

Award Justification Statement
RFA 202502026 - Maine Rural State AmeriCorps Grant

I. Summary

Volunteer Maine, the state service commission, awards *grants* of federal AmeriCorps program resources to community-based agencies (public and nonprofit). This RFA solicited proposals from organizations that had never received an AmeriCorps grant and would recruit a small number of participants (between 2 and 5 FTEs). The grant period is three (3) years with 12-month annual budget periods serving as the basis for adding funds. Programs serving rural areas were a priority along with programs that addressed community issues related to public health, workforce development, housing, climate action, or community resilience.

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 Rural State 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 36 and 37 of the RFA.

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

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

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

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

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

It also will consider information gathered in a structured interview of representatives of the grant applicant. The representatives must include the proposed project director plus personnel responsible for finances and human resources. The interview will be conducted through remote technology and recorded. Task Force members will review the recording as part of their assessment tasks. The Task Force will use the following weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 25 points Funding Priority Alignment, 10 points Program Model, 15 points Commission Preferences (rural, partnerships, marginalized communities), 10 points Financial Plan, 15 points Fiscal Systems, 10 points Past Performance, and 15 points for Grant Readiness for a possible total of 100 points. Upon completion of the Task Force review, the scores from Phase One and Phase Two will be combined to produce a single review score. The Grant Selection and Performance Task Force then makes its final recommendations to the full Maine 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. External peer reviewers: Madelyn Hennessey, Anne Louise Rice and Alsina Brenenstuhl. Grants Task Force peer reviewers: Ed Barrett and Kelly Day.

III. Qualifications & Experience.

(excerpt pg 25 of RFA) Applicants must operate an AmeriCorps program only in Maine. Eligible types of organizations are public or private non-profits, State/county/local units of government, higher ed institutions, faith-based organizations, labor organizations, federally recognized Tribes, and regional organizations. All applicants must have an existing physical presence in the community where AmeriCorps members will serve. Organizations must have an official IRS employer identification number. Applicants will need to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier with the federal System for Award Management and have an active registration. Only organizations that have never been awarded an AmeriCorps grant may apply. Agencies that have hosted AmeriCorps members but were not fiscally responsible for the program are eligible. Eligible organizations that are primarily female or minority managed or led, and agencies within or primarily recruiting from designated labor surplus areas are encouraged to apply.

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

- IV. Proposed Services.** Operate the AmeriCorps program approved in the application for up to three years.
- V. Cost Proposal.** This grant program awards a flat amount per 1700 hours of service by AmeriCorps members. The amount for this competition was \$27,000 per 1700 hours.
- VI. Conclusion.** The sole proposal submitted addressed the RFA priority for mental health and was deemed to have met the criteria for funding eligibility.



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



DATE: January 8, 2026

ADDRESS: Hospice Volunteers of Somerset County
165 Madison Avenue
Skowhegan, ME 04976

Dear Linda Mackenzie:

Congratulations on your recent Conditional Grant Award. Volunteer Maine, the Maine Service Commission, is committed to assisting all awardees as they navigate the pre-award process. There are several important details to consider and items to complete prior to the funding period. Please review this information carefully and share it with any applicable staff.

Time Line

Awards & Forms

All awards made by Volunteer Maine are sub-grants made from Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) awards to Volunteer Maine itself. As such, we cannot issue a Cooperative Agreement for funding to you until CNCS enters the notice of grant award into *eGrants*, the federal grant management system. Your award. Therefore, officially remains conditional until that occurs. The Cooperative Agreement will be forwarded to you for signature as soon as we receive this federal notice of award. Once the agreement is returned, it will be submitted to the Bureau of Purchases for encumbrance.

To assist in the preparation of the Cooperative Agreement and to set your agency up in Volunteer Maine's electronic grants management software there are a few tasks to complete immediately.

- National Service Grantee Report Authorization Form: Please complete the list of approved program users for our grant management platform, *OnCorps Reports*, and *The Group Hub* using the Report Authorization Form and return immediately.
- Board Authorization Signature Form: Please obtain signatures on this form for those who are authorized to sign grant transactions, such as contracts, payment requests, progress reports, etc.
- Organizational Logo: *OnCorps* logins for funded programs appear on a shared screen. Please forward a small logo file to use in identifying your program if you have not already done so.

