

Climate Corps Grant Proposal Report to Commission from Task Force

Recommendation: Do not fund.

Legal Applicant: Greater Portland Council of Governments

Focus Area: Energy Outreach & Ed AND Home Energy Conservation

Grant Period: 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2023

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

	State Funds		Local Share
Member Support	\$61,734		
Supervisor Support	\$49,693		
Other Operating Costs			\$21,000
Total Requested	\$111,428	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	\$21,000
Cost-per-member proposed	\$55,714		

Program Description (staff summary): Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), a regional planning organization, proposes to host 2 Climate Corps members for 9-10 months. One member will be focused on working with WindowDressers to recruit and support volunteer window insert builds; one member will be focused on creating energy efficiency outreach kits for local municipalities. Both will be hosted/supervised in-house by GPCOG staff. Members will receive orientation to program, training in volunteer recruitment and management, soft professional skills, life after service, and networking opportunities.

Service locations: GPCOG’s service area includes 25 rural, urban, and suburban communities in Greater Portland (from Bridgton to Saco to Durham).

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

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

Scoring Detail:

Peer Reviewer Consensus Score. Assessment of narrative using point distribution from RFA. Major categories (Program Design, Organizational Capability, Budget) are derived from RFA for scoring.

	Quality Rating	Score
Program Design		
Funding Priority	Strong	1
Need	Adequate	3
Service Activity and Model	Adequate	11.25
Service Area	Adequate	7.5
Theory of Change and Evidence of Effectiveness	Adequate	7.5
Member Training and Workforce Development Goals	Adequate	7.5
Member Experience	Adequate	3.75
Equity, Justice, and Accessibility	Substandard	2.5

Organizational Capability		
Organizational Background & Staffing	Strong	15
Budget	Adequate	11.25
Total Peer Reviewer Score		75.25

Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation.

Task Force Consensus Score. *The Task Force reviewers assess the additional technical criteria to ensure grant readiness and likelihood of success.*

	Quality Rating	Score
Proposal Alignment and Model		
• Alignment with Funding Priorities	Adequate	7.5
• Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Weak	5
Past Performance		
• Past performance in other grant programs, including those funded by foundations or other government agencies.	Strong	20
Financial Plan	Adequate	11.25
Fiscal Systems		
• capacity of financial management system to comply with federal requirements	Strong	8.33
• strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial management practices	Strong	8.33
• strength of the sponsoring organization’s financial status/stability	Strong	8.33
Grant Readiness	Adequate	15
Total Task Force Score		83.74
Peer Review Score		75.25
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		158.99

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.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Program Design.

Funding Priority

Clear funding priority and plan for meeting grant requirements.

Need

Clear description of history of WindowDressers and their need for capacity support. However, did not rise to “severe and compelling” need because not clear on why the drop off happened. Also, less specific on need vis a vis energy outreach packets.

Service Activity and Model

Not clear on what exactly the member is doing in terms of community outreach. More specifics would be helpful.

Service Area

Not clear that they will (or how they will) specifically target those who are disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Theory of Change and Evidence of Effectiveness

Would have liked more specific details to move this assessment to “strong”.

Member Training and Workforce Development Goals

Orientation and existing training program for Resilience Corps is strong, however lacked specific credentials or specific training unique to energy efficiency/weatherization. Emphasis on soft skills and networking. Not clear that it is specific or intentional for the goals of the Energy Efficiency Climate Corps program versus an expansion of their existing Corps program.

Member Experience

Similar to comments on training, unclear how the member experience is distinctive and intentional for Climate Corps. Helpful to be part of a larger cohort, but again, question if this is an expansion of the existing Corps or an evolution of the existing Corps.

Equity, Justice, and Accessibility

Referenced available data for ensuring program activities were in alignment with equity, justice, and accessibility, but did not call out specifics on which communities would be targeted. Did not speak to Indigenous collaboration. References diversity of region, but did not mention specific populations or potential partnerships.

Organizational Capability.

Organizational Background and Staffing

Strength of model and past experience managing a Corps.

Budget

Staff benefit budget not detailed on separate line. Did not request full amount of funding and unclear why only proposing 2 and not 3 or 4 members. No accounting for WindowDressers staff time?

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 () No ()

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

Equity, justice, and accessibility tactics were not specific.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

While it is a strength that the organization hosts an existing service corps program that is successful, the lack of specifics/intentionality in some places make it unclear if the additional member positions are akin to an expansion of the existing Corps or an intentional evolution/pilot of a new Corps effort.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Proposal Alignment and Model.

- While the proposal addresses both priorities, it appears to be similar to work currently or previously supported by the Commission through GPCOG’s Resilience corps and the Maine Campus Compact’s work with window inserts/home energy efficiency. Given that the area to be served by this grant is the same as

that served by the Resiliency Corps, it does not add to our demographic/geographic diversity. Not clear that this is actually a new program or simply an expansion of an existing one. While mention is made of steps to serve underserved/ disadvantaged population, limited detail is provided.

- Sustainability is weak based on this program being requested to replace previous AmeriCorps program members. There is little information on community need or details regarding what original ideas or impact the program will have.
- Theory of change outputs and outcomes were misaligned. Not clear what specific populations and communities they would be serving.
- Unclear how is this program distinguished from AmeriCorps program.
- Applicant is solid across the board. Have a lot of moving parts which is typical challenge for COGs. It is worth clarifying the administrative overhead issue.
- Get the fact they are an organization that is well put together. Have a program with 10 members and 14 positions total. Not seeing as much equity or clear description of a different need than Resilience Corps is meeting.

Past Performance

- GPCOG has successfully handled numerous state and federal grants, both in the areas covered by this proposal and others. They have a strong track record of performance.

Assessment of Financial Plan

- As noted in various review documents, benefits have not been separately identified in the budget; the amount of staff time devoted to this project seems high given its size in comparison with the Resilience Corps, and support from Window Dressers is either not shown or not broken out.
- They delineate the background checks and cost but in the budget put only 1 not the 2 mentioned in the narrative. Have a considerable amount of the budget to support current staff. Seems oversight heavy – even that was inconsistent. For one position 36% of FTE was needed to supervise 1 member; in the other, 22% of 1 FTE was needed to supervise.
- Main concern is delineation of funding structures and activities between Climate Corps and AmeriCorps program. They acknowledge some of the challenges but the activities seemed to be duplicate funding and activities. Unclear if we would be funding the same thing twice.

Fiscal Systems

- The agency has strong fiscal management systems that have been shown to meet state and federal grant management and reporting requirements. The agency is in a strong financial position. Clean agency audit and no questioned costs/findings on federal grants.

Grant Readiness

- The agency has shown that they can do the work and have three knowledgeable staff members who are already engaged in similar programs, indicating that the agency could easily adjust to staff changes/turnover.
- Well prepared to implement.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- AmeriCorps program experience is very good professional experience for members and work is good.
- Hope other areas get programs together that we can support in the future. Need in this area is concentrated but funding is concentrated in this area.