



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE HANDBOOK



Created by ECO AmeriCorps members in the 2021-2022 cohort





Photo: ECO members on the low ropes course at Northwoods Stewardship Center

This handbook is organized into three main sections that outline the expectations of how the ECO AmeriCorps Program, the Host Site, and the ECO member will engage with DEIJ during the service term. In addition, we have included some introductory materials, a DEIJ Discussion for the ECO member and Host Site to complete at the start of service, and an Appendix that includes additional resources.

Table of Contents

Defining DEIJ	3
Why DEIJ is Essential for Our Service	3
Why DEIJ is Essential for Our Service Cont.	4
ECO AmeriCorps Program	5
Host Sites and Supervisors	6
ECO members	7
Starting the DEIJ Narrative	8
Appendix	11
Appendix cont.	12

Defining DEIJ

DEIJ (which stands for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice) are individual concepts that collectively contribute to ethical societies. Diversity refers to the representation of a spectrum of identities, some of which include: race, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, age, ability, and religion. Equitable practices (as opposed to equality) recognize that each person has different circumstances and allocate the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach a fair outcome. Inclusion ensures that differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard, and every individual feels a sense of belonging. And finally, justice recognizes that we are a part of a system rooted in oppression and actions are needed to eliminate these disparities.

Why DEIJ is Essential for Our Service



Photo: Squash from the Abenaki Land Link Project. Credits: Abbie Castriotta

ECO AmeriCorps Program: The ECO AmeriCorps program recognizes that service in the program is an entryway into environmental and conservation fields. The opportunity to be in ECO allows access to many resources and connections that help members assume leadership roles in their field. ECO AmeriCorps aims to ensure that these opportunities are equitably distributed by making the program accessible to all and removing any barriers to entry. Likewise, hosting an ECO member can provide great benefit to an organization, and this opportunity should be available to a diverse array of organizations. It is the responsibility of the ECO AmeriCorps program to accept host sites that provide the most diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just work environment possible for ECO members. Furthermore, the ECO AmeriCorps program serves as a network for a variety of host sites and may serve as a facilitator for organizations to connect and collaborate on DEIJ initiatives.

Why DEIJ is Essential for Our Service Cont.

Host Site: ECO AmeriCorps host sites are committed to bettering the communities in which they serve and hold the responsibility of serving the entire community equitably. Host sites must make DEIJ efforts a priority to ensure they are fulfilling this responsibility. Host sites should engage with their ECO member to push forward DEIJ initiatives and approach each project with a DEIJ perspective.

ECO members: ECO AmeriCorps members have committed to raising the bar for service in our state by redefining DEIJ as an essential part of ECO AmeriCorps service. Members seek to uplift all voices and identities in the environmental and conservation fields while serving Vermont communities in an equitable manner. Members will bring new insight and enthusiasm to help their host sites to form and enact diversity, equity, inclusion and justice commitments. Furthermore, they must actively strive to foster an AmeriCorps program that is accessible to all wanting to serve Vermont communities.



Photo: ECO members studying animal tracks in the snow with Fox Paw School

ECO AmeriCorps Program

This section outlines the expectations of the ECO AmeriCorps Program as a branch of the AmeriCorps Program and includes the staff at the statewide level.

Expectations of the ECO AmeriCorps Program:

- Recruit and support a diverse cohort of ECO members.
- Consider existing and planned DEIJ initiatives as a factor when reviewing host site applications.
- Host events with the purpose of bringing host sites together to workshop place-based and Vermont-oriented DEIJ goals, share advice and resources, and collaborate on state-wide DEIJ initiatives.
- Support the ECO member DEIJ Committee.
- Allow DEIJ Committee time to be recorded as Direct Service.
- Engage in discussions with the DEIJ committee and consider recommendations from the committee.
- Strive to improve financial stability for ECO members.
- Seek affordable housing opportunities for ECO members at every host site. Work towards removing barriers for members with unreliable transportation.
- Include a diverse group of people, perspectives, and opportunities at ECO organized training and service opportunities.
- Host workshops and scrambles focused on DEIJ topics (see Appendix for Vermont organizations focused on supporting and uplifting Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and other frequently unheard voices).
- Continue to provide financial compensation to all BIPOC speakers and presenters.