Training

You will receive via email the dates of our required trainings for new grantee staff, which will occur via remote conferencing. We will send additional details as they come up, but you and as many staff as possible should plan on attending the trainings.



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Online Management Systems

eGrants/MyAmeriCorps Portal

CNCS uses the *My AmeriCorps Portal* (<https://egrants.cns.gov>) as their Web based management system for AmeriCorps member recruitment, enrollment and management of education award related information. Grantees access the *Portal* via the *eGrants* system that you used to submit your original application. This is a federal site; the Volunteer Maine has no management role in the use of this site. It is important for you to set up permissions for those who will be using the site.

Instructions on using eGrants can be found at:

<https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/webhelp/!SSL!/WebHelp/eGrants.htm#>>pan=2>

eGrants System rules can be found here: https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/eSPAN_ROB.pdf

As a new grantee, you will not have access to member management tools in the Portal until the notice of grant award is issued in that system.

OnCorps Reports

Volunteer Maine uses *OnCorps Reports* as its regular grant management system, and we will add your staff upon receipt of your National Service Grantee Report Authorization Form. This free platform provides you with program, member, and fiscal management tools, including:

- All AmeriCorps Member information must be uploaded to *OnCorps* from the *My AmeriCorps Portal*, or entered individually;
- Program outcome data are managed through *OnCorps*;
- Monthly financial reporting and quarterly program reporting is also done using *OnCorps*;
- Member and supervisor time sheets may be recorded in *OnCorps* or another approved system;
- A variety of other program management tools are also available in the system.

The Group Hub

Volunteer Maine also utilizes a *Basecamp* software system we refer to as the Group Hub for a variety of communication purposes and to share working papers and files. Access permission to the Hub is included on the same form as *OnCorps* permissions.

Invitations to access *OnCorps* and the Group Hub are sent directly from the software after we receive your Authorization Form.

Additional Considerations

During the pre-award period, it is important to set up your program for success. Your cooperative agreement will include variety of tasks that require some advance preparation, which you should begin considering as soon as possible.

Local Share of Grant Funding (AKA 'Match'): If match is derived from third party organizations, in whole or part, you will be required to submit documentation that local match has been identified through letters of commitment from donors/host sites by the end of the first quarter. If you have partners not identified in your application or from whom you did not secure written commitments, you will need to secure written commitments. Now is a good time to inform all partners of your funding and remind them of their role(s) in supporting your program.



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Advisory Council: All AmeriCorps programs require broad-based local input. This takes the form of an advisory council that includes representatives from the community served, participants (i.e. members) in the program, community-based agencies providing services in the area of impact, and local labor organizations representing your employees (if applicable).

List of Program Sites: Volunteer Maine requires that program service sites and site information not specifically identified in the grant application be approved prior to placing members. Submit any additions to your site list for approval as soon as possible. The listing should include:

- Organization name
- Site Address
- Site supervisor(s) with email contact information, and
- A description of how the service activities at the site align with and contribute to the approved program design.

CNCS requires that programs enter member site locations in the *My AmeriCorps Portal* (once you have access). Because members must be assigned to a site, this information must be entered before you can enroll AmeriCorps Members. *OnCorps* requires the same order of precedence; sites and supervisors must be entered before members.

Additional useful general AmeriCorps guidance and materials can be found via the following link to the CNCS website for managing AmeriCorps programs: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-ameri-corps-grants>.

We look forward to working with you this year!

