

Host Site Application DEIJ Grading Rubric

The ECO AmeriCorps program attracts members from across the U.S. who bring their unique backgrounds, skills, and experiences. Service is an entryway into environmental and conservation fields, and ECO AmeriCorps has its own Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) committee to provide program feedback and to ensure that these opportunities are equitably distributed and accessible to all (ECO AmeriCorps DEIJ Handbook). This includes ensuring that our host sites also uphold principles of diversity and inclusion and can create a supportive service environment for their AmeriCorps members. We define DEIJ as,

“[the] individual concepts that collectively contribute to ethical societies. Diversity refers to the representation of a spectrum of intersecting 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 (ECO AmeriCorps DEIJ Handbook).”

Additionally, members are expected to offer the same level of inclusivity and sensitivity within their direct service. As a result, the cohort often discusses the various attributes, in addition to race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity, which may lead to systemic disadvantages and how to address them.

Our members and their host sites all serve/work diligently to support the community where they live and operate and perform invaluable services to Vermonters. We recognize that our ECO host sites are as unique as our members and can vary significantly in size, structure, and purpose. As a result, DEIJ activities and policies will differ greatly from organization to organization. We hope to see a genuine commitment to DEIJ-related principles within the boundaries of what is feasible for the organization and accountability for upholding these goals.

Below you will find the Host Site Application DEIJ Grading Rubric that the ECO DEIJ Committee will be using when looking at those responses. The committee has also developed a DEIJ Self-Assessment Tool based off of the Meyer DEI Spectrum Tool. We encourage host sites to go through a self-assessment to better understand the rubric and for inspiration in your own answers. That tool can be found on our website, or by clicking [THIS TEXT](#).

Host Site Application DEIJ Grading Rubric

*****Please refer to the examples of an “Exemplary Response” that are included at the end of this rubric for guidance*****

Question	Did Not Answer (1pt)	Partial Answer, No Examples (2pts)	Partial Answer, Examples Included (3pts)	Answered The Question Fully (4pts)	Exemplary Response (5pts)
What initiatives you're your organization undertaken to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ)? Please include any historical data or details for on-going strategic plans, partnerships, and projects, as relevant.					
Outline how DEIJ principles will be incorporated into your organization's work moving forward. (Provide examples of any training, workshops, projects, partnerships, etc.).					
Describe specific challenges that your organization has faced while integrating DEIJ principles.					
How will the ECO member be included or supported in on-going or future DEIJ initiatives at the organization?					

Examples of an “Exemplary Response”

Below you will find responses from Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT) to the DEIJ questions. **Please note that a lengthier response does not necessarily constitute an exemplary one; your response will be graded based on its content.**

1. What initiatives does your organization take to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ)? Please include any historical data or details for on-going strategic plans, partnerships, and projects, as relevant.
 - A. Our work in this area includes, but is not limited to:
 - Redesigning our registration systems in 2022, moving away from a "first-come-first-serve" system that benefitted families with faster broadband, the resources to pay for early access, and the ability to sit and wait to registration, to a "lottery + ranked choice" system that aims to distribute program placements more equitably.
 - Partnering with donors and schools to grow our scholarship systems and offer financial support without means-testing. Last year MALT collaborated with school administrators in Lincoln to offer two fee-free spots in our summer camp programs. Interest in this program has increased, and we hope to offer 10-20 reduced-fee and fee-free spots in MALT summer camps.
 - Reviewing program materials to ensure we offer a diversity of perspectives and content from a variety of cultures, and training educators in practices for creating a safe and welcoming space for learners of all identities.
 - Offering programming in historically underserved geographic locations and Title I schools. MALT has collaborated with Shoreham Elementary School to offer school-time field trips. We will also be hosting our first summer camp in Salisbury, another community with a Title I school.

This work extends beyond our education programs. The 2023-2024 ECOAmeriCorps member will help develop tools to prioritize conservation activities in Addison County. One lens that will be applied in the creation of these tools is equity; how can we prioritize conservation projects to expand access to protected spaces for all people?

