



Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
AmeriCorps Program

2024 Evaluation Report



AmeriCorps

About the Center for Rural Studies

The Center for Rural Studies (CRS) is a fee-for-service research organization that addresses social, economic, and resource-based problems of rural people and communities. Based in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Vermont, CRS provides consulting and research services in Vermont, the United States, and abroad. Our research is divided into five main areas: Community and Economic Development, Vermont Community Data, Human Services and Education, Program Evaluation, and Agriculture. CRS offers its clients professional assistance with community planning, focus groups, outreach and capacity building, community data, survey research, and program evaluation.

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About VHCB AmeriCorps

The following organization description was written by VHCB AmeriCorps in the 2020 Program Evaluation and copied into this latest evaluation.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) AmeriCorps Program is a statewide National Service project of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board. The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board is an independent, state-supported funding agency providing grants, loans, and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, municipalities, and state agencies for the development of permanently affordable housing and for the conservation of important agricultural land, recreational land, forestland, natural areas, and historic properties in Vermont. The VHCB AmeriCorps Program further supports the mission of VHCB through AmeriCorps Member placements at affordable housing and land conservation non-profits throughout the state. 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.

The goals of the program are to:

- Assist low-income and other disadvantaged individuals in accessing safe, healthy affordable housing, including home purchases.
- Help homeless individuals and families find suitable housing, build life skills, develop resumes, improve employment prospects, and obtain social services.
- Stabilize housing for low-income, elder, and disabled individuals, and other disadvantaged populations.
- Provide environmental education and service opportunities for school-age youth and adults.
- Improve public lands through natural area stewardship.
- Improve access and recreational opportunities in public lands and parks, especially for disadvantaged populations.
- Repair, make accessible, weatherize, and improve energy efficiency in homes.
- Educate residents and housing groups on energy conservation measures.

In addition to the goals listed above, VHCB AmeriCorps sets the following goals according to its mission statement:

- Developing leadership qualities in members that serve in the Program.
- Expanding and inspiring cross-collaborative solutions among organizations serving in Vermont.
- Inspiring and energizing all Vermonters to serve their community.

VHCB AmeriCorps members engage in a variety of activities to meet local community needs. In the housing field, members: help homeless individuals and families find suitable housing, build life skills, develop résumés, access job training programs, and obtain services to support them in

long-term housing; 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; and repair, make accessible, and weatherize homes. Conservation Members: provide environmental education, outdoor recreation, and service opportunities for school-age youth and adults; educate groups about responsible hiking and camping practices; 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; organize special events; and educate residents and housing groups on energy conserving measures. Additionally, members connect individuals living in low-income housing with better food access and nutrition education; facilitate community events aimed toward improving tenant/renter relations; and help host sites research the needs of its clients/community to deliver better services.

Members sign up to serve with a host site for 11 months of service. Throughout the term, members serve closely with a supervisor and staff of the host site organization. The VHCB AmeriCorps Program is committed to member development and works with members to ensure they are having a positive, yet challenging experience during their term of service.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) AmeriCorps Program, described above, is required to submit periodic program evaluations to assess the effectiveness of VHCB AmeriCorps in delivering its services and contributing to positive outcomes in Vermont. For this evaluation, VHCB AmeriCorps partnered with the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) to provide third party evaluation. The results of this evaluation are intended to demonstrate VHCB AmeriCorps' effectiveness and provide constructive recommendations for how the organization can further improve its programs.

Methods

This evaluation utilizes a combination of program performance metrics collected quarterly from host site members, member exit surveys, and host site manager and member interviews conducted by research specialists at the Center for Rural Studies. These multiple data sources provide a mix of qualitative and quantitative data that contribute to a holistic evaluation of program processes and outputs. More in-depth evaluation specifics are found below.

Findings

Finding 1: AmeriCorps members feel well-supported and valued by VHCB AmeriCorps

- AmeriCorps members often praise VHCB AmeriCorps' support.
- A majority of host site members report that the VHCB AmeriCorps program "greatly exceeded their expectations."
- Members feel the VHCB staff is readily accessible by email or phone should members need additional support.

Finding 2: AmeriCorps members feel satisfied with their preparation for service.

- AmeriCorps members have mixed feelings about effectiveness of orientation.
- Members prefer in-person events.
- VHCB AmeriCorps trainings are supported by host sites, but sometimes can create scheduling challenges with host programming and service needs.

Finding 3: Host sites experience challenges with recruitment and retention of AmeriCorps members.

- Members are finding opportunities directly through organizations and not always through AmeriCorps.
- Some host sites would like to collaborate more with VHCB AmeriCorps on recruitment.
- Host sites find that Vermont's housing shortage and low pay present barriers to equitable recruitment.

- Service term lengths can present a challenge for successful and fulfilling tenure for AmeriCorps members.

Finding 4: AmeriCorps Members make valuable contributions to host sites and the Vermont workforce.

- A high percentage of members feel they contributed to programs and services offered by their host site.
- Members report very high levels of increased understanding about Vermont challenges and organizations addressing challenges due to their AmeriCorps membership.
- The percentage of members reporting that they acquired new skills because of their AmeriCorps membership remained at over 80% through the three reporting periods analyzed.
- Over half of member respondents reported Great Improvement in their interpersonal communication and working relationships skills in each year of analysis.
- Over 90% of respondents state that their AmeriCorps service contributed to or inspired future volunteerism and service.
- Members consistently express that a strong level of personal and professional network development results from their AmeriCorps service.

Finding 5: AmeriCorps members have impacts on ability for host sites and VHCB to achieve mission, but more updated information is needed.

- Nearly all of the human services provision metrics that were able to be analyzed over time showed marked decreases in the number of those served between earlier periods and 2020-2021 due, presumably in large part, to the COVID pandemic.
- The diversity of operational subject areas and specified populations served highlights the diversity of programs VHCB AmeriCorps serves across Vermont.
- Veterans and military families saw increased service provision by total numbers served between the earliest reporting period (2016-2017) and the 2020-2021 period. Even these, however, decreased in 2020-2021 when compared to the most recent reporting periods.

Recommendations

- **Cost of Living-** advocate for substantially increased wage rates for members.
- **Housing Access-** identify housing options that meet the specific geographic and timing needs of members.
- **Recruitment-** modify recruitment processes to be more collaborative with host sites.
- **Trainings-** coordinate with host sites to ensure that the timing of VHCB trainings take into account the programmatic timing/staffing needs of host sites.
- **Trainings-** include interpersonal/socialization/network-building opportunities among members and host site organizations.
- **Evaluation Tools-** revisit data collection forms and processes to build standardization and ease response/data entry.

