three applicants in the competition submitted funding requests at or just below the maximum. It should be noted that the grant award covers the entire award by using federal funds restricted to local share replacement. This means that, on these grants, the federal award covers the expenses identified by the applicant as normally being part of a cost-share.

VI. Conclusion

Three of the priorities listed in the RFA are addressed by a combination of the applicants. Two address workforce development, one focuses on climate action, and the third targets public health issues. All three were selected for funding.

Crofton, Maryalice

From: Crofton, Maryalice
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 1:53 PM
To: Naomi Albert
Subject: Formal Award Notification
Attachments: AwardNotificationLetter-CTT.pdf

Please see the attached letter.

In addition, please be aware that the federal AmeriCorps agency's award of funds to cover the grant is being delayed significantly by implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act. This is wholly unexpected and impacts the ability of the Commission to finalize the award document (Cooperative Agreement) with you. We will share any information as it becomes available. Current predictions are a minimum 1 month delay. Fingers crossed!

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



June 21, 2023

Naomi Albert
A Climate To Thrive
7 Pine Street
Bar Harbor, ME 04609-1010

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Grant Award(s) under RFA # 202303048, Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants

Dear Ms Albert:

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

- A Climate to Thrive
- Haystack Mountain School of Arts
- The Maine Prisoner Re-entry Network

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Maryalice Crofton
Executive Director



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

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

Crofton, Maryalice

From: Crofton, Maryalice
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 1:54 PM
To: James Rutter
Subject: Formal Award Notification
Attachments: AwardNotificationLetter-HMSA.pdf

Please see the attached letter.

In addition, please be aware that the federal AmeriCorps agency's award of funds to cover the grant is being delayed significantly by implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act. This is wholly unexpected and impacts the ability of the Commission to finalize the award document (Cooperative Agreement) with you. We will share any information as it becomes available. Current predictions are a minimum 1 month delay. Fingers crossed!

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June 21, 2023

Dr. James Rutter
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts
PO Box 518
Deer Isle, ME 04627-0518

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Grant Award(s) under RFA # 202303048, Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants

Dear Dr. Rutter:

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

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Executive Director



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Crofton, Maryalice

From: Crofton, Maryalice
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 1:55 PM
To: Dipper C
Subject: Formal Award Notification
Attachments: AwardNotificationLetter-MPRN.pdf

Please see the attached letter.

In addition, please be aware that the federal AmeriCorps agency's award of funds to cover the grant is being delayed significantly by implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act. This is wholly unexpected and impacts the ability of the Commission to finalize the award document (Cooperative Agreement) with you. We will share any information as it becomes available. Current predictions are a minimum 1 month delay. Fingers crossed!

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June 21, 2023

Jerome Castaldo
Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network
2 Bangor St Ste 2
Augusta, ME 04330-4724

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Grant Award(s) under RFA # 202303048, Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants

Dear Mr. Castaldo:

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

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- Haystack Mountain School of Arts
- The Maine Prisoner Re-entry Network

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Executive Director



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	Applicant Sheet 1 Application ID 23AC256692 Applicant Name A Climate to Thrive	Applicant Sheet 2 23AC256345 Haystack Mountain School of Crafts	Applicant Sheet 3 23AC256724 Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network
Peer Reviewer Results			
Program Design	37.5	45	28.75
Organizational Capability	25	25	12.5
Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy	18.75	18.75	18.75
Peer Review Final Score	81.25	88.75	60
Recommendation to Grants TF	80-89, Recommend for Further Review	80-89, Recommend for Further Review	60-79, Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation
Task Force Review Results			
Proposal Alignment and Model	22.5	27	20.25
Preferences from RFP	22.5	25	25
Financial Plan	11.25	11.25	11.25
Fiscal Systems	7.5	13.75	6.25
Grant Readiness	11.25	11.25	7.5
Task Force Final Score	75	88.25	70.25
Final Application Score	156.25	177	130.25
Funding Requested	\$58,158.00	59,949	60,126
Rank order for funding (high to low)	2	1	3

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: 23AC256692 **PROGRAM NAME:** n/a **FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$58,158.00

APPLICANT NAME: A Climate to Thrive

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						
	Jake Hurner	F. Celeste Branham				
Program Design					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Need and Target Community(ies)	Adequate	Adequate			Adequate	11.25
Response to Need	Adequate	Adequate			Adequate	11.25
Readiness for Planning	Adequate	Strong			Adequate	11.25
Expertise and Training	Adequate	Strong			Adequate	3.75
Program Design Score						37.5

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
	Jake Hurner	F. Celeste Branham				
Organizational Capability					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Organizational Background & Staffing	Strong	Strong			Strong	25
Org. Capability Score						25

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	Jake Hurner	F. Celeste Branham				
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy					Consensus Rating	Point Value
	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	37.5	25	18.75		81.25

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

	Rater -- initial ratings			
Proposal Alignment and Model (35%)	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	
Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	
Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	
Potential for innovation and/or replication	Adequate	Weak	Strong	
Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	13.5
Adequate	2.25
Adequate	2.25
Adequate	2.25
Adequate	2.25
Section Score	22.5

	Rater -- initial ratings			
Preferences from RFP Announcement (35%)	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Adequate	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	
serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	
from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people	Adequate	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	7.5
Adequate	7.5
Adequate	7.5
Section Score	22.5

	Rater -- initial ratings			
Financial Plan (15%)	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	11.25

	Rater -- initial ratings			
Fiscal Systems (15%)	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management practices	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Adequate	Weak	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	3.75
Incomplete/Nonrespons	0
Adequate	3.75
Section Score	7.5

	Rater -- initial ratings			
Grant Readiness (15%)	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	11.25

GTF Total Score:	75
Peer Reviewer Score	81.25
Combined Score	156.25
	of possible 200

*lookup pre-programmed

Recommendation: Fund with no corrections

Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet

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

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

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

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

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

APP ID: 23AC256345 **PROGRAM NAME:** n/a **INITIAL COMMENTS:** LINK TO DOC
APPLICANT NAME: Haystack Mountain School of Crafts **FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$ 59,949

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						
	F. Celeste Branham	Jake Hurner				
Program Design					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Need and Target Community(ies)	Adequate	Adequate			Adequate	11.25
Response to Need	Strong	Adequate			Strong	15
Readiness for Planning	Strong	Adequate			Strong	15
Expertise and Training	Strong	Weak			Adequate	3.75
Program Design Score						45

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
	F. Celeste Branham	Jake Hurner				
Organizational Capability					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Organizational Background & Staffing	Strong	Strong			Strong	25
Org. Capability Score						25

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	F. Celeste Branham	Jake Hurner				
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy					Consensus Rating	Point Value
	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	45	25	18.75		88.75

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!
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	
Alignment with Funding Priorities	Strong	Adequate	Strong	
Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	
Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	
Potential for innovation and/or replication	Strong	Weak	Adequate	
Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Strong	18
Adequate	2.25
Adequate	2.25
Adequate	2.25
Adequate	2.25
Section Score	27

Preferences from RFP Announcement (35%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	
from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Adequate	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	
serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	
from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people	Strong	Adequate	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	7.5
Strong	10
Adequate	7.5
Section Score	25

Financial Plan (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	
	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	11.25

Fiscal Systems (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	
capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management	Strong	Adequate	Strong	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Strong	Adequate	Strong	

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

Grant Readiness (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings			#REF!
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	
	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	11.25

GTF Total Score: 88.25
Peer Reviewer Score 88.75
Combined Score 177
of possible 200

*hlookup pre-programmed

Recommendation: Fund with no corrections

Peer Reviewers -- Consensus Process Worksheet

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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.

