



10:00 Introduction

T. Dean & R. Steele: Clarification on the interview: questions asked of applicants during the interview period can only be seeking clarification for what is included in the application.

10:05 Montana Legal Services Association (MSLA)

New Program Proposal

R. Steele:

- Introduced the OCS representatives at the meeting
- Notified MSLA that the review interview process will be the same as in the past. However, the scores will be lower in general staff scores have been lower than the Commissioner Workgroup's although the rank has been in line.
- Reviewed the application scoring (3-excellent to 0-not acceptable)

R. Steele:

Reviewed the components of Program Design and the assigned score weights.

A. Need

Consensus Score: 2

B. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems

AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems Consensus Score: 2

C. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed & Measurable Community Impact

J. Auer: Noted that pg 9 is the strongest section about past performance on the application.

R. Steele: better job than in prior applications, but lacked description of impact and measurement.

T. Dean: agrees that the application lacked information, particularly with regard to service to Native Americans

Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed & Measurable Community Impact Consensus Score: 1

D. Member Recruitment

J. Auer: acceptable, but lacks specific information.

R. Steele: The applicant needs to explain how it plans on recruiting those that they are targeting.

Member Recruitment Consensus Score: 2

E. Member Training

R. Steele: OCS is aware that members receive significant training and deliver legal information; however, this is not apparent in the narrative provided.

J. Auer: The nature of the trainings was adequately described, but lacked description on the skill sets required/acquired.

R. Steele: MSLA can easily make certain/verify the allowableness of member activities through activity logs and other means, but this is not described in the application.

Member Training Consensus Score: 1

F. Member Supervision

Member Supervision Consensus Score: 2

G. Member Experience

T. Dean: the narrative for this criterion begins with a statement on pg14 that the applicant believes the focus of the program is on the people served/clients, and not the AmeriCorps members. This criterion asks the applicant to discuss member experience, but as it is written, it appears as though the member is secondary.

R. Steele: disagrees with T. Dean and believes that this is a good way to start the narrative for this section, as the point of AmeriCorps programs are to address a community need/solve community problems. Narrative included was a good transition, stating that it is important that members have a good experience, but the goal is to benefit the community.

J. Auer: this program should be a 3 on this section based on knowledge of the programs connection to civic engagement and community service.

Member Experience Consensus Score: 2

H. Volunteer Generation

J Auer: liked the information provided on the recruitment of pro bono attorneys and the associated activities.

Volunteer Generation Consensus Score: 2

I. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

R. Steele: good description on how the applicant teaches members to describe themselves and their relationship to AmeriCorps, but more explanation needed.

Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification Consensus Score: 2

R. Steele: stated that the consensus score for Section 1: Program Design was 15/27.

Section 2: Organizational Capacity (20%)

All meeting attendees agree that there is no need to review the description of organizational capacity.

A. Organizational Background and Staffing

T. Dean: lacks description of any evaluation plans and the organizations capacity to conduct an evaluation. This is a large piece of this criterion, but a lot of information is provided

J Auer: missing information on the capacity to conduct training for members.

R. Steele: few technical changes are needed, but fully explained:

J Auer: emphasized that parts were missing from the description

Organizational Background and Staffing Consensus Score: 2

B. Sustainability

R. Steele: would like to see more specific information on financial sustainability.

J Auer: notes that it is difficult to discuss AmeriCorps and financial sustainability.

T. Dean: noted that the following quote on page 20 addressed the prompt, “sustainability is about more than money and community support. It is about making sure that procedures and programs are well documented and not dependent on any single individual. It is about planning for future contingencies.”

Sustainability Consensus Score: 3

C. Compliance & Accountability

T. Dean: partial information only provided on improving retention. Even though retention is high, over 92%, there is a lack of plan for improvement.

J Auer: significant pieces were missing, including host site training, monitoring, and selection details. More explanation needed.

R. Steele: more information is needed on internal review processes.

Compliance & Accountability Consensus Score: 1

Section 3: Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy

A. Cost Effectiveness

T. Dean: a value statement is needed that shows how/why the program is cost-effective especially if compared to other similar programs. The statement could describe the applicants need and ability to serve a large, rural state.