Introduction

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Evaluation Methods

Data Sources

Data for this evaluation was collected by research specialists at the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) as well as internally by staff of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. The three primary data sources include:

- Member and Host Site Interviews conducted by the CRS (2023)
- Member Exit Surveys (Program Years '23, '24, '25)
- Member Progress Reports (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2020-2021)

The Member Evaluation Surveys and Quarterly Member Reports were collected by the staff at VHCB and delivered to the Center for Rural Studies for the purpose of analysis. Interviews with members and hosts sites were conducted by the Center for Rural Studies (CRS).

Research Questions

- What are strengths or challenges of host site-VHCB partnerships?
- To what extent do AmeriCorps members have the training and support they need from VHCB in order to positively contribute to their host site positions?
- What is the impact of AmeriCorps participation to member's professional development and future contributions to the region?
- What are the outcomes of AmeriCorps members activities in their organizations?

Notably, this report has new and altered research questions than some originally proposed in the evaluation plan. This is for a number of reasons. First, program enrollment created challenges to having a cohort of AmeriCorps members to interview in a timely manner. Second, evaluation plans were reliant upon data collected from host site partnerships. Host sites were not able to provide expected data to VHCB AmeriCorps and the program evaluators, which limited the scope of the analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Member and Host Site Interviews

Eighteen interviews were conducted by research specialists at the CRS: eight with AmeriCorps supervisors at host sites, and ten with AmeriCorps members who were in current or recently completed service with AmeriCorps. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and lasted approximately 20-50 minutes. Discussions with AmeriCorps members and sites focused on training for AmeriCorps; benefits to AmeriCorps members; relationships between VHCB AmeriCorps, its host sites, and its members; and benefits, challenges and opportunities for host sites that work with AmeriCorps. A full copy of interview questions can be found in the appendix section.

Member Program Exit Surveys

Member exit surveys are administered to members as they end their AmeriCorps term. These survey metrics center on impacts to members from their service experience as well as host site and AmeriCorps program assessment. This report includes data from VHCB AmeriCorps program years '23, '24, '25.

Member Quarterly Progress Reports

VHCB collects primary and secondary performance measurement data from AmeriCorps members each quarter. The metrics center on direct service impacts like number of clients served and amount of built and natural infrastructure assessed, mitigated, etc. These quarterly assessments enable ongoing review to ensure that program performance metrics are being met. Quantitative data are tabulated to annual level and qualitative survey responses are collected to provide context for the quantitative performance measures. This report includes data from 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2020-2021 for longitudinal analysis.

Data Caveats and Challenges

Several factors should be considered when reviewing the analyses provided throughout this evaluation report. The longitudinal member exit surveys and progress reports data sets are subject to numerous changes over time that impact trend analyses. The number and type of host sites vary over time, which impacts the type of services and overall number of service units reported over time. Additionally, within host sites that remain constant, there may be programmatic changes that address host organizations' immediate service needs but that also impact longitudinal analyses. Finally, the annual progress report data sets stop at year 2020-2021- the height of the COVID Pandemic- impacting all trend analysis for those performance measures. Subsequent evaluation reports that include data from later periods are likely to reflect changes due to the pandemic.

Findings

Finding 1: AmeriCorps members feel well-supported and valued by VHCB AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps members have positive experiences with VHCB AmeriCorps and find the relationship positively contributes to their service. Data from the member surveys indicate that the VHCB AmeriCorps program met, and many times exceeded expectations for AmeriCorps members. Notably, the percentage of AmeriCorps members who felt VHCB AmeriCorps greatly exceeded expectations increased over 200% in the last three program years, and the most recent program year has over 92% of members saying they would recommend VHCB AmeriCorps members to others. These numbers are important indicators of continued promise for future AmeriCorps cohorts.

The data from the member surveys were further supported by claims in member interviews, which are summarized following the tables and figures below. Overall, participants in interviews felt VHCB AmeriCorps went above and beyond in terms of their responsiveness, organization, and support of AmeriCorps placements.

Table 1.

AmeriCorps Member response to “which statement best summarizes your experience with the VHCB AmeriCorps program?”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change py23 to py25
At times, it fell below my expectations	2.7	9.1	3.7	37.0
It met my expectations	37.8	45.5	33.3	-11.9
It often exceeded my expectations	48.6	31.8	29.6	-39.1
It greatly exceeded my expectations	10.8	13.6	33.3	208.3
Often and greatly exceeded expectations	59.4	45.4	62.9	5.9

Figure 1.

AmeriCorps Member response to “which statement best summarizes your experience with the VHCB AmeriCorps program?”

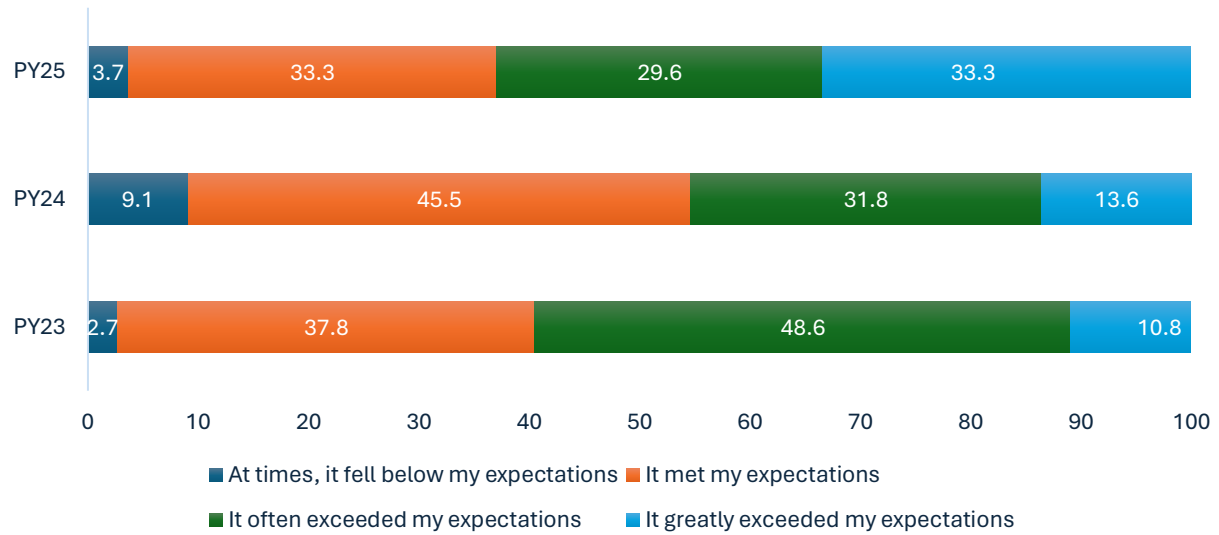


Table 2.

AmeriCorps Member response to “Would you recommend VHCB AmeriCorps to others?”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=21)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
No	0.0	9.5	3.7	-
Undecided	24.3	28.6	3.7	-84.8
Yes	75.7	61.9	92.6	22.3

Figure 2.

AmeriCorps Member response to “Would you recommend VHCB AmeriCorps to others?”