APP ID: 23AC256724 **PROGRAM NAME:** n/a **INITIAL COMMENTS:** LINK TO DOC
APPLICANT NAME: Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network **FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$61,904.00

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						
	F. Celeste Branham	Jake Hurner				
Program Design					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Need and Target Community(ies)	Weak	Weak			Weak	7.5
Response to Need	Weak	Weak			Weak	7.5
Readiness for Planning	Weak	Adequate			Adequate	11.25
Expertise and Training	Weak	Weak			Weak	2.5
Program Design Score						28.75

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
	F. Celeste Branham	Jake Hurner				
Organizational Capability					Consensus Rating	Point Value
Organizational Background & Staffing	Weak	Weak			Weak	12.5
Org. Capability Score						12.5

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	F. Celeste Branham	Jake Hurner				
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy					Consensus Rating	Point Value
	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	28.75	12.5	18.75			60

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

End Peer Reviewer Work - Task Force Work Recorded Below

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LINK TO COMMENTS

	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
Proposal Alignment and Model (35%)				
Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	Weak	Strong	
Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	Weak	Weak	
Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	Weak	Adequate	
Potential for innovation and/or replication	Strong	Weak	Adequate	
Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Weak	Weak	Weak	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	13.5
Weak	1.5
Adequate	2.25
Weak	1.5
Weak	1.5
Section Score	20.25

	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
Preferences from RFP Announcement (35%)				
from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Adequate	Adequate	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	
serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Adequate	Adequate	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	
from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people	Strong	Adequate	Strong	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	7.5
Adequate	7.5
Strong	10
Section Score	25

	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
Financial Plan (15%)				
	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	11.25
Section Score	11.25

	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
Fiscal Systems (15%)				
capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management practices	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	Weak	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Weak	Adequate	Substandard	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	3.75
Incomplete/Nonresponsive	0
Weak	2.5
Section Score	6.25

	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Ronald A. Holmes	Jacinda Goodwin	Ed Barrett	#REF!
Grant Readiness (15%)				
	Weak	Adequate	Weak	

Consensus rating	Point Value
Weak	7.5
Section Score	7.5

GTF Total Score: 70.25
 Peer Reviewer Score: 60
Combined Score: 130.25
 of possible 200

*lookup pre-programmed

Recommendation: Fund only if corrections can be negotiated

Grant Task Force Report to Commission-- Planning Proposal

Recommendation: Fund the proposal. [Note: There are minor corrections and a clarification needed in the budget.]

Legal Applicant: A Climate to Thrive

Application ID: 23AC256692

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

- Type:** Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Cost Reimbursement

Federal Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship

Commission Priorities: Climate Action, Workforce Development

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

Proposed Dates: 08/15/2023 to 06/15/2024

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

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating	39,265		16,828
Member Support	n/a		n/a
Indirect (Admin)	2,065		0
CNCS Award amount	41,330	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	16,828
% sharing proposed	71%		29%
% share required	n/a*		n/a*
Cost-per-member proposed	n/a	*This grant would use the ARP match replacement option to cover the local share so it is really all AC funds.	

Program Description (executive summary):

A Climate to Thrive proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program to serve communities throughout Maine, with preference given to disadvantaged Communities, as identified through the Federal Government's Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool, those with the highest energy burden, and communities in Aroostook, Franklin, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties. It will address the need to build local capacity for climate mitigation and energy projects that simultaneously increase local resilience that impacts the lives of community members throughout the state of Maine in the AmeriCorps focus area(s) of Capacity Building and Environmental Stewardship. The AmeriCorps federal ARP investment \$58,158 will support planning activities carried out in collaboration with Sharon Klein from the University of Maine's Mitchell Center and Local Leads the Way Communities. No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.

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.

University of Maine Mitchell Climate Center, Dr. Sharron Klein, and Local Leads the Way Committees

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.*

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
Rationale & Approach/Program Design Section (50%)		
Need and Target Community(ies)	Adequate	11.25
Response to Need	Adequate	11.25
Readiness for Planning	Adequate	11.25
Expertise and Training	Adequate	3.75
Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Strong	25
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
Total		81.25
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		
• Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	13.5
• Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	2.25
• Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	2.25
• Potential for innovation and/or replication	Adequate	2.25
• Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Adequate	2.25
Preferences from RFA Announcement		
• from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Adequate	7.5
• serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Adequate	7.5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people 	Adequate	7.5
Financial Plan	Adequate	11.25
Fiscal Systems		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements 	Adequate	3.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial management practices 	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial status/stability 	Adequate	3.75
Grant Readiness	Adequate	11.25
Total Task Force Score		75
Peer Review Score		81.25
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		156.25

Final Assessment of Application:

- Forward or fund
- 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 errors in budget calculation need correction. Clarification of match replacement amount needed given there is a local share entered in the Source of Funds screen. National Service Criminal History Background Checks are not required for planning grants – item can be removed. Indirect cost allocation on local share needs clarification.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Program Design.

Need and Target Community(ies)

- This section of the application responds to all criteria– no omissions or additions. Specific counties and the method of selecting communities is outlined, however it does not suggest a process for soliciting placements within those areas at this time. Capacity is highlighted as the inequity of the targeted communities that an AC member may alleviate Outlined previous conversations and studies that speak to both the need of the communities and the engagement of the community voices- outlined complimentary program of the State Resiliency Grants and the service providers.
- Maine's Climate Action Plan identifies the reasons many high energy-burdened communities cannot address climate risks: capacity, expertise, and funding. The proposal is direct in identifying the target areas in need, as defined through the Federal Government Climate and Environmental Screening Tool, specifically nine counties.

Response to Need

- This section of the application responds to all criteria– no omissions or additions. The proposal reaffirms the need for capacity as the main activity and need of the targeted communities and outlines similar models undertaken in other states. The applicant states it has current partners in targeted counties they would continue to work with Applicant is looking at partnering with UMaine and specifically Dr Klein Applicant would spend time if funded trying to secure further resources including staff and grant funding but does not currently have the resources

- The purpose of the planning effort is to address the need to build local capacity for climate mitigation and energy projects in order to meet State of Maine climate goals. Also, this planning effort will try to improve upon the low energy literacy about State and Federal support available.

Readiness for Planning

- This section of the application responds to all criteria– no omissions or additions. Through capacity and education applicant would align Ac activities with their goals of moving away from fossil fuels and towards broader climate action. Applicant currently has engaged both volunteers and interns and described the interview, data collection and training available Applicant is looking to hire new staff and outlined desired qualifications Applicant discussed the intention for an advisory group and the use of current relationships to staff the committee
- They derive high-level expertise from their collaboration with Dr. Sharon Klein, representatives on their Advisory Committee from the Environmental Justice Committee, and the Community Resilience Partnership that will aid them in the program development process. Experience with 38 interns over the last five years is also beneficial.

Expertise and Training

- 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. The applicant touched on each criterion with the experience they have had while also acknowledging the benefit of support through technical assistance. While it seems the program has experience and past success on smaller projects and programs the applicant was not able to be critically specific regarding some of the expertise aside from asserting the existence of this proficiency. Applicant responded to each criteria fully but without additional information that would warrant strong
- Presentation of personnel expertise and training was very solid.

