**Frequently Asked Questions for Host Sites**

**What is a Host Site?**

MCC partners with environmental organizations throughout the state who host our Environmental Stewards (ES), Shore Corps Stewards (SCS) or Community Tree Stewards (CTS) during their term of service. These organizations are referred to as Host Sites.

**What are the terms, benefits to members and costs to sites?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MCC Position** | **Duration (Weeks)** | **AmeriCorps Slot** | **# of available positions** | **Education Award Amt.** | **Stipend (Weekly)** | **Cost to Host Site** |
| Community Tree Steward | 45 | 1700 | 5 | $7,395.00  | $680  | $0 USFS funded |
| Environmental Steward | 45 | 1700 | 10 | $7,395.00  | $535  | $15,500 |
| Environmental Steward | 24 | 900 | 10 | $3,697.50  | $535  | $11,000 |
| Shore Corps | 24 | 900 | 4 | $3,697.50 | $800  | $0 NOAA funded |

Sites do need to reimburse mileage for members if they use their personal vehicle to travel from the Host Site office to any other location for service. Additionally, we hope sites will consider assistance with housing.

**How much time will the member be available per week?**

These members serve 40 hours per week meeting the objectives outlined in their position descriptions, and they must attend some required trainings throughout the year. A calendar is provided at Host Site Supervisor Training which will outline all of the required events.

**How does AmeriCorps influence this position?**

**As an AmeriCorps program, MCC and the AmeriCorps members must follow several laws, documents, and guidance from AmeriCorps, Volunteer Maine, and the State of Maine. All of these positions are AmeriCorps funded positions.**

Based on AmeriCorps guidelines some activities are off-limits to MCC members ***during service hours***. Prohibited activities include:

* Efforts to influence legislation
* Organizing protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes
* Assisting or deterring union organizing
* Impairing existing contracts or collective bargaining agreements
* Engaging in partisan or election politics
* Religious activities
* Activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants
* Assignments that displace employees
* Providing assistance to a business organized for profit
* Fundraising for the MCC member’s cash contribution
* Mundane, clerical duties (data entry, membership campaigns) not directly related to an MCC project

 **The full text of the Prohibited Activities is available within the Handbook and upon request.**

**Can a site co-host (partner with another organization to supervise a member)?**

**Sites may partner to host the member. A clear line of communication, delineation of time, and commitment of each organization to provide a supervisor who will complete supervisor training, sign off on timesheets, and provide evaluations for the members and complete reporting are required.**

**What does the candidate pool look like?**
MCC receives applications from across the country, and sometimes from abroad. These applicants have a variety of skills and experience, come from a wide variety of skills and experience, and they are typically looking to gain experience in their field and give back to the community.

The pool varies from year to year, but in the 2025 1700 hour cycle, there were over 100 applicants for 14 positions. Their qualifications included a range of Bachelor’s degrees in everything from Biology, Wildlife Ecology, Comparative Literature, Geological Sciences and more to some candidates with previous MCC Team Leader experience, some with a Master’s degree and a couple HS Diplomas and GEDs.

All members are at least 18, but there is no upper age limit. The majority of members are 18-25 years old; Individual Placement members tend to be on the upper end of the range. About 50% of members are female. MCC has an overall initiative to engage underserved populations.

Historically, MCC forwards all interested candidates to Host Sites for review. We trust sites to determine the right candidate for them, as long as they meet minimum AmeriCorps guidelines. If you would like increased screening/to not receive all candidates, please connect with the Program Manager to discuss your organizations' minimum requirements.

A timeline with Host Site requirements, and a recruitment schedule, is sent to sites after acceptance. This timeline helps organize activities related to that particular recruitment cycle. With many partners, and many recruitment windows happening at MCC in general, it is important to stick to the prescribed timeline and be proactive in communication as much as possible if there are issues/adjustments need to be made.

**What is training for individual placement members like?**

For the regular orientation, there is a one-week period at the beginning of the term in the Augusta area. Training topics include the MCC Handbook, their member agreements, time sheets and reporting, National Incident Management Systems, Volunteer Reception Centers, additional AmeriCorps-centered activities, Non-Violent Communication, Introduction to Tools (safety and PPE), Interpretive Programs, and Portfolio Assignments.

