

Grant Proposal Report from Task Force to Full Commission

Recommendation: Forward only if corrections are negotiated

Legal Applicant: Goodwill Industries of Northern
New England (GINNE)

Program Name: Multilingual Leadership Corps

**Total prior years with
CNCS funding:** [9]

Prior experience with CNCS funding: GINNE was funded for this program (Multilingual Leadership Corps) for six years as a Commission Formula grantee and then applied to be a national direct, operating in Maine, NH, and VT. The organization submitted this proposal to the AC Competitive and proposes to operate only in Maine. Although it has been funded a total of 9 years, the agency's move 3 years ago to Competitive makes it subject to different evaluation rules. They only need to submit an evaluation plan this round.

Grant Category:	<input type="checkbox"/> Formula <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Competitive <input type="checkbox"/> Other Competition	Performance Period:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Year 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 3
Type:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost Reimbursement <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Fixed Price <input type="checkbox"/> Ed Award Only	Start/End Date:	09/01/2022 to 08/31/2025
ME Priority Area:	[n/a]	Fed Priority Area(s):	Educational opportunity and economic mobility

Requested Resources: Funds and Slots (if Fixed Amount, only complete CNCS award amount)

	CNCS		Local Share
Operating	\$131,059		\$547,940
Member Support	\$362,520		\$103,970
Indirect (Admin)	\$ 25,962		\$114,549
CNCS Award amount	\$519,541	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	\$766,459
% sharing proposed	40%		60%
% share required	40%		60%
Cost-per-member proposed	\$23,616 (\$21,600 max. allowed)		

	AmeriCorps Member Service Years: 22.00					
	FT	3/4T	HT	RHT	QT	MT
Slots with living allowance	14	10	2			
Education Award only						

Statement of Need (from application narrative):

Immigrant and refugee youth (IRY) in Maine (ME) enter the education system significantly behind their peers. Adapting to a new culture; learning a new language; adverse childhood experiences resulting from fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries; financial hardships; undergoing the asylum seeker or refugee process; and confronting racism and xenophobia, contribute to a myriad of barriers to academic engagement and future employment success. (Mentoring for First-Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth, National Mentoring Resource Center; Ashmeet K. Oberoi, December 2016.)

According to the Maine Department of Education (DOE), in 2021 ME had a population of over 6,370 IRY who spoke over 100 languages. Of the 5,566 students in Lewiston, ME, schools, 1,353 (25%) do not have English spoken at home. Similarly, Portland Public Schools (ME), reported having 1,484 (34%) students whose parents/guardians require interpretation/translation services.

Washington County, ME, the heart of blueberry country, historically attracts seasonal migrant farm workers, many of whom have settled in Downeast Maine. According to DOE data, the Hispanic and Latino student population in Milbridge, ME has

risen to 32%. Catholic Charities, Maine's refugee resettlement agency has also begun to receive Afghans evacuated as U.S. forces withdrew from Afghanistan in August. Governor Janet Mills' office announced in August that Maine was willing to welcome Afghans fleeing their homeland. Greater Portland, Lewiston, Augusta, and Bangor are among the communities that have been preparing to welcome Afghan families. (Afghan evacuees begin to arrive in Maine, Portland Press Herald, October 2021.) The anticipated arrivals include school-age children who will be enrolled in local public schools.

According to a 2017-2018 Maine DOE report, 1 in 5 migrant students in ME are chronically absent. Research shows that "chronic absenteeism has a clear relationship to negative consequences for students, including lower achievement, disengagement from school, course failure, and increased risk of dropping out," (MACM for Special Educators, Maine DOE, May 2018). 2019 ME DOE data reported that 83.6% of current English Language Learners (ELLs) fall well below the State Expectations for Proficiency on State Assessments as compared to 43.1% of non-ELLs. ELLs graduate at a rate around 80% in ME, compared to the overall High School Graduation rate in the state of 87%.

Program Description (executive summary):

Goodwill Northern New England proposes to have 36 AmeriCorps members (24.12 MSY): Fourteen 1700-hour stipended members, ten 1200-hour stipended members, two 900-hour stipended members, and ten 300-hour education award only members who will implement social-emotional development and academic support interventions with immigrant and refugee youth in Portland, South Portland, Westbrook, Brunswick, Lewiston, Milbridge, Augusta, and Bangor, Maine. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for engaging 270 immigrant and refugee youth, grades 4-12 in youth development programming - mentoring and academic support - with an outcome of improving academic engagement of 180 the cohort. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage 50 volunteers who will be engaged as adult or peer mentors, providing academic and social and emotional learning support. This program will focus on the AmeriCorps focus area of Education. The AmeriCorps investment of \$519,541 will be matched with \$339,250 in public funding and \$427,209 in private funding.

