

PART I - FACE SHEET

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|---|-----------------|---|--|
| APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE | | 1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction | |
| Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System) | | | |
| 2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS): | | 3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE: 02-DEC-10 | STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER: 6000001 |
| 2b. APPLICATION ID: 11AC123872 | | 4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY: | FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 09ACHME0010001 |
| 5. APPLICATION INFORMATION | | | |
| LEGAL NAME: Maine Conservation Corps DUNS NUMBER: 002221286 - 8815 | | NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Linda Shapleigh TELEPHONE NUMBER: (207) 624-6086 FAX NUMBER: (207) 287-3342 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: linda.shapleigh@maine.gov | |
| ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 124 State House Station Augusta ME 04333 - 0124 County: | | | |
| 6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 016000001 | | 7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. State Government 7b. | |
| 8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input checked="" 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): | | 9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: Corporation for National and Community Service | |
| 10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State | | 11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: Maine Conservation Corps | |
| 12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): State of Maine | | 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY): | |
| 13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 01/01/12 END DATE: 12/31/12 | | 14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="ME 001"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="ME 001"/> | |
| 15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <input type="text" value="3"/> | | 16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: 04-MAY-10 <input type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372 | |
| a. FEDERAL | \$ 390,068.00 | 17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO | |
| b. APPLICANT | \$ 626,487.00 | | |
| c. STATE | \$ 0.00 | | |
| d. LOCAL | \$ 0.00 | | |
| e. OTHER | \$ 0.00 | | |
| f. PROGRAM INCOME | \$ 0.00 | | |
| g. TOTAL | \$ 1,016,555.00 | | |
| 18. 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: Linda Shapleigh | | b. TITLE: Director | c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (207) 624-6086 |
| d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: | | | e. DATE SIGNED: 04/29/11 |

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Executive Summary

The mission and mandate of the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) is "...to improve public property for the increased use and enjoyment of the public, to provide conservation education, to promote and manage volunteer opportunities related to natural resources and to assist public and non-profit organizations with projects that serve a valid public purpose." MCC manages the Field Team and Environmental Educator programs which provide a positive work experience and instills an ethic of volunteerism.

Rationale and Approach

COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEED

The mission and mandate of the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) is "...to improve public property for the increased use and enjoyment of the public, to provide conservation education, to promote and manage volunteer opportunities related to natural resources and to assist public and non-profit organizations with projects that serve a valid public purpose."

MCC accomplishes its mission through two programs: the Field Team program and the Environmental Educator program. The Field Team program has been building trails and accomplishing conservation projects since the early 1980's, creating over 500 miles of new trail since its inception. MCC Field Teams possess an exceptional level of technical skill and have a solid reputation as some of Maine's most effective trail builders. The Environmental Educator program provides opportunities for members to gain experience in environmental education, volunteer leadership, water quality monitoring, watershed stewardship, and development of community service projects.

The MCC mission allows the compelling community need to be established at the community level. Communities and organizations throughout Maine identify specific needs that meet the mission of MCC.

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Land trusts, municipalities, state organizations and others identify compelling community needs in their response to MCC Field Team RFPs in the fall, leading to approximately 30 partners per year.

Information requested in the proposal for a Field Team includes the number of beneficiaries served by the project, types of environmental education or skills training the organization can provide to the members, and if the involvement or training of volunteers is a priority.

Natural resource agencies and conservation organizations throughout the State identify compelling community needs in their response to MCC Environmental Educator RFPs in the spring, leading to approximately 20 host sites per year. Information requested in the proposal for an Environmental Educator includes how well the proposed project aligns with MCC's mission; how the organization will ensure capacity building through outreach, volunteer recruitment, training and management; what the clearly determined need is for the project; and what the clearly developed scope of work is for the Environmental Educator.

Looking to the future, our nation is facing unparalleled challenges. College students and others wonder whether they will have jobs. Our infrastructure is at risk. Our climate is changing. Our communities are divided. Obesity and inactivity are chronic.

There are solutions on the ground, with more change in the future. Numerous recent gubernatorial and legislative commissions and task forces in Maine have recommended: active outdoor recreation to combat obesity and youth inactivity; backcountry trail networks to attract world-class tourism; investments in quality of place to attract and retain residents especially in rural areas; environmental education to link people and place and climate; internships and jobs for young people to create opportunity and prosperity; investments in infrastructure to create jobs and a platform for nature-based

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tourism.

With an exceptional reputation across Maine, the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC), established by the Maine Legislature in 1983, remains perfectly positioned to address these compelling needs and to advance these strongly supported recommendations by delivering tested programs. MCC provides work experience for young people while instilling an ethic of volunteerism. MCC creates trail networks that support active outdoor recreation. MCC supports Maine's economy with jobs and with "green infrastructure" to bring prosperity to rural areas through nature-based tourism and quality of place.

MCC's record of success is clearly aligned with key priorities of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), especially:

1) Ensuring a brighter future for all America's youth. MCC partners with youth organizations like Casey Family Services to connect children in foster care with AmeriCorps members. Working with MCC members, children develop positive work habits and a sense of accomplishment as they work with team members to build recreational trails.

2) Harnessing Baby Boomers Experience. MCC recruits over 70 baby boomers each year to help with community projects and works with this demographic on volunteer boards of local land trusts. Community organizations capitalize on these individuals' skills in fundraising, marketing, and land stewardship.

3) Engaging Students in Communities. MCC builds engaged citizens by placing Environmental Educators in school systems to raise awareness of environmental issues.

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In addition, many schools throughout Maine have students volunteer on MCC projects.

4) Mobilizing More Volunteers. MCC is continually expanding the number of volunteers recruited in Maine. MCC projects increase the number of service opportunities available to these volunteers.

MCC's record of success is also clearly aligned with key priorities established by the Maine Commission for Community Service (MCCS):

1) Energy Conservation. MCC recruits Environmental Educator members to work with schools and organizations on energy conservation issues.

2) Increased health/wellness through physical fitness. The creation of walking paths in local communities by MCC enables people to easily incorporate exercise into their daily lives, thereby helping to reverse the trend of inactivity and obesity.

MCC projects address compelling community needs precisely because the projects are requested by communities. The communities themselves evaluate their most pressing natural resource needs and submit proposals to the MCC through its Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND MEMBER ROLES

The MCC recruits and places 82 qualified AmeriCorps members to serve on environmental education and community outreach projects identified by the communities themselves. AmeriCorps members are

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divided between MCC's Field Team and Environmental Educator programs.

The goal of the Field Team is to train and provide top quality teams to support partners' natural resource, trail building and restoration projects and volunteer recruitment activities. Through training, mentoring and hands-on work, members develop vocational skills, real life team-building experiences and knowledge about working hard and getting along in a small group.

The Field Team typically operates from May 24th through November 14th. The Program Coordinator, with assistance from the Recruitment Assistant, recruits 59 AmeriCorps members to serve as 13 half-time members (900 hours), 40 quarter-time members (450 hours), 1 reduced half-time members (675 hours) and 5 minimum-time members (300 hours). Terms of service include either the entire 6-month term of service (May-November), a 3-month summer term (May--August), or a 3-month fall term (August--November). Members can serve on full teams with 1 Team Leader and 5 members or on a mini-team that has 1 Team Leader and 2 members. MCC typically runs 9 teams during the summer and 5 teams in the fall.

Mini-teams meet the needs of many small Land Trusts eager to complete trail access and improvements with enthusiastic volunteers and minimal resources. Volunteers working with a mini-team have completed projects earlier than anticipated.

