



STATE OF VERMONT
JOINT FISCAL OFFICE

MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Fiscal Committee members
From: Sorsha Anderson, Senior Staff Associate
Date: May 30, 2025
Subject: Grant Request - JFO #3257

Enclosed please find one (1) item, which the Joint Fiscal Office has received from the Administration.

JFO #3257: \$300,000.00 to the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Central Office from the California Volunteers Fund. This grant will establish a state-led Climate Corps. Funds will increase the current AmeriCorps members' living allowance to \$30,000.00 as required by the Climate Corps designation, and will fund three additional AmeriCorps members. *[Received May 30, 2025]*

Please review the enclosed materials and notify the Joint Fiscal Office (Sorsha Anderson: sanderson@leg.state.vt.us) if you have questions or would like this item held for legislative review. Please submit concerns by **June 25, 2025**, or we will assume that you agree to consider as final the Governor's acceptance of this request.

**State of Vermont**

Department of Finance & Management
109 State Street, Pavilion Building
Montpelier, VT 05620-0401

Agency of Administration

[phone] 802-828-2376

STATE OF VERMONT FINANCE & MANAGEMENT GRANT REVIEW FORM

Grant Summary:		This grant will be used to increase current AmeriCorps members' living allowance to \$30K as required by the Climate Corps designation (\$200K) and fund three additional AmeriCorps members (\$100K). Additional Climate Corps programming costs have been covered by existing AmeriCorps grants.			
Date:		3/5/2025			
Department:		AHS - Central Office			
Legal Title of Grant:		California Volunteers Fund			
Federal Catalog #:					
Grant/Donor Name and Address:		California Volunteers Fund 1400 Tenth Street Sacramento, CA 95814			
Grant Period:		From:		To:	
		2/3/2025		2/3/2026	
Grant/Donation		300,000			
	SFY 1	SFY 2	SFY 3	Total	Comments
Grant Amount:	\$300,000	\$	\$	\$	
Position Information:		# Positions	Explanation/Comments		
Additional Comments:		The intention of this grant is to demonstrate the utility of increased living allowances for the purposes of building those costs into future federal budgets.			
Department of Finance & Management			Adam Greshin <small>Digitally signed by Adam Greshin Date: 2025.05.20 Signed by: 90'</small>		(Initial)
Secretary of Administration			Sean Brown <small>F643164EBC83432...</small>		(Initial)
Sent To Joint Fiscal Office			Anna Reinold		Date
			<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> REVIEWED <small>By Anna Reinold at 2:10 pm, May 30, 2025</small> </div>		



STATE OF VERMONT REQUEST FOR GRANT (*) ACCEPTANCE (Form AA-1)

BASIC GRANT INFORMATION				
1. Agency:		Agency of Human Services		
2. Department:		Central Office		
3. Program:		SerVermont		
4. Legal Title of Grant:		California Volunteers Fund		
5. Federal Catalog #:				
6. Grant/Donor Name and Address: California Volunteers Fund 1400 Tenth Street Sacramento, CA 95814				
7. Grant Period:		From:	2/3/2025	To: 2/3/2026
8. Purpose of Grant: To develop and launch a state-led Climate Corps. The funding is in alignment with the state service commission (SerVermont) approved AmeriCorps program funding. These funds will be used as a living allowance for AmeriCorps members serving in a full-time service position.				
9. Impact on existing program if grant is not Accepted: Will not be able to supplement the AmeriCorps members living allowance.				
10. BUDGET INFORMATION				
	SFY 1	SFY 2	SFY 3	Comments
Expenditures:	FY 2025	FY	FY	
Personal Services	\$	\$	\$	
Operating Expenses	\$	\$	\$	
Grants	\$300,000	\$	\$	
Total	\$300,000	\$	\$	
Revenues:				
State Funds:	\$	\$	\$	
Cash	\$	\$	\$	
In-Kind	\$	\$	\$	
Federal Funds:	\$	\$	\$	
(Direct Costs)	\$	\$	\$	
(Statewide Indirect)	\$	\$	\$	
(Departmental Indirect)	\$	\$	\$	
Other Funds:	\$	\$	\$	
Grant (source CVF)	\$300,000	\$	\$	
Total	\$300,000	\$	\$	
Appropriation No:	3400001000	Amount:	\$	300,000
			\$	
			\$	
			\$	
			\$	
			\$	

STATE OF VERMONT REQUEST FOR GRANT (*) ACCEPTANCE (Form AA-1)

		Total	\$ 300,000
PERSONAL SERVICE INFORMATION			
11. Will monies from this grant be used to fund one or more Personal Service Contracts? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If "Yes", appointing authority must initial here to indicate intent to follow current competitive bidding process/policy. Appointing Authority Name: _____ Agreed by: _____ (initial)			
12. Limited Service Position Information:	# Positions	Title	
Total Positions			
12a. Equipment and space for these positions:		<input type="checkbox"/> Is presently available. <input type="checkbox"/> Can be obtained with available funds.	
13. AUTHORIZATION AGENCY/DEPARTMENT			
I/we certify that no funds beyond basic application preparation and filing costs have been expended or committed in anticipation of Joint Fiscal Committee approval of this grant, unless previous notification was made on Form AA-1PN (if applicable):	Signature: <u>Kristin McLure</u> <small>DocuSigned by: 2D24B62BE34A4C5...</small>		Date: 2/19/2025
	Title: Deputy Secretary		
	Signature: _____		Date: _____
	Title: _____		
14. SECRETARY OF ADMINISTRATION			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved:	(Secretary or designee signature) <u>Sean Brown</u> <small>FR43164FRC83432</small>		Date: 5/21/2025 8:39
15. ACTION BY GOVERNOR			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check One Box: Accepted	(Governor's signature) <u>[Signature]</u>		Date: 5/30/25
<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected			
16. DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED			
Required GRANT Documentation			
<input type="checkbox"/> Request Memo <input type="checkbox"/> Dept. project approval (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Award <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grant Agreement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grant Budget		<input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Donation (if any) <input type="checkbox"/> Grant (Project) Timeline (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Extension (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Form AA-1PN attached (if applicable)	
End Form AA-1			
(*) The term "grant" refers to any grant, gift, loan, or any sum of money or thing of value to be accepted by any agency, department, commission, board, or other part of state government (see 32 V.S.A. §5).			

 DS 2/19/2025
 30



GRANT AGREEMENT

THIS GRANT AGREEMENT (the “Agreement”) is made this **4th day of February, 2025**, by and between the **California Volunteers Fund**, a California public benefit corporation organized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as amended (the “Grantor”) and **Agency of Human Services; State of Vermont** (the “Grantee”) (each of which may be referred to individually as a “Party” or collectively as the “Parties”).

Term Start Date: February 3, 2025

End Date: February 3, 2026

RECITALS

WHEREAS, Grantor is a California public benefit corporation that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (the “Code”). Grantor’s purpose is to support California Volunteers and its programs.

WHEREAS, Grantee is tax-exempt pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Code. Grantee’s purpose is to support the purposes of the Grant Purposes (defined below).

[WHEREAS, Grantee is a [type of government agency] and is tax-exempt as a [state or political sub-division]; and]

[WHEREAS, Grantee is a [type of government agency] and is tax-exempt pursuant to Section 115(1) of the Code; and]

WHEREAS, in furtherance of its charitable purposes, Grantor now wishes to make a grant to Grantee, in the amount and on the terms and conditions in this Agreement.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual rights and obligations set forth herein, the parties to this Agreement hereby agree as follows:

1. **Grant Purpose.** The purpose of this grant is to develop and launch a state-led Climate Corps. Please see *Exhibit A Scope of Work* for additional information on the program scope and grant purpose.

2. **Grant Amount and Timeline.** Subject to this section, Grantor shall pay to Grantee the sum of **\$300,000** (the “Grant”). Unless noted differently in *Exhibit B Budget Detail and Provisions*, the Grant shall be paid out as a one-time payment at the start of the agreement. If funds are disbursed throughout the period of the grant, Grantor shall provide Grantee with two weeks written notice whether Grantor has raised sufficient funds to award Grantee a tranche of the grant in any given period. Grantee shall be excused from performance of its obligations under this Agreement during any period of time that Grantor does not award it a tranche of the Grant.

3. **Restrictions on Grant Funds.**

a. Grantee shall use the Grant solely for the purposes stated in Paragraph 1, and Grantee shall repay to Grantor any portion of the Grant which is not used for those purposes. Any changes in the purposes of the Grant must be approved by Grantor in advance, in writing.

b. Grantee shall not use any portion of the Grant to participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office, to induce or encourage violations of law or public policy, to cause any private inurement or improper private benefit to occur, nor to take any other action inconsistent with Section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

4. **Reporting.** To enable Grantor to fulfill its obligation to supervise and control this Grant, Grantee shall submit a full and complete report to Grantor as of the end of the fiscal year within which any portion of the Grant is received or spent, unless additional or alternative reporting requirements are outlined in *Exhibit C Metrics, Reporting, Deliverables, and Timelines*. Unless otherwise noted, Grantee shall submit this report no later than 60 days following the end of each such fiscal year. The report shall describe the charitable programs conducted by Grantee with the proceeds of the Grant and all expenditures made from Grant funds and shall report on Grantee’s compliance with the terms of this Agreement. Please see *Exhibit C* for additional information on reporting and timelines.

5. **Financial Records.** Grantee shall maintain complete books and records of revenues and expenditures for the Grant, which shall be made available for inspection at reasonable times if deemed necessary by Grantor. Grantor may choose to, at its own expense, periodically audit a selected number of its grants. If this Grant is selected, the Grantee will be expected to provide all necessary assistance in connection with such audit. Records must be kept for at least three (3) years after completion of the Grant.

6. **Grantee Tax Status; Notice to Grantee.** Grantee represents and warrants that it is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code. Grantee shall provide immediate written notification to Grantor of any changes in Grantee’s tax status, or any other change in its program that would affect its ability to achieve the Grant’s purpose.

OR

Grantee represents and warrants that it is tax-exempt as a political subdivision of the state [OR pursuant to Section 115(1) of the Code].

7. **Indemnification.** Grantee irrevocably and unconditionally agrees, to the fullest extent permitted by law, to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless Grantor, its officers, directors, employees, and agents, from and against any and all claims, liabilities, losses, and expenses (including reasonable attorneys' fees) directly, indirectly, wholly, or partially arising from or in connection with any act or omission of Grantee, its employees, or agents, in applying for or accepting the grant, in expending or applying the grant funds, or in carrying out any project or program to be supported by the grant, except to the extent that such claims, liabilities, losses, or expenses arise from or in connection with any act or omission of Grantor, its officers, directors, employees, or agents.

8. **Termination; Remedies.** Grantor, at its sole option, may terminate the Grant at any time if, in Grantor's judgment, Grantee becomes unable to carry out the purposes of the grant, ceases to be an appropriate means of accomplishing the purposes of the Grant, or fails to comply with any of the conditions of the Grant. In the event of such termination, in addition to any other legal remedies it may have, Grantor may demand the immediate return of all or any unexpended portion of the Grant, and Grantee shall immediately comply therewith. Notwithstanding the forgoing, the conditions set forth in Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 of this Grant Agreement shall survive any such termination and shall continue to apply.

