

Grant Proposal Report to Commission from Task Force

Recommendation: Forward or fund only if corrections can be negotiated

Legal Applicant: Penobscot Nation Housing Dept

Project Name: Penobscot Nation Energy Efficiency Program

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: 01/01/2024 to 12/31/2024
 Submitted request is for Yr [1]

Federal Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

Commission priorities: Workforce development, Climate action/energy efficiency, Housing

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			
Member Support			
Indirect (Admin)			
CNCS Award amount	\$280,000	Total Local Share (cash + in-kind)	\$306,000 from Source of Funds
% sharing proposed			
% share required	n/a		
Cost-per-member proposed	\$28,000		
max allowed	\$28,000		

Total AmeriCorps Member Service Years:

	Slot Types Requested						
	1700	1200	900	675	450	300	Total
Slots With living allowance	10						10
Living allowance proposed	21,675						
Slots with only ed award							

Program Description (executive summary):

The Penobscot Indian Nation proposes to have 10 FT AmeriCorps members who will support the Tribal Nation in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. This includes splitting up the 10 AmeriCorps members into two tracks. The first would be getting certified as North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NACEP) PV Apprentice Certified and carry out community solar projects. The second track would be getting members Building Science Principle Technician Certified to conduct Home Energy Audits and be able to provide reports, allowing for our Housing Department to make the required changes to ensure home energy efficiency. These services will be carried out primarily on the Penobscot Nation and extended out to the other 3 Tribes in the State of Maine. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps program will have all members certified and trained and begin working on our solar grid resilience program and to initially have 50 home energy audits done for our low-income Tribal Citizens. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 8

community volunteers who will be engaged in assisting with home energy audits and weatherization projects within the community. The AmeriCorps investment of \$280,000 will leverage our \$306,000 in public grant funding.

Service locations:

Not specified but partner communities referenced

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

Passamaquoddy Nation, Maliseet Nation and Mi'kmaq Nation, Revision Energy and Build Green Maine

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

Energy Audit Team

OUTPUT: EN1: Number of housing units or public structures weatherized or retrofitted

Proposed target: 30

OUTCOME: EN1.1: Number of housing units/structures with reduced energy consumption or reduced energy costs

Proposed target: 10

Solar AssessmentTeam

OUTPUT: EN1: Number of housing units or public structures weatherized or retrofitted

Proposed target: 3

OUTCOME: EN1.1: Number of housing units/structures with reduced energy consumption or reduced energy costs

Proposed target: 3

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

(Measures listed in the RFP not entered and targets were not proposed)

CAPACITY BUILDING

(Measures listed in the RFP not entered and targets were not proposed)

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.*

CATEGORY	Rating	Points
Rationale & Approach/Program Design Section (50%)		
Need	Adequate	5.25
Intervention	Weak	3.5
Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model	Adequate	12
Funding Priority and Preferences	Strong	4
Member Training	Adequate	3
Member Supervision	Weak	2
Member Experience	Weak	2
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	Adequate	3
Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%		
Organizational Background and Staffing	Weak	6
Compliance and Accountability	Adequate	15
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%		
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	Adequate	20
	Total	75.75

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		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with funding priorities 	Strong	25
Program Model		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve communities described in 2522.450(c) 	Adequate	1.875
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal adds to goal of being programmatically, demographically, and geographically diverse 	Strong	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for innovation and/or replication 	Adequate	1.875
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of evidence program can be sustained over time. 	Strong	2.5
Preferences from RFP Announcement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From a partnership or coalition whose members represent local organizations working together 	Weak	2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting or recruiting participants from historically marginalized communities and/or people. 	Strong	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> serve, counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural-urban continuum 	Weak	2.5
Past Performance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can comply with requirements, info consistent with other grant administrator's info, consistent with externally verified past performance 	Adequate	7.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: applicant used member positions 	n/a	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: used financial resources allocated 	n/a	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RECOMPETE ONLY: implemented program effectively 	n/a	
Financial Plan	Weak	5
Fiscal Systems		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity of Financial mgt system to comply with fed requirements 	Strong	5

• Strength of orgz financial mgt practices as evidenced by audits, etc.	Strong	5
• Strength of sponsor orgs financial status/stability per audit, 990, etc.	Strong	5
Grant Readiness	Adequate	11.25
Total Task Force Score		82.5
Peer Review Score		75.75
Final Score for Applicant (200 possible)		158.25

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.