Organizational Capability.

Organizational Background and Staffing

- the argument shows this element shows high levels of success or highly likely to be successful. Of its strengths the applicant seems to be able to demonstrate effective planning and collaboration efforts leading me to believe the past efforts and current make up of the applicant would be successful for the management and staffing to plan the proposed program
- Identification of related past projects were especially helpful. As examples, the Climate Ambassadors Program, the municipally-owned solar array in Tremont, and the electric school bus on Mount Desert Island are important indicators of the work they can and will perform. Their connections to the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, the Governor's Energy Office, and the Efficiency Maine Trust support participation in a strong network of like-minded entities.

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 %)

- All criteria met, the proposed budget is simple and falls within the allowable fields.
- Source of funds section of budget does not account for the full amount of local share.

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 (1) No (1)

Comments:

- Overall, the applicant responded to all needed criteria and while certain aspects of their assertions do not at this time rise to the management level of AC grant and program, the full funding of their application to plan would allow them to get there.

- I believe their specific sense of what the need and target population are, the expertise and training they exhibit as an organization, their capability given diverse projects they have previously undertaken, the strength of their network all point positively to their potential effectiveness.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- Some of the elements of the program and the specific skills or expertise involved in past projects are not clearly outlined outside of asserting the existence of. It would be helpful to be able to point to more specific actions or skills in further development but do not feel like a barrier for the planning process.
- I found the proposal clear overall. However, I was unclear as to how this planning proposal would be supplementary to the work of the Community Resilience Partnership. This was not explained. In fact, the question that arises is could this be duplicative?

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- While the applicant’s current model is engaging and seemingly effective, the criteria of an AC grant can often be rigid in its execution, it is valuable the applicant has connected with similar models of interest and has alumni for those models. As the applicant develops their program I wonder about the application process for sites due to the state wide nature and mission to serve under resourced communities. As the need for capacity can impact the site fees attached and the application process- outside of the points of connection already held by applicant. Some of the areas of experience/ expertise and the number of responsibilities outlined as desired for the projected hire seem to potentially be a high ask in relation to the compensation offered. While UMaine and Dr Klein seem to be key partners I would encourage applicant to further pursue other partners more fully specifically Island Institute and its Fellowship program in relation to the applicants work. Of note the applicant places a large amount of assertion on its ability to secure grant funding as part of the proposed program design. Unsecured and or unknown grant funding sources does not feel like a particularly strong case for program success and I would encourage applicant to further develop plans on determined and specific funding sources.
- I give my support to this proposal, given the needs environmental literacy, but, more importantly, for communities to have assistance in building capacity so as to mitigate climate change impacts.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Section A: Proposal Alignment with Funding Priority and Model

- The degree to which the community need targeted by the proposal is aligned with one of the funding priorities stated in the RFP- Adequate because of the indirect focus on Environmental Stewardship and commission’s Climate action focus through electrifying communities providing higher energy efficiency while trying to minimize the cost to change over from fossil fuels through awareness of discount and rebate programs. There is a capacity building focus through training programs. The extent to which the applicant proposes to serve communities described in 2522.450(c). An Adequate focus on the rural counties are the stated priority but this would be a state wide project. The extent to which the proposal adds to the AmeriCorps grant portfolio goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse. This looks to be strong since the demographics focus across Maine counties and is part of the focus are for the AmeriCorps. This program would be similar to other programs operating in Maine but has the focus on getting the word out on grants and support and educating families on energy opportunities that are better for the environment/climate change effects. The extent to which the proposal could be an innovative use of national service and, if successful, could feasibly be replicated in other parts of the state. This received an adequate rating. There are many programs in several states that do similar projects as being proposed. The program seeks to put more boots in the field to help communities with the possibilities for switching to more friendly energy sources for the environment. The strength of evidence the program planning can be successfully carried out. The program does align with the organization’s plans and has created community relationships through other programs it is running “Local Leads the Way” – ACTT program would expand the reach of this by adding resources to reach out to more communities and expand communities’ ability to develop alternative energy sources. I did have a concern over the year to year decrease and with no audit to

back up the 990 it is a concern. The program actually had to supplement the budget in 2021 with expenses exceeding revenues by \$6443. I feel the organization does know how to manage volunteers but there appears not to be a single point for volunteer management. There is an expectation that the current partners and organizations that support the current program would also support ACTT.

- Applicant responded to all criteria addressing the need for capacity and appear to have partners in place for planning/support. Applicant did not provide a lot of detail in terms of expertise and training but have experience and have worked on smaller projects.
- The program is directly and strongly aligned with two VM priority areas: Climate action compatible with Maine Won't Wait (the state climate action plan) and Maine Climate Corps; and, Environmental/community resilience, adaptation, and sustainability including emergency preparedness.
- While the specific communities are not identified, the concept is to work with small communities in Maine's rural counties.
- While VM currently funds several environmentally related programs and has operations in some of the rural counties, this would potentially expand that presence to additional areas.
- The proposed model closely mirrors the Maine Climate Corps model and could serve to provide evidence of the viability of this approach. Should Climate Corps not be funded, this program could serve as a replacement for the effort and might model ways in which other programs, such as MCC, could expand their efforts in the climate response and resilience arena.
- The proposed program aligns well with the mission of the agency and its activities on Mt. Desert. It would extend those to other rural areas based in part due to interest that other communities have expressed in adopting CTTs model.
- As noted, CTT has had conversations with other communities potentially interested in their model; at the same time, however, a full partnership does not exist, something that is not unexpected for a planning grant.
- While the agency is fairly new and has only in recent years hired program staff, its finances appear to be acceptably stable with a reasonable cash balance for such a new agency. Only caution, recent revenue decline at the same time staffing costs are increasing.
- The agency is heavily reliant on contributions, especially from a cadre of major donors. This adds an element of potential instability should some of these donors reduce their support.
- It is difficult to judge the stability of leadership although the interview indicated that many have been supporting and associated with the agency since its founding. They are proposing to hire an additional staff member to manage this program and appear to have adequate other staff to fill-in/cover in case of turnover.
- The agency has traditionally relied on and been guided by substantial community engagement, having begun as a completely volunteer agency. This ethic seems to be embedded in their overall approach. This also provides evidence that they have significant volunteer management experience and success, although elements of their volunteer management approach remain somewhat ad-hoc and have not been fully formalized.

Section B: Preferences from RFA Announcement

- The proposal is an extension of Locals Lead the Way and Climate Ambassadors programs. ACTT said it has partnered with other programs such as Island Institute by hosting a Fellow member as well as being a Service Provider for Community Resilience Partnership. As far as serving or having a physical presence in counties in Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington I again rated this as Adequate since this appears to be a Hancock based group and stated in the narrative that in the program it will give preference or priority to these counties as well as Disadvantaged

communities as identified by the Federal Government's Climate and Environmental Justice Screening tool. As far as the proposal is from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people, I found the proposal to be a statewide proposal with priorities given to the identified counties.

- Applicant is looking to serve additional underserved, rural areas in Maine and provided information about their work in the community and with various partnerships.
- The proposal is not from a partnership or coalition, although the program itself if implemented may have elements of such in its design. It is not from an organization led or supporting historically marginalized communities.