Identified partners:

- Pear Institute - founded by Harvard Medical School and McLean Teaching Hospital
- Department of Education, Trekkers

Service locations/Host sites:

- Portland Public Schools
- Telling Room
- Gateway Community Services
- Portland Housing Authority
- Center for Grieving Children
- MidCoast Health
- Brunswick School Dept
- Portland Mentoring Alliance
- University of Southern Maine
- Milbridge Elementary School
- Augusta School Dept.
- Intercultural Community Center
- Lewiston High School
- Tree Street Youth
- Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services
- Cultivating Community
- Portland Community Squash
- Opportunity Alliance
- Westbrook School Dept
- Lewiston Housing Authority
- Bangor Adult Education

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

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

OUTPUT: ED1A: Number of individuals served

Proposed target: 270

OUTCOME: ED27C: Number of students with improved academic engagement or social-emotional skills

Proposed target: 180

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

OUTPUT: TBD

Proposed target: TBD

OUTCOME: TBD
Proposed target: TBD

CAPACITY BUILDING
OUTPUT: TBD
Proposed target: TBD

OUTPUT: TBD
Proposed target: TBD

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. The break downs within categories are from federal agency and change annually.*

Score	
Program Design	
Theory of Change & Logic Model	24 (Strong)
Evidence Tier (matches federal tier of Pre-preliminary)	3
Evidence quality	6 (Adequate)
Notice Priority	0.5 (Weak)
Member Experience	3.75 (Adequate)
Organizational Capability	
Organizational Background & Staffing	9 (Strong)
Compliance/Accountability	5 (Strong)
Culture that Values Learning	3.75 (Adequate)
Member Supervision	4.5 (Adequate)
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	0 (Nonresponsive)
Evaluation Summary or Plan (assessed as <u>Strong</u> but no points given for this component)	n/a
Total Peer Reviewer Score	59.5

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

	Rating	Score
Program Model		
Alignment of community need targeted and funding priorities	Adequate	2.81
Extent to which proposal will serve specified communities and add to diversity of Commission's portfolio	Strong	3.75
Proposal is innovative use of AmeriCorps and might be replicated	Adequate	2.81
Evidence the program can be sustained beyond initial start up	Adequate	2.81
Proposal is from a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together	Strong	5
Past Performance		
Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance	Strong	20
RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions	n/a	
RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated	n/a	
RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively	n/a	
Financial Plan		
Plan anticipates operational costs and provides sufficient resources to implement program	Adequate	11.25
Fiscal Systems		
Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements	Strong	8.33
Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Strong	8.33
Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Adequate	6.25
Grant Readiness		
The applicant's systems, policies, experience, partnerships, leadership support, financial + personnel resources, etc. are fully prepared to implement the program as of start date.	Adequate	15
Total Task Force Score		86.35
Peer Review Score		59.5
Final Score for Applicant (max score is 200)		145.85

Final Assessment of Application:

- ☐ Forward Application to National Competition with no corrections/modifications
- ☒ Forward to National Competition with corrections/modifications
- ☐ Do Not Forward to National Competition

Referenced Conditions/Corrections

- Clarify the number of member slots and confirm the MSYs. The numbers are not consistent across the narrative and don't match the budget.
- Correct the significant number of budget errors in calculations.
- Reduce the Cost-per-MSY to the maximum permitted. It currently exceeds it by more than \$2,000.
- Correct the Evidence narrative. The evidence tier claimed is inappropriate and the explanations are not clear with regard to how the three source programs will be integrated to become one model.
- Address the concerns summarized by peer reviewers under Notice Priority, workforce development under Members, and made the Diversity Questionnaire readable.

Peer Reviewer Comments Compiled:

