

## Grant Continuation Report from Task Force

**Recommendation:** Authorize funding and positions

**Legal Applicant:** Maine Development Foundation

**Program Name:** Main Street Fellows AmeriCorps Program

**Category:**  AC Formula  
 AC Competitive  
 Other Competition

**Type:**  Planning  
 Operating  
 Fixed Price  
 Ed Award Only

**Year in Grant Cycle:**  Year 1  Year 2  Year 3

**Continuation Dates:** Start: 10/01/2022  
End: 09/30/2023

### New Resources for Continuation: Funds and Slots

	CNCS	Local Share	% change from prior year				
<b>Operating</b>	8,954	99,659	82%				
<b>Member Support</b>	114,765	0	8%				
<b>Indirect (Admin)</b>	6,281	4,941	(55.1%)				
<b>% sharing proposed</b>	55%	45%					
<b>% share required</b>	70%	30%					
<b>Cost-per-member proposed (max allowed)</b>	\$26,000 (\$26,000)						
<b>Total AmeriCorps Member Service Years:</b>							
<b>Slot Types Requested</b>							
	FT	HT	RHT	QT	MT		Total
<b>Slots With living allowance</b>		10					10
<b>Slots with only ed award</b>							

### Program Description (executive summary from grant application):

The Maine Development Foundation proposes to have ten half-time (900 hours) AmeriCorps members who will assist in community development, strategic planning, and the creation of new social capital in a community selected through a competitive process in one of the Maine Downtown Centers champion communities which include the ten Main Street communities and two of the high performing Maine Downtown Affiliate communities. The AmeriCorps members will be responsible for creating economic opportunities in their host community through direct program assistance to the downtown organization. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 10-20 volunteers who will be engaged in local research, planning, education, and technology projects through a range of projects in communities that strengthen local resilience. This program will concentrate on the CNCS focus area(s) of Economic Opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$130,000 will be matched with \$104,600.00. \$38,702.00 in public funding and \$65,898.00 in private funding.

### Service locations (new sites are italicized):

Westbrook, Gardiner, Biddeford, Skowhegan, Hallowell, Rockland.

**Performance measures** (targets and achievement for prior years; targets proposed for new year):

Performance Measure: Improving Systems in Rural Downtowns (Targets met or exceeded)

Output: Number of organizations that received capacity building services

Target = 5

Actual = 5

New Target = 5

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

Target = 3

Actual = 4

New Target = 3

Performance Measure: Member Development

Output: Number of Trainings (Members are on track to receive adequate number of training by the end of their service year)

Target = 8

Actual = 6

New Target = 8

Outcome: Number of members with increased knowledge and skills (Due to their inability to successfully recruit more than two members they are unable to meet this target this year)

Target = 5

Actual = 4

New Target = 5

Performance Measure: Capacity Building (All targets met or exceeded)

Output: Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were managed by AmeriCorps members or program

Target = 400

Actual = 672.50

New Target = 400

Output: Number of community volunteers managed by AmeriCorps members or program

Target = 20

Actual = 217

New Target = 20

Outcome: Number of organizations fully implementing three or more new effective volunteer management practices as a result of capacity building services provided AmeriCorps members

Target = 4

Actual = 4

New Target = 4

**Operating performance summary:**

In the 2021/2022 service year the program was impacted by statewide and national recruitment challenges. Despite significantly scaled up recruitment efforts the program had low application rates, difficulty in getting responses from existing applicants, and difficulty in getting applicants to complete the interview process. We have been able to recruit and retain two excellent full-time members,

resulting in a 40% enrollment rate with 100% retention.

MDF will continue to develop relationships with organizational and academic partners to establish recruitment pipelines. MDF will continue to promote this service opportunity via LinkedIn, Indeed, Service Year, MyAmeriCorps, Volunteer Maine, the Maine Association of Nonprofits, Handshake, and UMaine CareerLink as well as direct outreach to the Maine State Library, adult education centers, nonprofit partners, Maine colleges, and 30+ out-of-state colleges including top public service schools.