9. **Miscellaneous.**

a. This Agreement (including any attachments hereto which are hereby incorporated by reference) constitutes the entire agreement with respect to the subject matter hereof, and shall supersede any prior or contemporaneous oral or written agreements, understandings, or communications or past courses of dealing between Grantor and Grantee with respect to the subject matter hereof. This Agreement may not be amended or modified except in a writing signed by both parties hereto.

b. This Agreement shall not be deemed to create any relationship of agency, partnership, or joint venture between the parties hereto, and Grantee shall make no such representation to anyone. In making the Grant, Grantor does not assume any liability or responsibility for the actions of Grantee in carrying out the grant purposes or otherwise. Grantor shall have no responsibility for the payment to any third-party of any expenses incurred by Grantee in furtherance of the grant purposes or otherwise, which shall remain Grantee's sole responsibility.

c. Neither this Grant Agreement nor any other statement, oral or written, express or implied, nor the making of any contribution or grant to Grantee, shall be interpreted to create any pledge or commitment by Grantor or by any related person or entity to

make any other grant or contribution to Grantee or any other entity for this or any other project. The grant shall be a separate and independent transaction from any other transaction between Grantor and Grantee or any other entity.

d. The failure of Grantor to exercise any of its rights under this Agreement shall not be deemed to be a waiver of such rights.


e. By signing this Agreement, the undersigned certifies that he or she is a duly selected and authorized officer/representative of Grantee and that, as such, is authorized to accept the grant on behalf of Grantee, to obligate Grantee to observe all of the terms and conditions placed on the grant, and, in connection with the grant, to make, execute, and deliver on behalf of Grantee all grant agreements, representations, receipts, reports, and other instruments of every kind.

f. This Agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the law of the state of California, without reference to its choice of law principles. Any dispute arising from this Agreement shall be brought only in the state or federal courts located in California, and the Parties hereby agree to the jurisdiction and venue of those courts for any such dispute.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed or caused to be executed this Grant Agreement on the dates set forth opposite their signatures below.

California Volunteers Fund

“Grantor”

DocuSigned by:

5AECAC8C82D4AE...

By: Dave Smith

Title: CEO

Agency of Human Services;
State of Vermont

"Grantee"

DocuSigned by:

2D24B82BE34A4C5...

By: Kristin McClure

Title: Deputy Secretary

Exhibit A Scope of Work

The California Volunteers Fund is a mission driven organization that seeks to engage Californians to come together to lift all communities through service, volunteerism, and vibrant public private partnerships. As an independent nonprofit, the California Volunteers Fund supports the priorities and activities of California Volunteers, a department of the State of California. With guidance from the Cabinet and Chief Service Officer, as well as the Governor of California and the California Volunteers Commission, the Fund serves as a bridge for public private partnerships. Its primary work is to raise resources that support engaging Californians to come together to lift all communities through service, volunteerism, and civic engagement.

With these philanthropic resources, as awarded through this Grant, the Grantee is required to develop and launch a state-led climate corps in line with the terms outlined in this agreement. The grantee's submitted application has been incorporated as an attachment to this agreement.

Project Representatives

The project representatives during the term of this agreement will be the following. Please direct any programmatic questions to the state program partner (if applicable) and the Grantor.

Grantor: California Volunteers Fund	Grantee: Agency of Human Services; State of Vermont
Name: Kaitlin Meyer	Name: Philip Kolling
Phone: (858) 722-0282	Phone: N/A
Email: kaitlin.meyer@californiavolunteersfund.org	Email: Philip.Kolling@vermont.gov

Direct all grant contractual inquiries to:

Grantor: California Volunteers Fund	Grantee: Agency of Human Services; State of Vermont
Name: Kaitlin Meyer	Name: Philip Kolling
Phone: (858) 722-0282	Phone: N/A
Email: kaitlin.meyer@californiavolunteersfund.org	Email: Philip.Kolling@vermont.gov

Direct all financial inquiries to:

Grantor: California Volunteers Fund	Grantee: Agency of Human Services; State of Vermont
Name: Kaitlin Meyer	Name: Philip Kolling
Phone: (858) 722-0282	Phone: N/A

Email: kaitlin.meyer@californiavolunteersfund.org	Email: Philip.Kolling@vermont.gov
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Exhibit B Budget Detail and Provisions

Budget Detail and Payment Provisions

- **Award Disbursement:** The maximum amount payable for the term of this grant shall not exceed **\$300,000**. Payments will be made to the Grantee in the following amounts on the following timelines:
 - **Payment #1: \$150,000, Upon Contract Execution**
 - **Payment #2: \$150,000, April 15, 2025**

As noted in the Grant Agreement, the Grantor reserves the right to review and audit Grantee's use of Grant funds. Please see the Grant Agreement, 8. *Termination; Remedies* for more information on that process and repayment.

- **Budget Contingency Clause:** As noted in the Grant Agreement, 2. *Grant Amount and Timeline*, Grantor shall only be obligated to pay each tranche if Grantor raises a sufficient amount of funds as determined by Grantor in its sole discretion. Grantor shall provide Grantee with two weeks written notice whether Grantor has raised sufficient funds to award Grantee a tranche of the grant in any given payment period. Grantee shall be excused from performance of its obligations under this Agreement during any payment period that Grantor does not award it a tranche of the Grant. Additionally, payments to Grantees, in line with the timeline identified in *Award Disbursement*, are contingent on Grant deliverables, timelines, and communications being received and determined to meet the conditions, scope, and requirements of the Grant. If at any time Grant parameters are not being met, by the determination of the Grantor, the Grantor will request a meeting with the Grantee to outline any corrective action or steps needed to remedy the issue and ensure on-time disbursement(s) of Grant funds.

If funding is associated with an AmeriCorps program or other service program that leverages federal or state resources, funds allocated through this grant are contingent upon the successful approval or award of these government resources. If these government resources are issued through a state service commission, as defined by the federal AmeriCorps agency, then the purpose of this grant and the use of the funds must be in alignment with the state service commission approved AmeriCorps or other program funding and service/AmeriCorps slots/fellowship positions.

Budget

Budget Category	Calculation/Description	Budget
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Climate Corps Expansion Implementation Grant	Please see project budget attached.	\$300,000
Total		\$300,000

Exhibit C Metrics, Reporting, Deliverables, and Timelines

Per the Grant Agreement and *Exhibit A Scope of Work*, the Grantee is required to fulfill all deliverable requirements as outlined. Required metrics, reporting parameters, deliverables, and Grant timelines are outlined in further detail below. Any questions on these items should be directed to the Grantor.

Metrics

- Programmatic Metrics – Required
 - # of Fellowship Applications Received
 - # of Fellowships Completed
 - # of Climate Actions Taken
 - % of Fellows who indicate that they will pursue career opportunities or higher education in climate work or environmental stewardship
 - Report on Program Sustainability: This will include, but is not limited to, how the program intends to be sustainable long-term and proposed implementation budget.
- Financial Metrics – Required, Report on Total Expenditures

Reporting

- Quarterly Updates
 - Please explain how grant funds have been leveraged to meet program objectives and grant deliverables. Please share any individual impact stories.
- Final Report
 - Please see above metrics. These metrics should be reported in the final report. They can be anecdotally shared in quarterly updates and in program status meetings, but they should all be captured in the final report.

Deliverables

- Grantee provides a budget breakdown by the end of the first quarter they have an executed grant, showing how they anticipate leveraging the implementation grant. Any changes constituting more than 10% change to the budget submitted in the first quarter of operation must be submitted to the California Volunteers Fund for pre-approval.
- Grantee to launch a state-led Climate Corps, either called the Vermont Climate Corps or Vermont Climate Action Corps with Climate Corps Fellows receiving a living allowance of at least \$30,000 per FTE position or prorated for any Fellows who are serving less than a full-time service position.
- Grantee establishes systems to develop and implement the state-led climate corps and builds a strategy to support program sustainability beyond the first year.
- Grantee tracks the required metrics and provides reports and updates, in line with the information identified above.
- Grantee attends all meetings:

- o Recurring Calls (dates to be provided by the California Volunteers Fund)
- o Quarterly Program Status Meetings
- o Any ad hoc meetings scheduled, at the request of either the California Volunteers Fund or the grantee.

Timeline

- **Recurring Calls:** These are typically held monthly with all grantees, and grantees are expected to attend once their agreement is executed. A calendar will be provided in grant onboarding.
- **Quarterly Updates:** This is a status update that is due to the California Volunteers Fund before the quarterly program status meetings. Quarterly Updates are due on the 15th of each month following the close of the calendar quarter (e.g., July 15, 2025 is the deadline for the April – June 2025 quarter). The first updates are due the quarter in which the grant is executed.
- **Quarterly Program Status Meetings:** These are one-on-one meetings held quarterly between individual grantees (or state commissions and grantees) and the California Volunteers Fund to discuss program status, etc.
- **Final Report:** The final report is due to the California Volunteers Fund within 30 days of the end of the grant period. See *Recitals, 2. Grant Amount and Timeline*, for grant period.
- **Grant Close Out:** Once all deliverables have been met and all reports have been submitted, the California Volunteers Fund will issue a notice to the grantee confirming that the grant has been closed and all payments have been made.

Climate Corps Expansion Implementation Grant
Scope of Work: Program Narrative

- Program Name
 - Vermont Climate Corps
- Grantee/Legal Applicant
 - Agency of Human Services; State of Vermont
- # of MSY/FTE
 - VHCB AmeriCorps: 28.06 total, TBD in Climate Corps
 - ECO AmeriCorps: 24.03 total, all in Climate Corps
- Geographic reach/communities served
 - Statewide in Vermont
 - Focus on flood impacted communities (Barre, Montpelier, Waterbury, Northeast Kingdom, etc.)
- Living allowance amount/MSY
 - \$30,000
- Other benefits to support members
 - Housing (possibly)
 - Training
- Program Context
 - Vermont AmeriCorps programs have a long history of engaging AmeriCorps members in environmental, conservation, and housing efforts. In both 2023 and 2024, over the course of three federally declared disasters, Vermont experienced our most significant climate-related impacts to date. These two AmeriCorps programs are shifting their focus more towards Climate Change than they have previously, and incorporating aspect of disaster including response, mitigation, and resiliency into their programs.
- Climate metrics that will be tracked and reported on
 - Housing: Housing Services (focused on flood survivors)
 - Housing placement assistance
 - Shelter assistance
 - Financial Literacy
 - Home Ownership Services
 - Awareness & Stewardship: Community Engagement, education and outreach
 - Waste reduction
 - Stormwater management
 - Agricultural practices
 - At-Risk Ecosystems: Water Quality, Trail Improvement, and Land Conservation & Remediation
 - Invasive Species removal
 - Native species planting

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to conform to the Corporation's eGrants System)

1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:

Application ☒ Non-Construction2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION
FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY
SERVICE (CNCS):

3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:

02-NOV-23

STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:

n/a

2b. APPLICATION ID:

24AC260907

4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:

FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:

21ACFV/T0010004

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION VERMONT

UEI NUMBER: NYZQ61KSAN8

ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county):

One National Life Drive

Main 2

Montpelier VT 05620 - 0001

County: Washington

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER
PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give
area codes):

NAME: Carey Hengstenberg

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (802) 595-1632

FAX NUMBER:

INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: carey.hengstenberg@vermont.gov

6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):

474525424

7. TYPE OF APPLICANT:

7a. State Government

7b. Other State Government

8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).