J Auer: significant pieces are missing from the answer, a complete rewrite is needed.

R. Steele: the applicant is missing information. Applicant does not list other sources of funding as well as a more robust description of cost effectiveness.

Cost Effectiveness Consensus Score: 1

B. Budget Adequacy

T. Dean: noted that they did not have to mention criminal history checks in this section of the narrative and that the applicant did account for in the budget.

R. Steele: provided a good explanation of the increased match. Applicant should omit extensive information provided about MSY.

Budget Adequacy Consensus Score: 2

R. Steele: stated that the consensus score for the application is 65/100

10:35 INTERVIEW QUESTION PERIOD

T. Dean: confirmed that questions asked and answers provided will not impact scoring.

T. Dean & R. Steele: would like to see more information on the performance measures throughout the application, particularly on pg9. Targets and performance measures need to be explained clearly because some readers will only receive the narrative. OCS was impressed by the application and the changes made. OCS will work with MSLA to provide technical assistance.

T. Dean: it is unclear how many years the program has received funding in the application. It says 3 years on one page and 5 years on another. For how many years has the program received funding?

B Waiss (MSLA): debated on whether or not to include the period that MSLA had the planning grant.

R. Steele: stick to the three years, which is the period of time that the program has been operating. Also, applicant needs to make sure that the number of years provided for MSLA's existence is consistent throughout the application.

J Auer: very impressed by the proposal and hopeful that with technical assistance a good application will move forward.

10:50 Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) Continuation Proposal

MCC Representatives:

Jono McKinney, Executive Director

Wendy Wigert, Director of Operations

R. Steele: reviewed the continuation score sheet and review process.

J. McKinney: has any external review been completed?

R. Steele: At the last commission meeting, commissioners voted to have the review completed by OCS in order to neither shorten the time period that the applicant would have to put together an application nor the technical assistance period. Final funding recommendations will still be completed by the commissioners.

Program Design

T. Dean: great info provided about hiring the new veterans coordinator. Would like to see more information on the tribal crew and the partnership with the United States Forest Service (USFS). Have there been other crews like this piloted in other states or is Montana unique?

J Auer: would like to see the plans to recruit tribal members as well as the future plans for the vet crews. Would also like to see plans to increase the retention of veterans beyond hiring the veterans coordinator and the applicants thoughts on military families.

R. Steele: there are some technical issues and repetitive information in this section. Some sentences are long and difficult to understand, which makes it hard to follow. More information is also needed on the Wilderness Ranger Intern Program. The applicant makes good use of data points. Would like to see additional information on what the vet retention and what coordinator will do.

Organizational Capacity

R. Steele: more information could be provided on the MCC staff, their longevity, and their capacity.

J Auer: would like to see more information on the veteran's coordinator position.

Cost Effectiveness & Budget

T. Dean: Impressive to add slots without increasing grant amount.

R. Steele: recommends that the applicant elaborate on the 7.4% match increase due to impressiveness and ability to highlight as a success.

R. Steele: explained the continuation scoring section.

All grant reviewers agreed on the following Staff Application Assessment Scores:

- a. Has the program met their match requirements: 3
- b. Has the program had any significant compliance findings or repeat findings: 3
- c. Has the program completed enrollments/exits within 30 days: 3

Reviewers sought clarification on this from MCC, given that 1 out of 250 members exited late. MCC believes that changes were made due to a compelling personal member circumstance. All reviewers agreed on the score put forth, but MCC will follow-up on the issue.

d. Has the program met all OCS and CNCS deadlines:
TOTAL

3
12/12

11:10 INTERVIEW QUESTION PERIOD

R. Steele: Do you not record all the donated time (site supervisors, sponsors, etc.) because it is too hard to record or is it recorded incorrectly on the budget?

W. Wigert: Typically, MCC does not count it as an in-kind match because it is not something that MCC would have the ability to pay for. The match from sponsors is above and beyond the funding that it takes to support a member. In addition, MCC does not need the in-kind contributions to meet the match, as they have enough other-cash sources. There are also issues with in-kind resources meeting GAAP requirements.