An example of a collaborative project completed by a full Field Team is the Mowry Beach Boardwalk Trail. Located in Washington County, one of the poorest counties in Maine, this project was initiated by the Quoddy Regional Land Trust (QRLT) and teachers from the Lubec Consolidated School. During the winter, QRLP volunteers worked to assemble over 160 - 8-foot deck sections. This was a tremendous effort by local townspeople. The MCC team, working with volunteers and students, created a high

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quality boardwalk linking the school to the shore that is an asset to both the school and the community as a whole.

Other partners for the Field Team program include: Acadia National Park; Baxter State Park; the municipalities of Biddeford, Brunswick, Canton, Ellsworth, Gorham, Harpswell, Old Orchard Beach, Portland, St. Agatha, Yarmouth; several Land Trusts and the Bureau of Parks and Lands.

The second program where members serve is in the Environmental Educator program. This program places members at individual host sites throughout the state. The MCC Program Coordinator recruits 20 Environmental Educator members.

Environmental Educators provide environmental education in and out of schools, resource protection activities, outreach and volunteer recruitment opportunities. Projects engage volunteers to address environmental pollution, energy conservation and natural resource protection problems identified in their communities.

Members serve on projects that perform ongoing environmental conservation activities. Examples include hands-on environmental education for school children, storm drain identification, buffer zone and tree planting. Members work in schools and communities to engage youth and families in understanding natural resource and environmental protection issues.

For example, the Bangor Area Storm Water Group, in collaboration with the University of Maine, supports an Environmental Educator to help with stormwater education and outreach to seven Maine municipalities. The Environmental Educator works collaboratively with schools systems and delivers place-based, experiential learning activities to local schools.

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Environmental Educators are also placed within the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Historically, four AmeriCorps members serve with the DEP Air Bureau, Lakes and Watershed, Biological Monitoring and Stream Team divisions. The staff at DEP, committed to educating local community residents about conservation and environmental protection, engages AmeriCorps members to support their goals to educate communities about the sources of pollution and ways to prevent and fix problems. The Environmental Educators promote local stewardship for the protection of natural resources by educating and training volunteers, students and citizens about water quality and pollution issues.

Similarly, DEP's Watershed Division identified the need for an Environmental Educator to meet the Southern Maine's growing demand for watershed management personnel who can assist with local watershed monitoring efforts. To this end, one of the MCC DEP Environmental Educators helps organizations such as Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, Wells National Estuarine Reserve, and Royal River Conservation Coalition accomplish site-specific watershed protection projects.

Other placements for Environmental Educators include Damariscotta Lake Watershed Association, Chewonki Foundation, Oxford County Soil and Water Conservation District, Downeast Institute for Applied Marine Research and Education, Baxter State Park, Maine Audubon and Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

New community partners include MaineHousing that has an interest in energy conservation and management of home energy costs.

MCC conducts orientation workshops where members receive training and handbooks outlining the

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requirements of their positions and the rules regarding prohibited activities. Field Team members have a Team Leader on site to lead members and monitor project activity. The Team Leader position includes direct service and provides support to members. Team Leaders work alongside members serving as a model and provide on-site assistance. Environmental Educators have a host site supervisor who has also received training and a handbook on AmeriCorps goals and prohibited activities.

Orientation, training and member development activities are crucial to the successful implementation of the MCC program. The AmeriCorps grant provides the necessary funding to support these activities.

MEASURABLE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

The Field Team and Environmental Educator programs both use evaluation systems that track outputs and outcomes. Some performance measures are distinct to each program, while others are common to both programs.

The key performance measure for the Field Team program is trail building and restoration. Quality projects with significant impact will be completed to benefit local communities, parks and natural areas. Measurable outputs will include 59 MCC members serving with 20 local organizations to create or rehabilitate 20-25 miles of public access trails. Outcomes will be documentation from MCC partners indicating that at least 75% of trails for public use in the targeted communities "increased" or "greatly increased." End outcomes will document a 25% increase in the public use of trails at the end of 3 years.

The performance measure for the Environmental Educator program is increased awareness of the environment. Outputs will include 7 MCC members leading at least 100 experiential environmental education activities for at least 2,000 students in at least 30 schools as documented by records

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maintained by the MCC members. Intermediate outcomes will include evaluations indicating that at least 85% of students who attend lessons and activities presented by MCC members can demonstrate an increased understanding and awareness of the environmental topics covered. The evaluation process indicates MCC has reliably increased awareness of students in schools where experiential environmental education activities have occurred.

Two additional performance measures will be applied to both programs: recruitment and training of volunteers, and member development. Regarding volunteers, the MCC documents the number of volunteers recruited and trained at each partner site. MCC will recruit and train 400 volunteers, of which 100 are youth, on environmental topics. Intermediate outcomes include volunteer surveys documenting participation in MCC projects. End outcomes include sustainability of local organizations by trained volunteers, with 25% of volunteers trained and recruited by MCC members remaining engaged within their communities. By educating and recruiting local volunteers, community organizations will develop an informed, sustainable cadre of volunteers that will continue to serve the organizations beyond the AmeriCorps members' terms of service. The increased volunteer base will enable organizations to initiate and complete many more projects than previously possible.

Regarding member development, outputs will include 82 MCC members trained and provided with professional development opportunities. Intermediate outcomes will include evaluations that demonstrate increased knowledge and skills of AmeriCorps members. End outcomes will show that 95% of MCC members can apply skills learned to community needs by either building trails, bridges and walking paths or conducting environmental training to volunteers and students.

PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

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MCC has an established continuous quality improvement plan. The plan includes a system to evaluate the quality of services provided, and the satisfaction of AmeriCorps members, project volunteers, and community partners. MCC also has a system to track and evaluate its progress toward meeting and achieving outputs and outcomes.

To ensure that MCC is providing quality services, both the Field Team and the Environmental Educator programs hold partner meetings annually. Program staff ask partners to list MCC strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for changes. In addition to these meetings, both programs solicit feedback from their members, host site supervisors, project partners, volunteers, teachers and students with surveys. Volunteers are asked to complete a Volunteer Feedback Form. Partners for the Field Team are provided with a Project Satisfaction Survey and Environmental Educators and host site supervisors complete surveys at mid-term and end-of-term periods. MCC uses the results of these meetings and survey evaluations to make changes in its program operations and services.

MCC relies on multiple feedback mechanisms to track and evaluate its progress toward meeting and achieving outputs and outcomes. For the Field Team program, Team Leaders submit weekly team session reports. These reports provide the Program Coordinator with several pieces of valuable information including: safety awareness; service activities; relationship with project sponsor; education events; community volunteers and member issues. In addition to this report, staff visiting the project site is requested to fill out a team report addressing the following issues: safety; team dynamics; equipment and team morale. For the Environmental Educator Program, members submit quarterly reports to the Program Coordinator. These reports provide information on volunteer recruitment and member accomplishments and form the basis of quarterly reports submitted to the MCCS showing progress towards meeting and achieving outputs and outcomes. The reports also identify any programmatic issues needing to be addressed.

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In February 2008, MCC received the Excellence in Corps Operations (ECO) award. ECO is a national peer assessment process which recognizes Corps that make a commitment to high-quality standards and continuous improvement. Corps use the process as a tool to identify strengths and challenges and improve program quality. Among the many MCC effective practices, the Review Team was particularly impressed with: the high quality of services MCC members deliver to benefit of the State of Maine; the Corps' ability to integrate, recruit and leverage a high volume of volunteers into both the Field Team program and the Environmental Educator program; the management and cultivation of relationships with diverse organizations from both the public and non-profit sector; and the ability to generate significant financial contributions from various partners.

