Vermont Housing & Conservation Board Overview

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board is an independent, state-supported funding agency which provides grants, loans, and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, municipalities and state agencies for the development of perpetually affordable housing and for the conservation of important agricultural land, recreational land, natural areas and historic properties in Vermont.

History

The pace and pattern of development in Vermont in the mid-1980’s was threatening historic settlement patterns and the rural character of the state. Housing prices were rapidly rising beyond the reach of Vermonters, development pressure on the state’s valuable agricultural and natural lands was escalating at a record pace, and historic properties and downtowns were being abandoned for suburban sprawl development. In 1986, a coalition of affordable housing, conservation, and historic preservation advocates concerned with this rapid change in the character of the Vermont landscape approached the state legislature with a plan to form a unique agency to review and fund projects addressing a range of community needs. The Legislature responded, passing the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund Act, enacted in June 1987, and capitalized with $3 million.

The statute dictated the makeup of the nine-member Board: five citizen-members appointed by the Governor, (to include an advocate for low income Vermonters and a farmer), the Commissioners of the state agencies of Agriculture, Housing and Community Development, and Natural Resources, and the Executive Director of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency. In July 1987, the Board held its first meeting.

In September 1987, then Governor Madeleine Kunin established a Commission on Vermont's Future, charged with the mission of assessing the concerns of Vermont citizens on the issue of growth, establishing guidelines for growth, and suggesting mechanisms to help plan for Vermont's future. Through a process of public hearings at which thousands of Vermonters spoke about their concerns, the Commission gathered public input to create their report, issued in January 1988, *Guidelines for Growth*. In 1988 Vermont had a budget surplus, and upon the recommendation of the Governor's Commission on Vermont's Future, the legislature appropriated $20 million to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board was up and running, and momentum was building. With the new source of state funding, housing and conservation nonprofits were able to conceive and carry out projects within communities around the state that had not previously been possible. VHCB funds closed a critical gap in the financing of affordable housing projects and brought new conservation funds to the table, initiating a new era in the conservation of Vermont's agricultural lands and natural areas.
Today

Now in its 30th year, VHCB remains the forerunner in the nation in pioneering this comprehensive approach to affordable housing and community development linked with land conservation and historic preservation. The results have been impressive. With a cadre of nonprofit organizations working at the local level to identify and develop important projects in each community, the effects of 30 years of investment are discernible in every part of the state. VHCB has supported reinvestment in older housing in small town and village centers, revitalizing downtown neighborhoods where residents can walk to services, and rebuilding a sense of community while spurring other private investment. The conservation of Vermont’s open and wild lands preserves the landscape that is such an integral part of the state’s identity, supports the agricultural economy, protects wildlife habitat, and provides public access to the state’s waterways and woodlands.

Impact

Since its inception, the Board has awarded nearly $274 million to nonprofit housing and conservation organizations, towns, municipalities and state agencies to develop nearly 1,500 projects in 220 towns. This investment has directly leveraged approximately $1 billion from other private and public sources and resulted in the creation of more than 11,300 affordable homes, the conservation of 390,740 acres of agricultural and recreational lands and natural areas, and the restoration of 59 historic community buildings for public use. Many VHCB housing awards have supported housing in buildings eligible, nominated or listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places. Historic barns and farmhouses and archeological sites are located on many farms conserved with VHCB funding.
$274 million in state funds invested by VHCB have allowed project partners (non-profit organizations, towns, municipalities and state agencies) to leverage an additional $1 billion from federal programs, foundations, private capital and other charitable donations.

**Invested in:**
- 11,300 homes & apartments;
- 620 farms; more than 146,000 acres of agricultural land conserved;
- 255,000 acres conserved for public recreation and natural areas;
- 59 historic buildings restored for community use

**Housing Investment includes:**
- 1,000 homes for homeowners including 100 homes with Habitat for Humanity
- Preserved 1,790 units of federally subsidized at-risk housing
- 46 mobile home parks for over 1,900 families
- 2,924 homes for individuals with special needs including frail elders, battered women, youth-at-risk, ex-offenders, persons with chronic mental illness and individuals with mobility impairments.
- 1,605 homes made accessible in partnership with the Vermont Center for Independent Living.