MALT does not take part in lobbying activities for environmental justice issues, however we have land conservation and stewardship policies that include criteria for improving access to and quality of natural spaces. MALT works with communities outside of Middlebury - including Weybridge, Lincoln, and Salisbury- to bolster conservation efforts at the local level.
2. Outline how DEIJ principles can be incorporated into your organization's work moving forward. (Provide examples of any training, workshops, projects, partnerships, etc.)
 - A. DEIJ principles can be applied at all levels of the organization, and in all functions. Some examples include:
 - Creating registration systems for educational programs that address bias. MALT's new "lottery + ranked choice" registration provides a systematic framework for processing enrollment, removing some (but not all) sources of bias on the part of the person conducting the process.

- Providing interview questions to applicants prior to the interview. This allows folks who benefit from reflection and preparation to have the same chance at success in an interview as someone who thrives when coming up with responses on-the-spot.
- Staffing and scheduling models that allow for flexibility. AmeriCorps service members and MALT staff can take the requisite time to attend to family and personal needs. MALT personnel have leveraged this flexibility to attend to their mental health and help care for family.
- Partnerships. MALT collaborates with administrators at Title I schools to offer free or reduced-fee experiences. By partnering with community-based organizations like PTO's and select boards, we find creative ways to fund these experience and make them accessible to an audience that represents the geographic diversity of Addison County, as well as the varying financial realities of these communities.
- Access to core infrastructure is always free, and trails are built within walking distance of many communities. It takes time, energy, and financial resources to care for over 30 miles of trails around Addison County. Nonetheless, these trails are free to use. In Vermont, access to transportation can be a barrier to accessing these landscapes. The 19-mile Trail Around Middlebury is special; it passes through densely populated areas, within walking distance of thousands of people.

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

- A. Financial Barriers: offering reduce-fee or free programming requires finding the financial resources to do so. We're optimistic that we can tap into a highly-motivated group of donors to make this happen.

Lack of capacity: MALT has two FT staff members at the moment, with a vacant trails manager position. We are all working hard to care for the TAM, monitor lands, supervise servicemembers, and deliver myriad education experiences. We don't necessarily have an abundance of time to dedicate to creating new initiatives, or investing in authentic partnerships with organizations working in the DEIJ space.

Lack of data: MALT began collecting demographic information from program participants in January, 2023. Prior to that, we have minimal data about who we have served. It will take time to collect enough data to draw meaningful conclusions about who we are (and are not) serving. We also collect minimal data about trail users. With an estimated 10,000 users annually, this is a huge blind-spot for us, in terms of knowing who is accessing MALT-conserved lands.

Minimal lived-experience among staff: MALT proactively seeks to make our hiring and employment practices equitable. With that said, our staff is diverse in some metrics (geographic origin, age, educational background), but not necessarily diverse in others ways. With a small staff and budget, it can be challenging to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds.

Lack of affordable housing: Addison County, like much of Vermont, has a dearth of affordable rental units. This constraint severely limits who can live here and participate in the AmeriCorps experience.

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

- A. DEI work is not relegated to a single department or role; it's woven into all facets of MALT's work. The ECO member will have the opportunity to support this work in a number of ways, including:
- helping develop and pilot a new scholarship system, offering fee-free and reduce-fee spots in MALT's programs
 - developing public programming with the specific goal of reaching underserved communities. To that end, the servicemember will support partnership building with local organizations, in order to create authentic experiences that speak to the needs and desires of these communities.
 - assist in processing demographic data from program participants. In September 2023 MALT will have been collecting demographic information for one year. This abundance of data will need to be processed so that we can better understand who we are - and are not - serving. The outcome will be a summary report comparing MALT's current audience to the demographics of Addison County as a whole.
 - attending trainings provided by partner organizations. MALT will work with the service member to ensure they can attend trainings in the DEI space. We have adequate and flexible staffing to allow service member to step away during most seasons (Summer may be an exception to this - the camp season and trail maintenance season coincide, making Summer an especially busy time).
 - Continuing to improve free access to the TAM by maintaining trails, updating signage, and communicating with adjacent communities.