In addition to the ECO evaluation, MCC conducted an evaluation by an outside organization as required by the MCCS. This evaluation report has a section for partners to suggest improvements to the MCC AmeriCorps partnership.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Organizations that partner with MCC represent communities from throughout the State. They have identified their needs through surveys, meetings and various local partnerships.

The Field Team partnerships are developed based on a community need identified by an organization or a committee of that organization. For example, Portland Trails is a non-profit urban land trust whose mission is to create a 50-mile network of multi-use trails within Greater Portland; to encourage the participation of neighborhoods, schools, and the business community in trail use and stewardship; and to make Greater Portland a model for people-powered recreation and transportation. MCC has partnered with Portland Trails for the last 9 years to help them achieve their mission of creating trail

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access and improvements on public land.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust conserves and stewards Maine's coastal lands and islands for their renowned scenic beauty, outdoor recreational opportunities, ecological diversity and working landscapes. MCHT promotes the conservation of natural places statewide by working with land trusts, communities and other partners, and has protected more than 125,000 acres in Maine, including more than 250 entire coastal islands. MCC has partnered with MCHT over the past two years to develop trails on Marshall Island. Marshall Island is the largest uninhabited island on the nation's eastern seaboard. Establishing walking trails on the island will help direct recreational use and protect the island's fragile natural environment.

In direct response to our partner's demonstrated needs, the MCC has developed a trail planning service. This service helps partners who want to build trails on land trust properties but lack expertise in trail design and construction.

In addition to directly engaging with communities, MCC also partners with the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) within the Department of Conservation (DOC) Bureau of Parks and Lands. This has resulted in an increased awareness of MCC as well as an increased number of requests for Field Teams. The DOC so values the synergy between RTP and MCC's Field Team that applicants for RTP funds now receive greater consideration if they propose to use an MCC Field Team to accomplish their work.

MCC also actively promotes the Land for Maine's Future program to local land trusts to build their awareness of the availability of funds and opportunities to build trails in their communities for their residents to enjoy. This also results in increased requests for MCC Field Teams.

Through the solicitation of new proposals each year, MCC forms relationships with new partners to expand the variety of projects protecting Maine's natural resources. MCC has many comparable long-

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standing relationships with organizations.

MCC continues to engage community partners by recruiting high quality AmeriCorps members looking for meaningful terms of service. Many members request a second term of service with MCC. It is the host site's responsibility to identify the roles and responsibilities of the Environmental Educator to help achieve their missions.

The MCCS notes in its feedback report dated 9/30/08, "Your program's ability to continue to recruit and utilize volunteers through your partner sites continues to be a program strength and shows the level of public commitment to the projects and work your members are involved in."

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

The MCC has a strong history of collaboration with many national, state and community service programs. At the national level, MCC is an active member of the Corps Network. The Corps Network, established in 1985, is the voice of the nation's 136 Service and Conservation Corps. The ECO award referenced earlier is administered by the Corps Network.

MCC contracts with the Corps Network for its AmeriCorps Education Award (EAP) program. This program allows Field Team and Environmental Educator members, serving outside of the State Competition grant, to receive an education award at the end of their term of service.

At the regional level, MCC has participated in the Tri-State conference with Corps from New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine.

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At the State level, MCC participates in the MCCA staff council meetings. These meetings include VISTA, National Direct as well as other State AmeriCorps programs. These meetings provide an opportunity to share information and collaborate in trainings and service events.

The AmeriCorps program recognizes Martin Luther King (MLK) Day as a day of service. In 2008, the MCCA, MCC, and the VolunteerMaine VISTA Project partnered to create a Martin Luther King Day service project aimed to honor Dr. King's life and legacy. The project, called Maine Letters from Kids, supplied over 400 letters from Maine students in 4th through 7th grades to students in Iraq as a means of building peaceful bridges between our cultures for the future.

There is great respect for MCC among other Corps, partnering organizations, project sponsors and community members. MCC works effectively with other programs to share resources and expertise, participate in joint celebrations of service, submit joint grant applications for projects, and attend the Leadership Academy with other programs from across the State.

MCC's unique mission to preserve the State's natural resources allows collaboration and support of other national and community service programs without any duplication of limited program resources.

In its feedback report dated 3/31/08, the MCCA noted "Your efforts with the Martin Luther King Day celebrations and the Letter writing to Iraqi students are great examples of positive press for the AmeriCorps programs. Also, opening up training availability to other AmeriCorps members fosters the sense of the "one" AmeriCorps ideal and gives members opportunities to network with their peers. The participation and leadership of the MCC program provide strength to the AmeriCorps portfolio in Maine and support for other programs, competitive, national direct, and VISTA. Your willingness to collaborate strengthens us all. Your successful efforts in several high visibility events were especially noteworthy."

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POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

Both the Field Team and the Environmental Educator programs are designed to be replicated throughout the state.

Similar trail projects throughout the State are a good example of the ability to replicate the program model. The Field Team Coordinator keeps trail design and bridge construction plans on file. These files allow our community partners to use the plans of other communities and replicate a trail or a bridge in their community. The Coordinator and the Field Team Assistant recently completed data collection that will allow communities to determine the cost of building a handicapped access trail. This valuable information will help communities plan for comparable trails that provide greater access to handicapped individuals.

At the Inland Hospital Nursing Home facility, the hospital is designing a handicapped accessible trail that will circle the nursing home. The trail will start at every exit door and connect to the perimeter trail. This is an exciting opportunity to develop a trail for an elderly population with a design that can be replicated by nursing homes throughout the State.

Multi-year Memoranda of Understanding with community partners provide opportunities for volunteers trained by MCC members to replicate trails, bridges and stone stairs elsewhere in the State.

The Environmental Educator program is an excellent example of program replication. In 2007, MCC had a member placed with Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District to increase environmental awareness among children and young adults in Cumberland County and the Casco Bay watershed by focusing on soil and water education and awareness. Due to the success of this

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partnership, two additional Soil and Water Conservation Districts, in Penobscot and Oxford counties, applied for MCC Environmental Educators in 2008.

MCC's partnership with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is another example of program replication. DEP has remained a valued long term partner with MCC utilizing 11 MCC Environmental Educators in the past 2 years. Environmental Educators provide DEP with an established, consistent message and training program to community partners when providing outreach.

Organizational Capability

1. SOUND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

ABILITY TO PROVIDE SOUND PROGRAMMATIC AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT

Created in 1983, the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) is a State program which has operated an AmeriCorps program for over 10 years. On July 1, 2007, MCC was transferred from the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) to the Department of Conservation (DOC) Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL). The DOC was established to preserve, protect and enhance the land resources of the State of Maine. The BPL manages and administers programs on over one million acres of public land. The transfer to BPL has been a perfect fit for MCC.

DOC successfully manages an annual budget of over 28 million dollars. BPL provides management oversight and fiscal support to the MCC. In March of 2008, the Director of MCC and the Resource Administrator of BPL attended the Financial and Grants Management Institute training sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. This training provided the knowledge to ensure the requirements for administering an AmeriCorps program are met. All programmatic and financial systems in place within MCC have been designed to thoughtfully carry out the AmeriCorps grant

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provisions and the State contract for federal funds.