Some of the above expectations and initiatives are the responsibility of the ECO Program Staff and Team Leader, and some are organized and developed in collaboration with the member-led DEIJ Committee. As the ECO AmeriCorps program grows, and with it the DEIJ strategy, the program should invite members, leadership, and partners to take part in more complex, broadly ranging conversations and action steps.

The members and staff of ECO Americorps are holding themselves accountable for mitigating the barriers that exist in the environmental field, and expect the host sites to join in these efforts.

To learn more about AmeriCorps' commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, click [here](#). To learn more about the ECO AmeriCorps DEIJ Strategy, click [here](#).

Host Sites and Supervisors

This section outlines the expectations of the Host Sites as organizations in the ECO AmeriCorps network, and Supervisors in their supervisory and mentorship capacities for the ECO AmeriCorps members.

Expectations of the Host Site and Supervisor:

- Work with the ECO member to determine clear goals (see discussion outline below) for the member's involvement in DEIJ.
 - Have a conversation about the ECO's areas of interest in DEIJ.
 - Discuss the organizations current, planned, and completed DEIJ projects and initiatives.
 - If possible, create at least one SMART goal with the ECO member focused on DEIJ projects at the host site.
 - Ensure that there is adequate time for the ECO member to engage in DEIJ projects (at the host site and with the AmeriCorps program) along with other responsibilities.
- Consider expanding organizational DEIJ efforts.
 - Create a well-researched, DEIJ statement that is specific to the organization with actionable goals.
 - Actively work to advance the goals laid out in the statement.
 - Form a DEIJ committee that meets regularly to critically evaluate the DEIJ progress of the organization.
 - Reexamine the organization's partnerships through a DEIJ lens.
 - Reevaluate the organization's recruitment process through a DEIJ lens.
- Support the ECO member's DEIJ service in a variety of capacities.
 - Allow time to be spent on the ECO AmeriCorps DEIJ Committee if desired by the member.
 - Share opportunities for involvement with other organizations in the community.
 - Be open and perceptive to discussions surrounding DEIJ initiatives.
 - Recognize the fact that participating in and leading DEIJ conversations and initiatives can have a largely disproportionate weight and emotional toll on members of the BIPOC community.
- Support all ECO members, and specifically those who identify as BIPOC and minority groups.
 - Share knowledge of local community groups, safe spaces, and BIPOC/minority group-led organizations to connect with.
 - Actively work to implement staff-wide anti-bias, anti-racist, and DEIJ education and training (see Appendix for Resources for Organizations committed to DEIJ).
 - Be available (with compassion and emotional intelligence) for the ECO AmeriCorps member to voice any concerns (make it explicitly clear that this is acceptable and encouraged).

ECO members

This section outlines the expectations of the ECO AmeriCorps member as an individual, as a member of the ECO AmeriCorps Program and at their Host Site.

Participating in and leading DEIJ conversations and initiatives can have a largely disproportionate weight and emotional toll on members of the BIPOC community. It is not the objective of the ECO program or the host site to expect that any member will participate in DEIJ focused projects as part of their service. Instead, it is a collective responsibility to support and encourage members to participate in the ways that feel important to them. The Expectations of the ECO member outlined below should be discussed and adjusted depending on the specific interests and capacity of the ECO AmeriCorps member.

Expectations of the ECO member:

- Continue to educate yourself about race, allyship, systemic racism, bias, white privilege, ableism, and other DEIJ topics in the environmental field and beyond. Engage in respectful conversations surrounding these topics.
 - See Appendix for personal education resources.
- Learn about the community you are living and serving in. What challenges, injustices, systemic issues, and barriers to inclusion exist in your community? Are there existing opportunities and organizations working to repair these issues?.
- Optional:
 - Work with your supervisor to identify DEIJ project areas at your host site.
 - Create a DEIJ focused SMART Goal with your Supervisor.
 - Join a DEIJ group or committee at your host site or initiate the creation of one.
 - If interested, participate in the ECO AmeriCorps DEIJ Committee.
 - Continue learning about DEIJ projects happening in Vermont by attending webinars and in-person events.
 - Share events that you hear about with the ECO member cohort and supervisors.