☐

NEW

☐

NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE

☒

CONTINUATION

☐

AMENDMENT

If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es):

A. AUGMENTATION

B. BUDGET REVISION

C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):

9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:

Corporation for National and Community Service

10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006

10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State

11a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:

ECO Vermont

12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):

ECO AmeriCorps operates statewide in Vermont - members are placed
predominantly in the following counties: Windham, Washington, Orleans, Franklin a

11b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/01/24

END DATE: 08/31/25

14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant b.Program 15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #:

a. FEDERAL

\$ 489,738.00

b. APPLICANT

\$ 494,014.00

c. STATE

\$ 0.00

d. LOCAL

\$ 0.00

e. OTHER

\$ 0.00

f. PROGRAM INCOME

\$ 0.00

g. TOTAL

\$ 983,752.00

16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE
ORDER 12372 PROCESS?☐ YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE
TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR
REVIEW ON:

DATE:

☒ NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372

17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?

☐ YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. ☒ NO18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN
DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE
IS AWARDED.

a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

Jason Batchelder

b. TITLE:

c. TELEPHONE NUMBER:

(802) 828-1556

d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

e. DATE SIGNED:

11/02/23

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation will have 26 AmeriCorps members who will provide assistance to municipalities and nonprofit organizations throughout the state of Vermont. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving 150 acres of public land, 20 miles of Vermont's streams and trails, and providing environmental stewardship training to 2,000 individuals. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage 500 volunteers who will be engaged in outreach, education, and environmental restoration activities in their communities.

The AmeriCorps investment of \$486,758 will be matched with \$414,823 in public funding and \$0 of private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

OVERVIEW

The emphasis of the program is on building capacity in nonprofit organizations and municipalities throughout rural Vermont communities to increase knowledge and awareness as well as to support the completion of projects that improve the environment and address climate change through environmental stewardship. Areas of environmental stewardship include the following: (1) engagement, outreach, and education; (2) improvement of water quality and access to public land; and (3) protection and restoration of public lands. ECO AmeriCorps directly assists nonprofit organizations and municipalities with critical conservation efforts in traditionally underserved and rural communities. Members are placed at host sites in these communities and focus on engaging citizens and leveraging resources to protect and restore the environment for all Vermonters. Of the 255 municipalities in Vermont, only eight towns have a population greater than 10,000 people with 83 percent of Vermont residents living in rural areas. As such, many of these municipalities do not have the capacity, staff resources, or technical expertise to provide environmental outreach to community members and implement projects to improve and restore water quality and access to public land. Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps program is dedicated to providing equity to traditionally underserved communities by building local, community-based capacity and support. Members are placed predominately in Franklin, Washington, Orleans, Windham and Rutland Counties. According to the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index, Windham, Rutland and Orleans Counties are categorized as a "moderate" risk for social vulnerability. The Vermont Social Vulnerability Index and Environmental Health Disparity Index are used in the

Narratives

partner host site selection process to ensure that our partner sites are serving some of Vermont's most vulnerable communities. By hosting the program through Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC), the program will be aligned with state goals, ongoing efforts and funding opportunities for environmental projects that address climate change which will assist members with leveraging resources in the communities they are serving in.

The program is aligned with three primary topic areas:

(1) ENGAGEMENT, OUTREACH, EDUCATION

Community engagement is critical to the foundation of environmental conservation. Vermont's communities benefit from a high level of social capital but lack the targeted, technical knowledge and opportunities to fully adopt an environmental ethic for long-lasting environmental stewardship. Eight full-time AmeriCorps members will be assigned to engagement, outreach, and education initiatives. Interventions will vary based on community needs but will include recruiting and managing over 200 volunteers on projects ranging from providing education at community events to engaging community members in monitoring seasonal vernal pools, providing education to 500 students in grades K-12, hosting more than 20 community workshops and events, and promoting environmental stewardship through newsletters, websites, and social media. Members will serve with both statewide and regional nonprofits as well as with municipal organizations. Outreach will be strategic, focused, and tailored to reach a diverse audience of municipal officials, community members, and school children.

A recent report by the High Meadows Fund, an organization providing funding to support Vermont community watershed groups, highlighted the effectiveness of different community engagement techniques. Their findings indicated that hands-on engagement tools and engaging community members by meeting them where they are can help build community support. Often this engagement begins with relationship building through community events, workshops, volunteer projects, and education in schools. The philosophy of ECO AmeriCorps engagement design is to place members into the community to develop relationships and build support for environmental change, climate resiliency and adaptation. The ultimate outcome of these interventions is to change individuals' behaviors regarding environmental sustainability. Through placing members directly in communities to provide creative and innovative hands-on workshops, volunteer events, and education, ECO

Narratives

AmeriCorps members will drive change on individual decision-making. Through direct outreach and community engagement, 300 community members will have an increased knowledge of environmental topics, including climate change, waste minimization, composting, watershed science, and invasive species management, and 200 community members will adopt a change in behavior. All activities will be tracked and verified by host sites and reviewed by ECO AmeriCorps staff. Eight Member Service Year (8 full-time MSY) will be placed with these state, municipal, and nonprofit organizations contribute to community education and outreach.

(2) IMPROVEMENT OF WATER QUALITY

There are 23,000 miles of rivers and streams in Vermont. Twenty percent of the miles of rivers and streams are not fishable or swimmable because they have been severely impacted by human activities on the land or in the water. Examples include sediment runoff, eroding streambanks caused by in-stream activities and large storms, and the introduction of invasive species. Sediments that run off into streams not only impair the stream for fishing and swimming but also ultimately drain into Vermont's 800 lakes and ponds, the most significant of which is Lake Champlain, the nation's sixth largest naturally formed lake. It provides 20 million gallons of drinking water per day to residents of Vermont, New York, and Quebec. It is the water source for 28 municipalities and nearly one-third of Vermont residents. Under the Federal Clean Water Act, Lake Champlain is considered "impaired" by phosphorus pollution, resulting in, among other things, toxic algal blooms that harm animals and people, and compromise recreation. Swimming in water containing toxic blue-green algae can release toxins that cause skin rashes, sore throats, diarrhea, stomach problems, and more serious health issues.

In 2015, the Vermont General Assembly passed Act 64 -- The Clean Water Act -- expanding water quality improvements statewide. The ECO AmeriCorps program bolsters the capacity of these statewide efforts by placing members in state and local government and nonprofit entities to further the state's goal of restoring Vermont's waterways. There are a number of interventions proposed for the 2022-2023 grant year with the ultimate outcome of improving 15 miles of waterways (EN5). Members will work with small farms to develop five nutrient-management plans for active farmland. These plans provide instructions for farmers to only apply the quantity of nutrients that the land can absorb and minimizes runoff into nearby streams. Unstable areas along rivers and streams will be stabilized through a minimum of 10 riparian tree plantings on publicly owned and conserved land. These tree plantings provide structure to hold the soil in place to reduce the quantity of sediment and

Narratives

associated nutrients that enter waterways. ECO AmeriCorps members will also be integral to monitoring these waterways by collecting and analyzing chemical and aquatic ecosystem data. A key element of water restoration is developing and implementing water-related projects, including installation of green infrastructure, rain gardens, culvert replacements, and other riverbank stabilization projects. Annually, members will collectively propose 15 projects for funding and implement up to 15 of these restoration projects, some of which were planned by an AmeriCorps member in a previous service year. In addition, members will lead a minimum of 10 river cleanups to remove trash and debris from these waterways for an immediate improvement. One hundred community volunteers will be recruited and managed to assist with these projects.

All intervention activities and outcomes will be tracked and verified by the host sites with final review by ECO AmeriCorps and VTDEC staff. Eleven Member Service Year (MSY) (10 full-time and 2 half-time) will be placed with these state, municipal, and nonprofit organizations to help mitigate pollution and restore Vermont's waterways.

(3) PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF PUBLIC LANDS

According to the Vermont Protected Lands Database, 1,652,201 acres of land are protected in Vermont. This represents 28 percent of Vermont's total acreage. The majority of land is publicly owned by the National Forest Service or state- or town- owned forests; however, there is a large amount of acreage protected through public conservation easements. Maintenance and improved access to public land will ultimately result in greater utilization for public benefits by improving physical access for recreation, hunting and fishing and maintaining healthy plant and animal life. Five MSY will be dedicated to improving publicly owned and publicly managed land. Members will serve with municipalities and land conservation organizations.

Specific activities will include removal of invasive species on 50 acres, wildlife and conservation management plans on 100 acres of land, 5 miles of trail building and trail infrastructure maintenance, 5 native plantings to manage stormwater and reduce runoff, and monitoring and assessment of 10 conservation easements. These interventions will result in the improvement of 100 acres of public land and 5 miles of trails. More than 200 volunteers will be recruited and managed to assist with these projects. All intervention activities and outcomes will be tracked and verified by the host sites with final review by ECO AmeriCorps and VTDEC staff. Five Full-Time MSY will be placed with these state, municipal, and nonprofit organizations to assist with land management and restoration efforts. Members may also participate in state and local emergency disaster relief efforts if it is requested by

Narratives

the SerVermont or AmeriCorps.

Evidence: The ECO AmeriCorps program serves two primary purposes: (1) to build capacity in rural Vermont communities for environmental stewardship and (2) to complete on-the-ground projects to achieve positive environmental results. There are two reports included as evidence to support that the program design and proposed interventions will be effective: 2020 ECO AmeriCorps Program Evaluation and the Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2021 Performance Report.

ECO AmeriCorps Program Evaluation. During the 2019-2020 program year, ECO AmeriCorps conducted an ongoing non-experimental process evaluation. This report evaluates and documents the program's activities and determines whether the program had an influence on the organizational capacity of host sites and their ability to mobilize projects that address water quality and other environmental issues. This evaluation provides pre-preliminary evidence that the program design is working as intended to make lasting environmental changes in Vermont's rural communities. Findings show that the majority of host sites increased capacity to take on additional projects through hosting an AmeriCorps member.

The Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2021 Performance Report was released in January 2022 by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. This report quantifies water quality protection and restoration projects completed in the state of Vermont since 2016. Specifically, the report includes the number of projects completed, amount of state funding leveraged, and amount of nutrient pollution reduced. Interventions described and quantified in this report include ECO AmeriCorps member-led projects. Interventions completed include expanded use of green stormwater infrastructure and low-impact development, improved management of roadways, implementation of best management practices on farms, and continued and strengthened river corridor and floodplain protection. This report will be used as a guide to evaluate the effectiveness of future host site partnerships and member projects and aligning ECO AmeriCorps projects with this annual report is a goal for ECO AmeriCorps' next program evaluation.

Notice Priority: ECO AmeriCorps is applying under the Environmental Stewardship funding priority.

Member Experience: The cornerstone of the member experience is being part of a 26-member cohort aligned with common goals. This cohort provides members with social and professional support,

Narratives

comradery, and numerous opportunities for collaboration. In addition, the program provides mentors, who are staff from VTDEC and community organizations, to provide ongoing, informal mentoring, one-on-one coaching and support, along with job shadowing and training opportunities to the member throughout their service term. More formally, the member experience includes a combination of traditional training, regular virtual/online meetings, and hands-on learning opportunities and service projects. ECO AmeriCorps selects applicants who not only possess the skill and background to succeed at their assigned service site but also express a strong commitment to service, community and teamwork. The combination of the program's approach of support, intensive orientation, frequent training events, and service projects creates an esprit de corps among the members that has resulted in an over 96 percent retention rate. In 2021-2022, ECO AmeriCorps members and staff developed a draft diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) plan for the program which included expanding member recruitment to historically black colleges and universities, increasing our efforts to help members located affordable housing, and expanding our training to include trainers and guest speakers from diverse backgrounds including BIPOC. In addition, members developed a DEI manual for members to refer to during their service year. Our ECO AmeriCorps DEI committee is continuing to meet during the 2022-2023 service year to expand on previous efforts to ensure that all members feel safe and supported and that the content of the member trainings and ECO AmeriCorps program practices are culturally and community appropriate.