Since its inception, MCC has placed hundreds of AmeriCorps members throughout the State to accomplish countless natural resource projects. Some specific examples of accomplishments and outcomes over the past two years include the 2007 Field Team that worked with over 30 community partners to build or rehabilitate over 34 miles of trail throughout the State. In 2008, the Field Team has worked with over 30 community partners and built or rehabilitated over 40 miles of trail. In 2007, the Environmental Educators presented over 200 environmental educational lessons and activities to over 3,000 students in classrooms and in the field. In 2008, the Environmental Educators presented over 700 environmental educational lessons and activities.

MULTI-SITE

MCC places its AmeriCorps members at multiple sites throughout the State. As the intermediary for AmeriCorps funding, these sites do not incur programmatic or fiscal responsibility. MCC supports and oversees its service sites through a consistent process of evaluations, policies, training and oversight. MCC ensures its AmeriCorps members receive a quality and consistent service experience by evaluating the projects submitted through its RFP process. The Field Team program encourages partners to provide education or training for the team in the form of presentations about its organization, guest speakers, or side trips to educational sites. The project is evaluated to ensure sites can provide members with water for drinking, cooking and washing and a means of safe disposal of human waste. Indoor housing is recommended after October 15. The Environmental Educator program ensures its members receive a quality and consistent service experience by requiring a comprehensive training and orientation plan for the MCC Environmental Educator, an appropriate workstation, including use of computer, e-mail and Internet access, phone, fax and copier, and a commitment by the organization's

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site supervisor to attend mandatory site supervisor orientation trainings. Both programs evaluate proposals to ensure projects promote volunteer involvement on projects.

ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF

MCC is administered by four key staff and the support of the Resource Administrator at the Bureau of Parks and Lands. MCC staffing includes a Director, two Program Coordinators, and a Recruitment and Outreach Assistant. The MCC Director has oversight of the entire program and reports to the DBPL. The Director has served with MCC for 3 years and has 25 years of Federal Program management and compliance experience. The Program Coordinator for the Field Team has served with MCC for 8 years and has over 30 years in trail management and crew supervision. He has worked with volunteers and AmeriCorps members throughout the State including extensive trail building at both Baxter State Park and along Maine's Appalachian Trail. The Field Team Coordinator manages all aspects of the Field Team program. The Environmental Educator Program Coordinator has served with MCC for 3 years and has 11 years of program management experience and serves as the MCC Volunteer Services Coordinator. She manages all aspects of the Environmental Educator program and coordinates all MCC volunteer activities. The Recruitment and Outreach Assistant has 7 years of experience with MCC. The Recruitment and Outreach Assistant is responsible for all recruitment support, payroll, file management and record keeping. The Resource Administrator for the BPL has over 10 years of experience working with Federal and State programmatic and fiscal reporting requirements. The Resource Administrator has worked with MCC over the past year and has financial responsibility for the AmeriCorps grant.

PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT OR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

MCC takes the responsibility of continuous improvement very seriously. In February of 2008, MCC

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received the ECO Award, a peer assessment process which recognizes Corps that make a commitment to high quality standards and continuous improvement. ECO status is awarded for a period of five years. MCC also received this award in 2003. During 2005 and 2006 while at the DOL, MCC participated in the State's Bend The Curve (BTC) initiative. BTC is a State planning exercise providing opportunities to assess delivery of services and areas for improvement. The process focuses on core needs of customers, identifying processes that have value to the customer and eliminating steps that do not. BTC involves thinking differently about work and relationships with one another. Also in 2005, MCC convened an Advisory Committee to develop a 3 year strategic plan. The first goal of this plan focuses on quality of service. Through meetings with partners and written evaluations from partners and AmeriCorps members, MCC constantly evaluates its program to better meet the needs of its AmeriCorps volunteers and the organizations and communities in which they serve.

PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The MCC staff receive technical assistance from the Maine Commission for Community Service (MCCS) on information technology, programmatic and financial management and administrative updates at monthly staff council meetings. MCC partner sites for the Environmental Educator program receive orientation trainings. Orientations provide information on policies, procedures, expectations and allowable activities. Host Site Supervisor Handbooks are distributed and reviewed at the orientation. MCC staff identify training needs as they arise.

2. SOUND RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AS AN ORGANIZATION

VOLUNTEER GENERATION AND SUPPORT

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For the 2009 program year, MCC is recruiting an AmeriCorps member to increase its organizational capacity. This member will research marketing and promotional strategies; design, write and implement promotional strategies such as press releases, public service announcements, and advertising copy; plan, coordinate and participate in promotional activities, and increase awareness and understanding of MCC services and activities by writing and delivering presentations to civic and service organizations. This increase in public awareness will help in generating additional volunteers.

At the community level, MCC has a proven track record of securing volunteers. One effective tool for recruiting volunteers is the MCC volunteer database which highlights all of MCC volunteer opportunities. This enables potential volunteers to search the calendar and find opportunities that meet their schedules. Field Team partners generally have a volunteer group in place. Field Team members work with volunteers teaching them to maintain their trails. The Environmental Educator members work with host sites to recruit and train community volunteers.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

The MCC has been recognized and acknowledged for its community leadership at community ceremonies throughout Maine. In 2007, Governor John E. Baldacci, DOC Commissioner Patrick McGowan and conservation enthusiasts cut the ribbon on the River~Link Trail. This project, built with the support of an MCC Field Team, will connect the Damariscotta and Sheepscot Rivers in Lincoln County when completed. Commissioner McGowan also participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony of the Mowry Beach Boardwalk Trail, a community trail in Lubec built by an MCC Field Team in 2007. Another significant organizational accomplishment is MCC's receipt of the Excellence In Corps Operations award in 2008 and 2003.

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The staff of the MCC is all dedicated to volunteer and community service. The Program Director is a Board member for Myra's Gift, Inc., a non-profit organization that helps low-income families receive needed safety items, such as car seats and cribs, for their newborn children. In addition to working with social service programs, the Program Coordinator for the Environmental Educator program served as the Volunteer Family Coordinator for the Maine Army National Guard for 18 months while her son served in Iraq. The Program Coordinator for the Field Team program, Lester Kenway, is a nationally known trail trainer. He has earned numerous awards over his 30 year career, including the Harvey Bell Memorial Award in 2008 for outstanding innovative contribution to trail construction. He became the 51st Honorary Member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in 2007 for distinguished contributions to the Appalachian Trail, and he received the Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award for innovations and accomplishments rehabilitating trails in Katahdin's Alpine areas in 2005. It should be noted that Mr. Kenway intends to retire at the end of the year. He will, however, remain available to train MCC members. He will also continue his work with the Maine Appalachian Trail Club working in partnership with MCC on Appalachian Trail projects. The Resource Administrator is a Major in the Army National Guard and she has been deployed to serve in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

SUCCESS IN SECURING MATCH RESOURCES

MCC has successfully raised all of its match resources in this three year grant cycle. MCC provides a 60% cash match for the AmeriCorps funding exceeding the statutory minimum. Over the past 3 year cycle, this has resulted in matching community funds of approximately \$500,000 each year.

MCC has been very successful in securing matching funds from its partners. MCC works with partners to secure funding through several grant opportunities such as the Recreational Trail Program (RTP), the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund (MOHF) and other sources. The RTP receives Federal funding and expects the level of funding to remain constant over the next

Narratives

several years. The grant manager of RTP and MCC work closely to coordinate projects and improve the quality and success of trail building projects. MCC also works with the Program Officer for the Land for Maine's Future Program at the State Planning Office to identify potential projects. Local environmental groups often fundraise for their projects and to secure an Environmental Educator. All of these connections help to increase the collaboration and range of community stakeholders involved in the program.

As noted in the MCC 9/30/08 feedback report by the MCCS, "Your program is fortunate in these times of a difficult economy that your partner sites are continuing to support your efforts."