Sincerely,

Jamie McFaul
Grants Officer

Forms **to return** via email to jamie.mcfaul@maine.gov:

- (1) PDF Form: Board Authorization Signature Form VM FILLABLE
- (2) PDF Form: Grantee Report Auth Form VM
- (3) Organizational logo in .jpg format

Application ID 55,440
 Applicant Name 25ES278494

Peer Reviewer Results

Program Design	41.25
Organizational Capability	31.5
Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy	14.00
Peer Review Final Score	86.75

Recommendation to Grants TF Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation

Task Force Review Results

Proposal Alignment and Model	25
Program Model	8.12
Preferences from RFP	15
Past Performance	7.5
Financial Plan	7.5
Fiscal Systems	8.75
Grant Readiness	11.25
Task Force Final Score	83.12

Final Application Score 169.87

Funding Requested

59,400

Rank order for funding (high to low)

1

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: 25ES278494 PROGRAM NAME: AmeriCorps Expanding Hospice in Somers
 FUNDS REQUESTED: 59,400 APPLICANT NAME: HVOSC

INITIAL
COMMENTS: LINK TO DOC
 Exec Summary
 Conforms?

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						
	Allison Foster	Sophia Doremus	Debra Bare-Rogers	Alex Williams		
Program Design (50 total possible)						
The Community and Need	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong		Adequate 6
Logic Model	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Strong		Adequate 6
Evidence of Effectiveness	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Adequate		Adequate 6
Funding Priority and Preferences	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Strong		Strong 3
Member Training	Adequate	Strong	Strong	Strong		Strong 6
Member Supervision	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Strong		Strong 6
Member Experience	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	Strong		Adequate 4.5
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Strong		Adequate 3.75
Program Design Score						41.25

RATER -- Initial Ratings						
	Allison Foster	Sophia Doremus	Debra Bare-Rogers	Alex Williams		
Organizational Capability (25 total possible)						
Organizational Background & Staffing	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Strong		Strong 18
Commitment to DEIA	Adequate	Adequate	Incomplete/Nonrespon	Strong		Adequate 13.5
Org. Capability Score						31.5

RATER -- Initial ratings						
	Allison Foster	Sophia Doremus	Debra Bare-Rogers	Alex Williams		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 total possible)						
Member Recruitment	Adequate	Adequate	Incomplete/SNonresp	Strong		Weak 3.50
Member Retention	Strong	Strong	Incomplete/Nonrespon	Adequate		Weak 3.50
Data Collection	Adequate	Weak	Incomplete/Nonrespon	Strong		Weak 2.50
Budget Alignment to Program Design	Adequate	Adequate	Substandard	Strong		Adequate 4.50

FINAL SECTION TOTALS and RECOMMENDATION

Final Consensus Score	Program Design	Organizational Capability	Cost Effectiveness/ Budget Adequacy		Total Score
	41.25	31.5	14		86.75

Recommendation: 80-89, Recommend for Further Review

Grant Task Force Tech Reivew and Assessment Section

INITIAL RATINGS> Below are the initial ratings offered by GTF Members after their independent reading and assessment of the proposals. These are the starting points for your determination of a final rating of the application narrative.

LINK TO COMMENTS

	Rater -- initial ratings					
	Kelly Day	Mary Krebs	William Guindon	Edward Barrett	Consensus rating	Point Value
Proposal Alignment (25%) Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Strong	25
					Section Score	25
Program Model (10%)	Rater -- initial ratings					
	Kelly Day	Mary Krebs	William Guindon	Edward Barrett	Consensus rating	Point Value
Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	2.5
Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	1.875
Potential for innovation and/or replication	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	1.875
Strength of evidence planning process will succeed	Weak	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	1.875
					Section Score	8.125
Preferences from RFP Announcement (15%)	Rater -- initial ratings					
	Kelly Day	Mary Krebs	William Guindon	Edward Barrett	Consensus rating	Point Value
submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people	Strong	Strong	Strong	Adequate	Strong	7.5
serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	7.5
					Section Score	15
Past Performance (10%)	Rater -- initial ratings					
	Kelly Day	Mary Krebs	William Guindon	Edward Barrett	Consensus rating	Point Value
Prior Grant management experience	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	7.5
					Section Score	7.5
	Rater -- initial ratings					
	Kelly Day	Mary Krebs	William Guindon	Edward Barrett	Consensus rating	Point Value

Financial Plan (15%)	Adequate	Strong	Adequate	Adequate
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Adequate	7.5
Section Score	7.5

	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Kelly Day	Mary Krebs	William Guindon	Edward Barrett
Fiscal Systems (15%)				
capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial management practices	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
strength of the sponsoring organization's financial status/stability	Weak	Adequate	Weak	Adequate