ECO member DEIJ Committee:

During the 2020-2021 service year, members from the ECO AmeriCorps program started meeting weekly to discuss and act upon DEIJ goals. The 2021-2022 cohort has continued these meetings and has created a strategic plan for DEIJ initiatives this year. Areas of focus include Housing & Transportation; Recruitment & Retention; Expanding Partnerships through training, service days, host sites, and ISP opportunities; and member and Host Site support, relationships, and expectations. 2021-2022 members created this document with the intention that it remains a living document that future cohorts can update and expand on.

Participating in the ECO DEIJ Committee and the weekly meetings is an opportunity that is open to all ECO AmeriCorps members. Future members will have the opportunity to serve in this committee and expand upon the DEIJ initiatives that ECO members have begun.

Starting the DEIJ Narrative

For Host Sites and members

The supervisor and ECO member should use this question sheet to initiate a conversation about the organization's DEIJ efforts and goals. Please think of these questions as a starting point for the conversation and feel free to discuss any other topics that the supervisor or member are interested in regarding DEIJ. The aim of this initial conversation is to allow the ECO member to better understand where they may assist with the host site's DEIJ efforts.

Does the organization have a DEIJ statement?

- If yes, please provide a copy to the ECO member and discuss:
 - How does that impact your organization's work?
 - Is everyone at the organization familiar with the statement and aware of how it applies to their work?
- If not, is this something the organization is working towards? If not, why?
 - Is this something the ECO member can help with?

Does the organization have a DEIJ committee? Or have regularly occurring DEIJ-specific meetings?

- If yes, please discuss with the ECO member:
 - What is the role of this committee and what do they do?
 - Who is a part of the committee? Staff, board members, volunteers?
 - How regularly does this committee meet, what are the expectations of committee members, and what is the time commitment?
 - Can the ECO member join this committee if they are interested? (This is strongly encouraged by ECO AmeriCorps)
- If not, why?
 - Are there current efforts and/or interest in creating a DEIJ Committee or similar group?
 - Are there obstacles that the organization is facing in creating one?
 - How could an ECO assist with helping to create one?

Who does the organization serve and who does it not serve?

- Who does the organization serve and who does it not serve?
 - What populations are the organization serving?
 - Who has access to opportunities through the organization (community science, education programs, events, etc)?
 - Does the organization have volunteers? If so, how do you recruit them?
 - Does the organization have program participants? If so, how do you recruit and/or select them?
- Has the organization done any work to identify the underserved populations in the community?
 - If yes, who are the underserved populations?
 - If not, what are some steps that could be taken to identify these populations?
 - Is this something an ECO member could do if they are interested?

How does the organization recruit staff, volunteers, interns, board members, etc.?

- Does the board/staff/etc. reflect the folks you are serving/want to be serving?
- How does the organization support members of minority groups once they are hired (as interns, AmeriCorps, volunteers, staff, or board members)?
- Is the organization reaching a diverse pool of applicants?
 - If yes, what steps are being taken to ensure this?
 - If not, is this something that the ECO member can assist with?
- If applicable, what is the process for recruiting the board members or the steering committee at the organization?
- Describe the communication between the board members/steering committee and the staff at your organization surrounding DEIJ.



Photo: ECO members at the Invervale Center



Photo: ECO members Cedar Circle Farm

What is the organization doing well and in what ways can the organization improve their commitment to DEIJ?

- What are the major projects or objectives the organization has achieved?
 - If applicable, were any of these completed by past ECO members, please discuss these with the current ECO member.
- What DEIJ work is ongoing within your organization?
 - What are the projects, initiatives, etc. that are on the horizon?
- Are there any opportunities or goals that the organization, or the supervisor specifically, has for the next year?

Does the supervisor have any specific DEIJ projects that they hope to have the ECO member be involved in or lead?

- How do these align with the interests of the ECO member?
- Is there a way to incorporate these projects into the ECO member's SMART Goals?
- Is there anything else the ECO member or Supervisor wants to discuss further at this time?