3.SUCCESS IN SECURING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

COLLABORATION

The MCC grows each year with new program partners. In 2007-2008, the Field Team Program had 20 new partners and the Environmental Educator Program had 9 new partners. This demonstrates communities continue to be interested in engaging MCC in environmental education and conservation efforts. The ongoing partnership MCC has with the Department of Environmental Protection also increases the outreach of services MCC provides.

LOCAL FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

MCC partners provide in-kind contributions to their projects in a variety of ways. Field Team partners provide camping areas for team members as well as project materials. Environmental Educator partners provide office space, computers, telephone and staff supervision. Partners from both programs

Narratives

provide additional training opportunities to the members. Local contributions to the MCC program have remained consistent over time.

WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

MCC collaborates with many communities stakeholders throughout the State. MCC partners, volunteers, teachers and students are all stakeholders in the preservation of Maine's natural resources. MCC alumni and community partners continue to promote the MCC program increasing its support over time. MCC plans to recruit AmeriCorps member to communicate its accomplishments to community groups throughout Maine. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of MCC and the 75th anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Governor of Maine proclaimed November 14, 2008 as Maine Conservation Corps Day. This proclamation and media coverage will provide a platform for increasing community awareness.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

MCC serves poor communities in a poor state in a manner aligned with multiple state-wide strategic priorities.

The Maine Development Foundation's (MDF's) Measures of Growth 2008 presents continued red flags and negative scores on Maine's income, gross domestic product, and employment indicators as compared to the nation. MDF's 2008 report shows Maine's per capital personal income slipping to 39th in the country (only 11 states had lower incomes) based on 2006 reports (most recent). Maine's income has slipped from 91% of the national average to 87% of the national average. The 2005 median household income of Aroostook, Piscataquis and Washington counties' was more than 24% lower than

Narratives

the state median.

Maine has responded with tourism pilot initiatives (known as FERMATA or Maine Nature Tourism Initiative) particularly focused on the rural and remote counties of Piscataquis, Washington, and Franklin where low rural incomes are aligned with high tourism potential.

MDF's 2008 report also shows no statistical progress on Chronic Disease. The Maine Center for Disease Control (DHHS Bureau of Health) reports that inactivity is the leading cause of epidemic obesity in Maine. Inactivity is second only to smoking as a health risk in Maine. Inactivity and obesity are statistically linked to poverty and rural populations.

Maine has responded by aligning its tourism and health initiatives with active outdoor recreation initiatives. Governor Baldacci's www.Take-it-Outside.com initiative is focused on youth, health, and outdoor recreation, aligning the Bureau of Health, the BPL, and MCC along with other strategic partners.

MCC is an essential service provider of hiking trails particularly in low income areas. In alignment with statewide strategic priorities, MCC simultaneously promotes goals of volunteerism and leadership. Below is a list of a few (of dozens) examples.

In Washington County, MCC recently built or rehabilitated several trails linked to tourism (Bold Coast Hiking) and community goals. The Mowry Beach Trail was a partnership between a school and the Quoddy Regional Land Trust. The trail provides access from the school to the beach through a wetland area that includes a 200-foot boardwalk. This project provides wheelchair accessible public access to the beach while the wetlands area provides classroom-training opportunities on wetland ecology. In

Narratives

addition to the educational opportunity that this project presented, local children from the school, grades K-12, helped MCC members in the construction of the boardwalk. Other recent projects in Washington County include rehabilitated bold coast Quoddy Head trails, new trail construction around Pocomus Lake, and trail reconstruction on the bold coast's Western Head in Cutler.

In the poorest county in the state, Piscataquis County, the Debsconeag Lakes are located south of Baxter State Park and west of Millinocket. The Nature Conservancy is partnering with MCC to bring extremely remote backcountry hiking and canoeing opportunities to this area to increase and support the economic opportunities of the local residents. MCC also worked on 7 Appalachian Trail projects and provided trail reconstruction to 2 additional community partners in this County.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1.COST EFFECTIVENESS

CORPORATION COST PER MEMBER SERVICE YEAR (MSY)

The Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) is requesting \$9,718 per member service year. This does not include child care or the cost of the education award.

DIVERSE NON-FEDERAL SUPPORT

MCC has successfully secured cash match contributions of \$500,000 in prior grant years. MCC works with community partners to help secure grant funding. Many community partners fund raise for matching funds.

DECREASED RELIANCE ON FEDERAL SUPPORT

Narratives

Reliance on federal support has decreased from \$10,503 to \$9,718 per MSY. MCC has increased its cost share over the past 2 grant seasons. In order to maintain community partners MCC proposes a broader reach of community partners by holding cost share at its current rate during these difficult economic times.

2.BUDGET ADEQUACY

SEE CLARIFICATION SUMMARY for Budget Clarification Response

This budget supports the goals of the MCC and its members. AmeriCorps grant funding and partner cash match will adequately support member living allowances and health insurance coverage. Partner cash match will support all activities of the MCC program including: orientation and training; purchase of tools and equipment; staff salaries and general operating expenses.

The operating budget will allow MCC and its members to achieve identified community needs that form the basis of the performance measures.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Evaluation Plan

All Maine AmeriCorps programs are required to conduct an evaluation over the course of the grant period. Programs evaluate three elements: one, changes in the capacity of partners or service sites in the areas of service delivery, sustainability, volunteer recruitment and management; two, changes in the community level of need or type of need as a result of the program; and, three, elements of the project that is of particular interest to the program.

Narratives

MCC contracts with Community Mediation Services of Hallowell to conduct this external evaluation of its program.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

"2011 CLARIFICATION RESPONSE"

Programmatic Clarification Items:

Please make the following changes in the eGrants narrative field labeled "Clarification Summary."

Source of Funds:

Recreational Trails Program funds may be used to match other Federal funds if the project also is eligible under the other program. States also may allow a programmatic match: if some project sponsors in a State provide more match funds than required, other sponsors in the State may provide less. Some in-kind materials and services may be credited toward the project match. States may allow some pre-approval planning and environmental assessment costs toward the project match. See <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/news/dec2005/matchingfunds.htm>.

This program does not have MOE requirements.

The needs are not clearly defined for each type of service. Please revise the narrative to define the need.

Field teams address the following needs:

Lack of public access to public lands

Environmental degradation and erosion from human and natural causes

Lack of fiscal resources to support maintenance of existing trail systems

Lack of volunteers trained in ongoing trail construction and maintenance practices

Narratives

Environmental Educators address the following needs:

Lack of opportunities for school--age youth and other members of the public to learn about the value of conservation and the importance of maintaining high quality natural ecosystems

Lack of available training for local volunteers in conservation education pedagogy

Lack of public awareness of water quality issues which impact human health, local aquatic industries, and wildlife

Please define the energy conservation issues that will be part of the Environmental Educators program.

Environmental Educators recruit, train and lead community volunteers, teach school children and adults about environmental issues, work with watershed organizations to monitor water quality conditions, and research, educate and promote green initiatives including energy conservation that provide long term public benefit, in partnership with public and private non-profit organizations

Please explain why the educational system is not able to provide sufficient hands-on community environmental education.

The educational system is focused on a core curriculum that only superficially addresses environmental education and rarely involves hands-on opportunities for students. Teachers have much less time to introduce concepts that are not related to the core curriculum. Outdoor education is an alternative for students who seek to be engaged and have an active role in their learning experience. Outdoor education programs have shown to improve academic performance in students.

Please describe the need that members serving in the estuary organizations will address.