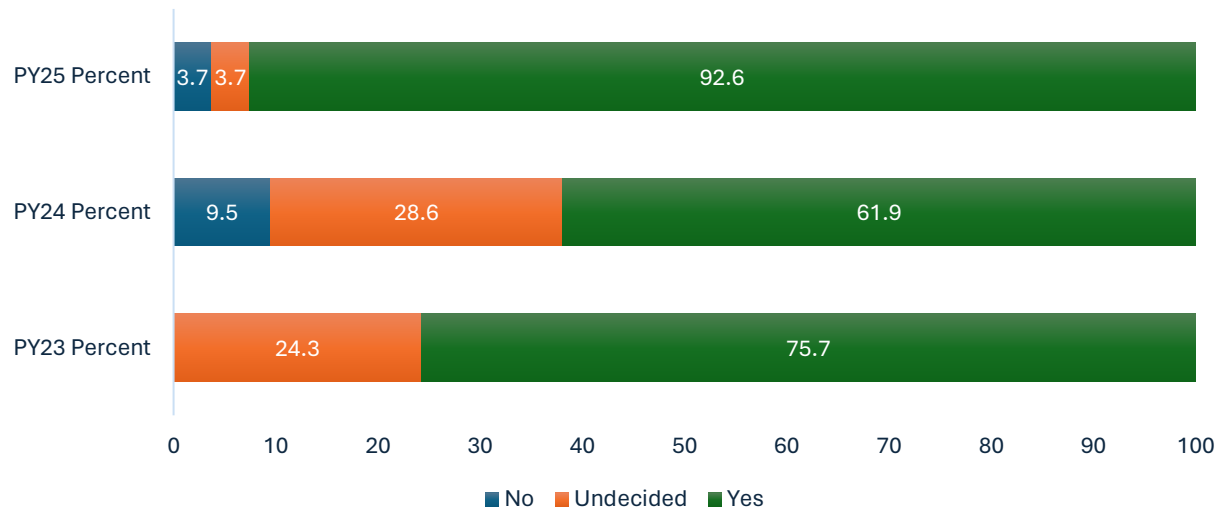


Table 3.

Member response to “I was supported by my fellow AmeriCorps Members and/or could use my fellow members as a resource throughout my service.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	8.1	9.1	7.4	-8.6
Somewhat true	48.6	31.8	3.7	-92.4
True	43.2	59.1	88.9	105.8

AmeriCorps Members’ feelings of peer group support increased substantially through the 3-year analysis period from about 43% of members completely agreeing that they felt other members were a resource in PY23, to about 89% completely agreeing in PY25. The asset that peer support provides within the AmeriCorps Member cohort is something that VHCB AmeriCorps should continue to recognize and cultivate in future cohorts.

AmeriCorps Members interview participants praised VHCB AmeriCorps Support

During interviews, AmeriCorps members expressed without hesitation that they felt well supported by VHCB staff. As one member summarized, “VHCB is every bit of their reputation.” AmeriCorps members feel valued and cared for by the staff and that as members they are genuinely appreciated for their efforts; and the sentiment certainly goes both ways.

In particular, the weekly email updates and hourly reports were mentioned as the most helpful for members to know the status of their progress as an AmeriCorps member. Members also feel the VHCB staff is readily accessible by email or phone should members need additional support. “They are a small team that makes so much happen,” one member reflected, “they are just so good at ensuring success for everyone involved.” One member interviewed pointed out that VHCB staff went above and beyond in terms of support for new members; sending links to housing openings as well as information needed for lease agreements. Multiple other members reflected on times that they had to unexpectedly miss service hours due to emergencies for themselves or family members, and they received excellent support from VHCB regarding make up for missed hours. One member mentioned that at times the support can even feel like more than they need; explaining, “I guess it’s a weird balance of sometimes it feels like summer camp but at the same time it’s nice to have that support.” When pressed for any challenges in receiving support, one member did mention that it appears to be a lot for just their small office to be handling all of the VHCB AmeriCorps placements and that the amount they are juggling can sometimes impact their ability to respond.

Finding 2: AmeriCorps members felt the training was satisfactory in preparing members for service.

Training is another aspect of AmeriCorps participation that this evaluation chose to focus on. Adequate training is an important leverage point for VHCB AmeriCorps members’ ability to sufficiently contribute to host site activities, network with other AmeriCorps members, and gain professional development training that will contribute to successful future careers.

Data from the member exit survey indicates that all members participate in some form of training: 100% of respondents selected “somewhat true” or “totally true” in response to “I actively participated in VHCB AmeriCorps trainings, events, and program initiatives. Members also generally felt that this training was useful; in the most recent program year, 96.2% felt the training was at least somewhat useful. In addition to being well prepared themselves, most AmeriCorps members (92.6% in PY25) felt that host sites were at least somewhat prepared for their arrival and had clear expectations and guidelines for how AmeriCorps members’ positions could effectively contribute to their organizations.

Interviews with AmeriCorps provided greater context for member perceptions of VHCB training. The summaries below describe that members didn’t feel underprepared for service, but they did wish orientations focused more on in-person connections and networking with other members. It also includes details about feedback from host sites on how member training interacts with service responsibilities.

Table 4.

AmeriCorps Member response to “I actively participated in VHCB AmeriCorps trainings, events, and program initiatives.”

	Py23 % (n=36)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=25)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	13.5	4.5	0.0	-
Totally false	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0
Somewhat true	29.7	36.4	40.0	34.7
Totally true	54.1	54.5	60.0	10.9

Table 5.

AmeriCorps Member response to “VHCB AmeriCorps provided training that was useful to my general personal and/or professional development.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=26)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	5.4	13.6	3.8	-29.6
Totally false	2.7	0.0	0.0	-
Somewhat true	56.8	40.9	30.8	-45.8
Totally true	35.1	45.5	65.4	86.3

Table 6.

AmeriCorps Member response to “my sponsor organization was well prepared for my arrival in terms of having a clear assignment for me and the on-going ability to support my daily efforts.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	8.1	9.1	7.4	-8.6
Totally false	2.7	0.0	0.0	-
Somewhat true	18.9	27.3	18.5	-2.1
Totally true	70.3	63.6	74.1	5.4

AmeriCorps Members and Host Sites feedback on orientation and trainings.

AmeriCorps members have mixed feelings about effectiveness of orientation.

AmeriCorps members had varying levels of experience and feedback on VHCB orientation and ongoing training offerings. Depending on when the member started their service (during Covid protocols or not; mid-year or not) they may have had different initial trainings. In general, AmeriCorps gave feedback that the initial orientation can feel like an overwhelming amount of information and can be difficult to absorb at a time they are anticipating their upcoming service. As one member explained, “there this tension about getting educated about AmeriCorps as this big federal program that does a lot of things versus preparing you specifically for your day to day

of what you'll be facing at your particular host site that you are assigned to." This member went on to explain that it was helpful to break down required tasks such as timesheets and reporting hours. Others echoed these perspectives, commenting that it was hard to absorb the information presented at the initial training because there was so much. One member commented, "all I really needed to get from the training [to start my position] was how to log my hours and then maybe like the prohibited and unallowable activities and that was somehow spread out across two days. Members' lack of engagement with larger topics of AmeriCorps may relate to changing interests of members [more information provided in section on recruitment] – which is, organization first, rather than AmeriCorps first. Because VHCB works with such a range of organizations, this also seemed to contribute to why some members didn't feel certain material related to their particular service.