Member Recruitment: Members are recruited nationally through the AmeriCorps portal and locally through community postings, local newspapers and word of mouth. The program strives to place members recruited locally in our program, however, that is not always feasible. Generally, our 26 member cohort is comprised of over 50% of members recruited from Vermont.

Member Training: Extensive opportunities exist for member training. Members attend an introductory three-day orientation, including basic training on AmeriCorps policies and procedures, prohibited activities, time and programmatic reporting and training on Vermont communities and demographics. There are 13 in-person member events scheduled for the service year: 1 orientation, 1 end of year celebration, 8 monthly training events, with a dual focus on professional development and technical training, and 3 service project days. Lastly, each member receives a \$200 stipend for training of their choosing to advance their professional goals and interests.

Organizational Capability

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

As a state agency, VTDEC has the staffing, management, and internal controls necessary to support the ECO AmeriCorps program and has successfully managed this program through the prior eight service years. VTDEC staff members are motivated and have high-level accountability with the department's performance and budget, overseen by the Vermont General Assembly. VTDEC manages an annual budget of over \$100 million, which includes funding from more than 70 federal grants. The ECO AmeriCorps program is housed within the Administration and Innovation Division of VTDEC together with the Grants and Contracts team, who are directly responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the ECO AmeriCorps program follow all federal grant rules and regulations as well as department and statewide grant, contract, and procurement policies. VTDEC supports a robust internship program supporting up to 15 interns who gain experience in the environmental field. In addition, VTDEC provides workforce certification programs. Examples include certification in Shoreland Erosion Training, and Drinking Water Supply and Wastewater System Operator training and certification and is committed to workforce development.

ECO AmeriCorps currently employs one full-time program supervisor who is entirely dedicated to overseeing the day-to-day operations of the program and a part-time member coordinator. In addition, two other VTDEC staff provide part-time administrative, management, and financial support to ensure effective program operations in the areas of grant compliance and financial management. The ECO AmeriCorps program has a track record of filling all host site service slots and enrolling 99 percent of all member positions, with a member retention rate of 96 percent for the 2021-2022 service year.

Over the past several year, VTDEC formed three internal committees targeted at elevating the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in our work:

- (1) The Diversity and Equity Committee focuses internally on staff recruitment and retention, support for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ staff, and provides internal training and discussion for staff in the areas of systemic racism, unconscious bias, and indigenous rights.
- (2) The Environmental Justice Committee focuses on improving meaningful engagement with communities to provide equal benefits to environmental resources and ensure that negative environmental burdens are equitably distributed, where no community is bearing an increased proportion of pollution. Meaningful engagement requires additional outreach and support to Vermonters who are low-income, BIPOC, disabled or have limited English proficiency. This team also delivers ongoing training to all VTDEC staff on principles of racial and social justice.

Narratives

(3) Civil Rights Compliance Steering Committee: Civil rights compliance in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is required by VTDEC's federal granting agencies. As such the VTDEC has established a non-discrimination coordinator and compliant procedure and a limited English proficiency plan and continues to improve our efforts in this area.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The ECO AmeriCorps program staffing is adequate to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps AmeriCorps regulations, supporting members and site supervisors, conducting site visits at host sites, monitoring inquiries and issues, organizing and scheduling member trainings, and overseeing the timely submittal of time sheets through OnCorps. The program supervisor is responsible for financial and programmatic reviews, ensuring adherence to prohibited and unallowable activities requirements. The financial manager is responsible for all aspects of fiscal grant management, including oversight of grant funds and quarterly financial reporting. The financial manager reports to the VTDEC Financial Director and the VTDEC Commissioner Office, this provides for multiple levels of review and accountability for fiscal oversight and program compliance.

Issues of noncompliance are addressed by program staff as soon as they are identified. All host site supervisors and members are aware of all ECO AmeriCorps program regulations and practices to ensure that the program maintains compliance through training and additional resources including a supervisor and member handbooks. Both members and host sites sign formal agreements with the program which outline compliance requirements and program expectations. ECO AmeriCorps members receive branded clothing and other logo materials to identify them as AmeriCorps members. Members wear branded gear while in service. All members display AmeriCorps signage in office spaces.

CULTURE THAT VALUES LEARNING:

VTDEC has been on the forefront of statewide continuous improvement efforts in Vermont, using Lean principles as a main strategy. VTDEC adopted Lean as a process-improvement methodology and management philosophy in an effort to build a system of continuous improvement with the goal of better serving the public through more efficient, timely, and transparent processes. The ECO AmeriCorps program continues to review performance measures data on environmental outputs and outcomes in addition to qualitative information from host sites and members to continually improve program operations.

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MEMBER SUPERVISION

The strength of the program depends on successfully building and supporting positive working relationships with site supervisors. It is a high priority for this program to fully prepare site supervisors and to ensure a good match for them and the ECO AmeriCorps members. Supervisors are required to attend site supervisor orientation prior to the start of the service year and participate in member orientation that includes program practices and expectations, prohibited activities and additional support that AmeriCorps members need during their service. Supervisors are also encouraged to attend ECO AmeriCorps service events and attend virtual trainings in an effort to keep them connected to the program and all of our members. Members and supervisors work together within the first few weeks to create a service plan that includes expectations of the position, along with personal and professional goals. The SMART (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time Bound) goal framework is utilized as it clearly outlines expectations of what the member has committed to accomplish during their service term.

ECO AmeriCorps staff conduct one formal site visits with each member and supervisor during the service year to address compliance, member progress, and member/supervisor concerns, and encourage effective communication. Supervisors complete mid-service and end-of-service member evaluations. Members use the OnCorps system for tracking service hours and activities that are reviewed and approved by both supervisors and ECO AmeriCorps staff. Members also complete quarterly reports of their training and accomplishments; these reports are reviewed and approved by host site supervisors and program staff.

Both members and host sites sign agreements with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation which outlines expectations for the service year, program policies, prohibited and disallowed activities.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

n/a

Evaluation Summary or Plan

n/a

Amendment Justification

n/a

Clarification Summary

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Comments on Resolution Letter dated April 14, 2023:

BUDGET ITEMS:

Comment: Section I. I. Other Program Operating Costs: Please list all costs and itemize all calculations in the budget to show what costs are included for the following line item(s): Recruitment

Applicant Response: The budget narrative has been updated with itemized calculations for recruitment

Section II. B. Member Support Costs: Worker's Comp or Occupations, Accidental, Death and Dismemberment coverage for members is a required budget expense. Please revise the budget to include this item.

Applicant Response: The State of Vermont covers all AmeriCorps members through the same policy that covers all state workers. Workers compensation is provided but is not itemized or billed to the grant. A note was added to the budget narrative.

Section II. B. Member Support Costs: Since health care was only budgeted for 12 of the full-time members, please confirm all FT members will have access to health care if requested.

Applicant Response: All members are offered health insurance by the program, however during the 8 years the program has been operating the maximum number of members requesting health insurance is 10. The program uses the estimate of 12 because that is a more realistic expense associated with this line item.

Section III.B. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate: The current rate appears to be expired. Please enter updated information in eGrants or provide a justification. Failure to provide current rate information may result in costs being removed from the budget.

Applicant Response: The indirect rate for state fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023) was

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added to egrants. The Department of Environmental Conservation has not negotiated the rate for state fiscal year 2024 beginning July 1, 2023.

As of 3/1/23, the Legal Applicant name on the 424 in eGrants (Environmental Conservation, Vermont Department of), does not match the registered Legal Applicant name in SAM (DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION VERMONT) exactly. No award will be made to this organization unless the legal applicant name matches exactly. The legal applicant must make the necessary corrections to eGrants and/or SAM.

Program Response: The names match in both egrants and Sam.gov and are listed as ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, DEPARTMENT OF

Continuation Changes

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO PROGRAM SCOPE OR DESIGN

The ECO AmeriCorps Program will operate similar to previous year for 2024-2025 with a program start date of September 1, 2024 through the program end date of August 31, 2025.

CHANGES IN OPERATING SITES

Each year there are several operating host sites that leave the program and new host sites are recruited. The program does not anticipate significant changes in the host site roster between the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 service years.

The host site roster for the 2023-2024 Service Year are listed below:

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Addison Country Solid Waste Management District

Birds of Vermont Museum

CT River Conservancy

DEC -- Administration and Innovation Division

DEC - Monitoring, Assessment and Planning Program

DEC - Clean Water Initiative Program

DEC -- Wetlands Program

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DEC Watershed Planning Program

Rich Earth Institute

Friends of Northern Lake Champlain

Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative

Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District

Hildene

Vermont Center for ECO Studies

Vermont Land Trust

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Montpelier Parks, Trees and Conservation

Middlebury Area Land Trust

Northwoods Stewardship Center

VT Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets

VT Cooperative for Practice Improvement and Innovation

Vermont Natural Resources Council

Willowell Foundation

CHANGES TO PERFORMANCE MEASURES

No changes in Performance Measures are proposed at this time

CHANGES TO MONITORING STRUCTURES OR STAFFING

No changes proposed.

EVALUATION PLAN

Evaluation Plan is being revised per comments received on 2023-2024 Grant Application.

BUDGET REVISIONS

Modifications were made to the budget, including:

*23 full-time MSY living allowance are increased from \$23,000 to 26,000.

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*One half-time MSY living allowance is increased from \$12,970 to \$13,765

*Two quarter time MSY living allowance are increased from \$6,485 to \$6,882

* For Service Year 2024-2025, the program increasing the service site fees for hosting members to a sliding scale where organization with less than 3 full-time employees (FTEs) pay 40% of full-time member living allowance (\$10,400), organizations with 3-10 FTEs pay 45% full-time member living allowance (\$11,700), and organizations with greater than 10 FTEs pay 50% of full-time member living allowance (\$13,000). All of these increases will go directly towards increasing member living allowance.

*Federal mileage reimbursement rate is increased from \$.625 per mile to \$.655 per mile as established by the General Services Administration.

*Staff salaries are increased or decreased to reflect the salary of the positions and future negotiated salary increases.

*Negotiated Federal Indirect Rate is decreased to 23.94%

*Total amount requested from CNCS - \$489,739 which will be matched by \$489,739 in State and Local funds. The proposed cost per MSY is \$20,380.