Housing is provided, and the ES must attend every day and session as scheduled. Meals are also provided. Details are sent directly to the members close start date, but they can anticipate a summer camp like setting where they will need to bring a sleeping bag and basic necessities.

Chainsaw week is structured similarly, but additional gear is required such as all leather gloves and steel toe boots which are 8” high.

Community Tree Stewards and Shore Corps members will receive additional training specific to those respective programs. CTS can expect up to 14 days of additional training, including chainsaw safety training. SCS can expect 7 days of additional training, and they connect monthly for demonstration projects.

**What additional requirements does MCC have for individual placements?**

As these positions are AmeriCorps members with MCC, there are several requirements they must complete through MCC directly. They do accrue service hours for these activities:

* Attend all orientation trainings
* Complete WorkReady training (including resume writing, interview skills, and more)
* Assess the host sites volunteer program, make improvements, and conduct volunteer events ( includes EVMP and VMAP assignments)
* Participate in additional required events and days of service (listed on training calendar)
* Complete time sheets and quarterly reporting
* Create a member portfolio describing the tasks accomplished, with one copy to remain at the host site
* Complete exit paperwork and exit surveys

**What are the expectations regarding behavior and conduct for the Environmental Stewards?**

While in service, MCC members are expected to:

* Demonstrate mutual respect towards others
* Follow directions
* Direct concern, problems and suggestions to the appropriate Program Official
* Maintain a positive attitude towards service to the public
* Not engage in any activity involving proselytizing or assisting religious organizations, attempting to influence legislation or an election, or aide a partisan political organization, helping or hindering union activity, or aiding a business organized for profit
* Participate in all educational and service components of the program
* Complete assignments in a safe, timely and satisfactory manner
* Wear appropriate clothing or uniform when participating in service projects

At no time may the MCC member:

* Engage in any activity that is illegal under local, state or federal law; and
* Engage in activities that pose a significant safety risk to others, including aggressive behavior or fighting

The MCC member understands that the following acts will constitute a violation of the Program’s rules of conduct:

* Unauthorized tardiness
* Unauthorized absences
* Repeated use of inappropriate language (i.e. profanity) in the Program, including service sites and housing provided by the host site
* Stealing or lying
* Engaging in activity that may physically or emotionally damage other Corps Members or members of the community
* Possessing firearms or other weapons on or around the service site or any residential facility
* Possessing or using illegal drugs during the term of service
* Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol during the performance of service activities or while in residential status at any MCC lodging facility
* Failure to notify the Program of any criminal arrest or conviction that occurs during the term of service; or one prior to the term of service, which may impact the ability of the MCC member to participate fully in the Program

**What is the host site expected to provide to the member and MCC?**

Host Site Supervisors make a commitment to provide the members with the supervision, technical assistance and support that they need to get their projects done. Although the members are members of the MCC, the Host Site Supervisor will be the person who has the most interaction with the member, develops the service plan and answers most project-related questions. One of the roles of the MCC Program Manager is to ensure that the member is receiving adequate support and guidance from the Host Site Supervisor. It is up to the MCC member to inform the Site Supervisor and the MCC Program Manager if there are any problems at the host site in order for the problems to be resolved.

It is important from the beginning of the term of service that the Host Site Supervisor establishes regular communication with the member, ideally in the form of weekly one-on-one meetings. Members will be looking to Host Site Supervisors for training and materials needed to successfully complete projects. Supervisors will need to assess what skills the members have and what additional training may be needed early on for their projects. It is expected that supervisors will need to set aside time to orient the members to the office, to go over projects and establish a timeline for their term of service.

MCC meetings and trainings will take place at various places around Maine. Host Sites are responsible for reimbursing members for mileage to and from these meetings and trainings. MCC staff will make every effort to determine meeting and training dates well in advance in an attempt to avoid time/scheduling constraints. We will also inform Host Site Supervisors about the content of the meetings and training in case the Supervisor may want to attend. Please let us know if you have an idea for a training topic or if you know a good presenter. Attendance at most of these meetings and training is mandatory for MCC members.