Despite the difficulty digesting material, AmeriCorps members felt that they got all of the information they needed out of trainings; most could not think of anything they encountered during their service at their host site that they wished they had learned during their orientation and other training events.

Members have a preference for in-person events.

Members expressed a strong desire for in person training and felt that some of the virtual, lecture style sessions were missed opportunities for deeper connection with their fellow AmeriCorps member cohort. In comparison to the virtual training, members had great feedback on the in-person training they attended and said it was helpful to meet and bond with other cohort members. They enjoyed participating in these in-person events via both service projects and retreats. In particular, multiple members commented how much they enjoyed the overnight retreat at Craftsbury Outdoors Center. As one member put it, "[the] retreat was fantastic. No cell service, very little wi-fi, it all made the bonding sort of happen organically." Another member commented, "I was definitely annoyed about it [at first], I was like 'I don't want to have to be somewhere for two days...but it was really nice to connect more with the other AmeriCorps members. And it's easier to learn stuff in person than on zoom.'"

In fact, most AmeriCorps members saw connection with others as the primary reason they looked forward to professional development events with other AmeriCorps members. One member commented they find ongoing trainings by VHCB helpful "as a means of bringing the AmeriCorps members together." In regard to an upcoming financial training, they said [to me,] "the training is a means to connect with other members, then the particular tool is the financial literacy training. [I'm looking forward to it], even though [financial literacy] is not something I'm super jazzed to be learning about."

Members who are less centrally located in the state did express some challenges attending in person training that are far away. As one member explained, "it's hard because on the days where we have training, we often travel an hour and a half to a place and arrive, and then just jump into something for four hours, and then I leave and drive home feeling very disoriented. I

did enjoy when we have conferences or two-day events which leave more room for social interaction and don't rush through programming.”

Training events are supported by host sites, but sometimes can create challenges.

When asked about any challenges host sites experienced in their relationship with VHCB, some participants discussed that training can sometimes conflict with the AmeriCorps members' ability to fully participate in their host organization. There are some trainings that are long on host sites radar, and the supervisors are able to plan around the member being away, but other trainings seem to pop up later, when the host site was planning on the member being there.

Host sites mentioned that they are grateful VHCB plans professional development opportunities and acknowledges they are an important part of the experience, but it can present challenges around “where is your loyalty as an AmeriCorps member.” For example, one host site said “[I understand] there are lots of goals they need to meet, but the person really becomes an essential part of our staff. When they have to leave for training commitments, even if it's just missing the staff meeting, they're missing an opportunity to further connect with their coworkers.”

Finding 3: Host sites experience challenges with recruitment and retention of AmeriCorps members.

The decline in AmeriCorps member enrollment is documented and expected in the context of low unemployment rates and building back programs after the Covid-19 pandemic. Interviews with AmeriCorps members and host sites provided more context on some challenges that may be able to be addressed to support enrollment challenges on the organization side.

Members are finding opportunities directly through organizations and not always through AmeriCorps.

When asked about why they decided to choose an AmeriCorps position, members clarified that it was the specific organizations they found first, not AmeriCorps. Members were not specifically looking for AmeriCorps positions but found an “AmeriCorps opening” within the organization they hoped to work for. One member, who happened to have previous Vista experience, said “I wasn't really sure if I wanted to go back into the AmeriCorps program, but the posting with the [organization site removed] became available and has an amazing reputation as well as VHCB. So, I was familiar with those two organizations and ultimately chose the AmeriCorps path.” Similarly, another member shared “I hadn't really been considering an AmeriCorps [position] due to the low pay, but a lot of people flagged this particular role as something I might be interested in.”

Finding the AmeriCorps position provided a number of benefits, including longer term lengths for otherwise seasonal positions, and the benefit of a year commitment for someone who might

be early in their career and hoping to gather many experiences. Once in AmeriCorps, some members did choose to do a second term of service at a different host site, so the AmeriCorps structure in that case helped them find other positions. For others, they hoped that a service year at a particular organization would lead to a full-time staff position at that site. Members also like the idea that these positions introduced them to professional networks in Vermont. This was particularly appealing for members who came from out of state and wanted to integrate professionally into the state.

Host sites find housing shortage and low pay as barriers to equitable recruitment.

The low pay of AmeriCorps positions as a significant challenge was evident for both host sites recruiting and retaining AmeriCorps members, as well as members themselves finding success in their position. For recruitment, the constraints of the AmeriCorps wage impact both the quantity and quality of applicants. As one host site supervisor described: “There’s a well-known work shortage in Vermont and the cost of living is high enough that the stipend folks get isn’t really suitable. So, your pool starts out limited and times like these, it becomes increasingly harder to find a suitable candidate.” Similarly, another host site shared, “it’s not really feasible on an AmeriCorps stipend to make a move to be here and join us. So, there’s some uncertainty in that area. Though we’ve been fortunate to have our spots filled in the last couple of years, looking forward to the next service term, there’s not a strong feeling of confidence that we will be able to fill those positions based on the housing situation here in [our town].

Host sites also discussed that they see their members struggle with the AmeriCorps wage. Some participants had members who had left due to the inability to secure the money they needed to support themselves. One participant explained, “Finances are something that’s challenging for them, just having enough money for food and car payments...I was an AmeriCorps [member] over 10 years ago and you could get by back then, but things have changed so much now with housing and cost of living.” This affects not only AmeriCorps members currently in their positions, but the ability for organizations to attract new members and who is able to participate in the program at all. One host site participant, whose organization chose not to hire an AmeriCorps this year, described that the difficult process of recruiting a member was not something their organization had the capacity to do. They attribute this consideration to wage offerings: “I think there’s a certain amount of apprehension with participating in general, even if we had more capacity because the program doesn’t really offer a livable wage. So, it ends up discriminating against folks who are lower income or don’t have family money to support them. That, coupled with the housing market, there’s too many barriers.” In this example, not only are members facing barriers to participate, but the organization is questioning whether they want to continue with AmeriCorps because of the low wages they offer.

Host sites and AmeriCorps members alike agreed that the additional housing stipend provided by VHCB is critical to sustaining AmeriCorps in their positions, as well as making AmeriCorps members feel valued.

Some host sites would like to collaborate more with VHCB AmeriCorps on recruitment.