**Land for Public Recreation includes:**
- Support for Green Mountain Club’s protection of the Long Trail, now 95% complete.
- Investment in various trail systems: the Catamount Trail (north-south 300 mile cross country ski trail); Cross Vermont Trail (east-west trail through 17 towns);
- East Montpelier Trail system; Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association conservation of more than 1820 acres to create a 14-mile ridgeline trail and wildlife reserve between Rockingham and Putney.
- Protection of Champion Lands – 133,000 acres for public recreation and wildlife.
- Significant nature preserves with The Nature Conservancy: High Pond Preserve, Hubbardton; Bald Mountain, West Haven; Black Mountain, Dummerston; Wilmarth Woods, Addison; Shelburne Pond; North Pawlet Hills; White River Ledges

**Historic Buildings for Public Use include:**
- Farm Barn and Breeding barn at Shelburne Farms
- Monitor Barn – Vermont Youth Conservation Corps headquarters
- Brookfield, Jamaica, Ira, Pawlet, Brighton and West Rutland Town Halls
- Latchis Theater, Brattleboro; Paramount Theater, Rutland; Flynn Theater, Burlington
- Firehouse Arts Gallery, Burlington
- Morrisville River Arts and Lamoille Grange Hall
OTHER PROGRAMS

In addition to VHCB funding programs for housing development and land conservation, a number of supplemental programs supported with state and federal funds provide services and capacity to improve housing and conservation opportunities for Vermonters and to assist farmers with economic development:

Farm and Forest Viability Program More than 400 farmers have participated in the Farm Viability Program, developed in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets in 2003 to provide farmers with business planning and technical assistance.

VHCB AmeriCorps VHCB has administered $4.7 million in federal funds to place more than 400 AmeriCorps members with housing and nonprofit organizations statewide, providing community service, developing leadership skills and civic engagement.

Healthy Homes and Lead Paint Hazard Abatement Program More than 2,000 homes made lead-safe. The program provides financial and technical assistance to income-eligible landlords and home owners to reduce the risk of lead poisoning caused by lead-based paint hazards. Free trainings are provided in essential maintenance practices required by Vermont’s Lead Paint law. $19.6 million administered since 1994.

A new HUD grant will allow for development of the Healthy Homes Program to address additional health and safety issues beyond lead paint. Healthy Homes will add to existing rehabilitation programs, providing assistance to correct building issues that contribute to unhealthy living conditions like mold, moisture and pest infestation, and particularly affect vulnerable groups, such as children with asthma and the elderly.

HOME Program Increases the affordability of rental housing with federal funds; $61.4 million administered since 1992.
VHCB AmeriCorps Overview

What is the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board AmeriCorps Program?
The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) AmeriCorps Program is a national service project that places AmeriCorps members with affordable housing, land conservation and environmental education organizations statewide. Members increase the capacity and effectiveness of the organization where they serve while gaining leadership skills and connecting with the mission and goals of a community based nonprofit organization.

VHCB AmeriCorps Mission

Since 1997, the VHCB AmeriCorps Program has been serving Vermont communities, cultivating leaders, and inspiring collaborative solutions to expand housing opportunities and steward our natural resources. Serving on the front lines of community-based organizations, VHCB AmeriCorps members energize, engage, and empower Vermonters to address unmet needs at a local level, collectively creating positive change statewide. Through a grass roots approach, we believe we can bring Vermonters together, incite a spirit of active citizenship and build a healthy future for Vermont.

What do VHCB AmeriCorps members do?