Program Design

- Theory of Change and logic model
 - In the chosen cities/towns the highest group of targeted recipients reside - with the targeted population being immigrant and refugee youth in grades 4-12. Data presented in the narrative backs-up the proposed solution. Member, support team and staff roles are defined. As shown in previous AmeriCorps programs lead by the applicant, expected outcomes of past successes can be reasonably reflected into this program's outcome. Trekkers, MLC - The logic model follows the narrative
 - Extensive description of the problem using statistics and also addressing recent local changes including the surge in Afghan families moving to Maine and the difficulties with addressing IRY needs due to COVID.
- Evidence Tier
 - Based on the narrative the 2 studies presented - one is an interim evaluation report for the Aspiration Incubator Model and the second is a comprehensive evaluation corroborating the proposed Academic and Social emotional development intervention. Both studies are not the direct focus for the target group but can be used to help support possible outcomes.
 - The suitability for these studies is well-examined. It appears that applicant will be using the studies as a basis for their own interventions rather than using them as an example simply for the report. This is especially noted with the dosage of interventions as described in the second study. While both studies are both great evidence, there was no control or comparison group with the first study, so it should not be considered a moderate study.
 - The application does not propose to replicate a cohesive program model that has been evaluated. It does describe three models it apparently will integrate into a single program but never clearly says how it will work. Example, intensity of one model cited as inspiration is much higher than this applicant proposes. And one model to be used is from inner city Chicago which is very different from Portland/Lewiston/Augusta/Bangor and Millbridge.
- Evidence Quality
 - Recent relevant data is being used - The studies and data in the narrative can be relatable to the positive outcomes as stated in the narrative and the applicant has a track record of operating successful past AmeriCorps programs, Trekkers. MLC NDMVA and the process has measurement tools to understand success or improvement areas such as HSA and RSC.
 - The studies the program has used to design its model are well described but how the various models work together in this program or why they are relevant for facets of the program.
- Notice Priority
 - The short notice of Priority does not mention the funding priority of education but cites efforts to help local communities respond to and recover from Covid-19 pandemic using evidence from the evidence exchange?
- Member Experience
 - AmeriCorp will be able to develop leadership qualities through interaction, training and networking, Members will be working with people with very diverse background and cultures as well as language barriers. The member will be making presentation to the local community/organizations and through social media. They will need to learn to recruit community volunteers.
 - Well-defined plan, including the increments for when trainings would be given to members.
 - Plan for supporting work readiness/development among members is not very developed.

Organizational Capability.

- Organizational Background and Staffing
 - The applicant has a strong and long history working with Federal Funding and the AmeriCorp programs. They have an imbedded support organization and defined roles and job descriptions. The organization has various partners as evidenced in the sources of funding secured in the Budget. The organization has experience working with refugees from other programs and working with diverse and inclusive groups.
 - Goodwill has extensive experience working on grants and lays out in great detail the responsibilities of each person involved with the programs.
- Compliance/Accountability
 - The applicants experience in the past working within the confines and limitations of federal funded programs has create a organization of experienced members. This includes compliance and accountability which includes site visits time sheet checks, frequent communication and re-enforcement of priorities, prohibited

- activities, acceptable behaviors versus unacceptable behavior. They have a Corporation Compliance and Risk Team in place
- Goodwill programs and staff are frequently looked at by a specific team which holds them accountable. They specifically outline the course of action if anything is to go wrong with any member.
- Culture that Values Learning
 - Leadership collects regular data and feedback for their strategic planning. Members and stakeholders evaluate the program and experiences during site visits. MLC advisory board holds quarterly meetings around needs and inventions to best serve local IRY
 - Meets the requirements laid out in the assessment criteria.
- Member Supervision
 - Members are to meet with and are overseen by the Site supervisor daily. AmeriCorps staff meet with supervisors monthly. Members are oriented in program regulations, priorities and expectations. Each member also receives an AmeriCorp Handbook that list approved and prohibited activities.
 - Meets requirements laid out in the assessment criteria.

Budget Adequacy and Cost Effectiveness. (Reviewers consider the budget narrative and its formulas, accuracy, expense items as well as Source of Funds information.)

- \$/MSY is limited to \$21,600. This proposal has \$/MSY set at \$22,000. There is the 40% to 60% required split between Fed and Applicant funding. Rest of budget appears to be well laid out and appropriate funding categories. outside fund looks to have been secured.
- Very well explained and thorough budget. Includes in-depth explanation of sources of funds.
- Many math errors and the number of members is not referenced consistently.
- Exceeded the maximum cost per member. Page 40 states that proposals with budgets over the cost per MSY would be considered unresponsive to the criteria.

Evaluation Plan. (If applicable.)

- As in the narrative the theory of change has been stated as well as the scope of the evaluation, desired outcomes and how those outcomes are to be achieved, measured and analyzed.
- Analysis plan was lackluster.

Summary Comments

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)

- The success of a similar program that has been run by the applicant as well as the methodology being used bodes well for the success of the proposed program. This is an area that is in need of support and has struggle as laid out in the applicant narrative. The area of focus has been appropriately chosen as well as the host towns and cities.
- Incredibly thorough report with solid evidence and explanations of budget items. Every piece of the report is well-documented and explained. Beyond that, the program would meet rising community needs throughout the state and potentially become a model for other communities throughout the country.
- This is a needed program in the state. Especially as the refugees and immigrants try to settle and establish themselves in a new very different country where the language may be different and the culture certainly is. To focus on the 4-12 grades will support bringing this group into a productive and contributing members of the state.
- Unclear elements
 - There were a couple of areas of concern - \$/MSY and why the Notice of Priority deviated?