Grant Characteristics

Performance Measures

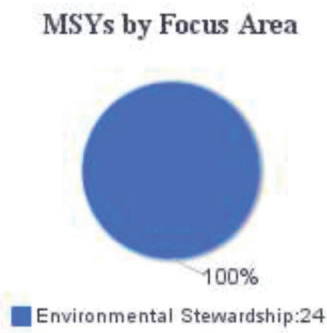


Table1: MSYs by Focus Areas

Focus Area	% MSYs
Environmental Stewardship	100%

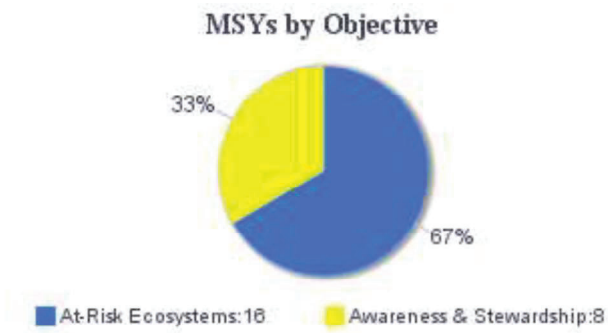


Table2: MSYs by Objectives

Objectives	%MSYs
At- Risk Ecosystems	67%
Awareness & Stewardship	33%

% of MSY NPM VS Applicant VS Not in ANY

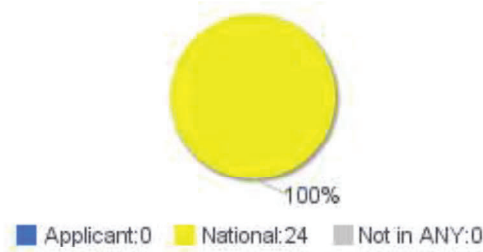


Table3: %MSYs by NPM vs.Applicant vs. Not in ANY

% MSYs	NPM	Applicant	Not in ANY
	100%	0%	0%

Table4: No of MSY and Members by Objective

Objectives	No of MSYs	No of Members
At- Risk Ecosystems	16.00	18
Awareness & Stewardship	8.00	8
Total	24.00	26

Primary Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship
Primary Intervention: Education/Training
Secondary Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship
Secondary Intervention: Climate Change Intervention

Performance Measure: Community Engagement, education and outreach

Focus Area:	Environmental Stewardship	Objective:	Awareness & Stewardship	No of MSY's:	8.00	No of Members:	8
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Problem Statement:

Community engagement, community science, education and outreach are needed to assist Vermont's rural communities to adopt programs and projects to protect, enhance and restore their natural resources.

Selected Interventions:

Education/Training

Describe Interventions:

Leverage information sharing through workshops, webinars, website and social media Develop K- 12 school educational workshops and curricula, and technical assistance Facilitate educational workshops in targeted watersheds

Provide composting workshops, and host community waste reduction events Recruit and train one- time and recurring volunteers

Provide educational resources, information and technical assistance to farmers regarding agricultural practices to reduce nutrient pollution

Educate individuals and municipal officials about sustainable stormwater management

EN3 Output:

EN3: Number of individuals receiving education or training in environmental stewardship

Target: 2000 Individuals

Measured By: Tracking System

Described Instrument: Members will maintain training rosters to count participants in outreach and education programs. Sign- in sheets will also be used where applicable.

EN3.1 Outcome:

EN3.1: Number of individuals with increased knowledge of environmental stewardship

Target: 300 Individuals

Measured By: Survey

Described Instrument: Participants will be surveyed at the end of outreach events, trainings and workshops to determine if they have increased knowledge on environmental stewardship

EN3.2 Outcome:

EN3.2: Number of individuals reporting a change in behavior or intention to change behavior

Target: 200 Individuals

Measured By: Survey

Performance Measure: Community Engagement, education and outreach

Problem Statement:

Selected Interventions:

Education/training

Described Instrument: Surveys will be conducted at the end of training events and/or individual outreach efforts to schools, municipalities and other community partners.

Performance Measure: Water Quality and Trail Improvement

Focus Area:	Environmental Stewardship	Objective:	At- Risk Ecosystems	No of MSY's:	11.00	No of Members:	13
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Problem Statement:

Twenty percent of Vermont's rivers and lakes are impaired or limited for fishing and swimming activities. Impairments are due largely to human activities including nutrient and sediment pollution from run-off, eroding streambanks and the introduction of invasive species.

Selected Interventions:

Climate Change Intervention
Debris Removal
Invasive Species Removal
Plant Establishment
Stream/River Remediation
Trail Creation
Trail Remediation

Describe Interventions:

- *Conduct on the ground assessments and analysis of impervious surfaces and road inventories
- *Develop project ideas for water quality improvement
- *Manage volunteers and coordinate with stakeholders
- *Conduct water quality monitoring and coordinate volunteer sampling
- *Review existing studies and assessments
- *Apply for project implementation funding
- *Manage project implementation and reporting
- *Conduct verification of water quality improvement project installation/ maintenance and track effectiveness and outcomes.

EN5 Output:

EN5: Miles of trails or rivers treated

Target:	20	Miles
Measured By:	Tracking System	
Described Instrument:	Members will complete a Project Accomplishment Form for each project completed. Each project will be validated by the host site supervisor. Completed forms will be submitted to ECO AmeriCorps program staff on a quarterly basis.	

EN5.1 Outcome:

EN5.1: Miles of trails or rivers improved

Target:	20	Miles
Measured By:	Other	

Performance Measure: Water Quality and Trail Improvement

Problem Statement:

Selected Interventions:

- Climate Change Intervention
- Debris Removal
- Invasive Species Removal
- Plant Establishment
- Stream/River Remediation
- Trail Creation
- Trail Remediation

Described Instrument: VTDEC will evaluate areas where improvements have been reported through a master tracker document of ECO AmeriCorps related projects. Upon completion, where possible for water quality improvement projects, VTDEC staff will provide estimates of reduced nutrient loading.

Performance Measure: Land Conservation and Remediation

Focus Area:	Environmental Stewardship	Objective:	At- Risk Ecosystems	No of MSY's:	5.00	No of Members:	5
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Problem Statement:

Land conservation is vital to protecting Vermont's waterways. Publicly owned or managed land must be stewarded and managed to protect and restore ecological and hydrologic function.

Selected Interventions:

Debris Removal
Invasive Species Removal
Plant Establishment
Stream/River Remediation

Describe Interventions:

Members will assist in the development of project ideas and fundraising for shoreland and stormwater improvement projects
Removal of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species through service projects and community events Utilize geospatial analysis to target priority projects
Develop nutrient management plans for small dairy farms Conduct assessments on effective land management practices
Develop and monitor land conservations plans for publicly owned land and land held in public easements

EN4 Output:

EN4: Acres of parks or public land treated.

Target:	100	Acres
Measured By:	Tracking System	
Described Instrument:	Members will complete a Project Accomplishment Form for each project completed. Each project will be validated by the host site supervisor. Completed forms will be submitted to ECO AmeriCorps Program staff on a quarterly basis.	

EN4.1 Outcome:

EN4.1: Acres of parks or public land improved

Target:	100	Acres
Measured By:	Other	
Described Instrument:	ECO AmeriCorps will maintain a master tracking document for all projects completed. Before and after photos will be submitted as part of the Project Accomplishment Forms and quarterly progress reporting.	

Program Information

AmeriCorps Funding Priorities

*Check any priority area(s) that apply to the proposed program. Please refer to the NOFO for the information on the threshold for meeting priority consideration

Environmental stewardship

Grant Characteristics

*Check any characteristics that are a significant part of the proposed program

Geographic Focus Rural

Demographics

Other Revenue Funds	0
Number of volunteers generated by AmeriCorps members	500
Percent of disadvantaged youth enrolled	0

Required Documents

<u>Document Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Evaluation	Sent
Federally Approved Indirect Cost Agreement	Sent
Labor Union Concurrence	Sent
Other Documents	Sent

Logic Model

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
The community problem that the program activities (interventions) are designed to address.	Resources that are necessary to deliver the program activities (interventions), including the number of locations/sites and number/type of AmeriCorps members.	The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including duration, dosage and target population.	Direct products from program activities.	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions. These outcomes, if applicable to the program design, will almost always be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in behavior or action. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in condition or status in life. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year. Some programs, such as environmental or capacity-building programs, may measure changes in condition over a period as short as one year.

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)		1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction	
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):		3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE: 29-MAY-24	
2b. APPLICATION ID: 24ES266727		4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY: FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 23FXFVT0010002	
5. APPLICATION INFORMATION			
LEGAL NAME: Vermont Housing and Conservation Brd UEI NUMBER: LVAXX2HN2ZM3		NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Erin Riley TELEPHONE NUMBER: (802) 828-5061 FAX NUMBER: INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: e.riley@vhcb.org	
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 58 East State Street STE 101 Montpelier VT 05602 - 3159 County: Washington		7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Other 7b. Other State Government	
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 030311984		9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: Corporation for National and Community Service	
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):		11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: Vermont Housing and Conservation Board 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):	
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps Fixed Amount Grant (State)		14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="VT 01"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="VT 01"/>	
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): VT		16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372	
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/01/24 END DATE: 09/01/25		17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <input type="text" value="1"/>			
a. FEDERAL \$ 686,683.00			
b. APPLICANT \$ 0.00			
c. STATE \$ 0.00			
d. LOCAL \$ 0.00			
e. OTHER \$ 0.00			
f. PROGRAM INCOME \$ 0.00			
g. TOTAL \$ 686,683.00			
18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.			
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Francis Sharpstene		b. TITLE: c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (802) 828-3253	
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 05/29/24	

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Executive Summary

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board will have 33 AmeriCorps members who will deliver housing placement services, steward the natural environment to improve the ecosystem, increase access, and provide environmentally based education and training in Vermont. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for individuals transitioning into affordable housing, an increased ability for individuals to stabilize housing and live independently, improved public lands that are more accessible for a diverse population, and inspiring community members to be better stewards of the natural landscape. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage 1000 volunteers who will be engaged in homebuyer education activities, homelessness services, senior companionship, preparing and delivering meals, extracting invasive species, building and maintaining trails, and engaging the public in outdoor recreation, and environmental education. The AmeriCorps investment will be matched with \$ 800,743, \$ 539,844 in public funding and \$ 260,899 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

VHCB AmeriCorps (VHCB AC) is a multi-focus rural program supporting the mission of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and a member of the Vermont Climate Corps Network (VCCN). The VCCN was launched in response to the Biden-Harris Administration's creation of the American Climate Corps and is focused on addressing climate change through service. VHCB is an independently operated entity of the State of Vermont implementing dual goals of creating affordable housing while preserving natural, agricultural, and recreational lands. Established in 1987, VHCB remains the forerunner in the nation in the comprehensive approach to affordable housing and community development linked with land conservation and historic preservation. VHCB provides affordable homes for working families, improves community infrastructure, protects natural, recreational, and historic assets, and supports energy efficiency work. VHCB accomplishes its mission in partnership with a network of local entities addressing community issues at the community level. VHCB AC Program supports the mission by placing members in this network of local community organizations consisting of housing trusts and housing providers, homeless shelters, public land management entities, outdoor and environmental learning centers. PROBLEM #1: Economically disadvantaged individuals including low-income, seniors, persons with disabilities, minorities, and individuals experiencing homelessness are unable to access safe, affordable housing and are at a higher risk of losing existing housing. Access to safe, affordable and permanent housing is linked to