Housing Members
- Help homeless individuals and families find suitable housing, build life skills, develop résumés, access job training programs and obtain services.
- Assist first-time homebuyers to learn about budgeting and prequalify for low-interest mortgage loans at Vermont’s Homeownership Centers.
- Recruit volunteers, provide community outreach, make referrals, and provide direct services, information and technical assistance.
- Repair, make accessible and weatherize homes
- Provide residential services to low-income, elderly, and/or disabled individuals to help them maintain and remain in healthy, safe, affordable housing.

Conservation Members
- Provide environmental education and service opportunities for school-age youth.
- Educate groups about responsible hiking and camping practices.
- Increase public land access for individuals with emphasis on disadvantaged populations, and engage individuals in outdoor recreational activities.
- Recruit volunteers and raise awareness about conservation issues.
- Participate in natural area inventories, extract invasive plants and implement weed management plans.
- Perform trail maintenance, restoration and improvement.
Co-develop, coordinate, and teach summer day camps and natural history programs.
Create mailings, contact the media, produce newsletters, create and maintain database records and websites, organize special events.
Educate residents and housing groups on energy conserving measures.

What benefits do Members get?
In addition to having an opportunity to do meaningful, challenging work and gaining real-world experience, there are many tangible benefits as well, including:
- Living allowance: $20,400 for full-time service; $10,800 for half-time; $5,400 for quarter-time
- AmeriCorps Education Award to be used for existing student loans or for future education in the next seven years.
- Health Insurance: Covers major medical, hospitalization and prescriptions.
- Travel Reimbursement: Non-commuting travel is paid for service related activities.
- School Loan Forbearance: Deferment on federally subsidized school loans.
- Training Opportunities: In addition to an overnight Orientation, members have numerous training opportunities over the course of the year. Trainings may include Communicating through Conflict; Cultural Competency; Financial Literacy; Working with the Media; Poverty Issues; Volunteer Recruitment; Leadership; a Ropes Course and others. Additionally, members will attend a 2-day National Service Conference, a Team Retreat, several Group Service Days and a Closing Ceremony.
- Networking Opportunities: VHCB AmeriCorps is dedicated to offering its members a wide range of experiences and community engagement opportunities.

What else?
Members decide which host organization they would like to apply to. Members work closely with their supervisors in their host non-profit agencies. By signing on, members are making an 11 month commitment to service.
VHCB AmeriCorps 2018-19 Performance Goals

CNCS Approved Primary Performance Measures

**Housing Placement Services**

2,500 economically disadvantaged individuals, including homeless and near-homeless will have greater access to safe, affordable housing opportunities through housing placement and accessibility services provided by ACMs. Services will include housing identification, applications assistance, referrals, back rent and security deposit disbursements, and home sharing coordination.

450 economically disadvantaged individuals, including homeless and near-homeless, will transition into safe, affordable housing as a result of ACM services.

**Living Independently and Residential Services**

ACM’s will provide companionship, resource facilitation, food access, transportation, volunteer matching, and housing support to 500 individuals, including 150 individuals who are Homebound, Older Adults, and/or living with a disability.

75 individuals who are Homebound, Older Adults, and/or living with a disability will report increased social support due to member’s services.

**Food Access and Nutritional Services**

ACM’s will implement community gardens, provide emergency food, deliver meals, support food pantries, and provide nutritional services and education to 2000 individuals.

**Improving Lands and Habitats through Environmental Stewardship**

ACM’s will implement invasive species management, trail maintenance, boundary marking, easement monitoring, and tree planting/maintenance on 11,000 acres of parks and public lands. 3,000 acres of land will be assessed as improved according to the entities land management plan.

**Environmental, Energy, and Outdoor Education**
ACMs will deliver education on environmentally-conscious practices and outdoor recreation, including but not limited to sustainable energy and other natural resources, sustainable agriculture, and public land access and recreational opportunities to 900 individuals resulting in greater knowledge and appreciation for the natural environment and how people can help conserve energy and care for natural eco-systems. Education will be delivered through school programs, public programs, day camps, home visits, and service learning projects. Only Individuals surveyed for behavior changes may be counted.