Section C: Financial Plan

- I have reviewed the budget and all looks to be appropriate and reasonable, though I questioned \$0 in supplies. The match is within the CNCS guidelines but I was also confused if the Grant Match resource is this coming from ARP funds or does funding in the identified In-Kind monies under Source of funds become the match or is additional backup funding?
- Budget seems to be appropriate to the effort.
- Local funding includes \$10,000 in in kind staff support.
- Question about whether local share will be required if funded from ARP funds.

Section D: Fiscal Systems

- The financial management system in place is for the most part in compliance with the federal requirements for accounting for public grant funding. There are a few training concerns around risk management, cyber security and Fraud, Waste and Abuse that are missing – the biggest omission was the audit even though the organization's accountant wrote a letter of review this did not take the place of an audit. There was also a noted drop in revenue year over year and the overspending (expenses to revenue) in the organization.
- Organization has not been audited.
- The agency is still relatively young and is in the process of moving to a more formal accounting and reporting system with the hiring of a bookkeeper; however, additional enhancements and improvements may be required to meet federal AC grant requirements.

Section E: Grant Readiness

- I'm impressed by what the organization has accomplished over its relatively short existence and the broad volunteer support it has received. I'm confident it can undertake and complete the planning process. The larger challenge, of course, will be successful implementation when and if the organization decides to move forward with a full grant application. I'm hopeful that will occur.
- The organization has strong leadership and successful working models from other states to base their program on, from which you could expect a successful outcome. The budget looks reasonable and it has had several partnerships and has hosted a Fellow from the Island Institute so are aware that specific reporting requirements are necessary – the organization would need to be tightened some and it was noted in the narrative – Volunteer coordinator would need to be designated to oversee the AmeriCorps and the program's lead person would be newly hired.

Grant Task Force Report to Commission-- Planning Proposal

Recommendation: Fund the proposal. [Note: There are minor corrections and a clarification needed in the budget.]

Legal Applicant: Haystack Mountain School of Crafts

Application ID: 23AC256345

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

Type: Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Cost Reimbursement

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: 08/15/2023 to 06/15/2024

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

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating	39,935		16,973
Member Support	n/a		n/a
Indirect (Admin)	608		2,433
CNCS Award amount	40,543	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	19,406
% sharing proposed	67.63%		32.37%
% share required	n/a*		n/a*
Cost-per-member proposed	n/a	*This grant would use the ARP match replacement option to cover the local share, so it is really all AC funds.	

Program Description (executive summary):

Haystack Mountain School of Crafts proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program to serve Hancock County, Maine. It will address workforce development and access to STEM education that impacts the lives of youth and young adults in the AmeriCorps focus area of workforce development. The AmeriCorps federal ARP investment \$60,000 will support planning activities carried out in collaboration with the Haystack Fab Lab. No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.

The Haystack Fab Lab holds the potential to positively impact the local community by promoting workforce development and supporting economically disadvantaged youth through STEM education programs. The Fab Lab's mission is to provide comprehensive STEM education training and skill development, which addresses the lack of access to STEM education and training in underserved communities. By leveraging the resources and expertise of the Haystack Fab Lab, a community Fab Lab can deliver hands-on workshops and training programs in coding, computer-aided design (CAD), 3D printing, and robotics. In addition to technical training, the Fab Lab offers a platform for mentoring, coaching, and skill development, which enhances participants' employability and job prospects. This program is well-suited to host AmeriCorps service members to expand and deliver its programmatic mission.

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.

Local schools, job centers, and employers in Hancock County, MIT Bits and Atoms program

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.*

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
Rationale & Approach/Program Design Section (50%)		
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 Overall Rating 25%		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Strong	25
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
Total		88.75
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		
• Alignment with Funding Priorities	Strong	18
• Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Adequate	2.25
• Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	2.25
• Potential for innovation and/or replication	Adequate	2.25
• Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Adequate	2.25

Preferences from RFA Announcement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together 	Adequate	7.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum 	Strong	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people 	Adequate	7.5
Financial Plan	Adequate	11.25
Fiscal Systems		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements 	Adequate	3.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management practices 	Strong	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability 	Strong	5
Grant Readiness	Adequate	11.25
Total Task Force Score		88.25
Peer Review Score		88.75
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		177

Final Assessment of Application:

- Forward or fund
- 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 errors in budget calculation need correction. Clarification of match replacement amount needed given there is a local share entered in the Source of Funds screen. National Service Criminal History Background Checks are not required for planning grants – item can be removed. Indirect cost allocation needs clarification.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Program Design.

Need and Target Community(ies)

- The only reason I haven't delivered a "Strong" rating is that the target population, while clearly identified as economically disadvantaged youth ages 12-24 in underserved communities, could have been more specifically identified. The application says "many" of the 16-24 population lack a high school diploma or post-secondary education. How many? As another example, the applicant claims that job market participation by the 16-24 population is below the state average. What is that percentage and how far below the average does it represent? This is just fine tuning, I admit, but in my view it would strengthen the application.
- 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. The applicant outlined its intended community- Deer Isle and surrounding communities. The current job market is heavily affected by climate change and the economic disparity in the community does not lead to diverse work opportunities for young people- some statistics are listed to assert claim While not entirely communicating the “severe or prevalent” it is clear how the applicant would provide a benefit to the local communities. The applicant does not specify any impacted individuals consulted not specific organizations currently working in the sector though has expressed intentions to partner with schools and job training agencies. The applicant outlined their intended demographic of youth but does not specify if or how there would be a system or determining qualifications of “economically disadvantaged” or how no versus low cost would be factored.

Response to Need

- Ultimately, the planning effort is intended to result in a broader provision of existing programs and services related to comprehensive STEM education and training and skills development through the Fab Lab. This scaling up of the Fab Lab offerings will expose youth and young adults training and education in the use of computer programs, digital design, 3D printing, electronics, advanced manufacturing, robotics, and integration, as an alternate pathway to employment and career development. The Haystack Fab Lab has extensive experience in this area and a planning grant would permit the creation of additional partnerships in the delivery of their educational services-- all well described in this section.
- This section of the application responds to all criteria. The argument shows this element has had some success or could possibly succeed as described. The highest resource for the project needed is capacity that could be met through adding AC Members. Having more people/members would allow more partner sites and programs to run concurrently. AC members would be largely the mechanism of delivery of services of the program. Applicant has worked with several local schools that would be interested in continuing to work with applicant and could be a site for the AC members work, though they have not been listed to meet the need on their own. The scope of work proposed to be taken on by AC members is quite robust and potentially overly ambitious for the demographic of AC applicant but could be refined in planning process. Outside of the expertise of the local need from job centers and schools the applicant is the only listed resource of expertise in terms of the resource and program development outlined.

Readiness for Planning

- The Haystack Fab Lab has an existing network of community stakeholders and partners that they will expand upon through this planning process. They propose a community program vision that relies upon their existing expertise in delivering in-classroom instruction, hands-on workshops, internships, after-school programs, and training in the areas cited earlier, all to the end of improving participants' employability and job prospects. They are well-equipped over their 12-year operation to undertake this planning effort.
- This section of the application responds to all criteria. The argument shows this element has had some success or could possibly succeed as described. The applicant's mission and the proposed work of AC members is clear- implementing stem education opportunities. Currently the applicant has limited experience in formal volunteer initiatives- only 2 weeks per year to preform lab maintenance and other facility needs, however the applicant appears to have a database and system that could be adapted in the planning period to meet the needs of the AC program. The applicant will need to- by their own account spend time to develop more criteria and systems specific to volunteers and AC members. The applicant does outline similar models such as internships in another section- though the intention of the internship is shorter and for younger individuals. The lead individuals appear to have robust experience in their field and are both AC alumni- While the applicant outlines their intention to engage the advisory committee and the types of individuals to attend, they do specify who will be there, how they will be recruited or any tool to assess that all voices are represented.