The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve needs a dedicated individual to support expansion of partner community conservation projects. Need has been determined from planning meetings with

Narratives

sponsor partners. The ultimate beneficiaries of these projects will be the communities within the watersheds of York County through environmental conservation and education. There are 3 major projects with this organization to address the need. One, the member will support a community based initiative to move forward restoration of fish, habitat, and water quality in the two neighboring rivers. The group is comprised of volunteers from numerous towns in the watershed and works closely with the municipal conservation commissioners and planners, local conservation organizations, and state resource agencies. Two, the member will support a new project to study the impacts of land use on estuary health in the Saco River. The member will work with the University of New England students and faculty to monitor estuarine adult and larval fish communities. Study findings will inform a formal process of communicating ecosystem values to community stakeholders. Three, the member will support outreach and education by contributing the Seacoast Watershed Information Manager (SWIM) project website. SWIN is an on line resource for watershed managers, conservation groups, and community members.

Please describe how establishing walking trails protects the environment.

When trails are properly built and designed, they do not cause erosion and will maintain their usefulness with little maintenance. Walking trails protect the environment because they encourage people to stay on a path that minimizes damage to the land.

The link of the trails to reducing obesity was not clearly stated. Explain how trail use would be measured.

Measuring the relationship between trails and reducing obesity is not a principal focus of the MCC program. However, in February 2011, President Obama's released America's Great Outdoor Initiative. Page 9 of the report states in part " Fulfilling that promise--and the shared obligation--to preserve and protect our natural and cultural heritage for present and future generations is one of the daunting

Narratives

challenges for 21st-century America. Busy lives and limited access to clean, safe, open spaces discourage many Americans from taking part in outdoor activities. The nearly 80 percent of Americans who live in or near cities find it particularly difficult to connect with the outdoors. The outdoors has increasingly lost its relevance in the lives of our children, who now spend only half as much time outside as their parents did, but who spend an average of seven hours a day using electronic devices. Studies show that access to the outdoors can help reverse the obesity epidemic that has tripled among our children in the last generation. They show that time spent in nature can reduce stress and anxiety, promote learning and personal growth, and foster mental and physical health.

Please describe the involvement with the youth in foster care - estimate the number of youth, number of days, and a few of the projects that they undertake.

The number of participants who are youth in foster care is approximately 10-12 kids. They work with an MCC crew for 3 days and each youth provides 24 hours of service during their time with the MCC crew. Projects include the Appalachian Trail where they helped to install water bars and build stone steps.

The program plans to recruit a range of volunteers- please confirm that the each volunteer is counted only once.

Volunteers are counted only once because each one fills out a form prior to volunteering. Volunteer names are tracked in an MCC database.

Justify the need for the reconfiguration of slots to add two more members to the team.

The field team program runs May to August (450 hours); August to November (450 hours) or a member can stay from May thru November (900 hours). The reconfiguration of slots will allow 2 members to serve 450 hours instead of 1 member to serve 900 hours. Team size remained the same.

Narratives

Please describe the training and orientation of the members.

Orientation for the Field Team program starts in late February with an 10-week trail training course for 6 potential Team Leaders. The Trail Training program curriculum was developed by the Field Team Coordinator with input from the MCC Senior Team Leaders and Team Leaders. The program offers a two week Wilderness First Responder certification course. Other classes include conflict resolution; team building; tree identification; sanitation and hygiene; tool maintenance; food planning and preparation; trail design and hands on instruction on how to build bridges and rock steps. Many of these classes are taught by State personnel. A one-week class on chainsaw use and safety is taught. A one-day required course in driving dynamics is taught by the staff of the State's Risk Management Department. The course is a driver improvement course that is aimed to improve a student's defensive driving awareness and abilities. MCC staff review with all members the AmeriCorps and MCC rules, regulations and prohibited activities.

The team member orientation complies with any pre-service orientation or training required by the Corporation for National and Community Service. It is designed to enhance member security and sensitivity to the community. Orientation covers member rights and responsibilities, including the Program's code of conduct, prohibited activities (including those specified in the grant provisions), requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, progressive discipline, grievance procedures, sexual harassment, other nondiscrimination issues and other topics as necessary. This training also includes skills they will require to complete conservation and trail-related projects; conflict resolution, diversity, teambuilding, working with volunteers, AmeriCorps and the origins of MCC.

Throughout the season, one day a month is established as a training day for Field Team members. Classes are offered such as proper stretching techniques, splitting and shaping rocks, Leave No Trace education, small engine repair, and mountain and wetlands soil identification.

Narratives

Environmental Educators also participate in a 3-day orientation. This includes the Driving Dynamics course; a review of member rights and responsibilities, including the Program's code of conduct, prohibited activities (including those specified in the grant provisions), requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, progressive discipline, grievance procedures, sexual harassment, other nondiscrimination issues and other topics as necessary.

Both programs provide CPR and First Aid training to members.

Environmental Educators receive ongoing site-specific training given by their host sites. Host site supervisors serve as mentors for the members, providing day-to-day supervision and evaluating the member's performance at the mid-term and end of service. Members attend trainings such as Project WET, Project Learning Tree and Jeepers Peepers. Members also are trained in managing volunteers, how to promote environmental awareness and education and how to develop volunteer service projects for their sites.

AmeriCorps members learn basic job training skills such as arriving on time, filling out a timesheet, communication skills and working as a team. Members also have experiential learning opportunities.

As members progress through their terms of service, they are able to expand and grow in their positions. They develop new collaborative relationships with similar organizations, expand the organization's volunteer and membership base and increase the community's knowledge of environmental issues by teaching children and adults and developing service-learning opportunities.

Describe the professional development opportunities that are provided for the 82 members.

Narratives

Professional development opportunities are offered to members by their individual sites, such as the Maine Environmental Education Association conference and the annual Children's Water's Festival, as well as member participation in AmeriCorps sponsored training and events such as the Blaine House Conference on Volunteerism, the AmeriCorps Fall Conference and the AmeriCorps Member Conference. All members serving 900 hours or more complete the NIMS An Introduction Independent Study Course.

"2010 CLARIFICATION RESPONSE"

CLARIFICATION ITEMS

Budget Clarification Items:

Please make the following changes directly in the application budget and budget narrative in eGrants:

Section I. B. Personnel Fringe

All 2011 numbers have added to the Section I budget section. This recalculation has increased the overall Grantee share by \$9691. MCC anticipated that the vacant Field Team Coordinator position would be filled by a person new to State government and start at the lower end of the salary/benefit package. However, the person hired has been with State government for 17 years. This resulted in a \$7118 increase to the originally proposed coordinator budget.

The fringe rate is very high. Please provide the percentage used to calculate each item.

Narratives

Maine State Retirement System: 32% of salary

FICA: .0145% of salary

Health: \$ 8739/year/employee only

\$14616/year/family

Dental: \$ 328/year/employee only

W/C: \$ 1623/year/employee for Dept. of Conservation employees

Life Insurance: .0068% of salary

E. Supplies

Office Rental Equipment: Please move this cost to Section F

Moved

Supplies: Please describe gear:

MCC member gear includes 2 MCC t-shirts for all members; vests for Environmental Educator members; work shirts/pants for the Field Team's Senior Team Leaders and Team Leaders.

Explain carryover of the following items, trailer, supplies, and plate tamper

What is life of plate tamper and a trailer and how is that cost spread over a multi-year request? Describe if other tools are useful over one year.

The costs for the items are expensed in the year purchased. The carry over is the purchase of additional items in consequent years in order to have a continuous cycle for replacing equipment.