As a result, 500 Individuals will report a change in behavior or intention to change behavior toward more environmentally-conscious practices.

**Additional Secondary Program Performance Measures**

**Financial Literacy Services**

ACMs will provide financial literacy services including credit repair education and counseling, household budgeting, foreclosure prevention/intervention, home ownership education, outreach, and development and distribution of educational materials to at least 250 economically disadvantaged individuals. 50 individuals will demonstrate improved financial literacy knowledge.

**Housing Units Made Available**

ACMs will develop, repair, or otherwise make available 150 affordable housing units for low income individuals and families, including older adults and people with disabilities. 100 economically disadvantaged individuals, including homeless and near-homeless will remain in, transition into, or diminish risk of losing safe, affordable housing as a result of ACM services.

**Energy Efficiency**

ACMs will improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions of 100 housing units and structures through weatherization, retrofits and other energy efficiency measures.

**Volunteer Mobilization**

VHCB AC members will recruit, train, supervise, evaluate and recognize 1000 community volunteers so that these volunteer efforts help to further the missions of VHCB AC's sponsoring organizations. Members will recruit at least 700 volunteers, and will manage at least 800 volunteers. The volunteers
mobilized by VHCB AmeriCorps members will serve the equivalent of 5 full-time employees/10,400 hours of volunteer service at member host sites.

Capacity Building

In addition to volunteer mobilization, members involved in capacity building activities will expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of services, programs and their organizations. Activities may also leverage resources for programs and/or organizations so that lasting positive outcomes for the beneficiary populations are achieved. Members will provide capacity building services for at least 25 organizations, will raise $5,000 worth of In-Kind or cash goods to support projects, and will improve 25 systems used by host sites such as information gathering, data tracking, organization outreach, community engagement, and internal communications. Note: AmeriCorps members may raise resources directly in support of sponsors' program services but may not raise funds for an organization's general operating expenses or endowment.

Member Development

100% of VHCB AmeriCorps Members will participate in VHCB AmeriCorps Member Development Initiatives which includes member training, program initiatives, and service learning. Upon successful completion of their AmeriCorps term, all graduating members will report improvement in at least 3 life skills needed to better secure employment and become productive, engaged community members.
Living Allowance

These are the terms used to describe the financial benefit that members receive from the AmeriCorps program they participate in. The living allowance that AmeriCorps members receive is not considered to be a salary, or an hourly wage, but a stipend. Under the law that established AmeriCorps, a member is not an employee, and will not receive a wage or salary.

For the 2017-2018 program year, members will receive the following maximum living allowance amount:

- Full-time members: $20,400
- Half-time members: $10,800
- Quarter-time members: $5,400

The amounts listed above are gross amounts and do not account for tax and FICA withholding amounts. The member is expected to pay all applicable local, state and federal taxes. These are withheld under standard withholding rules. The member may be eligible for a withholding exemption if no tax liability was withheld last year, and the exemption is expected to remain the same for the upcoming year. Withholding amounts will be based upon federal and state law based on information provided by the member on IRS W-4 form we provide.

The living allowance will be distributed every other week only while the member is actively serving. If a member does not serve during the living allowance period which is a minimum of 15 days in a row, the member must be suspended and will not receive a living allowance.

Living allowance will be issued via direct deposit every other Thursday. The living allowance is not based on actual hours served in a given pay period and thus will not fluctuate based on the number of hours served per week. It will not be paid on an hourly basis or be tied to hours served in any way. Instead it is divided evenly by the number of pay periods during the member’s contracted term of service. It is designed to help members meet their living needs while in service. However, if they fall behind in hours are seem to be unable to successfully complete the number of service hours needed to fulfill their contracted term of service by the last day, the Program Director will work with you and your member to modify their schedule to get back on track. Though the living allowance may not be affected, they are at risk of not receiving the Education Award by not completing the number of required hours.