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economic mobility and is a building block in creating a resilient and vibrant community. Housing insecurity has been a longstanding issue in Vermont due to housing production costs, tight housing and rental markets, and low housing stock. Increased migration to Vermont due to climate change and COVID-19 exacerbated the housing crisis greatly impacting Vermont's most vulnerable. In July 2023, Vermont experienced a historic flood creating additional pressures on the housing market and unsafe living conditions for Vermont's precariously housed. VHCB AC housing activities are guided by the Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2020-2024 (VT HNA). The VT HNA, released in February 2020, is a comprehensive research based study sponsored by VHCB to assess the greatest areas of need to provide safe, healthy, affordable housing to all Vermonters. Vermont has the second-highest per-capita rate of homelessness in the country. The annual one night count conducted in January 2022 recorded 2,780 Vermonters experiencing homelessness, a 7.3% increase from the previous count. At the time VT HNA was issued 4,407 unhoused Vermonters received services from Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) partner agencies. In response to COVID-19, Vermont temporarily expanded its Emergency Housing program and individuals precariously housed or at risk of homelessness resided in hotels. Due to new eligibility requirements, many households must find new housing leading to a need for additional services on a constrained network. VHCB AC will follow guidance from VT HNA to support programs providing services to Vermonters experiencing homelessness. Services will be provided through a network of regional non-profit and faith-based shelters. VHCB studied Keep Austin Housed AmeriCorps Program's homeless services activities and reviewed their Evaluation Report: 2017-2019. The outcome evaluation report's findings noted member service activities are effective in reducing barriers for individuals experiencing homelessness to transition into housing. While serving a different region, VHCB will provide similar services as Keep Austin Housed AmeriCorps Program, which has an evidence rating of moderate on AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange. VHCB Members will provide case management services including, but not limited to: locating and securing housing; creating housing plans and goals; securing funding for rent and security; providing assistance to transition into housing; and improving food security. Members will implement programming for shelter residents including life skills and recreational groups, peer support groups, and on-going financial stability support such as resume/job application assistance, connecting with potential employers, budgeting, and resource assistance. Members will support individuals after leaving the shelter to keep them on a sustainable housing path. Based on performance data previously collected, and supported by research on the AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange, these activities will lead to an increased ability for individuals and families to transition out

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of homelessness into permanent, safe, and affordable housing. Vermont has a high number of households paying a disproportionate amount of income towards housing. VT HNA reports 36% of all households in the state are cost burdened by housing costs, meaning more than 30% of income is spent on housing costs, the maximum level considered affordable for the average household. 16% of households are severely cost burdened, more than half of their income for housing. For renters, 25% of households spend more than half of their income spent on housing costs. These households are at high risk of housing instability: frequent moves, evictions and even homelessness. Low housing stock and high demand has further constrained rental markets, Vermont's rental vacancy is currently at 3.5%, lower than a healthy rate between 4 to 6%. Currently the national rental vacancy rate is 6.3%. Chittenden County, Vermont's most populated region with highest volume of rentals, the vacancy rate has hovered at 1% since 2021. Members will deliver activities based on VT HNA's recommendation to support affordable housing programs with focus on low- income renters. Members will be placed at housing providers and community-based Housing Authorities. Members will: assist with housing searches and rental applications; eviction prevention by assisting securement of back-rent loans and prevention grants; provide security deposits to households experiencing financial hardships; connect eligible clients with public resources: food stamps, housing vouchers, and local financial assistance programs to offset financial burdens; engage with Landlords to foster healthy tenant relations, review lease agreements with clients to support comprehension of renter responsibilities; make home repairs for low-income families living in unsafe conditions; support essential needs and volunteer matching for individuals at risk of losing housing; and weatherize homes of low-income and elderly individuals to reduce home utility bills and make the housing more affordable and livable. Based on past performance data, activities will help economically disadvantage individuals access safe, affordable, healthy housing options and/or stabilize existing housing. VT HNA reports a median home price of \$ 215,000 in 2018, data from Vermont Housing Finance Agency indicates Vermont's 2022 median home price is \$310,000. According to VT HNA a home priced at \$117,000 or less would be affordable to Vermont's renters at median income in 2018. The 44% increase in home prices poses significant barriers to homeownership for first-time homebuyers and low to moderate income households. VT HNA found Vermont's cost-burdened households are less likely to obtain a mortgage or save for a down payment, making path to homeownership challenging. VT HNA recommends support for homebuyer programs for low-income households. Through housing service providers, members will provide outreach, education, and client support for affordable housing programs. Among the resources members will support are Shared Equity Programs. The

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research report Affordable Homeownership An Evaluation of Shared Equity Programs on AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange offers evidence that shared equity models provide homeownership opportunities to lower-income households with debt levels less than they could otherwise achieve. Members provide training for prospective low-income buyers on steps in buying a home, guidance, and information/resources needed to purchase a home. Members will support financial literacy to improve budgeting skills and strengthen credit scores to access home loans and save for down payments. Member activities will lead to low-income individuals accessing resources required for purchasing a home. Vermont has a disproportionately low homeownership rate among households that are not white-alone. Vermont's homeownership rate among white households is 71%, while Black households have a rate of 22%. The findings from 2022 point in time count showed BIPOC Vermonters disproportionately experience homelessness with 12% identifying as non-white, compared to 5% of total population. VT HNA recommends supporting housing services aimed at reducing racial inequities in Vermont's housing system. Members will expand existing Fair Housing and non-discrimination policies in programs and marketing. Members will assist with review of internal policies and external communication for racial bias. Members receive racial equity training and engage in service activities to counteract housing instability disproportionately impacting historically marginalized populations, such as evictions. Members will assist with improving communication and outreach materials to residents and clients in all languages. Members will build and strengthen partnerships with organizations serving racially diverse and historically underserved groups. Member activities will lead to housing, programs, and services inclusive and responsive to a racially diverse Vermont. PROBLEM #2: Climate change threatens Vermont's environmental health and biodiversity. Efforts to mitigate climate change and build climate resiliency must include public engagement and equitable access to natural resources. VHCB AC Program conservation based member activities will be guided by recommended actions identified in the Vermont Climate Action Plan (CAP). The CAP was released in December 2021 by the Legislature established Vermont Climate Council. CAP is evidence-informed and incorporates feedback from a public engagement process. The CAP outlines a framework to mitigate the impact of climate change while fostering resiliency and adaptation in Vermont's communities and landscapes. It identifies pathways of action, each accompanied by a set of strategies. VHCB AC activities support recommended actions focused on building resilience and adaptation in VT's natural lands and communities. Members will enact strategies defined in the CAP through our network of land management entities and local environmental centers, these strategies are in alignment with the goals set forth by the Vermont Climate Corps Network. Manage natural and

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working lands for biodiversity, forest health, and climate resilience. Member stewardship activities will build climate change resiliency while mitigating risks to natural resources and ecosystems. Members will engage landowners, recreational organizations and other agencies to participate in wetland restoration and conservation programs through outreach efforts, education, and coordination of service opportunities. Members will contribute to research to understand and address impact of trails and other recreational pursuits on natural communities, rare species, water quality, and other ecological values through land monitoring. Members will construct and renovate recreation facilities with sustainable materials, to sustainable standards, and in appropriate locations to minimize ecological impacts. This may involve installation of informational kiosks, signage improvement, and trail building/maintenance. Members will support stewardship efforts with direct services and coordinating volunteer efforts to improve ecological health and mitigate impacts of severe flooding - such as tree plantings, invasive species removal, and floodplain and riparian restoration efforts. Member services will lead to increased resiliency of Vermont's natural lands and waters. Develop and make available accessible outreach and educational materials to communicate issues of climate change and local impacts to the public, this includes highlighting the role Vermont's natural and working lands play in providing solutions to climate change. CAP emphasizes the critical role of education and shared understanding in supporting Vermont's ecosystem adaptation and resiliency. Members will educate the public on climate adaptation strategies considering rare species, water quality, the impacts of trails and recreation on ecosystems, nature-based practices, and other environmental management strategies. Education will be delivered through school programming, camps, events, and public forums. Members will improve platforms and messaging to engage a wider audience in stewardship opportunities, and create and maintain sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities and information. Leveraging informal user groups and organizations, members will disseminate information on policies, regulations, ethics, and best practices for use and stewardship of public lands, and collaborate with trail and recreation based non-profit groups to provide trainings on best management practices. Members will support communities and municipalities identify and build climate resiliency plans by providing training, resources, and educational opportunities. Member efforts will enhance public awareness, promote responsible stewardship of public lands and contribute to a more resilient and adaptive Vermont. Ensure equitable access to local foods, culturally relevant foods, and land for people who have been historically marginalized and come from impacted communities. Member activities will build resiliency of communities by making public lands and natural areas more accessible for all Vermonters, with a focus on disadvantaged populations,

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including low-income individuals, persons living with a disability, and new Americans. CAP reports disadvantaged groups are most vulnerable to impacts of climate change. Members will collaborate with working groups to support land managers and recreation providers incorporate accessibility and diversity into public recreation resources. Members will improve accessibility through the use of universal design principles to enable all Vermonters access to natural areas and recreation sites such as widening trails, removing barriers, and installing ramps. Member services will improve recreation access and opportunities in Vermont downtowns, villages and neighborhoods increasing equitable access. Members will expand programming to engage persons of all abilities in outdoor recreation and inviting individuals and communities unfamiliar with outdoor recreation to participate through teaching and wrap-around support. Members will support local food access programs increasing low-income Vermonters food security. Member activities will lead to improved access to Vermont outdoor spaces, natural areas, and local food.

Disaster Services. Through a coordinated effort with SerVermont, Members may be made available to participate in disaster relief service opportunities in the event of a disaster within the state.

NOTICE PRIORITY: Environmental Stewardship: Members will provide direct services or engage volunteers in activities such as invasive species removal, native plant restoration, and public lands improvement. Activities will focus on improving accessibility for communities with disadvantaged access and responding to damage caused by extreme statewide flooding and mitigating potential damage from future natural disasters.

Rural Communities: Vermont is a designated rural state with two-thirds of citizens living in rural communities. 11 of Vermont's 14 counties classified as rural according to the rural-urban commuting area codes. VHCB AC partners with nonprofits and municipalities by placing members at these sites to bring services to Vermont rural communities.

Additional Member Benefits: Provide a living allowance of \$30,000 for the duration of the service term, \$11,300 more than the minimum living allowance.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE: VHCB AC values how members are a catalyst for positive change in the organizations they serve. This value is embedded in program design by offering trainings and initiatives tailored to build skills for future employment and produce civic leaders. Service begins with a 5-day Pre-Service Orientation guiding members through AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and expectations. Other Orientation objectives include: data tracking and reporting; reciting the AC pledge, team-building activities, and a service project. During Orientation, members breakout into regional and service focus groups to discuss challenges facing local communities and opportunities to meet critical needs. Guest speakers will lead discussions on housing, environmental, and climate issues facing Vermont. Members set measurable personal professional goals; goals will be tracked, supported and drive

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program offerings. Following Orientation, individualized check-ins are conducted during first two months of service. Members attend program trainings/events approximately 2 days per month, content includes: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Conflict Resolution; state-wide AmeriCorps conferences; and Life After AmeriCorps focusing on resume building. Additional training opportunities are provided based on member goals and interests. Service sites provide position-specific learning and technical training. Program hosts multiple annual events to strengthen service ethic and provide reflection for the members, including MLK Day, a Spring Service Day; Mid-year Service Reflection; and a Closing Ceremony. Second term members may opt into self-identified training initiatives under guidance of Program Staff to engage in professional development opportunities. VHCB AC will offer a suite of enrichment initiatives to enhance knowledge, community engagement, and leadership skills. The Independent Service Project (ISP) allows members to step into leadership roles by spearheading a project of interest in their local community. The Book Club is a service learning opportunity for members to deepen understanding of service through reading. Peer Site Visits offer members opportunity to collaborate and learn best practices from one another. Regional AmeriCorps Recruitment Envoy (RARE) Opportunity mobilizes members to share their AmeriCorps Story, and garner interest among potential applicants. To cultivate positive member experience, the Program hosts an AmeriCorps Leader position to coordinate service projects, support goal setting, connect members with additional resources, and offer peer support. To recognize the valuable service members provide, VHCB AC initiated a member discount program by partnering with local businesses to offer discounts on goods and services.