Photo: ECO members pulling invasive species in Rupert, VT

Appendix

Resources for Continued Personal Education

- [The Vermont Peace and Justice Center website includes a list of resources for continued education](#)
- [BIPOC-owned Vermont businesses](#)
- [How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi](#)
- [Brené Brown with Ibram X. Kendi on How to Be an Antiracist](#)

Resources for Organizations Committed to DEIJ

- [8 Ways Environmental Organizations Can Support the Movement for Environmental Justice](#)
 - Outlines how mainstream groups can use their “organizational privilege,” and solid platform to meaningfully and effectively support frontline communities and grassroots Environmental Justice organizations.
- [10 Steps to a More Diverse Board](#)
- [Designing Inclusive Field Protocols](#)
- [10 Steps to Protect BIPOC Scholars in the Field](#)
- [How STEM can be more inclusive of scientists with disabilities](#)
- [Center for Whole Communities: “We collaborate with leaders, organizations and communities to develop and implement projects, programs and trainings to catalyze transformation at the intersection of social and environmental problems.”](#)
- [Request an educational program through the Peace and Justice Center](#)
- Team support and professional learning through [Love at the Roots](#): “Interactive professional learning sessions for teams and organizations on trauma-informed, healing-centered anti-oppressive practices and pedagogies. Currently offering these through zoom or other video platforms.”
- [FSNE 21 day racial equity habit building challenge](#): “This site is used to 1) host new daily prompts during Food Solutions New England’s 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge each April and 2) to act as an “archive” of the prompts to use throughout the year.”
- [VT Racial Justice Alliance Resources](#)

DEIJ Consultants for a DEIJ Audit:

- [Abundant Sun, LLC.](#)
- [TC Consulting](#)
- [Groundswell Change](#)
- [Spreadsheet: Vermont Educators/Consultants](#)
- [The Wells Collective](#)

Resources for Digital Accessibility

- [10 Ways to Improve Web Accessibility](#)
- [Improving Accessibility & Digital Inclusion for Those With Physical Disabilities](#)

Resources for Going Beyond Land Acknowledgments

- First, educate yourself about the Indigenous People of Vermont past and present
 - [Nulhegan Abenaki Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation](#)
 - [Elnu Abenaki Band](#)
 - [Ko’asek Traditional Abenaki Band](#)
 - [Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi](#)

Affinity and Support Resources for BIPOC Individuals

- [Vermont Releaf Collective](#): A network and affinity platform for BIPOC to thrive around land, environment, agriculture, and foodways.
- [Peace and Justice Center](#): “The purpose of the PJC is to work on the interconnected issues of peace; human rights; and economic, social, and racial justice. The PJC is committed to raising awareness of these issues, redressing the harms of generational oppression, and equipping people with tools to lead viable social change movements that include and empower all people. Our ultimate goal is to create a peaceful and just world. To achieve this, the PJC utilizes education, leadership development, and community-building to reach organizations, groups, activists, institutions, and the general public.”
- [LPMentoring](#): “Living Proof Mentoring is a community based, grassroots program designed to support Black youth in accessing affinity spaces with Black adults and other youth for connection, representation, and increased social capital.”
- [Unlikely Riders](#): “Our work is to encourage all Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to engage in fun, radical joy and offer support to find healing through the mountains while centering our needs and abilities.”

Affinity and Support Resources for LGBTQIA+ Individuals

- [Pride Center Vermont](#): “Pride Center of Vermont (PCVT) is the region’s most comprehensive community center dedicated to advancing community and the health and safety of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) Vermonters.”
- [Outright Vermont](#): “Outright Vermont is a 501(c)(3) non-profit under federal and state regulations. Since 1989, we have been building hope, equity, and power with LGBTQ+ youth in Vermont. Founded by a small group of queer adults, after a national survey discovered that queer youth were dramatically at higher risks of suicide than their heterosexual peers, Outright Vermont has built up programming that now includes: Queer youth spaces ... education & outreach work statewide for schools, communities, colleges, and organizations... and annual large scale events for queer youth & the larger queer community including
- [Venture Out Vermont](#): “We lead backpacking and wilderness trips for the queer and transgender community. We also conduct transgender inclusion workshops for educators, adventure professionals, summer camps and more!”
- [Out In The Open](#): “Connecting rural LGBTQ people to build community, visibility, knowledge, and power. We are building a multi-issue social justice movement led by rural LGBTQ people toward the transformation of our economic, social, and political relationships.”
- [UVM Prism Center | The University of Vermont](#)
- [Pride Hikes](#): “Co-hosted by Audubon Vermont, Pride Center of Vermont, and Outright Vermont. Pride Hikes have been happening every month since June of 2018 and go beyond being “welcoming to everyone” to creating a safe, affirming space for LGBTQIA++ community members.”