Expertise and Training

- The establishment of the Fab Lab was done in collaboration with MIT in 2011, using MIT's technical expertise, and also relying upon other national models for the Lab's creation. Dr. James Rutter, the Project Lead, offers sound personal expertise and training, supported by Dr. Scott Byrd, a research scientist, staff, and an advisory body of community stakeholders; this lends credibility to their notion that they have sufficient training and expertise overall to conduct the next phase of foundational work to broaden their services.
- 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 applicant and lead faculty outline thorough experience in developing theory of change and logic models and appear to be experts in their field of STEM education. The many initiatives taken on by the applicant demonstrate skill in developing outcomes, outcomes and frequency of activities however does not have experience specifically as it pertains to AC programs members or general volunteers as outlined in the criteria. The applicant alludes to but does not specify the following expertise: Designing

AmeriCorps member training and supervision plans Establishing or negotiating agreements with partners on roles, responsibilities, and commitment of resources. Develop a plan to keep the community and stakeholders aware of AmeriCorps activities and accomplishments Design a system for internal monitoring of program compliance and accountability Establish a protocol for securing the grantee share (match support) for the program.

Organizational Capability.

Organizational Background and Staffing

- Haystack itself opened in 1961 as an international craft school. Their Fab Lab has twelve years under their belt in STEM education and training. They have scientists externally and internally with whom they work to shape the Fab Lab offerings. They have experience, knowledge, capacity, and will to extend their reach to positive ends.
- the argument shows this element shows high levels of success or highly likely to be successful. The applicant outlines the extensive experience in the area of the project and appears to have the needed staff to engage in planning. The challenge of the applicant currently operating seasonally seems to present a pressing challenge but could be worked through during the planning process. The applicant does appear to be early in the planning of the program.

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 see nothing out of the ordinary in this presentation
- This section of the application responds to all criteria The argument shows this element has had some success or could possibly succeed as described. The budget is simple but straight forward and meets the outlined allowable costs. I would be curious for the applicant to expound on what the workshop supply fees are as it amounts to over 5% of the budget-however the information as is adequate.

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 (2) No (0)

Comments:

- They have a history of doing what they propose to do on a broader scale. They have excellent expertise in the STEM education and training field. They have identified the need for youth and young adults who are economically disadvantaged in Hancock County, and an existing network within which to work as they plan for expansion. They have lined up the need to conduct asset-mapping, building upon their network of stakeholders, furthering their STEM education programs, creating evaluation tools, and conducting comprehensive strategic planning. They have a vision, the means to make a difference, a population in need, and the capacity to reach their goals.
- While the applicant does seem to currently lack expertise or readiness in executing an AmeriCorps program they appear to have the needed to staffing, program idea and partners to execute planning effectively if funded. Given more time, technical assistance and funding, concerns around program could be addressed during this planning phase.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- The proposal was very clearly presented. I did not have a lack of clarity at any point in reading the application, only a desire for more specific information in certain instances.
- Some of the more technical aspects would be helpful to clarify but does not preclude them from success if funded. It would be useful for the applicant to more specifically identify some the process used in identifying partners, students, or stake holders for their committee. Creating or choosing a specific metric or system of

determining “economically disadvantaged” or how the selections are targeting the key populations aside from geography would be useful, additionally clarifying skills in specific terms if AC would help moving forward.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- This is a strong proposal that we should most definitely support.
 - The applicant clearly has a deep expertise in the education and STEM Programing and impressive ties to initiatives in the education space. While the applicant has experience as an Alumni, it seems important to center the volunteerism and AC elements moving forward, or more specifically expounding on the internship program as a starting place. The consultant appears to be on a limited basis, and otherwise is being taken on by current staff with many other responsibilities- perhaps expounding on other supports would be advised
-

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Section A: Proposal Alignment with Funding Priority and Model

- Regarding the degree to which the community need targeted by the proposal is aligned with one of the funding priorities stated in the RFP – The Haystack Fab Lab as stated in the overview would focus on promoting workforce development and support economically disadvantage youth through STEM education programs and to ensure project sustainability and long term impact for the communities served. This aligns the program with the National Service focus areas of Economic opportunity, Education and state focus area of Capacity building.
- To the extent that the program serves the communities described 2522.450(c) in the area served received a rating of adequate due to the small area served. Though the program stated it would be rolled out county wide (Hancock County), it has focused on the Blue Hill Peninsula/Deer Isle and local surrounding area. Concern is how they classified economically disadvantaged youth 16-25. What percentage is that of the total community it plans to serve. They could have made a better case with the addition of statistics in the proposal.
- Similarly, to the extent to which the proposal adds to the AmeriCorps grant portfolio goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse. The project received an adequate. From the write up in the project proposal could be an innovative use of national service and, if successful, could feasibly be replicated in other parts of the state as well as nationally as mentioned under readiness for planning. In regards to the strength of evidence the program planning can be successfully carried out. The proposal stated under Service History that Haystack has been working closely with the target population and community stakeholders for over 10 years, so they know the challenges and opportunities. Under program experience was stated that the Haystack Fab Lab provided comprehensive educational workshops and capacity-building initiatives for the economically disadvantaged youth residing in Deer Isle and the Blue Hill Peninsula. Also stated that the relationship between Haystack and MIT's Center for Bits and Atoms has been a valuable resource for the project since the founding of the Haystack Fab Lab in 2011. This collaboration has fostered strong ties with the broader Fab Lab community, with Haystack hosting MIT graduate students, post-doctoral students, and professionals each year to collaborate on educational programming. So with strong relationships already established a path for a successful program could be established.
- There appears to be a core of strong leadership. Haystack's Technology Director, Dr. James Rutter, will serve as the project's lead staff. Haystack's Fab Lab Community Assistant (Phoebe Zildjian) will also play a key role in the planning project. Finally, an external consultant, Dr. Scott Byrd, will play a major role in the planning project and assist Haystack with developing the necessary systems to facilitate an AmeriCorps Service project. And under Staffing - a significant strength of Haystack's staff is that there is a lot of experience and technical knowledge related to developing and running community-based programs like the one described in the proposal. Haystack also has a core administrative staff and is a small organization that can work closely with each other efficiently and effectively. The organization also has experience with other federal

programs and reporting requirements which is also a plus. In particular they mentioned a NOAA - MARINE DEBRIS & PLASTIC RECYCLING INITIATIVE. In 2021, Maine Sea Grant and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts received funding from Maine's Department of Environmental Protection to develop a system for recycling plastic waste from the aquaculture and fishing industries. The budget narrative look good and the only concern was a lack of trackable volunteer times and positions.