In response to this year's recruitment challenges and discoveries from the first two years of running the program, MDF plans to recruit and place ten half-time positions in the 2022/23 service year, (rather than full-time positions), with the option for Members to serve consecutive terms. MDF anticipates that this structural change will provide more flexibility to candidates and host sites by offering shorter service terms with the option to serve consecutive terms, increasing access to the service opportunity by making it more feasible to hold another part-time job and/or take classes concurrently, and to align service terms with academic calendars if desired. Host sites will also be provided with a new form for submitting service opportunities with greater emphasis on the benefits of a service term with their organization and in their community, including short-term housing and relationships with other local part-time employers if applicable. MDF will also add a professional development stipend to the list of benefits offered to candidates. MDF has received positive feedback on the proposed structural changes from several host sites.

**RECRUITMENT/ENROLLMENT – use of positions awarded to program for the 2021-2022 program year**

Service Term	Awarded slots	Used Slots	% of enrollment
1700	5	2	40%
1200			
900			
675			
450			
300			
<i>Overall</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>40%</i>

**RETENTION – keeping members engaged once they are enrolled.**

Service Term	Filled slots	Left early	Successfully completed	% retained
1700	2	0	N/A	100%
1200				
900				
675				
450				
300				
<i>Overall</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>100%</i>

**COMPLIANCE:**

» Program operation

MDF hosts monthly host site supervisor call with the following standing agenda: Administrative item review and questions (MDF led) Any questions or follow up on monthly reports (MDF led) Sharing of updates (Fellow led) Discussion of how the program pillars (resilience, equity, social capital, and welcoming communities) are being explored and implemented in service (Fellow led) Time for technical assistance, thought partnership, etc., based

on Fellow and Host Site needs and requests. (Fellow and Host Site Supervisor led in terms of topics for discussion or exploration) It is through these meetings that they primarily monitor and provide TA. Additionally, they receive as-needed requests for TA and respond accordingly. The Program Director role previously held by Adam Burk will now be held by Joanna Crispe.

» Member management

The members that are currently serving work closely with other members through monthly cohort meetings and monthly host site visits. They have discussed the start of year and mid-year evaluations to ensure they are getting an experience that meets their needs. They work directly with host site supervisors to ensure this as well.

Outside of what they can provide MDF has been working with a cohort of other programs to improve member connectedness. Staff work with Fellows to ensure they are using sign in systems and other tracking systems when it comes to volunteers. They have submitted their essential practices of volunteer management assessment to MDF staff.

» Program Finances and Agency Fiscal Issues

Maine Development Foundation has been fortunate to weather the financial stresses of the pandemic thus far. There have been no issues that impact the Main Street Fellows AmeriCorps Program to date, and none projected at this time.

**Task Force Review Summary:** Authorize funding and positions requested

- The budget as presented is largely correct although staff notes that the source of local funds has not been fully specified beyond the \$50,000 in cash to be provided by local Main Street participants. The biggest question is whether MDF will reach its member recruitment goals.
- The big question for this program remains recruitment given its poor performance for this program year. In response, the program proposes moving from 5 FT positions to 10 half-time ones with the potential for members to serve consecutive terms. The hope is that this will allow greater recruitment due to higher flexibility to combine service with either on-going school work or part-time work to supplement income. The living allowance will also increase on an hourly basis, although health insurance will be eliminated due to moving to pt positions. Finally, the impact of COVID on recruitment may be less depending on the course of the pandemic. I'm pleased that the program has apparently given some thought to this problem and posed a potential solution; however, I'm not convinced that this will be successful. While it may appeal as part-time work to active students, part-time positions are less appealing to those who are not students. Given that the program was more successful in its first pre-Covid recruiting period and that it retained both members it recruited this year, I am willing to give the program the benefit of the doubt and approve their request subject to continued monitoring of their recruitment effort.
- Based on the performance report, the number of volunteers was significantly exceeded. Either the definition of a volunteer should be clarified or the target increased. Volunteer hours were also exceeded, although less dramatically.
- the prior program director may not have kept agency management fully informed of program status/operations. This should be pointed out. Some reports have also not been submitted in a timely fashion.
- Other than the major change from FT to PT members, the program plans to continue as initially proposed.