



AmeriCorps

2023-24 ECO AmeriCorps

Forests, Food, and Fun: Stewarding Montpelier's Natural Communities

Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps is an AmeriCorps program within the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC). ECO AmeriCorps is funded in part by an AmeriCorps state grant provided through SerVermont from the Corporation for National & Community Service. Service sites will provide meaningful service opportunities, regular supervision with oversight of service hours and timesheets, office space and office equipment, orientation to the worksite, additional training (as needed) and mileage reimbursement. The 2023-2024 program will begin mid-September 2023 and end in August 2024.

To be considered, service sites must:

- Demonstrate a commitment to DEIJ principles and provide a pathway for involvement at the host site and program level.
- Be a non-profit, municipality, state agency, tribal government, or educational institution.
- Provide a position description showcasing activities that are appropriate to the mission of ECO AmeriCorps.
- Provide a work environment that is ADA compliant, drug-free, and carries supplies and equipment necessary for members to perform their duties.
- Be able to provide the cash match and mileage reimbursement at the federal General Services Administration (GSA) rate for service-related travel for the member.
- Attend a supervisor orientation and be available for a minimum of two subsequent site visits and check-ins from ECO AmeriCorps staff.
- Clarify any additional responsibilities to the member according to your organization's policies.
- Notify ECO AmeriCorps staff about conflicts or other issues as they arise.

Other Requirements and Responsibilities:

- Confirm member selection, on-site training, member supervision and support throughout term of service, other forms and documentation as required by AmeriCorps, mileage reimbursement for service-related travel.
- Main supervisor must attend AmeriCorps supervisor orientation (or make special arrangements).

Host Site cost based on # of full-time employees:

Full-Time (1,700 hours over 11 months)

- 0-3 \$8,000
- 4-10 \$9,000
- >10 \$10,500

Half-Time (900 hours over 6 months)

- \$5,250 regardless of size

Quarter-Time (450 hours over 3 months)

- \$2,625 regardless of size

For more information about the host site application:

- Visit the ECO Website for supporting documents: www.ecoamericorps.org
- Or contact Program Supervisor, Dustin Bowman, dustin.bowman@vermont.gov, 802-461-5222

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation is sponsoring AmeriCorps positions through its AmeriCorps Program. The State of Vermont is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Positions are open to all applicants without regard to race color, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, veteran's status, religion, or creed.

Name of Organization or Municipality:

City of Montpelier Parks & Trees Department

Address of Organization or Municipality:

39 Main St., Montpelier VT 05602

Primary Supervisor Name and Title:

Alec Ellsworth: Parks Director & Tree Warden

Primary Supervisor's email:

aellsworth@montpelier-vt.org

Primary Supervisor's phone #:

802 585 7673

Please provide a brief description of your role at your site:

- Manage over 500 acres of City Parks, including 20 miles of year round trail
- Manage care of Montpelier's 2000 street trees, including planting, pruning and removal
- Organize and supervise staff of 3 and numerous volunteer groups
- Provide staff support to the Parks Commission, Conservation Commission and Tree Board

Which hosting category are you applying to?

Full-Time (September-August)

What is the title of the position you are requesting?

Forests, Food, and Fun: Stewarding Montpelier's Natural Communities

Describe your proposed service project.

[Note: performance measures are based on improved acres of public land, improved miles of waterways or trails, number of Vermonters provided environmental stewardship education or training, and number of members placed in green jobs after completing their AmeriCorps service. Capacity-building activities are allowed. Please describe any projected impact.]