One long standing host site mentioned an interest in learning more about ways to collaborate with VHCB AmeriCorps on recruitment, so not to “duplicate efforts.” In an effort to research a more diverse pool of candidates, particularly those who have been “left out of the conservation field,” this host site is interested in ways to broaden the reach of recruiting efforts and feels that better understanding the ways that VHCB recruits may help them in those efforts. Others did not mention needing more VHCB assistance with recruiting but did mention that overall administrative work involved with hiring AmeriCorps staff seems to be getting increasingly burdensome, and they are curious of understanding why or how that process might be alleviated.

Term lengths can be a challenge for successful and fulfilling tenure for AmeriCorps members.

The length of AmeriCorps term was another challenge discussed by AmeriCorps host sites. For most, the 11-month term feels too short to be able to train up and effectively utilize a new AmeriCorps member. It can be demanding on the host site to onboard and train a new member, particularly with the increase in hybrid work schedules, causing some host sites to wish the member could stay on for longer.

For others, host sites were more interested in trying a shorter-term model. These comments tended to come from organizations whose work was more seasonal. As one organization explained, “another challenge [with recruitment] is the constant flux, knowing that this position is so seasonal. While 11 months is a long time...you spend the summer and fall [doing one task], then the winter [doing different work]. The first year for everybody has a learning curve to it, and if you only do one term, you don’t get to ever utilize what you learned.” This organization is considering whether a 6-month term may work better so the member is focused only on the tasks relevant to that season. Another member in an organization with seasonal work discussed similar challenges, instead focusing on how they impacted the experience and wellbeing of the member: “In the spring, summer, and fall, there’s a lot of outdoor projects, and December through March it’s adjusting to a period where they’re at their desk most of the time, and this was hard for both [AmeriCorps members] in terms of their mental health.” This situation put the organization in a position where they had to provide added mentorship and support for AmeriCorps members outside of their work tasks.

Finding 4: AmeriCorps Members make valuable contributions to host sites and the Vermont workforce.

Data from AmeriCorps member exit surveys extensively supports that members build skills and employability through participation in AmeriCorps programs. Data also supports that AmeriCorps members build their professional networks in Vermont, as well as learn about the state’s specific needs, through service. The existence of AmeriCorps positions to provide

opportunities for professional development and regional knowledge and commitment is important for the continued strengthening of the workforce regionally. The data tables below show positive evidence for building skills, commitment to public service, knowledge of Vermont, and a professional network.

Table 7.

Percent of AmeriCorps Members who indicated listed categories of skills “improved greatly” through AmeriCorps participation.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)
Interpersonal communication and working relationships	51.4	59.1	59.3
Personal time management and the ability to organize tasks	22.2	36.4	44.4
Problem solving and the ability to create successful strategies in the face of change/adversity	40.5	59.1	23.1
Effective communication and public speaking to groups of people	34.3	59.1	40.7
Community organizing	21.9	38.1	33.3
Use of technology to fulfill your responsibilities	34.3	25.0	44.0
Civic engagement/knowing how to make a difference in the community	31.4	35.0	46.2

Interpersonal communication and working relationships skills development was most often reported as the skill that improved greatly. Notably, the percentages of members who indicated that their problem-solving skills improved greatly is low and has dropped substantially over the last three program years. A breakdown of how members responded to each particular skill is shown in the tables below.

Member Skills Development

Table 8.

AmeriCorps Member response to “I was able to acquire new skills as an outcome of my service as a VHCB AmeriCorps member.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	0.0	0.0	7.4	-
Totally false	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Somewhat true	16.2	18.2	11.1	-31.5
Totally true	83.8	81.8	81.5	-2.7

The percentage of members reporting total agreement that they acquired new skills as a result of their AmeriCorps membership remained at just over 80% through the three reporting periods analyzed.

Table 9.

AmeriCorps Member response to “How did your interpersonal communication and working relationships change?”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
Improved greatly	51.4	59.1	59.3	15.4
Improved little	5.4	4.5	11.1	105.6
Improved some	43.2	36.4	29.6	-31.5
Not improved	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 10.

AmeriCorps Member response to “How did your personal time management and the ability to organize tasks change?”

	Py23 % (n=36)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
Improved greatly	22.2	36.4	44.4	100.0
Improved little	19.4	9.1	14.8	-23.7
Improved some	50.0	50.0	37.0	-26.0
Not improved	8.3	4.5	3.7	-55.4

Table 11.

AmeriCorps Member response to “How did your problem solving and ability to create successful strategies in the face of change/adversity change?”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=26)	% change from py23 to py25
Improved greatly	40.5	59.1	23.1	-43.0
Improved little	10.8	4.5	11.5	6.5
Improved some	48.6	36.4	65.4	34.6
Not improved	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 12.

AmeriCorps Member response to “How did your effective communication and public speaking to groups of people change?”

	Py23 % (n=35)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
Improved greatly	34.3	59.1	40.7	18.7
Improved little	14.3	13.6	18.5	29.4
Improved some	45.7	27.3	37.0	-19.0
Not improved	5.7	0.0	3.7	-35.1

Table 13.

AmeriCorps Member response to “How did your skills at Community organizing change?”

	Py23 % (n=32)	Py24 % (n=21)	Py25 % (n=24)	% change from py23 to py25
Improved greatly	21.9	38.1	33.3	52.1
Improved little	25.0	19.0	16.7	-33.2
Improved some	46.9	42.9	45.8	-2.3
Not improved	6.3	0.0	4.2	-33.3

Table 14.

AmeriCorps Member response to “How did your ability to use technology to fulfill your responsibilities change?”

	Py23 % (n=35)	Py24 % (n=20)	Py25 % (n=25)	% change from py23 to py25
Improved greatly	34.3	25.0	44.0	28.3
Improved little	25.7	15.0	8.0	-68.9
Improved some	31.4	55.0	40.0	27.4
Not improved	8.6	5.0	8.0	-7.0

Table 15.

AmeriCorps Member response to “How did your civic engagement/knowledge of how to make a difference in the community change?”

	Py23 % (n=35)	Py24 % (n=20)	Py25 % (n=26)	% change from py23 to py25
Improved greatly	31.4	35.0	46.2	47.1
Improved little	14.3	0.0	7.7	-46.2
Improved some	51.4	65.0	42.3	-17.7
Not improved	2.9	0.0	3.8	31.0

Table 16.

AmeriCorps Member response to the prompt: “I am better equipped to secure employment.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	2.7	0.0	3.7	37.0
Somewhat true	18.9	40.9	18.5	-2.1
True	78.4	59.1	77.8	-0.8

Table 17.

AmeriCorps Member response to the prompt: “I am more effective in addressing issues facing my community.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	8.1	4.5	7.4	-8.6
Somewhat true	35.1	45.5	29.6	-15.7
True	56.8	50.0	63.0	10.9

Contributions to Organizations

The following data tables show how AmeriCorps members perceive the contributions to make to their host sites. Information about impacts to host sites is also demonstrated in finding 5, but these data also provide important evidence that AmeriCorps placements perceive they are making substantial contributes to the effectiveness of their organizations’ activities and mission.

