

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		
• Alignment with funding priorities	Strong	25
Program Model		
• Serve communities described in 2522.450(c)	Strong	2.5
• Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse	Adequate	1.875
• Potential for innovation and/or replication	Adequate	1.875
• Strength of evidence program can be sustained over time.	Adequate	1.875
Preferences from RFP Announcement		
• Proposal submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people.	Strong	7.5
• serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum	Strong	7.5
Past Performance		
• Prior grant management experience	Adequate	7.5
Financial Plan	Adequate	7.5
Fiscal Systems		
• Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements	Weak	2.5
• Strength of sponsoring org's financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Weak	2.5
• 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, HVOSC 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. HVOSC 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.