The living allowance may affect the member’s eligibility for various federal assistance programs. The living allowance will not affect eligibility for federal work-study assistance, federal student aid, SSI, food stamps, Section 8 or public housing. It may however affect, AFDC (Aid for Families with Dependent Children), SSDI, and Medicaid. State and private student aid may or may not be affected, depending upon individual school regulations. Effects on state assistance programs will depend on state regulations.

Please note: The timesheet is the primary source of documentation for VHCB AmeriCorps to determine whether or not the member has been actively serving and what activities the
member has been performing. If the member fails to submit timesheets within a week of the due date, VHCB AmeriCorps will not have record of service activities and will assume you have not been serving. When this happens, the member will be placed in suspension. Living allowance payments are also suspended during this time. The member will be reinstated once all timesheets have been submitted to VHCB AC in full.
Hours Commitment

Members are contracted to fulfill the following number of hours –
- Full-time: 1700
- Half-time: 900
- Quarter-time: 450

This is the minimum number of hours the member must serve in order to successfully complete the program and receive the education award. The number of hours served may include only up to 20% approved training hours and 10% fundraising hours.

In order to successfully complete the term of service, the member is required to not only complete her/his service hour requirement, but also fulfill the dates of service agreed upon in the contract. In some cases a contract amendment signed by the member, the Program Director, and the host site is completed (please see following page).

Members that do not complete the required hours will be exited as follows:

**FOR CAUSE:** The member is exited for reasons within his/her control. The member will not receive any portion of the education award. Examples of “cause” are leaving the AmeriCorps program to accept a paid position, to attend school without completing hours, to relocate, etc.

**FOR COMPELLING PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES:** When exited for compelling personal circumstances, the member may be eligible for a pro-rated education award. These are circumstances beyond the member’s control occur, for example:
- The member has a serious injury or illness
- There is a serious injury, illness or death of an immediate family member and the member is needed to care for that family member
- The member is drafted by the Armed Services of the United States
- Some other circumstance occurs that makes it impossible or very difficult for the member to complete the term of service and if and only if the VHCB Director deems that circumstance to be compelling.

Members have a maximum of one year to complete the required number of hours at which point, members are no longer eligible to serve. If hours are not complete, the member cannot be exited successfully nor will they receive the education award. If unforeseen circumstances arise, members may be placed in “suspension”. The time that a member is in suspension does not count toward the year limit.
Contract Amendments

As unforeseen circumstances may arise over the course of the service term, it may be possible to amend the member’s contract with VHCB AmeriCorps to end early or extend their service. When amending contract dates, a member must still serve the contracted number of service hours.

Examples of contract amendments:

- A member may decide to begin Grad school and need to leave the AmeriCorps position 3 weeks early to attend. This member may request to shorten the term of service.
- A member may have to unexpectedly take time off to care for a ill child or parent. This member may request to extend the contract to complete the required hours.

To Shorten Term of Service:

If members would like to end service early, and that date is at least nine (9) months after the start date then members should—

- Submit a written letter to the VHCB AC Program Director, at least sixty (60) days prior to the original end date, listing the new end date and signed by both the member and the site supervisor. If the supervisor does not agree, then the date cannot be changed.
- VHCB AC will review the request and make a decision pursuant to AmeriCorps policies and provisions.

To Extend Term of Service:

If a member wants to extend the end of service date, as long as the date is not more than twelve (12) months after his/her start date then the member should—

- Submit a written letter to the VHCB AmeriCorps Program Director, at least forty-five (45) days prior to the original end date, listing the new end date and signed by both the member and site supervisor; and if the supervisor does not agree, then the date cannot be changed.
- VHCB AmeriCorps will review the request and make a decision pursuant to AmeriCorps policies and provisions.

When amending an end date, amount of maximum living allowance does not change. The remaining living allowance amount will be recalculated and bi-weekly living allowance payouts will be adjusted accordingly.