Table 18.

AmeriCorps members responses to “During my tenure I contributed to the maintenance/expansion of services offered by my sponsor organization.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Totally false	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Somewhat true	18.9	36.4	11.1	-41.3
Totally true	81.1	63.6	88.9	9.6

A relatively high percentage of respondents totally agree that they contributed to programs and services offered by their host site. That percentage dropped slightly in PY24 but has bounced back and is a positive indicator that AmeriCorps members are placed in impactful positions within the organization.

Table 19.

AmeriCorps Member response to “During my tenure I was able to create new and/or enhanced systems/practices which enabled my sponsor organization to better fulfill its mission.”

	Py23 % (n=36)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=26)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	5.6	9.1	3.8	-32.1
Totally false	2.8	0.0	0.0	-
Somewhat true	30.6	54.5	46.2	51.0
Totally true	61.1	36.4	50.0	-18.2

There is a very small percentage (~1 participant) who indicated they did not feel they were contributing to the ability of the organization to fulfill its mission. Otherwise, members responded felt they were making positive contributions to organizations’ missions. These data points were further supported in interviews with host sites and members, who both valued and felt valued when it came to AmeriCorps member contributions.

Vermont Knowledge Development

AmeriCorps members who complete their service with VHCB AmeriCorps partners learn important information about challenges unique to Vermont and how non-profits work, which is important to successful retention of the Vermont workforce.

Table 20.

AmeriCorps Member response to “Being a VHCB AmeriCorps member gave me a greater understanding of the challenges facing Vermont and the organizations attempting to address them.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	2.7	4.5	0.0	-
Totally false	2.7	4.5	0.0	-
Somewhat true	27.0	27.3	48.1	78.1
Totally true	67.6	63.6	51.9	-23.2

Figure 3.

AmeriCorps Member response to “AmeriCorps membership gave me a greater understanding of challenges facing Vermont organizations and addressing them.”

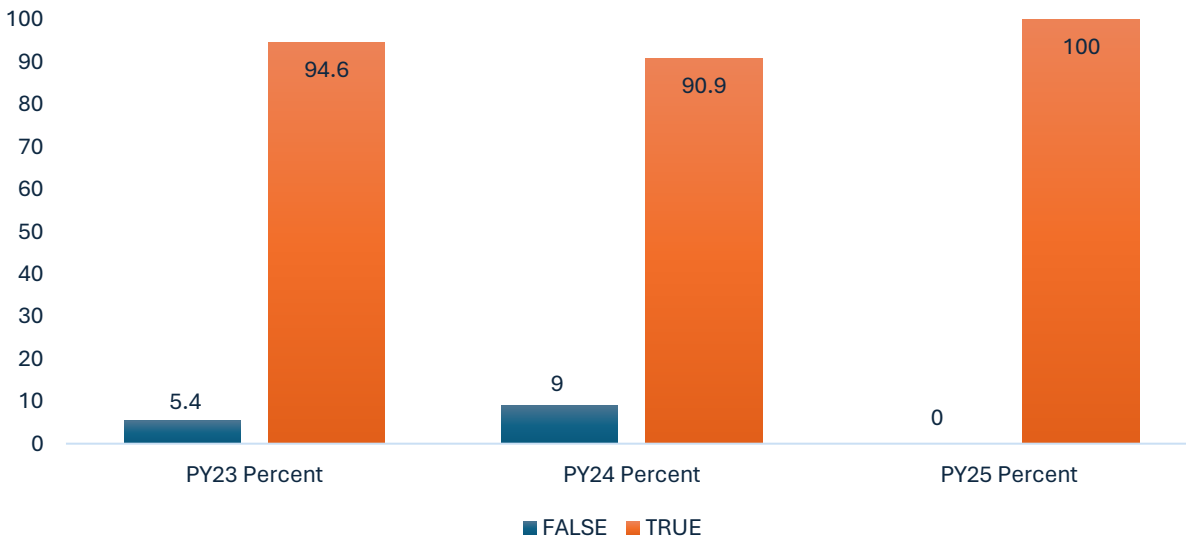


Table 21.

AmeriCorps Member response to “I have a deeper understanding or knowledge of the issues faced in Vermont communities.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	0.0	9.1	0.0	0.0
Somewhat true	24.3	13.6	33.3	37.0
True	75.7	77.3	66.7	-11.9

Table 22.

AmeriCorps Member response to “I have a greater understanding of how non-profits and public entities work.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	2.7	0.0	0.0	-
Somewhat true	13.5	18.2	18.5	37.0
True	83.8	81.8	81.5	-2.7

Impact on Personal Development

AmeriCorps service impact on members' personal growth and development includes four indicators: impact on ethic of future volunteerism and service, inspiration for future volunteerism and service, future involvement in issues, and networks development. Impact on future volunteerism and service is very high with nearly always 90% or more of respondents stating that their AmeriCorps service contributed to or inspired future volunteerism and service.

Table 23.

AmeriCorps Member response to "Being a VHCB AmeriCorps member contributed to my ethic of engaging in lifelong service and volunteerism."

	Py23 % (n=35)	Py24 % (n=21)	Py25 % (n=26)	% change from py23 to py25
Somewhat false	8.6	4.8	0.0	-
Totally false	2.9	4.8	3.8	31.0
Somewhat true	40.0	52.4	38.5	-3.8
Totally true	48.6	38.1	57.7	18.7

Table 24.

AmeriCorps Member response to "I am inspired to volunteer and/or participate in service in the future."

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	5.4	9.1	7.4	37.0
Somewhat true	40.5	50.0	18.5	-54.3
True	54.1	40.9	74.1	37.0

The member exit survey contains two different questions relating to future volunteerism and service that use different scales. When adjusted to make the scales more comparable, both results show very high levels of impact on future volunteerism and service.

Table 25.

AmeriCorps Member response to "I will become more involved in local, national and/or global issues."

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	5.4	13.6	3.7	-31.5
Somewhat true	37.8	36.4	37.0	-2.1
True	56.8	50.0	59.3	4.4

Half or more of the members expressed interest in becoming more involved in issues in their community or otherwise throughout the analysis period.

Table 25.