T. Dean: Is the hiring of a Veteran's Coordinator contingent upon this request?

J McKinney: No. MCC is currently in the process of recruiting this position. The purpose of the coordinator will be to better educate Vets before they begin the program, focus on the needs of veterans, and to increase retention rates. MCC plans on hiring this position whether they are funded or not. This is not a change in program, it is just staffing up in an area to meet the needs of the program.

T. Dean: Two evaluations appear to be going on concurrently. Can you expand on this, and when do you expect results?

MCC: In 2011 Education Northwest began an evaluation that looked at the major competencies. Subsequently, MCC had the opportunity to join other Corps across the nation to participate in a Texas A&M evaluation. The evaluations use different methodologies, but the same tools. One evaluation uses a pre/post instrument while the other is retroactive. MCC is interested to see if the data will be different because there is a significant cost difference between the two methodologies.

T. Dean: are the tribal crews exclusively going to be American Indian college students? Are there more partners involved?

MCC: MCC is not changing the program design, which is why this was not elaborated upon in the application. MCC is exploring new ways to increase partnerships and match.

The USFS wants to diversity its workforce, and is looking to MCC to help it fulfill the goal. USFS recognizes MCC's value of a training experience. USFS is putting forth funding to help support the tribal crews.

MCC is working with the University of Montana's Native American studies program and the Salish-Kootenai tribal college to recruit members, and will reach out to other tribal colleges as they move forward with the design of the program.

Due to funding constraints, the target population for this program will be graduating college seniors (the program will likely run from May-June through October), and will serve Native American students exclusively.

The reason for this, is that the USFS wants students to be able to participate in a program that includes at least 600 hours of service, which will allow members to qualify for non-competitive status. They are looking not only for trail crews, but they'd also like to hire members as part of their permanent workforce.

MCC hopes to build relationships with the colleges and programs to recruit for its other programs in the future.

MCC: To elaborate on the Wilderness Ranger Intern position- this came about due to the work being done in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness area and a partnership with the Frank Church Foundation. There was potential that funders may have seen competition between the two groups, therefore, MCC and the Foundation wanted to make their relationship explicit, and win-win to sustain resources in the area.

MCC: What level should MCC address State/Governor initiatives?

R. Steele and J. Auer: With the change in administration, no specific initiatives were included; however, you should still include them.

11:30 AmeriCorps Review Interview Wrap-Up

R. Steele:

Two other program submitted applications this round:

- One program submitted an application 14 minutes late. The application did not include a cover letter or letters of support- a first time applicant. The applicant did not provide information about the technical difficulties prior to the deadline.
- One program submitted an application, but also had technical difficulties with egrants. It was clear that the applicant did not have the capacity to implement an AmeriCorps program.

Both applications were rejected.

OCS will recommend to the Commission that we move MSLA forward as a new program.

OCS will recommend to the Commission that we move MCC forward as a continuation.

We hope to move forward two applications and different programs. It would be great for the state. We will send the Commission the information with the ranking for MSLA.

11:35 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

R. Steele: opened up the public comment period.

MCC: inquired about the new due dates and technical assistance period.

MSLA: thanked OCS review group.

MCC: thanked OCS review group. Would like to see more programs funded in the state, and reached out to MSLA in case they needed guidance.

R. Steele: reminder that there are available video conferencing sites in Bozeman and Missoula for the December 14, 2012 Montana Commission on Community Service commission meeting.

Attendees

Walt Sullivan Building:

Tony Dean, Financial Manager, OCS
Rebecca Steele, Grants Manager, OCS
Jim Auer, Grant Coordinator, OCS
Katie Gallagher, Grant Coordinator, OCS

Conference Line:

Brittany Waiss, AmeriCorps Coordinator, Montana Legal Services Association
Jono McKinney, President and CEO, Montana Conservation Corps
Wendy Wigert, Operations Director, Montana Conservation Corps

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