Organizational Capability

VHCB is an independent, state-supported funding agency with extensive experience using state and federal funds to meet local needs. Over the last 35 years, VHCB awarded \$400 million to nonprofit housing and conservation organizations, towns, municipalities and state agencies to conserve land, develop housing in 220 towns. VHCB is a responsive agency poised to deploy resources and coordinate initiatives to meet immediate community needs. VHCB regularly collects feedback to ensure organizational work is informed by community defined priorities. VHCB's clean audit history, dedication to maintaining proper internal control structures and regulatory compliance, make it a low-risk auditee. VHCB has an established delivery system with nonprofits partnering with VHCB AC and is well positioned to implement and maximize the benefits of an AmeriCorps program. Two full-time staff members will oversee VHCB AC: a Program Director and a Program Coordinator. Program Director Erin Riley, an AmeriCorps Alum, has 4 years' experience working with the program. Erin

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will be responsible for grant management, data collection/reporting, developing program policies, monitoring and ensuring compliance, resolving member/host site issues, and supervising staff. Madi Watt brings insight to the member experience from serving in AmeriCorps FoodCorps. In the Coordinator role, Madi will be responsible for driving recruitment and outreach strategies, maintaining member files, managing program initiatives, and general member support. The AmeriCorps team receives support from VHCB Director of Human Resources & Administration, Francis Sharpstene, former Program Director with 15 years' experience of AmeriCorps administration. VHCB's CFO provides fiscal guidance and manages the VHCB finance team who complete financial reports and member payroll. VHCB AC has a strong record of compliance and will continue to provide multi-tiered quality-control measures to prevent and identify noncompliance. Program staff regularly review AmeriCorps Rules and Regulations to ensure compliance and enroll in courses in the AmeriCorps Litmos system annually. Compliance is monitored by Program Staff regularly via internal audits, monitoring visits at service sites, host site/ member evaluations, and regular communication with supervisors and members. Member activity is regularly reviewed through bi-weekly timesheets, quarterly progress reports, site visits, and email check-ins. To promote accountability, host sites re-apply annually through a competitive process evaluating ability to meet compliance and performance expectations. Member Supervision: Designated AmeriCorps supervisors are prescreened using a Supervisor Assessment process evaluating experience and capability to meet program requirements and support member. Supervisors attend an Orientation covering AmeriCorps rules and regulations, program expectations, and guidance on member support. Supervisors receive a Handbook referencing program rules and policies. Program offers ongoing support to supervisors through monthly newsletters and annual site visits. Members and supervisors are required to schedule a weekly check-in meeting to facilitate regular feedback and coaching. VHCB AC staff and supervisors provide steady moral support, recognition, assistance in meeting personal and professional goals, training and learning support, and regular feedback. Supervisors and members will complete a Member Performance Review twice per service term. Members will complete and submit supervisor review at the close of service year. Commitment to Diversity: In 2020, VHCB adopted a resolution promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and reconciliation while carrying out mission objectives. VHCB's staff-led Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee implements the resolution by developing strategies and best practices. VHCB sponsored and led statewide racial justice initiatives, focused on the impact of racial inequities on access to housing and an equity-based training program for conservation leaders. VHCB AC reflects VHCB's commitment to justice, equity, inclusion, and

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accessibility by promoting and appreciating the diversity of its members. VHCB AC hosts at least two trainings centered on inclusivity and diversity. VHCB is an Equal Opportunity Employer which applies to AmeriCorps recruitment efforts. We encourage individuals with varying levels of education, professional skills, career backgrounds, and interests to apply; the common denominator a commitment to service and making a community impact.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

VHCB AC requests \$ 24,474 per MSY to support an increase in member living allowances. Findings from External Evaluation indicate dissatisfaction from members about low living allowances; service sites correlate the low amount to recruitment challenges. In response, we propose a \$ 30,000 living allowance, \$ 11,300 more than the minimum. The My AmeriCorps Portal is utilized to attract applications from across the country, while emphasizing recruitment from local communities through local advertisements and community outreach. VHCB recruits among program beneficiaries including individuals residing at shelters, homebuyer education and financial literacy clients, and mobilized volunteers. \$ 6,000 will support the recruitment plan of paid posts on social media, attending college career fairs, increased paid advertisements, and outreach to local high schools. A consultant will be hired to revamp recruitment materials to target a wide, diverse audience and help maximize recruitment budget. To support member retention, \$ 36,837 is budgeted for member trainings to provide opportunities for networking and career skills development. VHCB AC will fund up to \$ 250 per proposal for second year training initiative. Members can access an Employee Assistance Program funded by VHCB. A valuable resource offering assistance for mental health challenges, substance use disorder, financial and legal counseling. Data collection: During second year of grant, Program will hire an external evaluator to conduct a full program evaluation under guidance and direction of staff. Evaluation will assess member and host site satisfaction, value of member placements, program's areas of strength and weakness, and overall effectiveness of program at addressing community needs as set forth in logic model. VHCB AC will allocate \$ 20,000 to cover the cost of the evaluation. VHCB AmeriCorps regularly collects quarterly data about service activities and feedback from members. \$ 600 is included in the budget for the technology systems utilized to collect this member data. Budget alignment: VHCB AmeriCorps requests \$ 686,683 from AmeriCorps and will provide \$ 800,743 in non-federal funds for a total program budget of \$ 1,487,427. The budget as proposed fully supports the implementation of activities outlined in the program design, including necessary safety gear, tools, and supplies. The budget supports the program's objective of cultivating a positive member experience by budgeting for training opportunities and offering a higher living allowance.

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Evaluation Summary or Plan

N / A

Amendment Justification

N / A

Clarification Summary

N / A

Continuation Changes

N / A

Grant Characteristics

Performance Measures



Table1: MSYs by Focus Areas

Focus Area	% MSYs
Economic Opportunity	29%
Environmental Stewardship	71%

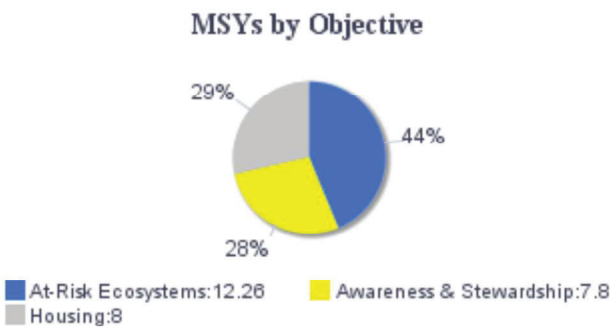


Table2: MSYs by Objectives

Objectives	%MSYs
At - Risk Ecosystems	44%
Awareness & Stewardship	28%
Housing	29%

% of MSY NPM VS Applicant VS Not in ANY

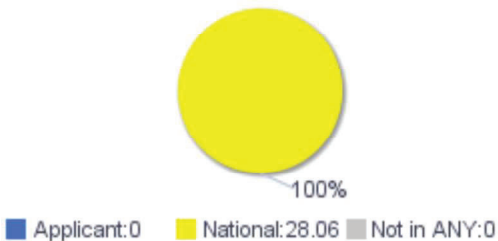


Table3: %MSYs by NPM vs.Applicant vs. Not in ANY

% MSYs	NPM	Applicant	Not in ANY
	100%	0%	0%

Table4: No of MSY and Members by Objective

Objectives	No of MSYs	No of Members
At - Risk Ecosystems	12.26	16
Awareness & Stewardship	7.80	10
Housing	8.00	7
Total	28.06	33

Primary Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship
Primary Intervention: Climate Change Intervention
Secondary Focus Area:
Secondary Intervention:

Performance Measure: Housing Services

Focus Area:	Economic Opportunity	Objective:	Housing	No of MSY's:	8.00	No of Members:	8
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Problem Statement:

Economically disadvantaged individuals including low - income, seniors, persons with disabilities, minorities, and individuals experiencing homelessness are unable to access safe, affordable housing and are at a higher risk of losing existing housing.

Selected Interventions:

Housing Placement/Assistance
Housing Unit Development

Describe Interventions:

- Housing Identification and Placement - 8 ACMs will identify safe, affordable housing opportunities 3 days/ week, 2 hours/ day, for 11 months.

- General Shelter Assistance - 5 ACMs will provide shelter intakes, orientations, donated goods procurement, client transportation, meal preparation, and childcare coordination 5 days/ week, 3 hours/ day, for 11 months.
Case Management - 5 ACMs will provide job readiness assistance, job and housing applications assistance, social service and substance abuse referrals, and post - placement follow - up 5 days/ week, 3 hours a day for 11 months.

Rent Subsidies - 1 ACM will help clients arrange back and emergency rent, security deposits, and administer housing retention program funds 2 days per week, 2 hours/ day, for 11 months.

Financial Literacy - 5 ACMs will deliver household budgeting, credit repair counseling, and rental readiness 2 days/ week, 1 hour/ day, for 11 months.

Home Ownership Services - 5 ACMs will deliver home buyer education and outreach, and pre/ post purchase counseling 5 days/ week, 5 hours/ day, for 11 months.

O1A Output:

O1A: Number of individuals served

Target: 500 Individuals

Measured By: Tracking System

Described Instrument: Foothold HMIS Database will be most commonly used tracking tool for shelters and housing resource centers. Individual sites may also have unique data tracking systems, including excel and online interfaces.

O11 Outcome:

O11: Number of individuals transitioned into safe, healthy, affordable housing

Performance Measure: Housing Services

Problem Statement:

Selected Interventions:
Housing Placement Assistance
Housing Unit Development

Target: 250 Individuals

Measured By: Proof of Residence

Described Instrument: Foothold HMIS database will be used to track the number of individuals and the follow - up services for those transitioned into housing. Within this database, information is collected about all household members, homelessness status, income sources and types, length of housing search, type and location of permanent residence and various other data collection points. The information provided by the database will be backed by documentation of housing placement and will be fitting to the host site and type of services provided. Examples of documentation include signed rental agreements and/or proof of rental assistance.

Performance Measure: Environmental Stewardship Services

Focus Area:	Environmental Stewardship	Objective:	At - Risk Ecosystems	No of MSY's:	8.00	No of Members:	10
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Problem Statement:

Climate change threatens Vermont ' s environmental health and biodiversity. Efforts to mitigate climate change and build climate resiliency must include public engagement and equitable access to natural resources.

Selected Interventions:

Climate Change Intervention
Debris Removal
Flood Mitigation
Invasive Species Removal
Plant Establishment

Describe Interventions:

ACMS will implement invasive species management; build riparian buffers; create, improve, and maintain access points; grow, plant, and maintain trees; remove debris; create and repair educational and safety signage; improve facilities; and monitor conservation easements on Vermont lands and waterways for 4 days a week, 6 hours a day, for 11 months

EN4 Output:

EN4: Acres of parks or public land treated.

