

AMERICORPS STATE COMPETITIVE GRANT REVIEW

RFA Due Date:	11/17/2022 (<i>Public Health</i>)	Project Name:	Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network
Application Number :	23AC252477	Project Contact:	Jerome Castaldo
Legal Applicant:	Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network	MSYs and Slots requested:	25 MSY and 27 slots (23 FT; 4 @ 900)
Grant Type:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost reimbursement* <input type="checkbox"/> Fixed Amount <input type="checkbox"/> Education Award Only	Budget Proposed	\$1,167,279.00
		CNCS funds	858,291.00
		Local Match	308,998.00
Reviewers:	Bosse, Asselin-Hawthorne	Cost per Member:	35,761.71

*US CDC funds do not require match level but applicant needs to show full budget including local share. Not usual.

1. Summarized rating:

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
Rationale & Approach/Program Design Section (50%)		
Theory of Change and Logic Model (24)	Weak	12
Evidence tier (12)	Pre-preliminary	3
Evidence quality – (8)	Incomplete/Nonresponsive	0
Notice Priority (1)	Strong	1
Member Experience (5)	Weak	2.5
Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%		
Organizational Background and Staffing (13)	Weak	6.5
Compliance and Accountability (8)	Substandard	2
Member supervision (4)	Adequate	3
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25)	Substandard	6.25
TOTAL		36.25
Evaluation Plan		n/a
Executive Summary matches template	No	n/a
Final Recommendation:		<=59, Do Not Recommend for Further Review

2. 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, Maine Office of Behavioral Health, Maine Treatment and Recovery Courts, "Some" Maine County Jails, Healthy Acadia, Ready 4 Reentry, Partnerships for Health

3. Applicant proposes to deliver services: (select what the applicant states their program will cover:

- 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

4. Which CNCS focus area does this applicant identify as related to its proposal? Do the applicant's activities in each focus area fall under the type of activities CNCS says are acceptable (see RFP page 82-9)? Do the performance measures chosen match the focus area?

Focus Area Identified	Activities are within list of acceptable for funding	Performance Measures match focus area
<input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Does the proposal fall in a federal funding priority for this competition?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA
Does the proposal fall in a Commission funding priority?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA

Performance Measures	
Do the Capacity Building performance measures match one of the sets listed in the RFP?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Do the Member Development performance measures exactly match the set provided in the RFA?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Executive Summary

Does the Executive Summary conform to the required template? Yes No

REVIEWER COMMENTS

Section: Program Design (50 %)

Theory of change (narrative text) and logic model

- The applicant's organizational experience with the reentry of an incarcerated individual into society being more successful with the aid of a peer mentor is evident. The applicant's proposed intervention to assist previously incarcerated individual with reentry into society is articulated. The summary addresses needs of the target population and abilities of the organization, however, the proposal summary is lacking in details of the core activities defining the AmeriCorps members' responsibilities. The applicant did not adequately describe the roles of the AmeriCorps members or the rationale for using AmeriCorps members. The Applicant did not reference the study research and results, attached to their proposal. It is unclear how the organization's volunteers and the AmeriCorps members will collaborate and share responsibilities in their efforts to assist the proposed beneficiaries with reentry. No current organizational performance data was provided, making it unclear how the specific performance targets in the logic model will be achieved. The targets appear to be higher than those achieved in the study provided. While the applicant mentions there is a significant need for volunteers, there is no logic model for the AmeriCorps members process in securing volunteers. It is unclear whether AmeriCorps members will supplant current volunteers and their responsibilities. No mention of building volunteer capacity. This is significant because the supporting research, submitted by the applicant, referred to difficulties in maintaining peer mentors. There is a concern that the applicant indicates they ".....will begrudgingly adhere to the legal directives requiring background checks of prospective AmeriCorp members...." This would appear to stigmatize an AmeriCorp member with a non-criminal record.
- Needs more information. It is not clear on the type of training the AmeriCorp Volunteer will receive. CIPPS? Do they need lived experience?
- The funder (US CDC) specifically asked for a discussion of the community and need in the contexts of the CDC Social Vulnerability Index. This was totally absent.

- The discussion of the need omitted a considerable amount of information. E.g., it proposed to serve 200 returning people in a year but there was no indication of what this represents for the total population of potential clients, where they are likely to go after release (rural or urban areas), why 200.
- There was a lot of good information and the study showed the program works but it was never brought it into the proposal narrative.

Evidence Tier

- The applicant did provide a well-designed and well-implemented evaluation study of work comparable to their proposal. The applicant never discussed the proposal's similarities and differences to the study, making it unclear whether the study and this proposal represent the exact same intervention. No outcome evidence of the applicant's current program was provided.
- This does not have outcomes that match the inputs. It is vague. So much is missing.
- The proposal claimed moderate evidence but did not provide evidence its program would replicate the one in the study even in the demographics, focus on key risk factors studied, selection of mentors for individuals, or training/preparation of mentors.

Evidence Quality

- The applicant did not explain how completely this program would replicate the one described in the study. Absent was any discussion of what adaptations would be needed to replicate a successful Connecticut program in Maine and whether the returning individuals would be demographically similar to those in the study.
- The applicant outlines their target beneficiaries and mentor qualities as those similar to those mentioned in the report study. The goal of increased success in reentry for individuals with incarceration histories are similar to the provided study.
- The study was good, except, they talk about the type of mentor and length of time. These were not compared in the proposal.
- Could have given evidence of success by the current program if it was the basis for this program design. Is undergoing an evaluation but did not provide any preliminary findings and also stated the evaluator would not be used in the future.