Evaluation is the other primary responsibility of Site Supervisors, who work much more closely on a day-to-day basis with the MCC members than the MCC staff. We welcome input from Site Supervisors about the program and the members. We ask Host Site Supervisors to complete a mid-term and final evaluation of the MCC member; these evaluations are available electronically. You will be sent an email with the document and hard copies are reviewed during Host Site Supervisor Training. All evaluations must be printed, signed and dated by the member and supervisor.

It is important to remember that members placed at agencies are doing service for their communities. The AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities list is designed to ensure a balance between “getting things done” and a quality experience for the member. Members are not allowed to do mundane, tedious administrative tasks: filing, data entry, etc. unless it directly relates to their projects. Members are not permitted to fundraise or write grants to help pay for their living allowance or your cash match. Members may solicit materials as they relate to their particular project (i.e.: soliciting lumber for a community garden project). Please contact the MCC Director or the Program Manager if you need clarification of these expectations.

**Are members required to host volunteer events or mobilize volunteers?**

Yes, AmeriCorps service should mobilize communities and build systems that can help keep volunteers moving after their term is completed.

**Is there any help available with the application process?**

MCC is happy to assist in answering questions, and helping identify projects that would be a good fit for an Environmental Steward. This can range from a brief phone call to an in-person visit, depending on the needs. Please allow time for scheduling before the deadline, as the program is in full swing before each deadline and staff is required to keep current sites and members on track.

**How does the interview process work? When will members be called for an interview?**

The MCC Program Manager will forward the applicant’s cover letter, resume and references to the applicant’s top 3 positions. Host Sites will review applications and conduct interviews. Not all applicants are called for an interview.

Interviews are held during a 2-week period, and the positions are offered the following Monday. We ask that applicants make the decision to accept or refuse that position by the end of the day offered. The applicant should accept as soon as possible.

**What training should the host site be prepared to deliver?**
Host sites should be prepared to offer a general orientation to the organization, and clear expectations and support for the tasks the member is expected to complete. This can look different in different organizations. It may be an initial training where things are gone over all at once with ongoing support, or it can be more spread out during the term as the specific tasks come up. Ensuring the member has clear expectations, the tools and equipment needed to perform the tasks, and ongoing support and mentorship is essential to a successful term.

**What can a host site expect to receive for in person assistance?**

Sites can expect their members will arrive with up front training, and they can request specific help during their term on projects. MCC staff and partners with technical expertise have limited availability but can be on site for specific needs and pertinent events.

# **What schedule can the host site expect a member to adhere to?**

You can anticipate the member serving a minimum of 40 hours per week. The calendar start and end dates create a tight window to serve the minimum number of hours to complete the term satisfactorily, and as such members are required to serve 40 hours per week. Additionally, some Host Sites need the position to fill slots on the weekends. Hours and days should be explained to candidates during the interview process. Members will need justification for any days where the member serves more than 12 hours. The hour requirement is nothing but a minimum. Members do not have traditional holiday, sick, or vacation time they are expected to be in service 40 hours per week and exceed the minimum.

**What benefits are provided to individual placements?**

Maine Conservation Corps is an AmeriCorps program, and as such, member time is not considered work. It is considered service, and is accompanied by certain benefits.

Members will receive:

* **Living allowance**

(These amounts are found in the table at the beginning of the document for each respective position)

* **Health insurance** at no charge to 1700-hour members who do not have existing coverage. Positions for shorter terms do not qualify for coverage. Members are responsible for co-pays, deductibles, etc.
* **Student Loan Forbearance** (if eligible). Check with the lender to determine whether loans qualify for forbearance while serving in a national service program with AmeriCorps. During this forbearance based on national service, interest continues to accrue. If the member successfully completes a term of service and earns an education award, the Trust will pay all or a portion of the interest that has accrued on the qualified student loans during this period. This accrued interest paid by the Trust, like the education award itself, is subject to income taxes. This benefit does not apply to non-AmeriCorps positions.
* **Childcare reimbursement (1700-hour AmeriCorps members, if applicable)**
* **Maine State Park Pass** for use during your term of service.
* **Unlimited networking, training and experiential learning** opportunities in the Environmental Field in Maine.
* **A great sense of satisfaction** from taking on responsibilities that directly affect the environment and the people of Maine.
* **Education Award** - upon successful completion of a term of service, AmeriCorps members will receive an Education Award. This award may be used to pay off existing student loans or future education costs.
	+ Amounts listed in the table above
	+ An Education Award is subject to income taxes in the year it is used.