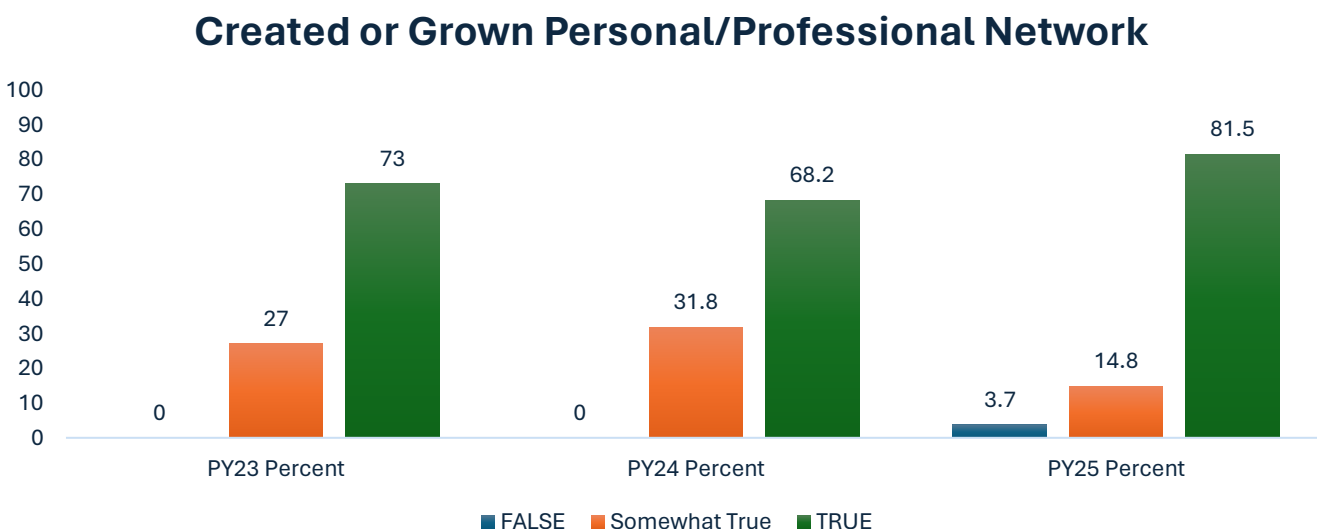
AmeriCorps Member response to “I have created or grown my personal/professional network.”

	Py23 % (n=37)	Py24 % (n=22)	Py25 % (n=27)	% change from py23 to py25
False	0.0	0.0	3.7	-
Somewhat true	27.0	31.8	14.8	-45.2
True	73.0	68.2	81.5	11.6

Members consistently express that a strong level of personal and professional network development results from their AmeriCorps service.

Figure 4.

AmeriCorps Members response to whether their personal/professional network has grown.



Finding 5: AmeriCorps members have impacts on ability for host sites and VHCB to achieve organization missions, but more updated information is needed.

Data showing the direct impacts that VHCB members have upon host site and VHCB missions is gathered primarily through the member quarterly progress reports. The primary and secondary performance metrics data collection ensures that program performance metrics are being met.

Data available for this report includes the following years: 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2020-2021. Only one of these progress report periods falls within the latest three-year evaluation period. Previous periods are included to show longer-term trends- and particularly to provide context about the impact of the COVID pandemic. Without more recent data available beyond the 2020-2021 reporting period, the following trend analyses terminate at the height of the COVID pandemic when, as we know, direct service metrics were drastically impacted.

Additionally, collection of various metrics varies over the time, with some metrics collected just once and others collected two, three or up to all four of the available reporting periods. Please note, the percent change analyses for each metric utilize the oldest and newest available data points for that metric.

Human Impact Indicators

Program metrics relating to human impacts include the number of people having received housing, financial and independent living services, and those receiving environmental stewardships education. Nearly all of the human services provision metrics that were able to be analyzed over time showed marked decreases in the number of those served between earlier periods and 2020-2021 due, presumably, to the impact of the COVID pandemic. Of note- veterans and military families saw increased service provision by total numbers served between the earliest reporting period (2016-2017) and the 2020-2021 period. Even these, however, decreased in 2020-2021 when compared to the other recent reporting periods.

The following data points show numbers served for each program area, as submitted through progress reports. The following section is numbers heavy and not able to provide current information on programs. However, the data is still included and it is important to note the diversity of operational subject areas and specified populations served, highlighting the diversity of programs VHCB AmeriCorps serves across Vermont.

Housing Services

Economically disadvantaged individuals including homeless individuals, receiving housing placement services.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
3,224	2,771	NA	2,457	-24%

Economically disadvantaged individuals, including the homeless, transitioned into safe, healthy, affordable housing.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
776	333	NA	410	-47%

Number of all individuals receiving services to remain in their housing.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	NA	NA	603	NA

Financial Services

Economically disadvantaged individuals receiving financial literacy services.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
1,190	1257	NA	134	-89%

Demonstrating improved financial literacy.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	488	NA	38	-92%

Units of information disseminated, aimed at improving financial knowledge.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
7,359	5736	NA	1,724	-77%

Individuals that received job placement services such as job seeking help, resume/application assistance, training, etc.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
195	732	158	119	-39%

Individuals with improved access to healthy foods or improved food security.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
4,626	6,952	3,043	2,858	-38%

Independent Living Services

The following independent living metrics are new to the progress report data collection in the last available 2020-2021 reporting period. These are not able to be analyzed and can only provide a baseline of new service provision that began during the height of the COVID pandemic.

Older adults /disabilities receiving services to live independently.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	NA	NA	474	NA

Reported having increased ability to live independently.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	NA	NA	215	NA

Number of individuals receiving independent-living or residential services.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	1355	NA	NA	NA

Access to food/nutrition and/or live independently.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	NA	NA	706	NA

Specified Populations Served

Veterans and military families saw increased service provision by total numbers served between the earliest reporting period (2016-2017) and the 2020-2021 period. Even these, however, decreased in 2020-2021 when compared to the other recent reporting periods.

Homeless individuals that received housing, resident, employment services.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
755	932	NA	458	-39%

Homeless families that received housing, resident, employment services.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
127	98	NA	34	-73%

Veterans who received housing services including housing placement, financial counseling, case management, etc.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
59	107	NA	53	-10%

Number of Veterans receiving services.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
48	142	122	67	+40%

Number of military families receiving services.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
9	21	15	11	+22%

Number of individuals receiving services to prevent or treat drug use or addiction.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	77	NA	NA	NA

The number of individuals that received services at least 3 times.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	4773	NA	NA	NA

The number of individuals that are over the age of 65 and/or a person living with a disability.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	427	NA	NA	NA

Environmental Stewardship Education

A very specific category of those served with environmental stewardship education- those under 18 years of age- experienced a marked increase during the 2020-2021 COVID pandemic reporting period. There was also an increase in the 2020-2021 reporting period among those reporting they would "...change behavior within one year in order to better protect the environment and/or reduce energy consumption."

Individuals receiving environmental education or training in environmental stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
23581	13074	11932	NA	-49%

Of the individuals receiving environmental education or training in environmental stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices, the number that were elderly, living with a disability, living in poverty, or minorities?