Notice Priority

- The Applicant has a clearly-delineated specifically-focused targeted beneficiary group: people with arrest and or conviction records. Which is a funding priority for this competition. The summary of the organization included information on the organizations focus on historically underrepresented and underserved individuals.
- This fits within the funding priority

Member Experience

- It is clear in the proposal AmeriCorps members will receive the proper training and develop new skills from the applicant, private agencies, courts, and county and state departments. The applicant makes it clear their organization leadership is laudably diverse, you are left to assume the applicant will be interested in maintaining this diversity of communities with their AmeriCorps members' to match that of their clients. There is no information on the opportunities members will have to develop leadership skills. The experience and training does appear to enhance the AmeriCorps members' array of employment opportunities.
- It does not explain how the opportunity will develop members as leaders.
- Does not discuss placement of members, why are they dispersed and how terms were determined. Potential safety concerns not addressed. Sounds like some of training seems to come from professional sources but not clear. Will AmeriCorps members end up with credentials?

Section: Organizational Capability (25 %)

Organizational Background and Staffing

- Many in current leadership and staff of the applicant organization appear to have the same life's experiences as the intended beneficiary population. The applicant did not fully outline staff and Board member qualifications. The organization's knowledge and implementation of diversity is demonstrated by the make-up of the Board of Directors and its staff. The structure and qualities of the staff responsible for the AmeriCorps Program is incomplete, as a

member supervisor is not currently on staff. Nor was it made clear in the proposal on how the supervisor will assist the AmeriCorps members, who may be spread throughout the state at various service site locations.

- it had relevant data

Compliance and Accountability

- It is completely unclear whether the organization has a plan or procedures in place to address prohibited or unallowable activities, as this area was not covered in the narratives. The applicant does refer to the Partnership for Health (PFH) as conducting evaluation, and further indicates in the summary, "While, there are no plans to engage PFH for a direct evaluation of the MPRN AmeriCorps Pathway, ...". A current evaluation will not be available until 2025.
- No discussion of policies or procedures and internal controls.
- Very difficult to assess this because no information was provided.

Member Supervision

- The applicant clearly states the AmeriCorps Coordinator will be trained and experienced in the prisoner reentry practices and programs they have found to be successful with their clients. AmeriCorps members will be trained by the organizations with expertise in the methods found effective in assisting individuals with histories of incarceration successfully reenter society. The applicant did not adequately describe how AmeriCorps members will be supervised and effectively assisted at critical times while also being dispersed around Maine.
- The grant talked about training of the staff and supervisors. Concern is will they go to prisons alone?

Section: Cost and Budget Adequacy (25 %)

- Cost to MSY = \$35,761 which is far above allowable rate. Most of the Grantee portion of the budget (81%) is anticipatory or conditional. \$150,000 of this is

Section: Evaluation or Data Plan Feedback

- NA

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? No

Comments:

- The applicant is unclear on their goals to develop capacity building. It is also unclear how the applicant will use AmeriCorps members as staff to enhance the existing volunteer pool. There is no detail on how the program will be assisted by AmeriCorps members to develop an organization that will not atrophy in the absence of an infusion of AmeriCorps members. The narratives provided by the applicant portray an organization which would be effective in this category of grant. The applicant leaves out vital information about the current output and the organization's output history. There is no reference to the supporting study in the narratives. The study found 66% of the mentored clients had a successful reentry. The applicant indicates an 80% success rate in his performance measure, without justification. The applicant mentions in the logic model the Augusta Recovery Reentry Center requires an infusion of significant volunteer manpower to provide support. They assign 2 MSYs (4 halftime AmeriCorps members). This action seems to supplant volunteers with AmeriCorps members. There is no mention of AmeriCorps members being regarded as staff and their work to secure volunteers to ensure future success of the Augusta Recovery Reentry program.
- The concept is great, but the grant will need to offer more detail.
- Program development is at the concept level and needs a planning grant to get ready for operation.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- It is unclear how AmeriCorps members will secure leadership skills in this organization. It is unclear what part volunteers play in the current organization, whether their numbers will increase with the aid of AmeriCorps members, and then what part they will play in the absence of AmeriCorps members. It is unclear whether this grant is a temporary infusion of funds and staff, or a means to strengthen the organization for a successful future. It is unclear what the applicant's plan is for evaluating success or failure. It is unclear who the leaders of this organization are, their titles and backgrounds.

- Training, oversight and expectations of each member

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- The applicant describes a program that is in demand in our society. They appear, by their account, to operate a program that is and has been successful aiding individuals with criminal histories reenter society. Clarity of their history, successes, organization, the capacity they wish to build, and AmeriCorps members part within the organization to build capacity would have been helpful in understanding the applicants' goals in using AmeriCorps members to ensure the future success of their organization's success and viability.
- A significant number of elements listed in the narrative requirements were overlooked – missing – and impacted scoring.
- Needs more information - then it may be worth funding.
- Really sad this proposal isn't strong enough for consideration. It's a needed one. Perhaps the applicant could do some planning and submit a complete proposal in another competition.