Target:	2000	Acres
Measured By:	Tracking System	
Described Instrument:	Databases will track parcels stewarded, acreage, date, type of treatment, and noted observations that track the health of the parcel under treatment. To ensure acres are only counted once regardless of multiple treatments, acres are logged in the data collection tool by name and location. When additional treatments are applied to a parcel, the treatment is logged, but not additional acres. Host Site Supervisors review and approve the data. Data is reviewed quarterly by staff to ensure acres have not been double counted	

EN4.1 Outcome:

EN4.1: Acres of parks or public land improved

Target:	1500	Acres
Measured By:	Land Manager Assessment	
Described Instrument:	Databases will track parcels stewarded, acreage, date, type of treatment, and noted observations that track the health of the parcel under treatment. All members in the VHCB AmeriCorps Program are placed directly with the land management entity and all data collected by AmeriCorps members is approved by the entity. Information on the entity ' s land management plan is collected at the	

Performance Measure: Environmental Stewardship Services

Problem Statement:

Selected Interventions:

- Climate Change Intervention
- Debris Removal
- Flood Mitigation
- Invasive Species Removal
- Plant Establishment

Described Instrument: time the organization applies to host a VHCB AmeriCorps Member. The database used to track the output of the number of acres that are treated (EN4) will be used as a base for tracking the number of acres improved. The managing entity will review the data for which acres have been treated and track (1) which acres have been assessed and (2) of those assessed acres which have been found to be improved to an acceptable level. The acres are logged in the data collection tool by parcel name and location and reviewed by the land management entity and Program staff to ensure acres are only counted once. AmeriCorps members and land management entities are trained to only count the actual number of acres that are treated and improved rather than the entire parcel area. Quarterly reports submitted to the program to document member activities are reviewed and approved by the land management entity. The land managing entity ' s documentation of improvement includes: (1) aerial surveys, (2) direct monitoring of invasive species of concern, trails and waterways, and other treated areas, (3) photographic logs that documents the variety and scope of the member ' s efforts.

Performance Measure: Trails and Paths

Focus Area:	Environmental Stewardship	Objective:	At - Risk Ecosystems	No of MSY's:	4.26	No of Members:	6
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Problem Statement:

Climate change threatens Vermont ' s environmental health and biodiversity. Efforts to mitigate climate change and build climate resiliency must include public engagement and equitable access to natural resources.

Selected Interventions:

Climate Change Intervention
Debris Removal
Flood Mitigation
Invasive Species Removal
Plant Establishment

Describe Interventions:

AmeriCorps Members will implement invasive species management; create, improve, and maintain access points; grow, plant, and maintain trees; remove debris; create and repair educational and safety signage; and improve trail accessibility for 4 days a week, 6 hours a day, for 11 months.

EN5 Output:

EN5: Miles of trails or rivers treated

Target:	100	Miles
Measured By:	Tracking System	
Described Instrument:	Databases will track area of trail stewarded date, type of treatment, and noted observations of the section of trail receiving treatment. To ensure miles are only counted once regardless of multiple treatments, they are logged in the data collection tool by name and location. Host Site Supervisors review and approve the data. Data is reviewed quarterly by staff to ensure miles have not been double counted	

EN5.1 Outcome:

EN5.1: Miles of trails or rivers improved

Target:	65	Miles
Measured By:	Land Manager Assessment	
Described Instrument:	Databases will track miles of trail receiving stewardship, date, type of treatment, and noted observations that track the trail being treated or created. All members in the VHCB AmeriCorps Program are placed directly with the land management entity and all data collected by AmeriCorps members is approved by the entity. The database used to track the output of the number of miles that are treated will be used as a base for tracking the number of miles improved. The managing entity will review the data for which miles have been treated and track (1) which	

Performance Measure: Trails and Paths

Problem Statement:

Selected Interventions:

- Climate Change Intervention
- Debris Removal
- Flood Mitigation
- Invasive Species Removal
- Plant Establishment

Described Instrument: miles have been assessed and (2) of those assessed miles which have been found to be improved to an acceptable level. The miles are logged in the data collection tool by trail name and location and reviewed by the land management entity and Program staff to ensure miles are only counted once. AmeriCorps members and land management entities are trained to only count the actual number of miles that are treated/ created and improved rather than the entire trail. Quarterly reports submitted to the program to document member activities are reviewed and approved by the land management entity. The land managing entity ' s documentation of improvement includes: (1) aerial surveys, (2) direct monitoring of trails and waterways, and/or (3) photographic logs that documents the variety and scope of the member ' s efforts and condition of trail.

Performance Measure:		Environmental and Outdoor Education	
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Focus Area:	Environmental Stewardship	Objective:	Awareness & Stewardship	No of MSY's:	7.80	No of Members:	10
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Problem Statement:

Climate change threatens Vermont ' s environmental health and biodiversity. Efforts to mitigate climate change and build climate resiliency must include public engagement and equitable access to natural resources.

Selected Interventions:

Education/Training

Describe Interventions:

ACMs will deliver environmentally conscious and outdoor recreation education to youth and adults through school and public programs, camps, and service learning projects for 5 days a week, 5 hours a day, for 11 months

EN3 Output:

EN3: Number of individuals receiving education or training in environmental stewardship

Target: 1000 Individuals

Measured By: Tracking System

Described Instrument: Attendance will be tracked for all events and programming. Learning objectives are set by the member host site. Learning objectives are collected and reviewed by the program in the Host Site Application. VHCB AmeriCorps only counts individuals who have received education through in - person events and programming. Individuals are tracked by first and last name through attendance logs and sign - in sheets which are added into on database. The data tracking tools are designed in Excel to have the ability to be easily manipulated such as alphabetically organized or scanned for duplicate entries. This manipulation allows members to merge duplicates to avoid double counting individuals. VHCB AmeriCorps additionally tracks units of information disseminated such as pamphlets or electronic information, but these numbers are tracked separately and not included in this performance measure

EN3.2 Outcome:

EN3.2: Number of individuals reporting a change in behavior or intention to change behavior

Target: 650 Individuals

Measured By: Survey

Described Instrument: Surveys may be completed orally, written, or online, depending on the type of learner and programming. To assess the number of individuals reporting a change in behavior, participants will be asked to complete a survey after receiving environmental education to report the behavioral change that they have or plan to make. At minimum, each survey will collect the name of the individual, a statement

Performance Measure: Environmental and Outdoor Education

Problem Statement:

Selected Interventions:

Described Instrument:	of what the behavior change(s) is or will be, and how the environmental education offered by the AmeriCorps Member influenced the change in behavior. Most commonly, written surveys will be administered, though in some cases oral surveys may be used such as when working with young children.
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Program Information

AmeriCorps Funding Priorities

*Check any priority area(s) that apply to the proposed program. Please refer to the NOFO for the information on the threshold for meeting priority consideration

Underrepresented communities, underserved people, Programs providing additional benefits, Environmental Stewardship

Grant Characteristics

*Check any priority area(s) that apply to the proposed program. Please refer to the NOFO for the information on the threshold for meeting priority consideration.

Geographic Focus Rural

*Check any characteristics that are a significant part of the proposed program

Demographics

Other Revenue Funds	800743
Number of volunteers generated by AmeriCorps members	1000
Percentage of disadvantaged youth enrolled	0

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation	Already on File at CNCS
Labor Union Concurrence	Not Applicable
Other Documents	Not Applicable

Logic Model

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
The community problem that the program activities (interventions) are designed to address.	Resources that are necessary to deliver the program activities (interventions), including the number of locations/sites and number/type of AmeriCorps members.	The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including duration, dosage and target population.	Direct products from program activities.	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions. These outcomes, if applicable to the program design, will almost always be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in behavior or action. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in condition or status in life. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year. Some programs, such as environmental or capacity-building programs, may measure changes in condition over a period as short as one year.
Economically disadvantaged individuals including low-income, seniors, persons with disabilities, and minorities, and individuals experiencing homelessness are unable to access safe, affordable housing and are at a higher risk of losing existing housing.	8 FT Members will provide housing services through a network of 7 housing providers including 5 housing programs providers, and 2 homeless services providers. Members will receive on-site training, skill building, and direct supervision at service sites to support activities.	Members will provide supportive services and service coordination for seniors and low-income residents; education/outreach for affordable homeownership programs, and support individuals in the process; housing stabilization services; make home repairs and weatherization services for low-income individuals, seniors, and individuals with disabilities, and support individuals experiencing homelessness secure housing. Members	500 economically disadvantaged individuals will receive services to improve access to safe, affordable housing opportunities provided by AmeriCorps Members. 2000 individuals will receive services to improve access to healthy foods or improve food security.	150 individuals experiencing homelessness will receive services directed at increasing food security and referrals to resources.	250 underserved individuals will have more equitable access to resources including housing programs and shelter spaces. 75 economically disadvantaged households will report housing stabilization from member services including weatherization, home repairs, and eviction prevention services.	300 economically disadvantaged individuals will transition from homelessness, inadequate/unsafe, or unstable housing into safe, healthy, affordable housing.

Logic Model

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
		will provide resource support and referrals to those experiencing homelessness. Members will support economically disadvantaged individuals become more food secure. Members will make services more equitably accessible to historically marginalized populations. Target population includes economically and underserved populations including seniors, persons with disabilities, minorities, low-income households, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Members will deliver the services full-time for 11 months.				
Climate change threatens Vermont's environmental health and biodiversity. Efforts to mitigate climate change and build climate resiliency must include public	17 AmeriCorps Members will serve at 11 environmentally focused host site organizations including 7 land conservation organizations, and 4	Members will maintain/create trails, and make them more accessible; implement invasive species management; floodplain and	AmeriCorps Members will implement stewardship measures such as trail maintenance, invasive species management, boundary marking,		650 Individuals will report a change in behavior or intent to change behavior toward more environmentally conscious practices such as frequent	1,500 acres of land and 65 miles of trails will be improved with better public access, reduced human impact, improved facilities, restored wildlife habitat,

Logic Model

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
engagement and equitable access to natural resources.	nature centers to provide environmental stewardship and education, and to improve access for disadvantaged populations to public outdoor spaces, healthy recreation opportunities. Members will receive on-site training, skill building, and direct supervision at service sites to support activities.	riparian restoration; flood cleanup, plant/maintain native plants; remove debris and hazards; improve signage; monitor public lands; deliver environmentally conscious/outdoor recreation education; educate public on climate resiliency, perform outreach and coordinate public events to increase opportunities for outdoor public space and local food access for a diverse population. Members and leveraged volunteers will perform these activities full-time for 11 months, with increased levels of activity during school breaks, and in the spring/summer months.	easement monitoring, and tree planting on 2,000 acres and 100 miles of trails in parks and public lands. They will deliver education to 1000 individuals on environmentally conscious practices, including but not limited to local environmental stewardship initiatives, climate adaptation strategies, and environmentally conscious approaches to accessing Vermont's natural resources. They will engage 1000 seniors, persons with a disability, and low-income, and minority individuals in outdoor recreation.		volunteering with a local conservation organization to help manage invasive species, plant native shrubs, or make trails more accessible, improving energy conservation efforts, or utilizing a "Leave No Trace" ethic when accessing Vermont public lands.	reduction in invasive species, updated management plan, and/or installed educational and safety signage due to AmeriCorps Member stewardship applications.