A plate tamper should last 5 to 10 years, depending on annual use. The request for accessible trails is growing exponentially and MCC is looking to upgrade/expand our specialized equipment to meet this demand.

Narratives

An enclosed cargo trailer should last 5 to 7 years. MCC currently has 9 trailers for 9 teams. An additional trailer is needed in case of breakdowns. Furthermore, many MCC trailers are ready to be retired and we need to begin replacing older trailers on an annual basis.

G. Training/ Member Training

On-Site Supervision/Training: Please provide a clear calculation and description for this cost.

Environmental Educator Program: Materials, trainer and lunch for 23 Host Site Supervisors @ \$6 per person = \$ 140

Field Team Program: Materials, trainer and lunch for 20 partners @ \$ 6 per person= \$120

I. Other Program Operating Costs:

Background checks are budgeted for 71 members. There are 82 member-slots requested. Are the other 11 members second-year team leaders. Please explain and adjust.

This cost has been changed to reflect the 82 members. In addition, the provider that MCC used in the past was not approved by CNCS as an alternative provider. Therefore the costs have been increased to reflect a cost of \$28/member. This includes the cost to be fingerprinted of \$10/member and the cost of the FBI fingerprint check of \$18/member.

Programmatic Clarification Items:

Clarification from last year addressed 2010 concerns.

Performance Measurement:

The sections you must complete are:

Narratives

- i. SAA Characteristics: Rural/Urban Selected.
- ii. Priority Area: Done
- iii. Select national performance measures. Environment/Clean Energy Selected

FY 2009

Your clarification questions are Budget Items, per the Corporation Program Officer please put in the budget narrative section, under the header FY09 Budget Clarification Response -- SEE CLARIFICATION SUMMARY for Budget Clarification Response and then put your responses to their clarification questions in the Clarification Summary Tab in eGrants.

Also, please clarify your program start and end dates.

The Maine Conservation Corps has amended its start date over the past years to move the program slowly towards a calendar year cycle. This was a recommendation made during the ECO review to help MCC enroll and exit members from both the Field Team and the Environmental Educator programs within a 12 month contract period.

Programmatic and budget clarification items are below.

Legal Applicant: Maine Conservation Corps

Application ID: 09AC094248

Recommended Funding: 331,557

Narratives

Recommended MSY/Slots: 34 / 68

Clarification of Budget Items:

1. The program is proposing 4 staff (3.5 FTE) to manage an 82 member program. The program has had a history of less than full enrollment and not meeting 30-day enrollment and exit reporting for a program considerably smaller than that proposed. Please clarify what steps the program intends to take to assure full enrollment and compliance with all Corporation reporting requirements.

The Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) is not proposing a larger program than in years past. The MCC administers two separate contracts in which it places AmeriCorps members: 1) a State Competitive grant and 2) an Education Award Program (EAP) with the Corps Network. MCC has historically distinguished between these two programs in its reporting of enrollment figures. Looked at on a combined basis, however, MCC has managed essentially the same number of AmeriCorps members for the past three years (94 members in 2006-07; 96 members in 2007-08, and an anticipated 96 members in 2008-09).

Adding to this confusion is that MCC's two programs have different operating years. For instance, in the 2006-07 program year (the year the program had less than full enrollment), MCC's State Competitive grant ran from September 2006 to October 2007 while its EAP contract ran from July 2006 to June 2007. During that program year, the new MCC Director filled all the EAP slots first in order to meet the June 30th deadline. That EAP contract (2005-06) was negotiated with a higher slot rate because it included part of the year that the Field Team did not fall under the grant. As a result of this error, MCC was then unable to fill all State Competitive slots. To rectify this situation, the MCC has brought the enrollment periods for the two programs in line with the summer and fall field team seasons.

The MCC understands that staggered contract operating years and a reporting format that distinguishes

Narratives

between the enrollments of the two programs has caused unnecessary confusion. To help simplify this situation, the MCC seeks to administer one program by increasing the number of slots under the State Competitive program. This will reduce the paperwork required to manage two separate contracts and will help ensure that MCC consistently meets the 30-day enrollment and exit reporting requirements.

2. Please clarify the purpose, rate, (not to exceed \$540 a day) and costs for expenses proposed for the independent evaluation.

The Maine Conservation Corps contracts with an outside consultant to conduct the AmeriCorps evaluation plus the additional 3 evaluation items required by the Maine Commission for Community Service. This evaluation typically costs \$ 1000.00

3. Please clarify if criminal history checks are being conducted on members and staff having access to vulnerable populations and why those charges do not appear in the budget.

The Maine Conservation Corps contracted with HireRight to conduct the criminal background checks. They do this at a cost of \$7.50/member. MCC staff checks the National Sex Offender Registry to check on the sex offender background. Not including this in the budget was an oversight. The cost of \$ 615 has been added under grantee share ($\$7.50 \times 82 \text{ members} = \$ 615.00$).

4. Advertising and recruitment costs should be in "Other" rather than "Supplies".

The expense has been moved to the proper category.

Narratives

5. Clearly identify sources of non-profit partners

MCC does an annual RFP for its partners. MCC partners fall into categories that follow available funding. Federal and State partners like the Appalachian Trail, Acadia National Park and Rachel Carson Wildlife Refuge receive multi year funding from the National Parks Service and the Public Land Corps and have a backlog of trail projects. MCC has a 3-year MOU with the Appalachian Trail. Many State and municipal partners receive their funding from the Recreational Trail Program (RTP). The RTP program is funded through the Federal Highway Administration which transfers a percentage of gasoline taxes paid on non-highway recreational use in off-highway vehicles from the Highway Trust Fund into the Recreational Trails Program for trail development, improvement and maintenance. A portion of this funding is set aside for non motorized trails. The RTP application provides an extra point for working with the MCC. MCC also participates in the Maine Recreation and Park Association's spring conference. Information on the MCC and sources of financing are discussed during a trail session. The State also has two sources of funding available to Land Trusts and non profits organizations. The Land for Maine Future Program is a program supported by a State bond. It provides funding to acquire land for public use. As part of this funding, 5% of the acquisition cost is set aside for use in developing public access. The other program is the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund (MOHF) program. Funding for this program comes from the sale of State lottery tickets and is for the sole purpose of maintaining, improving and expanding state and local natural resource conservation programs and associated compatible public uses. Although MCC partners change from year to year, t he make up of Federal. State, municipal and local non profits partners remains around the same as projects are funded through these sources of funding.

6. Identify mechanisms to track program impact across member service.

Narratives

The MCC program measures the impact of member service activities through data collected from community partners and from member reports. Community partners complete a post service survey form that addresses both the overall improvement and the change in use as a result of the work completed by members. Members complete either weekly session reports or quarterly reports. All outputs and outcomes are tracked through the MCC database. Reports are prepared quarterly and reviewed by MCC staff and State Commission staff. Field Teams typically build or rehabilitate 20-25 miles of trail annually. As noted by Sally Prouty from the Corps Network "Trails contribute to a sense of community. They get kids outside and active. Trails contribute to the health and wellness of a community. They help get people invested in their public lands-- our national treasures. Sometimes, trails even serve as an alternate route of transportation." In addition, Maine has a nature based tourism industry. Safe and accessible trails are an important part of this industry. Environmental education is a key piece to maintaining Maine's natural beauty. Working with school age children is crucial for promoting the importance of environmental issues. During the 2007-2008 year, 12 AmeriCorps members taught 768 environmental lessons to over 13,000 Maine students. In addition, MCC recruited over 400 volunteers who contributed over 3,250 hours to local service projects. Trained volunteers provide community organizations with important on-going support for local projects. Tracking the impact of these services is an important way to showcase the success of the program and part of the planning process for future programs.