- Clarify that the public funding referenced is in hand and approved for program support.
- Clarify that the tribal authorities who must support the grant have given their approval. The process was described but it is unclear whether the process occurred or was pending.

Peer Reviewer Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Section: Program Design (50 %)

Need

- Need “By being create with Renewable Energy and making homes more energy efficient we our reducing operating costs of home for our Tribal Citizens”
- The applicant does a good job of describing the need the Americorp program will address and the inequities faced by the Penobscot Indian Nation. The disparity in median income and unemployment rates shows a true economic disadvantage for the community when affording basic needs. Showing that the average household will have to spend roughly 1/13th of their annual income on heating fuel carries this point even further. However, the section seems to lack discussion and details on how the community was engaged to identify the need as a priority. Also, there is mention of the LI-HEAP as a safety net, but not much detail on the existing services, organizations, or planning efforts already working to address the stated need.
- The applicant provides a succinct problem statement with a robust solution of certification and then implementation. The data is sufficient to help convey the need and this applicant, the housing authority, already provides services in this area, as noted in the mention of the energy resilience program. There was no mention of eliciting community input into building the proposed program.

Intervention

- Intervention “in meeting solar and home energy needs on the primarily Penobscot Nation
- When discussing the program model implemented by AmeriCorps, the applicant covers the following topics:
 - The core activities of members and describes them as engaging in Home Energy Audits, community solar projects, minor home repairs, training the community in software uses, and connecting with the community.
 - The duration and intensity of the project is absent from this narrative section. - The demographics of the population served are described as primarily the Penobscot Nation, but with some support for the Passamaquoddy Nation, Maliseet Nation, and the Mi’kmaq Nation. While most of these items are touched upon, there could be more detail for the core activities, particularly for what and where the community solar projects could be used for, what sorts of minor home repairs and how do they further the goal of energy efficiency, and what sort of software training and how will this advance the goals of the program receiving funding. The section lacks discussion of why this intervention is the best fit for the identified community need. The roles and specialized qualifications for AmeriCorps members are discussed. There is no discussion of the role community volunteers will play.

- The applicant offers a clear description of core activities, along with some discussion of the duration, intensity and demographics of the beneficiaries. It quantifies the maximum amount that will be provided for repairs, but does not put this in context of a measurement of improvement resulting from the investment. The minimum qualifications for the AmeriCorps positions were not included nor was there any discussion about how the roles of the community volunteers will be distinct or the same as the requested AmeriCorps positions.

Theory of Change, Evidence of Effectiveness, Logic Model

- Has the same type of grammar problems.
- There is little discussion on the theory behind the declared solutions.
- The applicant makes a sufficient argument for the proposed invention reducing energy costs and fossil fuel reliance. There is also use of the climate study as an anchor for evidence of effectiveness. All elements of the logic model are complete and tie appropriately to the narrative.

Evidence of Effectiveness

- Referenced 20% below poverty, in need section referenced 19.1% (which is correct?)
- The applicant adds to the “need” for the program, but does not discuss how the solutions they propose have been proven effective in address that need. No citations to quality sources for statements presented as evidence. There is an appendix with performance goals, but adding this to the narrative would be helpful and clearer. The Logic Model contains most elements required. There could be more detail for certain items such as locations and number of members delivering the interventions, but overall it followed the expected criteria. Did not see reference to performance measures for all outcomes presented.
- The logic model provides adequate descriptions in all sections, however there is no alpha-numeric reference to national performance nor outcome measures. Further, there is an inconsistency between the narrative describing 50 home audits in the first year and the logic model identifying 40 homes.

Funding Priority

- Listed their priorities fully.
- Addressed funding priority as a Maine Won’t Wait goal.
- The proposed program meets more than one of the funding priorities as well as the requirements of the AmeriCorps program, however, the citation should be a federal level reference rather than the State of Maine as the RFA is federally issued.