Consensus rating	Point Value
Weak	2.5
Weak	2.5
Adequate	3.75
Section Score	8.75

	Rater -- initial ratings			
	Kelly Day	Mary Krebs	William Guindon	Edward Barrett
Grant Readiness (15%)				
The applicant's start up plan is detailed, complete, and demonstrates ability to stand up the program on time with resources in place (including staff leadership).	Adequate	0	Adequate	Adequate
The applicant's systems, policies, experience, partnerships, leadership support, financial and personnel resources, etc. are fully prepared to implement the program as of the start date.	Adequate	0	Adequate	Adequate

Consensus rating	Point Value
Adequate	5.625
Adequate	5.625
Section Score	11.25

GTF Total Score: 83.125
Peer Reviewer Score 86.75
Combined Score 169.875
of possible 200

*hlookup pre-programmed

Recommendation: Fund only if corrections can be negotiated

Fix budget and performance measures (esp individuals served)

Grant Proposal Report to Commission from Task Force

Recommendation: *To approve funding of the Hospice Volunteers of Somerset County grant application at \$55,440 with 2.2 MSY, contingent on the correction to their budget cost per MSY and clarification to their performance measures outcomes.*

Legal Applicant: Hospice Volunteers of Somerset County

Project Name: AmeriCorps Expanding Hospice in Somerset County

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

Type: Planning
 Operating
 Fixed Amount
 Cost Reimbursement
 Ed Award Only

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

Proposed Dates: 01/01/2026 to 12/31/2026
 Submitted request is for Yr []

Federal Focus Area:

Capacity Building,
 Healthy Futures, and
 Veterans and Military
 Families

Commission priorities: Public Health, Rural

Local Share Required in Budget: Yes No

Source of Funds detail required: Yes No

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

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating	*\$59,400		
Member Support	0		
Indirect (Admin)	0		
CNCS Award amount	*\$59,400	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	30,000-50,000 in local funding; 50,000 anticipated private funds
% sharing proposed	N/A		
% share required	N/A		
Cost-per-member proposed	*\$27,000		
max allowed	\$25,200		

Total AmeriCorps Member Service Years:							
Slot Types Requested							
	1700	1200	900	675	450	300	Total
Slots With living allowance		1	3				4
Living allowance proposed		27,000	27,000				59,400
Slots with only ed award							

Program Description (executive summary):

Hospice Volunteers of Somerset County (HVOSC) proposes to have four part-time AmeriCorps members who will help build capacity by participating in community education, recruiting, training, and retaining Hospice Volunteers and supporting public events in Somerset County. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps program will have established two to three site-based Assistant

Volunteer Coordinators in rural towns throughout Somerset County. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 6-8 volunteers in each new community, who will be engaged in providing compassionate care for individuals with a life-limiting illness. The AmeriCorps investment of \$59,400.00 will leverage \$60,000.00, comprised of \$30,000 in public funding and \$30,000.00 in private funding

Service locations:

Somerset County (Jackman, Skowhegan and Fairfield)

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

Maine Hospice Council, Maine General Hospital, Maine's Hospice Directors, as well as area churches, local and senior agencies, and Redington Fairview General Hospital

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

Applicant proposes to deliver services:

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

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

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

OUTPUT: Number of organizations that received capacity building services

Proposed target: 1

OUTCOME: Number of organizations that increase their efficiency, effectiveness, and/or program reach

Proposed target: 1

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

(measures listed in the RFP not entered and targets were not proposed because CNCS does not allow them)
To be entered in state award if selected nationally for funding.

CAPACITY BUILDING

(measures listed in the RFP not entered and targets were not proposed because CNCS does not allow them)
To be entered in state award if selected nationally for funding.