- Would like to have seen more information on who is being served and how they plan to identify these youth.
- The program is directly aligned with the VM priority of workforce development.
- Hancock County qualifies as a distressed area per staff report;
- The focus on stem learning and high-tech fabrication is something new to our grant portfolio and appears to be potentially quite innovative; although the program is potentially similar to some other mentorship programs we have sponsored, it is unique in a number of aspects. At the same time, this does not seem to be the type of program that could be easily replicated elsewhere in Maine, at least on a short-term basis, given its reliance on a high-tech lab and highly trained STEM leadership.
- The proposal is aligned with the mission of the agency, particularly its Fab Lab and its effort to expand involvement in the local community.
- The organization has strong relationships with local schools, businesses, and related groups and is tied in to a national fab lab network. Currently offers a high school internship program and after school program.
- Haystack is exceptionally well funded and financially stable with a large endowment. Given this, local share should not be a problem.
- Although the organization has a small staff, it seems to be generally stable and the organization has the ability to cover for staff turnover and the ability to quickly recruit replacements.
- The staff lead for project planning has been working closely with a group of stakeholders who will be the basis for the advisory committee to work on this project.
- Haystack has some experience with volunteers; however, that experience is in a quite different context primarily involving short-term volunteers coming to campus to prepare the site for sessions. It also has some experience with high school interns. Volunteer management is an area that will require some work to build on what systems and procedures are currently in place.
- Haystack staff appear quite well prepared to engage in the planning effort. The role of the various partners will be an area that has to be developed as the planning proceeds.

Section B: Preferences from RFA Announcement

- The proposal is from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together - The planning grant will evaluate and utilize an existing community Fab Lab managed by Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, which has the potential to offer hands-on workshops, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs in a variety of STEM topics. The Fab Lab is well-positioned to work directly with community stakeholders on real-world projects that are contextually relevant, benefiting the youth as a more engaging learning opportunity, as well as a resource to community organizations and businesses to help solve problems. The project team will work with local schools, job centers, and employers to identify services and skills that can be integrated into the Fab Lab, aligned with the needs of the communities. Part of this planning work will research barriers and challenges around STEM education and workforce development. The planning team will work closely with a group of stakeholders to identify essential skills to be integrated into mentoring programs at the Fab Lab. The campus is located on Deer Isle in Hancock County with the idea to spread the program through Hancock County with the AmeriCorp support. Under Overview - The Haystack Fab Lab holds the potential to positively impact the local community by promoting workforce development and supporting economically disadvantaged youth through STEM education

programs. The Fab Lab's mission is to provide comprehensive STEM education training and skill development, which addresses the lack of access to STEM education and training in underserved communities. By leveraging the resources and expertise of the Haystack Fab Lab, a community Fab Lab can deliver hands-on workshops and training programs in coding, computer-aided design (CAD), 3D printing, and robotics. And Under NEEDS and Target Communities - This proposed AmeriCorps program aims to address the economic challenges faced by Deer Isle and the surrounding rural communities of Hancock County in Maine. These challenges arise due to the shifting climate's impact on the fishing industry, a lack of workforce diversity, and inadequate STEM education for the upcoming generation of skilled professionals. This program will provide skill building and workforce development opportunities, focusing on economically disadvantaged youth in underserved communities to counter the effects of historical and systemic inequities. The goal is to break the poverty cycle and foster economic stability and growth within these communities.

- Have they considered partnerships with higher education (community colleges)?
- The proposal is not from a partnership or coalition, although the program itself if implemented may have elements of such in its design. It is not from an organization led or supporting historically marginalized communities. It is located in Hancock County.

Section C: Financial Plan

- All of the above criteria were mostly met in the proposal- All amounts seemed to correspond to the more detailed explanation, however the calculation for CNCs and Commission indirect is off from the amounts I came up with (\$420.12 for commission and \$1680.47 for CNCs using the RFA). All looked to be allowable. I can only assume these are funded from ARP funds so a direct match of the grantee share is not needed. (\$10,000 in Kind match versus program grantee match of \$19,406) There is a 30% match which is needed for ARP funding (actually 32.27% Match) of the Grantee to CNCs funds. Budget is simple and straight forward
- Budget seems to be appropriate to the effort. • Local share will be in-kind personnel and equipment costs.

Section D: Fiscal Systems

- For the first statement - The capacity of the sponsor's financial management system to comply with federal requirements for accounting for public grant funds as evidenced by Operation and Financial Management Survey responses – I rated this as adequate – Even though the organization is familiar with handling federal grants (2021, Maine Sea Grant and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts received funding from Maine's Department of Environmental Protection to develop a system for recycling plastic waste from the aquaculture and fishing industries) and the reporting necessary with those grants they have not established Standards for use of Federal funds. The strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status looks strong and the audit report was clean- no findings. The 990 agrees with the audit. The organization looks to have strong financial backing.
- The agency's finances are extremely strong. The only area that may not be as strong relates to federal grant management. The grant experience discussed in the interview was a grant from NOAA where Haystack is a sub-grantee, and that grant is still active and has not been completed. I anticipate the agency will have no problem adjusting to AC's requirements, but direct federal grantee experience was not indicated. Section

Section E: Grant Readiness

- The agency will be building on some of its current efforts with local educational institutions. It appears to have a strong network of stakeholders. Staff responsibilities seem clear and some staff have previous AC experience.
- Chose adequate for this statement, since in section 2 of the Essential Practices of Volunteer Management several (14) elements were only partially implemented and 8 elements were not being done at all. In section one there was a strong indication of the organization's ability in financial systems, leadership support and partnerships to make the organization successful in the Planning Grant. In the statement made in the narrative- the program will be able to leverage existing relationships and over 10 years of work and have the

potential to design and implement a unique program that may serve as a model for other communities in Maine or rural communities in the United States. Also in the narrative it stated that the service member would also conduct a community asset mapping and needs assessment, meet regularly with community stakeholders, participate in stakeholder group meetings and brainstorming sessions, generate reports and findings from field research and observations, research other models of community engagement from other organizations, and help with creating a program manual with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). This should also in-compass the section 2 deficiencies of volunteer management.

Grant Task Force Report to Commission-- Planning Proposal

Recommendation: Forward or fund only if corrections/clarifications/conditions can be negotiated.

Legal Applicant: Maine Prisoner Re-entry Network

Application ID: 23AC256724

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

Type: Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Cost Reimbursement

Federal Focus Area: Healthy Futures, Economic Opportunity, Capacity Building

Commission Priorities: Public Health

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

Proposed Dates: 09/01/2023 to 07/01/2024

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

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating	45,676		10,600
Member Support	n/a		n/a
Indirect (Admin)	693		4,935
CNCS Award amount	46,369	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	15,535
% sharing proposed	74.9%		25.1%
% share required	n/a*		n/a*
Cost-per-member proposed	n/a	*This grant would use the ARP match replacement option to cover the local share, so it is really all AC funds.	

Program Description (executive summary):

Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program to serve the state of Maine. It will address difficulties with community reintegration after incarceration that impacts the lives of formerly incarcerated citizens in the AmeriCorps focus area(s) of Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures and Capacity Building. The AmeriCorps federal ARP investment \$60,000.00 will support planning activities carried out in collaboration with the Maine Department of Corrections, the three regional workforce boards in Maine and their WIOA funding subrecipients, the Maine Association of Recovery Residences, several Maine Career Centers, and other community stakeholders. No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.

The focus of the proposed initiative will be reintegration into Maine's communities during and following a period of justice involvement. The Welcome Home: Acclimating to Living Life Outside Prison (WHALLOP) program will be an ongoing and long-term support with a focus on increasing resiliency through local capacity building that is rooted in the principle that those who have lived experience with incarceration and have demonstrated success in navigating the various hurdles and stigmas associated with a criminal history are in the best possible position to teach others how to do the same.