This position is geared toward leveraging volunteer hours to further our mission and increase our capacity to accomplish community-based projects in Montpelier. With staff supervision, focus will be on the following three areas:

- Trails & Conservation: Montpelier is undergoing a large expansion of our trail system with the goal of making our city into a destination for outdoor recreation. This year we will be developing several miles of new trails on an 80-acre expansion to Hubbard Park, as well as maintaining existing trails on ~420 acres of existing park land. Members should expect to learn about sustainable trail building and park stewardship. Members will learn alongside our crew and eventually lead volunteer groups in trail building, trail upgrades, and removal of invasive species.
- Urban Forest Management: Our department is tasked not only with maintaining our parks, but also our urban forest and riparian areas. In addition to the normal challenges of maintaining these areas, we are now dealing with the added challenge of handling the presence of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer in our community. Members should expect to lead volunteer groups in planting riparian areas, urban tree planting projects to replace Ash trees, removal of invasive species, and to serve alongside staff to maintain the roughly 2000 trees in our urban forest.
- Community Farm: Our FEAST Farm program has been rapidly growing over the last several years since we piloted the program in 2020. The FEAST Farm is an inter-generational collaboration between Montpelier Parks and the Senior Activity Center (MSAC). All the food grown on the farm is processed in the Senior Center's commercial kitchen and served as part of MSAC's FEAST meals program. The program is focused on providing local food to our most food insecure neighbors, and farm to plate intergenerational volunteer opportunities. Members should expect to lead a variety of volunteer groups, day camps, and other groups on the farm to grow food, steward a riparian buffer, and educate the public about sustainable agriculture. They should also expect to help us develop programming to support and enhance this project.

In addition to these 3 main goals, members will serve alongside our staff to help put on 3 large seasonal events that we host and to assist with other duties throughout the year as necessary. We prioritize training members in all skills required and helping them develop personal and professional goals that align with our scope of duties. Many members will develop a project in the latter part of their service that allows them to explore an area of interest while enhancing our mission.

What data collection tools will the member use to record the impacts of their service activity?

Volunteer Log: # of volunteer hours supported

GIS: # of miles of trails built, maintained, and infrastructure improvements

Trees: # of trees planted, pruned, removed

Other: # of miles of trails groomed for skiing, # of attendees at community events, Park Facebook and Instagram documenting service

Please provide any additional information (data, statistics, reports, etc.) that demonstrates the compelling need for the proposed position:

Our mission supports the goals outlined in the Vermont DEC's Clean Water Initiative. As the capital city and a city with 4 rivers, we are striving to be a model for the state on how to restore riparian habitat, mitigate storm water and erosion, and provide our residents with a connection to our river ecosystems.

<https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/cwi>

We are also one of only 24 communities around Vermont that were awarded a grant through the Governor's Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) program, which is focused on making communities into a destination for outdoor recreation.

<https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/vorec-community-grant-program>

Lastly, the impacts of Emerald Ash Borer on Vermont's forested landscape are only beginning to be felt by communities around the state. We expect the next 5-8 years to be the period where we lose virtually all our ash trees throughout Montpelier and the broader area. This once in a generation decimation of an entire species has not been seen since Dutch Elm Disease destroyed Montpelier's elm trees in the 1950's, necessitating an all-hands-on-deck approach to mitigate the impacts of this crisis.

<https://vtcommunityforestry.org/municipal-assistance/emerald-ash-borer-management>

What initiatives does your organization take to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice (DEIJ)? Please include any historical data or details for on-going strategic plans, partnerships, and projects, as relevant.

Montpelier has a Social and Economic Justice Advisory Committee (SEJAC), which was established in 2018 to assist City Council in addressing and reshaping the systems, policies, and practices that perpetuate barriers to racial, social, and economic justice in our community. In 2021 SEJAC published an initial equity assessment for the City of Montpelier with the following 5 goals:

1. Identify effective strategies to engage with and include underserved and underrepresented communities in Montpelier.
2. Capture the concerns and needs of underserved and underrepresented communities in Montpelier.
3. Build the capacity of informal and formal leaders to apply a social justice lens to their analysis, engagement, service delivery, and decision-making.
4. Promote the emergence of leadership that reflects the diversity of the populous.
5. Contribute to the ongoing development of a vibrant, inclusive, welcoming

community that attracts people to the region.