Scoring Detail:

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

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Design		
The Community and Need	Adequate	6
Logic Model	Adequate	6
Evidence of Effectiveness	Adequate	6
Funding Priority and Preference	Strong	3
Member Training	Strong	6
Member Supervision	Strong	6
Member Experience	Adequate	4.5
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Adequate	3.75

Organizational Capability		
Organizational Background & Staffing	Strong	18
Commitment to DEIA	Adequate	13.5
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy		
Member Recruitment	Weak	3.50
Member Retention	Weak	3.50
Data Collection	Weak	2.50
Budget Alignment to Program Design	Adequate	4.50
Total Peer Reviewer Score		86.75

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

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Alignment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with funding priorities 	Strong	25
Program Model		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve communities described in 2522.450(c) 	Strong	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse 	Adequate	1.875
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for innovation and/or replication 	Adequate	1.875
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of evidence program can be sustained over time. 	Adequate	1.875
Preferences from RFP Announcement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people. 	Strong	7.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum 	Strong	7.5
Past Performance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior grant management experience 	Adequate	7.5
Financial Plan	Adequate	7.5
Fiscal Systems		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements 	Weak	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of sponsoring org's financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc. 	Weak	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc. 	Adequate	3.75
Grant Readiness		
The applicant's start up plan is detailed, complete, and demonstrates ability to stand up the program on time with resources in place (including staff leadership).	Adequate	5.625
The applicant's systems, policies, experience, partnerships, leadership support, financial and personnel resources, etc. are fully prepared to implement the program as of the start date.	Adequate	5.625
Total Task Force Score		169.875
Peer Review Score		86.75
Final Score for Applicant (300 possible)		256.625

Final Assessment of Application:

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

Referenced Conditions/Corrections

The following proposal issues need to be clarified or, in the case of missing required elements, added: correction to their budget cost per MSY and clarification to their performance measures outcomes

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

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

- The Community and Need section is Strong, showing a clear, data-backed understanding of the underserved rural hospice volunteer need. The Logic Model is Strong, clearly linking inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes logically and feasibly. Evidence of Effectiveness is Adequate, supported by preliminary data and relevant research, appropriate for a first-time applicant. Funding Priority, Member Training, Supervision, Member Experience, and Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification are all rated Strong, reflecting solid organizational and programmatic capacity. Organizational Background and Staffing are Strong, with qualified staff and clear management structures. Data Collection and Budget Alignment to Program Design are rated Strong, ensuring accurate monitoring and appropriate resource use. Member Recruitment is Strong, with strategic, equitable practices likely to attract quality candidates. Member Retention is Adequate, meeting basic expectations though with room for stronger retention innovations. The applicant is not required to submit an evaluation plan initially but is recommended to plan for future evaluations, which aligns with their current proposal focus.
- TBD. There are a few areas in my comments that need clarification first. Also, Budget Narrative appears to be missing several assessed areas.
- The HVOSC had identified a need during the 2025 planning grant, more Hospice volunteers. They identified locations to expand in and had collected data to provide support to potential success in expansion. The capacity building efforts described through the grant that AmeriCorps members will provide align well. Members will come into the HVOSC community and not be alone, they will have other AmeriCorps members but they will also have an active community involved with the HVOSC.
- The proposal has a compelling argument of how Hospice care will “address the health needs of individuals with terminal illnesses and focus on improving the quality of life and providing support for patients and their families.” Within Somerset County specifically, the planning grant revealed a need for volunteer support and compassionate care. This grant category would be very effective as it “engages community volunteers in their mission-related work”, which is the goal of HVOSC.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- There could be further elaboration on some parts, specifically diversity efforts for member recruitment and data programming already in place.
- The member leader role was not fully clear. The data collection in its' entirety was unclear and concerning as to getting specific quantifiable results.
- Member Retention Strategies: While basic retention supports are mentioned, there is limited detail on innovative or targeted retention strategies to reduce attrition or re-engage members at risk, as well as no historical retention data provided. Evidence of Effectiveness: The applicant presents preliminary evidence and relevant research but lacks strong or moderate rigorous evaluation studies specific to the program, which could be enhanced with more detailed evaluation plans or external study references. Data Collection Specifics: While data collection processes are generally strong, more details on data quality controls, data management systems, and periodic data validation procedures would further support reliability. Budget Detail Connections: Budget alignment is strong overall but some line-item explanations could provide deeper justification and linkages to specific program activities for clearer transparency.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- This proposal is strongly supported by evidence from those in the community, and it aligns many priorities with the state of Maine.
- Members are referenced as working not serving. I didn't see mention to reasonable accommodating for members. Overall the proposal was in detailed regarding the experience on those involved and already working at HVOSC and their individuals receiving care. But it lacked specifics and more detailed overview of the AmeriCorps member role and depth of their time their and the distinction between staff and volunteers and them was foggy.
- Overall, the application was well-written and informative. As a peer reviewer (who lives in Maine), I would be interested to have learned if there are other similar project in Maine, specifically in the rural areas and their success in the communities they serve.
- The proposal identifies a critical need for volunteers and focuses heavily on recruiting and training them. However, key challenges remain in rural regions where the pool of potential volunteers may be very limited. Simply having a recruitment and training plan may not fully overcome these structural shortages without deeper, targeted strategies. Rural hospices face ongoing volunteer shortages due to small populations, aging volunteer bases, transportation barriers, and social stigma around death and caregiving. Effective recruitment often requires creative, broad outreach beyond traditional methods, such as leveraging colleges/universities, community centers, faith groups, and digital platforms. Individualized and flexible orientation and training schedules help accommodate volunteers' availability, increasing recruitment success. Building strong community relationships and recognition programs can improve volunteer retention and word-of-mouth recruitment. Technology like telemedicine or virtual engagement can supplement direct care roles when geography limits volunteer presence. The HVOSC proposal mentions recruitment and training but is less explicit on unique or creative strategies to expand the volunteer pool itself, such as working with local educational institutions or specialized outreach tactics tailored to the rural population. A recommendation could be for the applicant to strengthen their recruitment plan by integrating proven outreach strategies tailored to rural communities to increase volunteer supply more effectively.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Proposal Alignment and Program Model