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 Department of Corrections; 3 unnamed regional workforce boards; Maine Association of Recovery Residences; several unnamed Maine Career Centers; Eastern Maine Development Corporation; and Goodwill Industries; state Office of Behavioral Health, State Prisons, Healthy Acadia.

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.*

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
Rationale & Approach/Program Design Section (50%)		
Need and Target Community(ies)	Weak	7.5
Response to Need	Weak	7.5
Readiness for Planning	Adequate	11.25
Expertise and Training	Weak	2.5
Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Weak	12.5
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	18.75
Total		60
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	13.5
• Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Weak	1.5
• Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	2.25
• Potential for innovation and/or replication	Weak	1.5
• Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Weak	1.5

Preferences from RFA Announcement		
• from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Adequate	7.5
• serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Adequate	7.5
• from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people	Strong Adequate	10
Financial Plan		11.25
Fiscal Systems		
• capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Adequate	3.75
• strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial management practices	Incomplete/ Nonresponsive	0
• strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial status/stability	Weak	2.5
Grant Readiness	Weak	7.5
Total Task Force Score		70.25
Peer Review Score		60
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		130.25

Final Assessment of Application:

- Forward or fund
- Forward or fund only if corrections/clarifications/conditions can be negotiated.
- 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.

- Errors in budget calculation need correction. Clarification of match replacement amount needed given there is a local share entered in the Source of Funds screen. National Service Criminal History Background Checks are not required for planning grants – item can be removed. Indirect cost allocation needs clarification.

Funding is contingent on two conditions:

- A mentor/coach with nonprofit and fund development experience be hired to support development of the organization’s systems and capacity to submit a competitive proposal in the operating grant competition.
- As part of the planning grant activities, the organization consider partnering with a fiscal agent whose human resource and financial management systems have strong and federally compliant performance.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Program Design.

Need and Target Community(ies)

- The narrative was describing an incarceration process and a discussion of theories surrounding what may precipitate crime, rather than providing data on those post-incarceration persons who receive no services/support, or those who receive some support, but eventually return to prison. Very little relevant data provided.
- 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. The community described by applicant refers to individuals in Maine exiting soon to exit or have exited the prison system. Applicant asserts data at a high level of information that is not specific to Maine/Maine residence. Additional data does not add to the argument of specific populations to be served by project. Applicant shares the hierarchy of stress a individual form the justice system may face-many of which operate at a nebulous and high level emotional level. This information while interesting and

may be able to attest across needs is difficult to associate with local data points or outcomes desired by AC programs. The applicant has served many clients that would benefit such a program but has not communicated the consultation of how the program was designed. The applicant clearly communicated current agencies working in services that benefit this population and how this project would more specifically target the need.

Response to Need

- Same concern as above. I did not find a persuasive data-driven presentation as to how great the need is. What, for example, is the failure rate of existing programs, also tied to the recidivism rate. The claim that there is a lack of a holistic approach is entirely believable, but I am uncertain from the presentation as to how this planning grant will remedy that problem.
- 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. While a peer-to-peer model is explored as important to the project the applicant isn't clear on how an AC program or member would be the key resource in addressing the need outlined. The applicant outlines, the program would engage in peer-to-peer model- coaching, mentorship, social relationships and assistance in navigating resources. Similar to case management and a counseling sponsor

Readiness for Planning

- While they are clear about their aim, namely to reduce the recidivism rate in Maine, I am less certain as to how they intend to accomplish this.
- The applicant outlines the programs connection with the federal priorities of healthy futures and local goals of reducing substance use. The applicant currently works with Volunteers and engages them multiple times a year in training. However, does not include the system for documentation of time or outcomes. \ The applicant identified key current staff to take on the current work load and was able to specify the make-up of the advisory committee.

Expertise and Training

- This section might even be substandard, but I have already been critiquing the application severely. I did not find strong expertise in this section. Most of the training referenced is provided by other partners (ex., CIPSS and CCAR).
- The applicant was able to address criteria at a high level, and can address the outcomes of having in the past been through a system of an AC grant so is familiar with the model. The applicant currently has some informal practices and documents that could be modified to accommodate the needs of AC programs and Members but does not currently operate in the formal capacity that would be needed for Ac grant administration. The following criteria was unaddressed : Design a system for internal monitoring of program compliance and accountability Establish a protocol for securing the grantee share (match support) for the program.

Organizational Capability.

Organizational Background and Staffing

- This is a small organization consisting of a two-person Executive Team and a nine-person Advisory Board. It is also a relatively young organization. What i could not uncover from the narrative was the breadth of their work.
- 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. The applicant is able to speak to the expertise hosted by staff and board members of the program. The applicant discusses its on-going growth and the flat nature of leadership, but is not specific in the link to how the management structure or expertise could make successful this project. The applicant appears to be still developing formal systems and does not address systems for collecting information or reporting.

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 %)

- 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. The budget is simple but straight forward and meets the outlined allowable costs.

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 (1) No (1)

Comments:

- The organization seems ill-prepared for the scope of the task they propose to undertake. They seem to lack capacity even for this planning effort or an understanding of what their focus will be. My concern was a suggestion of heavy reliance upon other organizations that already operate in this narrow field to accomplish the planning and implementation. Is what they propose in fact duplicative of existing support services or supplementary to those services. The application lacked a clear statement of how they expect to achieve the holistic approach they are seeking.
- The intention of the program would be to allow the applicant to develop over the year in the areas that are weaker. I think there is enough information to with much technical support and guidance fund the applicant to plan for further programing. The applicant speaks to a specific need that is not being similarly addressed by any other sector and is using a format that is not typically lent to an AC/federal grant model. With more time and resources, I believe the concept could be better tailored to be successful for both parties. The applicant has demonstrated that while they are still growing, and perhaps lack the experience in applying for this format of grant, they excel at relationship building and have many stakeholders and partners that I think could assist in the program success if funded.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- The applicant would benefit from being able to clarify the work they are looking to do in specific concrete terms in activities, outcomes, and data relevant to specific regions. Additionally, as the applicant works through developing formal structures, tools or procedures need to be more clearly outlined and explained.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- Overall, I regret being so harsh in my critique, but I do believe they are not prepared to undertake the planning until more focus is achieved and concrete actions are stipulated.
- The applicant self-identified previous challenges navigating certain aspects of the application and logic model, and could benefit from further support navigating the models, techniques, and tools. It would be my recommendation if funded to encourage the applicant to adjust the budget to accommodate training for staff to become more familiar with formal processes, tools, documentation. The applicant has high degree of understanding for the community they serve, how to build relationships and networks and would benefit in this technical year in having resources dedicated to complimentary skill sets. The proposed project approaches an important and specific need in a holistic model that is difficult to translate into outcomes and specifics, while my overall scoring using the rubric reflects the formal assessment I believe there is room to build on the current opportunity.
- In the context of the application, they say that, in one instance, another organization is providing services to some of the recently released individuals and the applicant would “pick up the slack.” What is not discernable is how many people will they work with, who does what – they are coming into a space already occupied.
- There is a sense the applicant can see a planning outcome but portraying that in a grant applicant format needs development in this applicant. This one did not follow the prompts or provide the information. Can

they develop this ability during the planning grant so an operating grant would make a strong case? Maybe need a coach or technical writer to help them translate what they experience and envision onto paper.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Section A: Proposal Alignment with Funding Priority and Model