Member Training

- “Auditor training which 2-day training” “This training will allow for AmeriCorps members to conduct independently home energy audits”
- Applicant provided details on the specific qualifications and trainings the AmeriCorps members would have to obtain to complete the stated goals.
- The description of training is sufficient, with references to national certifications. Additionally, the applicant notes that the long-term jobs could result from the envisioned program. There is no mention of policies or even a check list to ensure the grant rules are followed.

Member Supervision

- “member will be receiving supervision for multiple entities” “members going through the Solar Track with be working closely with” “members in the Home Energy Audit Track with will closely with Build Green Maine”
- The applicant responds to the prompt, but very broadly. More information on a plan to report and check-in with a supervisor would be appreciated. How will AmeriCorps members needs be assessed if they do not self-report issues? Who within the Tribe is responsible for ensuring weekly meetings occur?
- This section describes sufficiently how the AmeriCorps staff who are supervised will be trained, however, it does not describe how the Nation supervisors will be trained.

Member Experience

- “once applications are receiving they are screened our Tribe’s Personnel Committee”
- There is good detail on the selection process outside of discussions on diversity of applicant backgrounds, talents, etc. Equitable hiring is mentioned. Opportunities for growth and education outside of the Americorp assignment exist. More detail on how members will be given the opportunity to reflect on this growth could be discussed. There is no discussion on how to connect to the broader National Service network.
- The member experience is addressed by the discussion of weekly training; however, there is no discussion about recruiting and training a pool of diverse Americorps volunteers nor is there a discussion of connecting to a broader national service network.

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

- They have several ways to identify the AmeriCorps folks.
- The applicant addresses all prompts. Could have more detail on co-branding, but it is inferred through some activity descriptions.
- This section provides a succinct description of how the program will be AmeriCorps branded.

Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%

Organizational Background and Staffing

- “Gary Fearon will be the overall supervisor is the Executive Director of Housing” Form ID Home Energy Deviancies’ Form talks about 30 units retrofitted and 10 units with reduced energy consumption. 50 mentioned in Executive Summary (see form)
- The applicant does not discuss how Americorp fits into the applicant organization’s mission and strategic goals. The applicant thoroughly describes the Tribe’s experience serving the community. Internal capacity is described in measurable terms and an organizational chart is provided. The organization’s relationship with volunteerism is described well. The training program and those involved are discussed, but the Tribe HR employees who will help oversee the members are not specifically talked about.
- The applicant does address how the proposed program fits into its overall goals, program beneficiaries and internal capacity. However, the application does not describe the credentials of the Department’s staff who will lead these two tracks.

Compliance and Accountability

- Looks to have all areas covered in case of a problem.
- The only organizational policy or practice discussed is an annual audit. No detail on what systems to ensure compliance with federal, state, and tribal laws and policies are.
- This section provides a brief description of how the organization works to ensure compliance, along with methods for correction.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%

- I did not see that form
- Budget is incomplete without assigning a number of Americorp members into their appropriate category and no average amount of allowance for those members is entered. No discussion of non-AmeriCorp funding except at the beginning of proposal.
- There is no budget for this program, and only a brief reference to other federal funding sources.

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

Comments:

- The applicant has clear goals and partners who can help carry those goals to fruition. While the application is rather unclear or vague in many places, the project is simple and revisions to the application can be made. The experience and education provided to Americorp members through the program would be valuable.
- The program described, including objectives, measures and resources are realistic for the size of the grant request.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- The grammar is very shaky.
- Whether due to the complicated nature of the budget device available to the applicant or otherwise, the budget is lacking and needs more details. The lack of updated information on additional funding would change this reviewers opinion of whether the applicant can effectively provide the service it seeks.
- There is no evaluation plan identified, even though elements of it are included in the narrative.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- Knowing and have worked with many people from the Nation I would have thought the application would have been better completed.
- The application could use tightening up and more information in key places. However, the project is good and due to the amount of collaboration with other entities, there should be enough support to carry out the project.
- This application had some strong elements, particularly the need and intervention descriptions, along with a complete theory of action matrix. However, typos, along with absence of some required items reduced what would have otherwise been an outstanding set of scores.