To change an end date that will not affect pay periods (within two weeks of contracted end date), request to amend the contract is not necessary.
Types of Service

**Service:** Direct Service is the bulk of what the member will do this year. This includes all activities on the position description that is not considered training or fundraising and all activities that fall within AmeriCorps guidelines.

**Training:** The member will receive extensive training over the course of the service year. Training includes both professional development and technical assistance. Training will be provided by the program, SerVermont, and the member’s host site.

**Fundraising:** While a member may claim up to 10% of hours as fundraising activities, fundraising activities are limited in the following manner:

- AmeriCorps members may raise resources directly in support of your program’s service activities.
- Examples of fundraising activities AmeriCorps members may perform include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Seeking donations of books from companies and individuals for a program in which volunteers teach children to read;
  - Writing a grant proposal to a foundation to secure resources to support the training of volunteers;
  - Securing supplies and equipment from the community to enable volunteers to help build houses for low-income individuals;
  - Securing financial resources from the community to assist in launching or expanding a program that provides social services to the members of the community and is delivered, in whole or in part, through the members of a community-based organization;
  - Seeking donations from alumni of the program for specific service projects being performed by current members.
- AmeriCorps members may not:
  - Raise funds for living allowances or for an organization’s general (as opposed to project) operating expenses or endowment

Write a grant application to the Corporation or to any other Federal agency.
Teleserving

Teleserving, or telecommuting, is the concept of serving from home or another location outside of the provided office space. Teleserving is not a formal, universal member benefit. Rather, it is an alternative method of meeting the needs of the AmeriCorps Position. VHCB AmeriCorps and/or the HSO have the right to refuse to make teleserving available to a Member and to terminate a teleserving arrangement at any time. Members are not required to teleserve, and adequate office space to perform the duties of the position should be always be available to members. A member has the right to refuse to teleserve if the option is made available.

Service Benefits and Hours: The AmeriCorps Member’s, benefits, enrollment status, living allowance, and service responsibilities will not change when teleserving. Members are expected to adhere to AmeriCorps and Program rules, regulations, and responsibilities while teleserving.

Eligibility and Limits: Successful teleservers have the support of their supervisors. Members will be allowed to teleserve based on the suitability of their position and the ability of their supervisor to manage the member remotely. Allowing teleservice is at the discretion of the HSO and Supervisor. A teleservice plan should be mutually agreed upon by the Member and the HSO.

The HSO may have telecommuting policies that add additional guidelines and restrictions which the member should adhere to. In cases that the policies don’t align, the Member should following the AmeriCorps Program Policy.

AmeriCorps Service is meant to be direct and have regular interaction with the community. Members serving in a Full-time capacity may teleserve a maximum of two days per week. Part-time members are limited to one day per week of teleservice. Serving “in the field” or attending trainings and events is not considered teleservice. In cases of inclement weather or other instances in which travel would be unsafe, Members may teleserve as necessary, and should never be expected to travel in unsafe conditions.

Workspace and Equipment: The Member must have a suitable workspace and necessary equipment and supplies to serve remotely. At minimum, the Member must be able to be contacted by phone and email, and contact information must be shared with the HSO and VHCB AmeriCorps Program Staff. The HSO may provide specific tools/equipment for the Member to perform duties at their discretion. When the member uses their own equipment, the member is responsible for maintenance and repair of equipment. Any HSO materials taken home should be kept in the designated service area at home and not be made accessible to others. Confidential files and information should not be removed from the HSO office space and only accessed electronically using a secure process.

Communication: Members must be available by phone and email during core hours. At a minimum, Members should check in with their supervisor or other designated representative of the HSO by phone or email at the beginning of their teleservice with a plan of what the Member will be working on. Members must again phone or email to check out at the conclusion of their teleservice, and as necessary throughout the day. Members must be available to remotely attend meetings deemed necessary by the HSO.
Program Benefits

Child Care
Full time AmeriCorps Members are eligible to apply for Childcare benefits. Benefits are based on enrollment status AND income eligibility. For information on eligibility, contact Francis or Erin.