- The degree to which the community need targeted by the proposal is aligned with one of the funding priorities stated in the RFP – The proposal falls partially (Thus an adequate rating) into a number of the funding priorities – among those are Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures and commission priority of Public Health. Extent to which the applicant proposes to serve communities described in 2522.450(c). Again an adequate rating since the narrative spent a lot of time on the theory of why people get incarcerated versus spend more about how the program would help support the individuals, 2522,450(c) A severely economically distressed community (Former prisoner re-entry). The extent to which the proposal adds to the AmeriCorps grant portfolio goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse. Here the demographics are incarcerated individuals re-entering society and being looked at for the entire state. The extent to which the proposal could be an innovative use of national service and, if successful, could feasibly be replicated in other parts of the state. If successful, the program and fully developed could be easily portable to other states and serve as an example of integration. The strength of evidence the program planning can be successfully carried out. Here I have given this a weak rating. Understandable this is a relatively a new program that still need a lot of planning and has a very small budget. Understanding the requirements of a National Service program is not fully indicated in the applicant’s narrative or the bookkeeping that also follows.
- The goal is to reduce recidivism, but the application provides little to no data about this target population. How are they being identified to be served? As they serving all who are reentering into the community or just some? Data in terms of post incarceration is lacking. How did they determine this was the need? No rural preference claimed. What about other programs already in place, coaching, mentoring, are they adding to that in some way or developing their own program? How specifically will this money and this program reduce recidivism rates? There are not a lot of formal systems in place, and this is a very small organization with some familiarity of AC. What are the regional workforce boards? Who are they? And WIOA funding recipients, who are they and how do they flow into this work?
- The program’s focus his healthy futures. It also would address economic development and is related to workforce development
- The program is state-wide and the extent to which it would serve distressed communities.
- The program would contribute to the balance of our portfolio by addressing an under-served and marginalized community.
- The program could be innovative in its approach to assisting the reintegration of criminally justice involved individuals into the community through what appears to be a peer mentorship/navigating system. While it is proposed to operate statewide, the extent of the population needing services is unclear. As a result, it is possible, although perhaps unlikely given the limited number of groups operating in this context, that it might serve as a model that others might emulate.
- While the agency is still in the process of developing its first strategic plan, this program fits well within its mission to reduce recidivism in Maine through local approaches to build community and bridge the gap between communities and individuals reentering from the criminal justice system.
- While relatively new, the agency has a developed relationship with important stakeholders and clients within the larger criminal justice/corrections arena and is currently serving clients. • Financial stability is an area of concern given the youth of the organization and lack of information about its financial status given no audit and no detailed 990. During the interview, the agency noted that one of the planning tasks will be to identify funding sources for the program to meet the local share.

- To date, leadership of the organization has been stable. However, core executive staff is fairly small. • The agency proposes to include many of the groups it has existing relationships within the planning process. The anticipated members of the Planning Team are outlined in their proposal.
- While the agency was initially all volunteer and continues to use volunteers, it does not have a formalized volunteer management system.
- Given the agencies relationships with various stakeholders, it appears likely that the potential partners in planning and implementing the program will be able to work together to refine the program and clarify exactly how it will be organized and implemented.

Section B: Preferences from RFA Announcement

- Proposal is from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together to implement a common approach to a community problem. – This rated adequate to weak but the organization does have a few common partnerships noted in the write-up such as the Department of Corrections, Eastern Maine Development Corporation and Goodwill Industries. There appears to be little community support at this point and the focus of prisoner re-entry network has fallen to the applicant. Preference for rural-urban has been rated as adequate since this will be a statewide program and the preferred counties are in the state though not a focus of the applicant of one of the preferred counties. I have rated the Proposal is from an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people strong since the leadership comes from the community they are trying to serve and understands the issues they are trying to address.
- The applicant has strong partnerships and experience with the identified population.
- The proposal is not from a partnership or coalition, although the program itself if implemented may have elements of such in its design. While it may have a presence in the designated rural communities, it is not clear that it would. It is from an organization led or supporting historically marginalized communities.

Section C: Financial Plan

- I have rated this section adequate but could have been convinced to go weak since there are several errors in the budget such as Travel costs, Admin/Indirect costs calculations, Fringe costs calculations. The applicant also said they were going to use ARP funding but also shows an additional Grant for funding to meet the match. The budgeted amounts look reasonable though supplies may be a little low.
- Fairly basic financial plan. More questions about the applicant's capacity, expertise, formal systems to implement this grant. May need a high level of technical assistance.
- Budget seems to be appropriate to the effort.
- • Some minor errors need to be corrected
- • Sewall Foundation Grant is IDed for local match (which may not be required?)

Section D: Fiscal Systems

- From the Operation and Financial Management Survey responses the organization meets the criteria for handling and complying with Federal requirements for accounting for public grant funds. However, it has not had an audit done and it has only a postcard 990 – meaning funding is less than \$50,000. I could not ascertain the financial stability of the organization.
- They have not been through an audit. Fiscal seems fairly basic.
- It's hard to evaluate the agency's fiscal management systems absent information from an audit or financial review. They indicate that they can comply with accounting requirements and are currently managing and MDHHS grant and have apparently had/have a USDOJ grant, so it appears they can adequately manage and account for grant funds

Section E: Grant Readiness

- The applicant appears to have strong partnerships throughout the state.
- Based on the lack of information in the application, it seems that the agency is actually entering into a pre-planning stage. The exact nature of the program they are proposing is not detailed; the information

supporting need (which I don't question), isn't very specific to Maine, and the intervention is unclear with no data about program models, effectiveness of interventions, etc. I would very much like to support this effort because of the well-known issues associated with recidivism and the population they propose to serve (and would be open to doing so), it seems that this might be a higher risk proposal than the other two planning grants we are reviewing. Similarly, it is likely that staff would have to spend more time working with this group.

- The organization still communicates to their board verbally as stated in the interview. There appears to be very little written documentation or requirements to do so. It does look like they issue quarterly narratives on their other Grants. The organization needs a lot of support to prep to be able to manage AmeriCorps members. Volunteers to date are managed by the individual project managers but with a small volunteer pool this may work for them at this point. Consistent volunteer management across the organization was not mentioned. The strategic plan was not developed at the time for this review, though the objectives and desired outcomes were mentioned in the narrative. This is a relative new organization and these deficiencies would be expected as they grow and get these systems in place.



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

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

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

Name (please print): Edward Barrett

Signature: Edward A. Barrett

Date: 4-19-23

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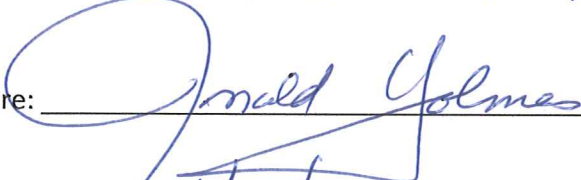
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Name (please print): Ronald Holmes

Signature: 

Date: 7/24/23

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Name (please print):

Jacinda Goodwin

Signature:

Date:

12-7-22

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Volunteer Maine

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

voice: (207) 624-7792

service.commission@maine.gov

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Name (please print): F. Celeste Branham

Signature: 

Date: 4/24/2023

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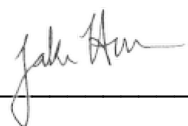
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Name (please print): Jake Hurner

Signature: 

Date: 4-22-23

[For Commission use only - - Date received: 4/26/2023]