Outline how DEIJ principles can be incorporated into your organization's work moving forward. (Provide examples of any trainings, workshops, projects, partnerships, etc.)

SEJAC's 2021 report gives baseline data and outlines a variety of ways that DEIJ principles can be incorporated into the City of Montpelier's work moving forward. Some examples include:

Operational

- Publicize and create accommodations for people with disabilities at meetings, and make the format more accessible.
- Improve the website and offer content that is easy to translate online or is in multiple languages.
- Conduct implicit bias and anti-racism training for staff, including police.
- Keep Zoom or remote participation component of meetings even after in-person meetings resume. Add closed captioning and multiple languages.

Relational

- Communicate more about available supports and services, and target the outreach so it gets to underserved populations.
- Receive acknowledgement of communication when reaching out to city councilors.
- Find more ways to ask people what they need - outreach, surveys, community polls, etc.
- Have police get out of vehicles and be more approachable on foot.
- Decrease interactions with people from marginalized communities who may have a fear response triggered by police presence.

Structural

- Address housing issues and discrimination toward people experiencing homelessness.
- Revise ethics policy and review all policies through an equity lens.
- Rethink policing in Montpelier. Suggestions include decreasing armed police presence, disarming, defunding, or abolishing police.
- Create a mental health crisis response team and offer alternative support via

dispatch.

- Develop and articulate an ongoing equity plan and vision for Montpelier.

Describe specific challenges that your organization has faced while integrating DEIJ Principles.

SEJAC's report uncovered a number of challenges including:

- Different senses of belonging within the community based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation
- Fatigue amongst those in the BIPOC community of "being consulted," especially considering the lack of diversity in the community.
- Varying levels of approachability at different levels of government such as the Clerk's office, voting, City Council, board & Commissions, public spaces, etc.
- lack of affordable housing for those wishing to live or work in the community.

How will the ECO member be included or supported in on-going or future DEIJ work at the organization, if they so choose?

- Included in any workshops/trainings hosted by the City of Montpelier.
- Included in staff discussions of DEIJ issues
- Supported to pursue DEIJ service in this community or elsewhere if they so choose.

Does the supervisor have adequate time and leadership experience to manage an ECO member? Please explain how:

Yes, we have been a host site for ECO Americorps since it's inception (excepting 1 year).

Will the member have access to networking opportunities in this position? Please explain:

Yes, we collaborate closely with a variety of citizen and community groups with great connections to a variety of professions:

- Montpelier Conservation Commission
- Montpelier Tree Board
- Montpelier Parks Commission
- North Branch Nature Center
- State of Vermont Departments of Environmental Conservation, Forest Parks & Recreation, Agency of Natural Resources

Does your organization currently host or plan to host an AmeriCorps member from another program? If yes, briefly describe the duties of this other position.

Yes. We host a VHCB Americorps member who has similar responsibilities to our ECO member.

Please list any clothing/equipment the member will need that you cannot provide (e.g., hiking boots, waders, raingear, etc.). Is a reliable vehicle expected? As the host site, you are responsible for providing all tools and technical equipment needed for the position (e.g., computer, phone, GPS, etc.).

- Safety toe boots
- Appropriate clothing for working outside in all weather all year round.
- Reliable vehicle expected for commuting, but not for use during service hours.

Is there someone in your organization's network that might be interested in mentoring your ECO service member? *Note, 1-2 hours per month, not required

Maybe

Are you willing to search with program staff over the summer to help your ECO member secure affordable and safe housing?

Yes

Many of our members are not from Vermont and are seeking a sense of community away from home. In what ways would you be willing to help them establish community connections? (Housing, peer networks, affinity spaces, local resources, fun places to go)

Yes, in addition to the ways listed, our staff is deeply rooted in this community and can help new community members find social and housing connections.

Provide approximate impact numbers (e.g. miles of rivers treated) in each focus area.

Water Quality and Trail Improvement - Please project Impact Numbers on miles of river/stream/trail treated and/or improved.