Health Care
Members serving in a full-time capacity are eligible for health care provided through VHCB AmeriCorps. The premium is paid entirely by the program; there is no additional cost to members. Members must accept the AmeriCorps provided health insurance if they do not have access to other health care coverage.

Travel, Mileage and Accommodations
Costs associated with travel required by VHCB AmeriCorps will be covered or reimbursed in full by the program, including overnight accommodations if required.

All mileage required by the program will be reimbursed at the current IRS rate set for mileage reimbursement. Mileage reimbursement between service sites or otherwise required by the host site is the responsibility of a member’s host site. Host sites will also use the IRS reimbursement rate. Mileage reimbursement cannot be paid for travel to and from the member’s first daily service site – i.e. regular commute travel.

Mileage reimbursement must be turned in to VHCB AmeriCorps within a month of the travel, or the member will risk losing the reimbursement.

Member Expectations

Newsletter
VHCB AmeriCorps produces a quarterly newsletter. Each member is expected to submit to the newsletter at least once during their service term. Multiple submissions are welcome. Submissions may be a story of your service, a reflection, a recap of event, something you’ve learned through your service, hints and tips for other members, etc. Please include photos with your submission if possible.

Uniform/AmeriCorps Logo
Members are expected to wear/display the AmeriCorps logo at all times when in service. This includes while at your office/usual workspace, while attending VHCB AmeriCorps events, and when out in the field/community. VHCB AmeriCorps provides them with shirts, sweatshirts, patches, pins, stickers, and nametags.

While members are welcome to sport the AmeriCorps logo while not serving, please remind them that they are representing AmeriCorps while doing so and should therefore refrain from any AmeriCorps prohibited activities when wearing the AmeriCorps logo.
The member being identified as an AmeriCorps member while providing service is essential to the sustainability and longevity of the VHCB AmeriCorps program per the instructions of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Encourage your member to commit to wearing the AmeriCorps Member uniform during all community service outreach hours, and as often as possible during regular service hours, as dress codes permit.

Attire policies may vary by host Site. Members should adhere to the attire policies of their host sites but also ensure that AmeriCorps uniform expectations are being met.

The member is expected to dress moderately at all times when serving. Professional attire should be worn while working in professional settings – such as conducting trainings or outreach.

Work clothes should be worn while on any type construction, environmental or maintenance duty. Work boots and protective gear must be worn on all assignments that put the member at any level of increased risk of physical harm.

**Background Checks**

All members must submit to a background check. All members are subject to an FBI Criminal History Check, Sex Offender Registry Check, and Adult/Child Abuse Check through the Vermont Agency on Human Services. In addition to the FBI Criminal History Check, members that applied to serve while living in a state other than Vermont must also undergo a criminal history check through that state.

Members may not serve unsupervised with vulnerable populations until VHCB AmeriCorps has received at least one of the criminal history checks without a criminal record. Vulnerable populations are defined as youth, elderly, or persons with disabilities. Program staff will notify the member and supervisor once the results have been received and the member is cleared to serve unsupervised.

If the criminal history check results are received with a criminal record, further action will be required. Murder or sexual assault automatically disqualifies a member for service. All other criminal records are taken on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed for relevancy to service, recent activity, and action for recourse. Members will be asked to respond to any criminal records before the conviction will be assessed.
Trainings & Events

Policies on Member Training Attendance:

- Full-time members are expected to attend all trainings listed above, and agree to do so in their Member Agreement.

- Other training days will possibly be made available as ‘optional.’ ACM’s must communicate with supervisors about upcoming trainings and are required to obtain permission from them to attend “optional” trainings.

- Members may also be sent to trainings by their sponsoring sites

- Members may not spend more than 20% of their service/training hours in training

- Half-time members are also expected to attend required trainings, if the day of the training or event falls on a day when the member would normally work at his/her site.

- Members who are unable to attend training due to circumstances out of the member’s control (i.e. illness, being away, family emergency, etc.) must notify program staff in writing as soon as possible.