Task Force Review Notes and Appraisal Summary:

Proposal Alignment and Program Model

- This proposal combines workforce development, housing, and environment components in a project run by and benefitting the Penobscot Nation and expanding to the other Maine Tribal Nations. The focus on solar and other housing energy improvements will assist low-income Tribal citizens while developing community members’ work expertise and certification while reflecting the Nation’s commitment to the environment. Training will include sensitivity and cultural competencies.

The proposal builds a strong needs rationale. It is well-integrated into the HUD-funded Tribal Housing strategies and programming with sustainability plans built in. Since the department already operates federally funded programs, it has strong financial and programming systems in place, which will facilitate meeting AmeriCorps requirements. Additionally, the Director of Housing, the Housing Commission (elected by tribal members), the Tribal Council and the Tribal Chief support the proposal. Servicing 100 homes in three years is ambitious, but probably attainable, given the relationships already built with homeowners, contractors, and other partners already built.

The Director recognizes his need to develop volunteer management skills and has arranged for support from other Tribal departments who work with volunteers. The Director has a clear vision of how to implement this program.

- The proposal addresses the community needs for safe and affordable housing and workforce development and is aligned with several funding priorities.

The program will serve an historically underserved population in a high poverty, low-income community.

The proposal will serve the Penobscot Indian Nation with the potential for expansion to Maine’s other tribes, a group Volunteer Maine has not recently supported.

The program is well aligned with the mission of the organization, is to be operated through the Tribal government, which has a strong relationship with its community and which is financially strong and stable supporting the likelihood of continued local funding support.

The Housing Department has limited to no experience in using and managing volunteers and will need to develop skills in this area. This is the only significant weakness in the proposal.

Preferences from RFA

- They are already working with other Tribal Departments, three other Maine Tribal Nations, Revision Energy, Build Green Maine, and the Penobscot Climate Action Corp. The proposed spread to the other Tribal Nations will serve counties in the rural-urban continuum.
- The proposal is not from a partnership or coalition, per se, although it will be drawing on the resources of other organizations to train members in energy auditing and alternative energy.

The proposal is from an organization lead by an historically marginalized community and should receive preference points. While the program will begin in Penobscot County, it may expand to other tribes located in rural counties; so, a weak rating rather than nonresponsive.

Past Performance

- They have extensive experience administering federal HUD grants and other federal programs. Because of this, they have strong HR, finance, and programmatic systems in place. The Housing Department will work with others to enhance its management of volunteers.
- In some areas, the application is strong, but there are several weak elements. The applicant did not identify the specific sources of local funds; the program manager may be a bit overloaded with supervision and, generally, supervision of the members was not fully defined as to roles and responsibilities between the program director and the outside consultants. The organization lacks experience with volunteer management. At the same time, it appears able to meet the performance targets and objectives and evaluate the impact of the project given the close relationship between the department and program beneficiaries, particularly those residing in Housing Department properties.

Financial Plan

- The applicant receives funds from eight federal agencies with significant growth in the past 20 years. The Housing Department has stable funding primarily through HUD, and they capitalize on the resources and expertise of partners. They have proven fiscal systems for administering federal grants. They had no findings in the last audit. The specific source of local share is not identified.
- Sources of local funds were not detailed.

Fiscal Systems

- The applicant receives funds from eight federal agencies with significant growth in the past 20 years. The Housing Department has stable funding primarily through HUD, and they capitalize on the resources and expertise of partners. They have proven fiscal systems for administering federal grants. They had no findings in the last audit. The specific source of local share is not identified.
- The housing department and tribe have significant experience in handling federal grant requirements and reporting.

The tribe's finances appear sound, while noting the relatively heavy debt burden and that one reporting unit was not included in the audit; also, the audit is a bit old with the most recent years' still in progress

Grant Readiness

- Because of its history with administering federal grants and programs, the applicant has solid systems, policies, HR and fiscal support and program experience. Leadership support has been demonstrated by approval of the proposal by the Housing Department leadership, the Housing Commission, the Tribal Council and the Tribal Chief.
- Could be rated strong, although I've taken the lack of volunteer management into account in this rating. Could move higher.