The two funding priorities are Public Health and Community Resilience, the hospice volunteers enhance community capacity building & resilience by providing essential support & companionship to patients and their families. HVOSC has private funding & public sources, 30,000 each, as well as the CNCS funding they applied for.

Based on the planning phase findings and the new proposal, the critical need in Somerset County and 1 year proposal are in complete alignment and capacity for expanding replicable community service is strong. As my experience with the Commission is limited, I cannot speak to portfolio goals and chose adequate (although the need for expanded capacity in Somerset County is great). There is nothing in their record or future planned activities to indicate that approval of the grant would not generate a sustainable model.

I felt the grant application has the potential to make a significant impact in Somerset County.

The proposal addresses the Public Health and Workforce Development priorities of the Commission. The area to be served meets the definitions in the Code of Federal Regulations. While we support another program in Somerset County, its focus is in the Skowhegan area. This proposal intends to serve the more isolated regions of the County and, therefore, is extending the commission's work to a currently unserved area. The program could

be replicated by other hospice programs in the state. It could also be a model for organizations that address other community needs in rural or geographically dispersed areas where expansion through the development of volunteer lead services might be possible. The program is directly aligned with the organization's mission. The agency has existing and strong partnerships with local hospitals and other supportive groups and agencies and they as well as program beneficiaries and the wider community have been involved in development of the agency's strategic plan and the proposed AC program. They appear to have used the planning grant effectively. While the organization is small, its 990 indicates that it has an acceptable level of reserves that can support the agency if necessary. While the ability to generate the resources necessary to support the program in the future may be a challenge, the model being pursued may not require significant on-going resources once the geographic expansion has occurred given that it will largely be volunteer based and existing central support may be adequate to handle the expansion. Leadership stability is always an issue for small non-profits. HVOSC is heavily dependent on its volunteer board. It currently appears to be operating without an executive director, although the agency is working with an internal candidate to build the necessary skills to take on that role. At the same time, the Board appears to be both deeply committed and stable. HVOSC has a strong and well-developed volunteer management system. The AC program will be supported through existing relationships, and the various partners appear ready and eager to provide continued support.