Task Force Review Comments Compiled:

Program Alignment and Model

- The proposal does not significantly address any of the federal funding priorities id'ed in the proposal, although it does qualify under the general program topics, i.e., education. The proposal does hint at a connection with helping to overcome the challenges of COVID faced by students whose educational experience was negatively impacted by Covid's disruptions and posits that these disruptions likely had a greater impact on immigrant and refugee youth. This contention is quite logical and likely the case, which enhances the need for the program. However, no specific

evidence is produced (it may not yet be readily available) supporting the contention. The program addresses Immigrant and Refugee Youth, most of whom are also people of color and who live in distressed communities. The program could clearly be replicated elsewhere; although I'm not sure it is especially innovative given its reliance on mentoring and development models developed elsewhere. I see an inconsistency in looking for innovative programs when AC emphasizes programs that are strongly evidence based. This seems to be an inherent conflict. This applicant is capable of sustaining this program given that it has been in existence for over a decade and has developed a broad range of community partners that contribute toward the cost of the program. The goals of the program align well with the organization's mission and purpose.

- Goodwill NE has a long list of partners to fund for this project - including Public Schools in Maine as well as many organizations across the state. The proof of funding shows a coalition ready to embrace this model to set up new Mainers for success through our education system - much needed at this time and in this state.
- Addresses important need for immigrant/refugee youth in the right areas of Maine.
- Descriptions of partnerships were not detailed. While evidence of the proposed model was named, it was not explained.

Past Performance

- This is not a recompeting program but Goodwill NE has successfully managed AmeriCorps programs. It is experienced with federally run programs and has sound staffing policies in place.
- The grantee's proposal exceeds the local share requirement and is provided by a large number of the program's partners in both cash and in-kind funding. As noted, the agency has operated this program for a number of years and has shown the ability to manage it well and in accordance with federal guidelines. It has implemented BMPs in volunteer management and is experienced in the use of volunteers.
- In its most recent grant cycle with the Commission, GINNE was considered a low risk grantee subject to desk monitoring as well as member file checks and Criminal history file reviews. Goodwill demonstrated high enrollment and retention rates and was been successful in refilling available positions. Goodwill was excellent in the timeliness of its reporting
- It is unclear what the past performance was on many of these metrics due to the fact that Goodwill Industries was a past National Direct Grant. It appears that their member recruitment and retention has been quite good.

Financial Plan

- At times the number members referenced is 26 and at other times 36. The maximum cost per member was exceeded. There were other errors. However, the funding seems to be secured and from a wide-range of partners.
- Funding source are adequate and identified in detail. However, note that the per member cost exceeds what is allowable, apparently as a result of the inconsistent treatment of minimum time members. This, along with other budget errors, must be corrected.
- There are many math errors, # of members is not referenced consistently, the costs per member exceeds the maximum amount. Just too many inconsistencies and errors.
- Grantee share of costs is significant. A reasonable amount of resources are allocated to training, travel, and evaluation.

Fiscal Systems

- The organization is stable but evidence of the downturn in their financials. They have complied with federal requirements for accounting in the past and their survey responses are favorable. Their financial management practices are in order although their application was mathematically off.
- The agency has a clean audit report and has been considered a low-risk agency by VM in the past. The agency also has significant experience in meeting federal grant requirements, including past AC grants. The agency has adequate financial strength although its balance sheet has been impacted by COVID – most likely due to lower sales at its thrift shops
- Audit/financial management survey indicate that they are entirely capable of managing federal plans.
- All items are complete and seem to reflect competency in meeting the requirements.

Grant Readiness

- They appear to have the funding in place to implement this program. The errors made in their application may hold things up as they will need to address those.
- This has been addressed above. The agency has the necessary systems, policies, and experience to be successful. It has assembled a large number of partners who will participate in the program and contribute financially. I see no issues with this agency's ability to hit the ground running.

- Per peer reviewer, plan for supporting work readiness/development among members is not very developed. Also, Their financial plan is incomplete.
- Past performance coupled with a clear plan suggest that the applicant will be ready to implement. However, it is concerning that there are a number of mistakes in the proposal related to MSYs and members, and much of the strategies are explained using generalities.
- The program is needed; however, given the length of time the applicant has operated AmeriCorps programs, the quality of the proposal submitted is very disappointing.