10

Land Conservation and Remediation - Please project impact numbers on acres of public parks or other public, publicly managed or tribal lands improved.

500

Community Engagement Outreach and Education - Please project number of individuals receiving environmental stewardship education or training.

300

Sponsoring Organization's Mission:

Montpelier Parks & Trees Mission is to steward the parks, trees, and natural spaces in Montpelier for the health and enjoyment of all.

Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position:

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Essential Functions. Functions that applicant must be able to perform. These may be listed in bullet form:

- Do physical service outside in all types of weather including but not limited to trail building and maintenance, forestry, removal of invasive species, farming, and volunteer coordination.
- Recruit, lead and mentor volunteers and job trainees to support our mission.
- Assist with planning, preparation, and execution of park events geared toward connecting the community with the natural world.

What are the secondary functions? These are projects or tasks that may be accomplished as time allows or applicant's interests evolve.

- Occasional Park projects such as light construction, plowing, mowing, sign building, etc.
- Occasional assistance to the Senior Center and Recreation Department for collaborative projects.
- Graphic or GIS skills could be utilized for mapping and sign related projects if there is skill and interest in this area

Desired Qualifications:

- Experience working with volunteers or in groups.
- Willingness to lead and mentor youth.
- Trail Building/Maintenance and/or Agricultural Experience (not required but desired).
- Experience with tree service or forestry (not required but desired).

Minimum Qualifications:

- Be a US citizen, a national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S.;
- Be at least 18 years of age upon entering the Pre-Service Orientation (there is no upper age limit);
- Be a high school graduate or have a GED certificate or be willing to work towards their GED as part of their service-year successful completion requirement. A member cannot have dropped out of high school to join AmeriCorps. If a member has a documented medical reason/professional opinion why they cannot finish high school, they might be eligible; call in this case;
- Has not been convicted of murder or sexual assault and is willing to undergo a National Service Criminal History Check;
- Must submit to Agency of Human Services checks, i.e. Adult Abuse and Child Abuse Prevention;
- Be committed to the ECO AmeriCorps program, and its ethic of service and personal and professional development of its participants;
- Have the ability and enthusiasm to drive to, attend, and participate in required trainings and events, and be prepared to drive up to 2-3 hours each way

Service Conditions (will the position be largely outside, office based, hybrid or seasonally/project dependent, in schools, etc.) *

Service is to be performed primarily outdoors, in all types of weather.

Members will be leading volunteers whose ages and abilities vary across a wide spectrum of age, physical ability, and mental aptitude. For example some volunteers are highly motivated adults, and some are court ordered teenagers serving community service hours. Members will be expected to be leaders and mentors, and to represent Americorps and the City of Montpelier with integrity under occasionally challenging circumstances. The best fit for this position is someone who is looking for challenge, personal growth, and the opportunity to serve the community in a meaningful way.

Occasionally weekend and night time duties will be required for events and volunteer activities, though generally our hours are from 8a-4:30p.

Will the member have access to "vulnerable populations"? This includes youth, elderly and individuals with disabilities.

Yes

Time Requirements:

Full time: will need to complete a minimum of 1700 service hours, serving approximately 40 hours/week over the course of the 11-month service term, September 13, 2023 - August 9, 2024

Orientation and Training:

ECO will provide members with orientation at the beginning of the service term. Host sites are expected to provide additional on-boarding training as well. Throughout the service term, ECO will provide in-person and virtual trainings to members on a variety of topics.

Benefits:

- Education award of \$6,895 (pre-tax) upon successful completion of service
- \$23,000 Living Allowance, paid bi-weekly
- Training
- Childcare assistance, if eligible
- Health Coverage
- Access to AmeriCorps Alumni Network
- Student loan forbearance and interest payments, if eligible

Evaluation and Reporting:

Mid and final performance reviews, quarterly reports, weekly timesheets, and end of service survey. Thank you for your interest in AmeriCorps!