http://www.americorps.org/for\_individuals/alumni/education\_award.asp

**Can members have a part time job while serving in the program?**

Members can supplement income with part time work as long as the part-time job does not take priority over the MCC/host site schedule. The member and Host Site supervisor must carefully review the schedule if the member decides to work a part-time job while serving as an MCC AmeriCorps member.

**What about sick and vacation time?**

AmeriCorps service positions are different than traditional employment. Because the start date and end date are designed with just enough time to finish a term successfully by meeting the minimum number of hours, there is not a lot of room for sick or vacation time. This commitment to service requires 40 hours per week. If time off is requested, it must be approved by the host site supervisor and MCC, contingent upon a plan to make up the time requested off, programmatic requirements, host site needs, and other factors.

**Is Housing Provided?**

It is up to each member to secure his or her own housing.  Some Host Sites provide housing as an added benefit, and some provide a housing stipend.

## Can members have a pet?

Members live independently in most cases, and this will depend on the landlord.

No pets are allowed in housing that is provided by MCC Host Sites or at MCC service sites, or in State of Maine vehicles.

## Do members have a car?

We advise the applicants of the following:

“If you are coming to Maine from another state please note that Maine is a rural state with almost no public transportation. ***It can be a challenge to live and work here without a car.***

You are expected to get to and from home and office, etc, on your own. In addition, your Host Site may require that you use your personal vehicle to travel to and from project sites and reimburse you for the travel costs according to their organization’s policy.”

Members may or may not have vehicles, but we encourage them to secure transportation.

**Do members go through any kind of background check?**

Maine Conservation Corps will recruit, screen and initiate the Criminal History Check process for candidates. Host Site Supervisors will then receive the candidate’s materials, conduct their own interviews, and select a candidate. MCC will then begin the onboarding process, including the completion of the Criminal History Check. MCC follows AmerCorps guidelines for all members. This includes a NSOPW (sex offender public website), state of residence and state of service, as well as an FBI fingerprint check.

**Are there any grants or funding resources that may be used for these positions?**

While there are probably many different places to look for funding options, we are aware of these two funds:

Land and Water Conservation Fund:<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/land_water_conservation_fund.html>

Recreational Trails Program:<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/recreational_trails_program.shtml>

Host Sites are responsible for all components of whatever grant process they may use, and additionally if the positions are funded MCC facilitates grant compliance however input from each site is needed.

**For Shore Corps specifically:**

**Is a demonstration project a requirement for the Host Site?**

No. MCC, DEP, and current Shore Corps Stewards collaborate to carry out demonstration projects. We are interested in assisting and coordinating additional projects should you have projects that fit.

We do not have additional funds for materials, materials will likely need to be locally sourced and all demonstration projects must be on public land. We expect members to use hand methods, and less intensive projects. Heavy machinery and large soil disturbances will not likely be a part of these projects. Likely project types may include buffer plantings, upland work, toe erosion practices and dealing with small undercuts, and erosion control socks. Marshlands do fit within the NOAA definitions.

Members do need to be able to attend projects at other Host Sites.

**What about permitting?**

Members will receive an overview of permitting, but someone on staff at your organization should be leading any permitting processes.

**Can members complete assessments for private homeowners?**

Yes, the OUR SHORE assessments can be used on private residences to better inform homeowners about nature based solutions to their erosion control issues. We expect to provide training for the assessments to the members, and provide hands on learning opportunities for the cohort to grow together and build consistency across the positions.

**In addition to our FAQ’s, please feel free to contact me with any questions about the MCC and becoming a host site.**

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