Preferences from RFA

At the end of the year HVOSC planned to establish 3 Site-Based Vol. Coordinators in 3 rural towns in Somerset County, plus AmeriCorps will leverage an additional 6-8 volunteers in each new community – this is great support and support they had sparsely for most hospice & palliative caregivers and clients. Much improved with this help for families & individuals in these highly remote and rural communities– a very great need as many seniors in Somerset County are alone or with older family and cannot help.

HVOSC has a strong track record as a coalition serving need in Skowhegan and their commitment to expand supports to address rural need in Somerset is solid.

Demographics targeted are in a rural community

While the proposal is from a single agency, it is clear that HVOSC has existing relationships with a variety of other local agencies and organizations. HVOSC serves a very rural and economically challenged county and will be recruiting volunteers from its area.

Past Performance

Using great volunteer management leader processes and has a clear strategy to train/onboard members local community members looks very good. Good retaining plan outlined, community partners to work with, vol. Management leaders, and site volunteers will all help. Data collection result as good as can be with this type of population going through hospice emergency – I feel like HVOSC's past research supports data collection with supporting feedback, helpful research and clear support from the community, listening groups, comments from caregivers, etc all average/good amount to show support.

Financial Plan

Taken together, the volunteer trainings, 30+ years of organizing supports and services, along with a clear focus on readiness and response places HVOSC in a clear position to continue performing well and carry out the proposed activities.

Since this is a fixed cost proposal, the financial plan is very straightforward with all AC funds to be used to support the program's members. Potential sources of local funds are identified, but not all are confirmed, although a matching grant of \$15,000 has been confirmed. It would be nice to know if the Maine Health Access grant is also coming through.

Fiscal Systems

They have 2 significant sources of operating funds, and public and private funding established. Fixed Amount Grants do not require a detailed budget. They requested an audit waiver. An audit would give supporters a little more confidence in vetting. Otherwise, seems ok.

The budget reflects the proposed ops activities. Strength in the financial management, stability, and overall coordinated leadership is clear.

I would like to see an audit before grant approval. Without an audit, there may be unknown financial concerns. Even a low-budget application can set up an audit committee utilizing local resources at little or no cost.

Since this is a fixed cost proposal, the financial plan is very straightforward with all AC funds to be used to support the program's members. Potential sources of local funds are identified, but not all are confirmed, although a matching grant of \$15,000 has been confirmed. It would be nice to know if the Maine Health Access grant is also coming through. As a small agency, HVO SC has had limited experience in managing federal grants and will have to work carefully in this area to ensure compliance, although they do have a bookkeeper and a relationship with an accounting firm. HVO SC is not audited, although they do file a 990 that shows a strong level of reserves and that the agency operated in the green over the last several years.

Grant Readiness

I believe there is an urgent need for this in Somerset County, and because they have great member orientation, staff that with good experience in management, good leader volunteers already to help in Jackman, I believe it will be very sustainable, and successful. Passion and vision will help, good outline of plan, believe it will be successful.

With not much experience evaluating start up plans, I scored adequate--meaning no issues stood out that would prevent a smooth rollout.

The implementation plan seems adequate and it is clear that the planning grant was used effectively. It also appears that there is significant support from the board and the agency's partners to implement the program. It does look like more work is necessary to obtain the needed additional resources, although the agency has sufficient reserves to address this if there is a shortfall. It should be noted that the agency has limited staff, but it appears that highly committed board members have and continue to step forward to provide time and expertise to the agency.



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voice: (207) 624-7792

service.commission@maine.gov

www.MaineServiceCommission.gov



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Name (please print): Allison Foster

Signature: Allison Foster

Date: 10/21/2025

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Name (please print): Alex Williams

Signature: 

Date: 10/20/25

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Name (please print): Sophia Doremus

Signature: *Sophia Doremus*

Date: October 23, 2025



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Name (please print): Debra Bare - Rogers

Signature: *Debra Bare - Rogers*

Date: 10/19/25

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Name (please print): William Guindon

Signature: *William Guindon*

Date: 11-7-2025

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Name (please print): Kelly Day

Signature: Kelly Day

Date: 11/7/25

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Name (please print): Edward A. Barrett

Signature: 

Date: 10-25-25

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Name (please print): Mary Krebs

Signature: 

Date: 1.1.25

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