- Members may not miss a training to put in regular hours at their site. If a member misses a training day and claims hours for service at the host site, these hours will not be approved.
Independent Service Project (ISP)

All Members are expected to complete an Independent Service Project (ISP) outside of their regular host site. Members are required to perform a minimum of 15 and maximum of 30 hours for ISP. The following guidelines apply to ISP projects:

1. ISP hours may not be served at the member’s host site. Hours should be served with another community organization or in some cases may be carried out independently by the member.
2. The member has the option of (1) creating and implementing his/her own community project either independently or within an organization or (2) serving the hours with an organization in a general capacity that will aid the organization’s mission. All of the 10-20 hours should be allotted to either one project or one organization, though projects may involve multiple community organizations/entities.
3. The member must gain approval from VHCB AmeriCorps in advance. Requests should be submitted via email to the AmeriCorps Leader.
4. The project/organization must be based in Vermont.
5. At the completion of the ISP hours, the member will submit the ISP Report which will include:
   - Documentation of the hours served approved by a representative of the organization
   - A written report and reflection
6. Members may collaborate in pairs or teams to complete ISP hours.
7. ISP hours may be carried out in member’s off time, or during regularly scheduled onsite hours with prior approval from the supervisor.
8. All ISP activities must fall within AmeriCorps regulations and guidelines.

Peer Site Visits

VHCB AmeriCorps allows members to claim mileage and hours for up to two peer site visits - visits to other VHCB host organizations. The member should schedule site visits with the member at the organization. Site Visits must be pre-approved by both the visiting member’s supervisor and by the supervisor at the site being visited. Site Visits are not required, but VHCB AmeriCorps encourages members to take advantage of this opportunity.

With the direct supervisors approval, the member may claim hours for additional peer site visits, but may not claim mileage with VHCB AmeriCorps.
Book Club

The VHCB ACM Book Club is designed to give members the opportunity to gain a greater knowledge of their service through reading, while gaining training hours toward their service term.

- Each book review may be worth up to a total of 10 training hours.
- Full-time members may complete up to 6 book reviews, half-timers 3, and quarter-timers 1.
- Members are limited to one review per month.

After reading the book, members should submit a review using the 'Book Review Form' to gain hours. On VHCB AC’s website, under the ‘Current Members’ tab, you will find a list of pre-approved books. These books may be selected without further approval for a review. If you would like to choose a book that is not on the list please submit a request to VHCB AmeriCorps staff for approval prior to reviewing the book.

R.A.R.E. Opportunity

The VHCB AmeriCorps Regional AmeriCorps Recruitment Envoy (R.A.R.E) Opportunity initiative allows members to claim up to 15 hours (or more with Host Site approval) for community events and activities that promote outside individuals to participate in AmeriCorps Programs. Such activities may include attending college or career fairs, tabling at community events or public spaces, presenting to school or community groups, publishing articles or writing op-ed pieces about the members service, etc. If activities are to occur during regular service hours, the member should gain approval from the supervisor. Participation in R.A.R.E. Opportunity is optional for members, but highly encouraged by the program.
Who to Contact

Program Staff

Francis Sharpstene  802.828.3253  francis@vhcb.org

Contact Francis for: Any and all issues that arise with your host site and/or supervisor that require guidance or resolve; contract questions, concerns or amendments; requesting extended time off; if you will miss a training or event; income or benefits verification (i.e. 3squares), and payroll questions.

Ashley Swasey  802.828.3249  Ashley@vhcb.org

Contact Ashley for: member paperwork and reporting questions; assistance with timesheets; mileage requests; anything else in Francis’ absence.

Open Door Policy

VHCB AmeriCorps maintains an open door policy. This means members may contact the person they feel most comfortable addressing. In some cases, the issue may need to be shared and/or handled with other staff members. In this case, the person you originally addressed may still continue to serve as your point of contact. It is our belief that members should feel comfortable and safe approaching program staff on all matters.