7. Elaborate member recognition activities.

Member recognition activities occur on the last day of the member's term of service. This is the opportunity for State officials, MCC staff, partners, friends and family members to gather and share and express our gratitude to our members for choosing to serve and choosing to serve in Maine. Past events have included signed letters from Congressman Tom Allen. Congressman Michael Michaud attended

Narratives

and spoke to the members two years ago. Last year, the Governor proclaimed the day Maine Conservation Corps Day. Typically the Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and staff will speak to the benefits their service has meant to the State. Partners will acknowledge what the AmeriCorps member(s) has provided to their community. Teams are acknowledged for their safety records and also given a funny award that acknowledges something unique about each team. Team Leaders acknowledge each of their team members and their contributions to the team. Every member receives a certificate. The event includes lunch and cake. This is our 'thank you' to our members.

8. Itemize costs for operating supplies and postage. Provide calculations for member educational supplies.

Operating supplies for the office include: office supplies= \$ 3,500 annually; postage= \$ 1,900.00 annually. Member educational supplies are books for the Field Teams. MCC has 10 waterproof containers -- one for each team. The calculation is \$ 2,000/10 containers = \$200/per container. The books are on topics such as, Lightly on the Land: The SCA Trail Building And Maintenance Manual; National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Wildflowers--E: Eastern; National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds--E: Eastern Region; A Field Guide to Rocks and Minerals; The Maine Woods by Henry David Thoreau; 50 Hikes in Coastal & Inland Maine: From the Burnt Meadow Mountains to Maine's Bold Coast; Roadside Geology of Maine; Reading the Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England; National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals; Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer; NOLS Cookery (National Outdoor Leadership School); and The Forest Trees of Maine to name a few.

9. Member Training: Provide calculations for Trail Training Program.

Narratives

The Trail Training Program now operates for 10 weeks. The \$12,000 covers: food for 6 members and the instructor at \$8 per day for 5 days per week and 10 weeks. ($7 \times 8 \times 5 \times 10 = \$2,800$); housing for 6 members at \$12 per night for 5 nights for 10 weeks ($6 \times 12 \times 5 \times 10 = \$3,600$); and the lead instructor at \$550 per week for 10 weeks ($10 \times 550 = \$5,500$). This comes to \$11,900. We allowed an additional \$100 to cover food and lodging for the consultants and other incidentals. Trail training members do receive Wilderness First Responder training and chainsaw training. MCC has been able to cover the costs of these trainings by allowing outside people to join and charging them for the courses.

Continuation Changes

2011 -2012 CONTINUATION - YEAR 3 APPLICATION

No Changes to Program

Enrollment: Year 1 - 100%

Year 2 - Begins January 2011

Retention: Year 1 - 97.2%

71 total slots filled

2 exited without award

Year 2 - Begins January 2011

Continuous Improvement:

Contract period for Year 3 begins January 2012.

Year 1 -- January - December 2010 information

In 2009, the Maine Conservation Corps purchased a subscription to Survey Monkey. MCC developed a survey to send to each partner at the completion of their project. The 20 question survey includes

Narratives

questions about: change in use; an evaluation of how the MCC member(s) did; and questions about the partners. This survey serves 3 primary purposes. First, it provides MCC staff with continuous partner feedback that allows the program to make changes during the course of the year. Second, the survey provides accurate information for the MCC performance measures. Third, the survey provides a base line of information for part of the MCC evaluation.

In 2010, MCC received 132 surveys back. Survey results showed that of the responding MCC partners: 94.6% of partners would be willing to consider using MCC on future projects; 82.9% stated that the completed project has enhanced the long term environmental condition of the site;

77.3% found that the use of MCC members to be cost effective. This information is significant as the program looks to restructure its match requirement as part of its sustainability goals.

84.8% reported that the members completed the work agreed on for the project. As this statistic started showing up, MCC staff met with partners to discuss the concerns they had. Part of the problem appeared to be a communication and expectation issue. As a result, MCC staff now does a walk through of the project with the partner before it begins to discuss the work, the expectation of the partner (sometimes work was not completed because the partner did not have material delivered on time) and what can be reasonably be expected of the member(s). This has helped provide a better relationship with the partners.

In addition, MCC created another survey for the member(s) to fill out.

For the Field Team program, this survey showed:

79.7% of the team leaders found the partner liaison provided adequate information during the site visit.

42.2% found the project liaison sought out community volunteers. This is a significant concern for us.

Going into the 2011 year, MCC will work with partners to educate and help promote the use of

Narratives

community volunteers.

18.8% of the project liaison invited local media to cover the project. Media coverage is a significant piece of the community outreach and education regarding the Maine Conservation Corps and the AmeriCorps program. MCC is working to develop standard language to provide to partners about the program. MCC has also recruited an AmeriCorps member to provide outreach and volunteer coordination to MCC partners.

On the positive side, 90.6% of members said that their project liaison offered support and encouragement to the members. This seemingly opposite rating speaks to the fact that many project liaison's are volunteers. They can offer support, but not always the necessary information regarding the project work. The Department of Conservation and MCC created and are sharing a new position. This position was filled in 2010. In 2011, one of the goals for this position will be to work with community organizations to educate on trail design and trail maintenance.

For the Environmental Education program, the results showed:

83.3% of the host sites developed work plans, explained goals and plans, and provided for specialized training on the use of equipment or curriculum necessary to accomplish tasks.

76.7% of the host sites communicated successfully with the member throughout their term of service.

These results will be shared with the host site supervisors at their orientation. Clearly additional communication and training are needed around volunteer management. The MCC AmeriCorps member will be working with partner organizations to understand and implement the 22 Essential Practices of Volunteer Management.

MCC also does a survey of its community volunteers. Of the volunteers who responded to the survey

Narratives

(346 responses) 100% responded that their experience was a positive one. Of 336 responses, 99.99% stated that the orientation to the project assignment was adequate. 3 responded no.

In addition to this modality, MCC sponsors partner meetings to discuss what works and what doesn't. These meetings are an opportunity to update partners on changes to the AmeriCorps programs and provide training on some of the basics, like in-kind forms.

RATIONALE AND APPROACH

No Changes in the MCC Rationale and Approach

COMMUNITY OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

No Changes in the MCC Community Outputs and Outcomes

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

No Changes in the MCC Organizational Capability

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY

No Changes in the MCC Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy.

EVALUATION SUMMARY OR PLAN

In 2010, the MCC surveyed its existing partners on the 22 Essential Practices. This will provide the baseline information. At future partner orientations, MCC will share this training and the Essential Practices of Volunteer Management Self Assessment tool. In 2011, MCC will provide its AmeriCorps members with training on the 22 Essential Practices in Volunteer Management. MCC will work with its partners and members throughout the year to increase the number of practices that each site implements.

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - None
 Geographic Focus - Urban
 Geographic Focus - Rural
 Encore Program

Priority Areas

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 18.64

Service Categories

Environmental Awareness-building and Education

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Environmental Stewardship

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

AmeriCorps members will improve access to public properties.

Result: Output

Result.

Indicator: Miles of trails built or maintained

Indicator: (PRIORITY) EN5: Miles of trails or rivers improved and/or created.

Target : Miles of trail built or maintained

Target Value: 25

Instruments: Weekly Session Reports

PM Statement:

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Sites rate trails satisfactory or higher.

Target : Percentage of agencies

Target Value: 20

Instruments: Organization Survey

PM Statement:

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable