

CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY SERVICE
Commission Conference Call
Record of Conference Call – June 30, 2009

Members Present: J. Barber, I. Black, J. Ciarleglio (proxy for M. Meotti), P. Cohen-Hecht, W. Dyson, N. Kokoruda, C. Kozak, R. McCue, A. Quiñones, V. Wilkinson

Members Absent: N. Berube, V. Conroy, X. Gu, E. Janney, J. Kristof, M. Manson, Sr., S. Murdoch, L. Sandiaes, K. Singh, M. Wilcox, S. Zotto

Others: J. Johnson (Executive Director), J. Blazynski (Program Officer),
A. Davis (Executive Assistant)

The purpose of the conference call was to discuss the program funding proposals that were submitted and to request final approval for funding. The conference call began at 9 AM.

The following represents summaries and recommendations:

ASPIRACorps

ASPIRACorps is the only Connecticut program offering a statewide model reaching many communities that are not being served by other programs. These cities include: Waterbury, New Britain, Torrington and Danbury. They are also the only program serving the specific population of Latino youths. They were an AmeriCorps program for several years and took a hiatus in 2005. At that time they had excellent recruitment rates, perfect site visits reports and were always used as a model to other programs. The hiatus was primarily based on issues with matching funds which has clearly been resolved. They have strong partnerships with the communities in CT. The current staff has experience with AmeriCorps and appears well prepared to begin receiving AmeriCorps funding in the 2009-10 program year.

ASPIRACorps proposes to recruit 55 half-time members and 11 full-time members to serve in 7 communities in 11 middle schools throughout the state of CT. These 66 members will receive training to develop the competencies to succeed in college. During their term of service they intend to reach 275 low-income middle school students who have English as their second language. Through after school academic and enrichment programs provided by the AmeriCorps members these students will improve English literacy and achievement in all academic competencies. In addition, parents of these children will be recruited to participate in a 10 week workshop called APEX to help them learn strategies to support their children.

On a motion made by J. Barber and seconded by A. Quiñones, the commission agreed unanimously to fund ASPIRA.

Legal Applicant	ASPIRA of Connecticut, Inc.
Program Name	ASPIRACorps
Total Slots Requested	66
Full-time	11
1-Year Half Time (900 hours)	55
Reduced Half Time (675	0

Quarter Time (450 hours)	0
Minimum Time (300 hours)	0
Funding Requests:	
CNCS Share (Federal)	\$472,454
Grantee Share (Local)	\$676,821
Budget Totals	\$1,149,275
Budget Total Percentage	41%
Required Match	26%
Recommended for Funding?	Yes

ExperienceCorps

Agency on Aging has been serving seniors 55 and older since 1974. They maintain a wide range of partnerships throughout the New Haven community. It is the first program in our portfolio that offers opportunities specifically to seniors over 55. They demonstrate a great level of compliance in the site visit reports and are always seeking ways to improve the quality of their services. They are also the only program serving Hamden, CT.

ExperienceCorps proposes to recruit 30 300-hour members and 4 450-hour members, 5 300-hour members without a stipend and 5 volunteers. They will serve to improve academic performance as per scores and teacher reports as well as student motivation to learn and achievement of benchmarks. They are planning to help improve social isolation of members via program design (teams, meetings, etc.). They will increase community events in which they give away children's books and encourage family literacy.

On a motion made by N. Kokoruda and seconded by V. Wilkinson, the commission agreed unanimously to fund the ExperienceCorps program.

Legal Applicant	South Central Connecticut Agency on Aging
Program Name	ExperienceCorps
Total Slots Requested	39
Full-time	0
1-Year Half Time (900 hours)	0
Reduced Half Time (675 hours)	0
Quarter Time (450 hours)	4
Minimum Time (300 hours)	35
Funding Requests:	
CNCS Share (Federal)	\$104,857
Grantee Share (Local)	\$46,614
Budget Totals	\$151,471
Budget Total Percentage	69%
Required Match	26%

Recommended for Funding?	Yes
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Handz-On AmeriCorps

Handz-On proposes to recruit and train 12 full time members and 12 part time members to serve a life coaches providing intensive mentoring to at-risk youth. They will target youth with severe behavioral issues and learning disabilities. Members will develop treatment plans for the youth and provide 24 hour on call availability. The AmeriCorps members will receive a certification after completing the life skills training.

This program was not recommended for funding. The training is not well described especially considering the population they intend to serve. Members cannot develop treatment plans. There is no plan as to how members will be recruited and retained. The goals of the program were not clearly defined. There is no evidence of financial stability with this program. The budget has numerous concerns. They are proposing to spend a significant amount on supplies and a van although the grant does not explain why they need these items. Staff, consultants and member travel costs were also excessive with no explanation in the grant. They also submitted the budget at 15,391 per MSY with the limit being \$12,600.

Legal Applicant	Handz-On, Inc.
Program Name	Handz-On AmeriCorps
Total Slots Requested	24
Full-time	12
1-Year Half Time (900 hours)	12
Reduced Half Time (675 hours)	0
Quarter Time (450 hours)	0
Minimum Time (300 hours)	0
Funding Requests:	
CNCS Share (Federal)	\$277,046
Grantee Share (Local)	\$494,467
Budget Totals	\$771,513
Budget Total Percentage	36%
Required Match	0%
Recommended for Funding?	No

Hartford AmeriCorps

Hartford AmeriCorps has been a program of Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. since 1995. They are consistently exceeding the targeted number of children served each year. They recruit 100% of the awarded members and are maintaining over 80% in the current grant year. Their community service activities have proven to improve many school yards and parks and neighborhoods throughout Hartford. Hartford AmeriCorps is a model program that is compliant in all areas of reporting as well as site visits. They are committed to member development and currently have an AmeriCorps alumni employed as the Program Director of Hartford AmeriCorps.

Hartford AmeriCorps places members in schools to assist with educational achievement of Hartford's at-risk youth populations. For 2009-10 they propose to recruit 18 full time members, 6 part time members and 10 minimum time (summer) members. In the coming program year the AmeriCorps program will begin a transition from tutoring elementary students to high school

students, placing 8 members in Opportunity high School and the balance in 3 partner elementary schools. Summer members will serve in the high school, which will run year-round.

On a motion made by N. Kokoruda and seconded by J. Barber, the commission agreed unanimously to fund Hartford AmeriCorps.

Legal Applicant	Our Piece of the Pie, Inc.
Program Name	Hartford AmeriCorps
Total Slots Requested	32
Full-time	18
1-Year Half Time (900 hours)	4
Reduced Half Time (675 hours)	0
Quarter Time (450 hours)	0
Minimum Time (300 hours)	10
Funding Requests:	
CNCS Share (Federal)	\$277,209
Grantee Share (Local)	\$236,298
Budget Totals	\$513,507
Budget Total Percentage	54%
Required Match	38%
Recommended for Funding?	Yes

Project Self Reliance

Project Self Reliance proposes to focus on preparing low-income families to transition from public assistance to self sufficiency through developing viable job skills and financial literacy. 21 Members will learn the required skills to make repairs in homes of seniors and low income families. They also propose to assist families with developing financial skills such as balancing a check book, opening and maintaining bank accounts, using credit wisely and developing spending plans. These members will then transfer these skills to low income families in the West Hartford community.

This program was not recommended for funding. It did not answer the questions in the guidelines. They did not describe how members would be recruited and trained. It did not describe a plan for volunteer recruitment or community strengthening. The performance measures were confusing and it was difficult to distinguish the impact on the members verses the beneficiaries. There were numerous budget concerns. Including excessive funds for staff training which was not explained in the narrative. Staff travel and member training costs were also excessive and not defined in the grant.

Legal Applicant	West Hartford Housing Authority
Program Name	Project Self Reliance

Total Slots Requested	25
Full-time	6
1-Year Half Time (900 hours)	8
2-Year Half Time (1st Year)	8
2-Year Half Time (2nd Year)	1
Reduced Half Time (675 hours)	1
Quarter Time (450 hours)	1
Minimum Time (300 hours)	0
Funding Requests:	
CNCS Share (Federal)	\$126,580
Grantee Share (Local)	\$95,030
Budget Totals	\$221,610
Budget Total Percentage	57%
Required Match	0%
Recommended for Funding?	No

YouthSPEAK AmeriCorps Partnership

YouthSPEAK is a new program model proposed by the Regional Youth/Adult Substance Abuse Project (RYASAP) which is located in Bridgeport, CT. They received AmeriCorps funding since 1994 under a different program called SNAP with the mission to address public safety in high risk Bridgeport neighborhoods. SNAP took a brief hiatus to assess the needs in Bridgeport and create a new program model. They are proposing to switch their focus to teen violence. RYASAP has an enormous amount of support from community service agencies throughout Bridgeport. They have extensive experience with federal grants and in 2004 they became the lead agency for Connecticut Public Allies.

YouthSPEAK proposes to implement a community-wide prevention program targeting 7th-9th grade students in the Bridgeport community. 142 members will be addressing teen dating violence through in-school, after-school, and community programming. They are requesting twenty 450 hr slots, twenty 900 hr slots, sixty 300 hr slots, twelve 675 hour slots. The overall goal of the initiative is to promote healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence.

Legal Applicant	Regional Youth/Adult Substance Abuse Project
Program Name	YouthSPEAK AmeriCorps Partnership
Total Slots Requested	142
Full-time	0
1-Year Half Time (900 hours)	20
Reduced Half Time (675 hours)	22
Quarter Time (450 hours)	40

Minimum Time (300 hours)	60
Funding Requests:	
CNCS Share (Federal)	\$525,017
Grantee Share (Local)	\$165,795
Budget Totals	\$690,812
Budget Total Percentage	76%
Required Match	24%
Recommended for Funding?	No

On a motion made by J. Ciarleglio and seconded by W. Dyson, the conference call adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Davis
Executive Assistant

DRAFT