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
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NA	NA	4651	165	-96%
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Of the individuals receiving environmental education or training in environmental stewardship, those that were under 18.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
11219	8325	8214	22260	+98%

Individuals with an increase in knowledge of environmental stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices based on administered pre/post tests.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
459	711	NA	NA	+55%

Individuals that reported a change in behavior or intent to change behavior within one year to better protect the environment and/or reduce energy consumption.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
529	727	NA	807	+53%

Housing Impact Indicators

There are two indicators specific to physical housing infrastructure impacts- both relating to physical housing changes for efficiency/weatherization actions. Both indicators follow the prevailing trend in decreased service provision during the 2020-2021 reporting period.

Number of housing units that have received services intended to improve energy efficiency and/or reduce carbon emissions.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
514	498	491	211	-59%

Units of housing improved or made available such as through landlord negotiation, weatherization, home repairs, etc.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
245	421	NA	132	-46%

Recreation & Parks Infrastructure Impact Indicators

While the total number of acres of parks or other public lands that were stewarded decreased in the 2020-2021 time period, the total number of acres improved increased slightly in 2020-2021 and the total number of trails stewarded also increased, perhaps reflecting the ability of these

programs to sustain and even grow during a period when indoor human interactions were discouraged and often replaced by safer outdoor interactions.

Total number of acres of parks or other public lands that were treated/stewarded:

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
34706	10980	12115	9044	-74%

Number of acres that improved according to the host sites land management plan/goals:

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
3587	3011	3545	3776	+5%

Number of miles of trails/paths that were created, maintained, or otherwise stewarded.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
120	154	450	134	+11%

Natural Environment Impact Indicators

Each of the three indicators in this service category also experienced declines in the 2020-2021 service period, though the number of acres stewarded to improve water quality decreased only marginally from the 2016-2017 reporting period and did increase from the other two reporting periods.

Number of miles of rivers, shoreline, or other waterways that were maintained, cleaned, or otherwise stewarded.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
106	87	378	26	-76%

Number of acres of land or waterways that were stewarded with an intent to improve water quality.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
4066	29202	2912	3775	-7%

Number of trees planted and/or maintained.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
15755	11867	3784	1311	-92%

Program Indicators

All program delivery indicators increased between the 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 reporting periods, with the exception of the number of hours dedicated to RARE Opportunity which experienced a decline between the 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 reporting periods.

How many books did you review this quarter as part of the AmeriCorps Book Club, if any?

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
24	NA	NA	26	+8%

The number of hours you dedicated to R.A.R.E Opportunity in this quarter.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
110	NA	NA	81	-26%

Total amount of funds raised, including donations, grant procurement, In-Kind donations value, etc.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
\$26,454	\$37,679	\$26,977	\$38,667	+46%

Fundraising increased substantially in the 2020-2021 reporting period despite the programmatic challenges presented by COVID.

Number of systems used by host sites such as information gathering, data tracking, organization outreach, community engagement, and internal communications that are improved through member service.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	NA	190	248	+31%

Number of organizations that have received capacity building services to expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of services and/or programs?

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021	Change
NA	NA	148	184	+24%

Conclusions and Recommendations

VHCB AmeriCorps provides strong and impactful services to housing and environmental initiatives in Vermont. Host sites and members alike indicate that AmeriCorps placements build skills, professional development, and a commitment to lifelong service in Vermont, and organizations that host AmeriCorps members are able to further their mission through member's participation in essential tasks. Further, VHCB AmeriCorps provides substantial support for members to find success in their placements. The following recommendations are taken from the findings of this study and intended to strengthen future relationships and effectiveness within VHCB AmeriCorps programs.

AmeriCorps Member Support

- Prioritize in-person orientations and training that allow AmeriCorps members to connect with one another.
- Consider developing opportunities for AmeriCorps members to build problem solving skills, either through training or communication with host sites to support this skill development.
- Continue to support members financially, logistically and emotionally through the challenges of finding housing for placements.

Host Site Support

- Prioritize building relationships with host sites.
- Create opportunities for host sites to connect with one another over challenges and opportunities related to hosting AmeriCorps members.
- Communicate with host site supervisors when members have reports due to VHCB AmeriCorps.
- Build capacity to collaborate with host site on recruiting members and administrative burden of hiring.

Evaluation Tools

- Standardize and simplify response scales within and across data collection forms when possible.
- Ensure response scales are appropriate to the questions.
- Eliminate metrics and survey questions that overlap or duplicate within and across data collection forms.
- Organize surveys to ensure clear and consistent subject area sections.
- Increase member exit survey response rates with incentivization.

Appendices

Appendix A: Host Site Interview Guide

Guiding research questions:

1. *How do host sites characterize host site-VHCB partnerships?*
2. *What are strengths or challenges of these partnerships?*

Introduction

Thank you so much for participating in an interview for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board AmeriCorps program evaluation. A component of the program evaluation is interested in better understanding the VHCB – host site relationship, as well as identifying areas to improve program capacity and implementation.

Your insights will be compiled with those from additional organizations to inform our analysis. We will not attribute specific quotes or information to any named source in our reporting unless explicitly requested in a follow-up communication.

I'd like to record our interview for the sole purpose of notetaking. The recording will not be shared beyond our internal project team, and I will delete it as soon as I record the notes. Is it okay to record for this purpose?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

1. To start, would you be able to describe how you work with members from VHCB AmeriCorps?
 - a. How long has this relationship lasted?
 - b. How long have you been directly involved with supervision?
2. Can you describe how this relationship has, or has not, been consistent in how you work with AmeriCorps members and the role they play in your organizations?

Thanks for that great information. I'm now going to ask you a couple of questions about the role of AmeriCorps members at your practice?

3. Can you talk about the ways that AmeriCorps members contribute to your organizations?
 - a. Is this common?
 - b. Do most members have the qualities to achieve this?
4. Can you tell me about a time that overseeing or working with AmeriCorps presented a challenging situation?
5. Is there any way you might like to see work with VHCB AmeriCorps members change?

Those are all the questions we have for you! Before we wrap up, is there anything else on your mind that you would like to discuss related to VHCB AmeriCorps?

Appendix B: AmeriCorps Member Interview Guide

Guiding research questions:

3. *To what extent do AmeriCorps members have the training and support they need from VHCB to positively contribute to their host site positions?*

Introduction

Thank you so much for participating in an interview for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board AmeriCorps program evaluation. A component of the program evaluation is interested in better understanding VHCB AmeriCorps member training, preparedness, and support from VHCB throughout placement in host-sites.

Your insights will be compiled with those from additional members to inform our analysis. We will not attribute specific quotes or information to any named source in our reporting unless explicitly requested in a follow-up communication.

I'd like to record our interview for the sole purpose of notetaking. The recording will not be shared beyond our internal project team, and I will delete it as soon as I record the notes. Is it okay to record for this purpose?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

6. To start, can you describe the placement you have with VHCB AmeriCorps?
7. What motivated you to want to pursue a position with VHCB AmeriCorps?
 - a. Did you have any specific professional development or career related goals?
8. To what extent do you feel that this experience is consistent with the skills/knowledge you hoped to gain upon entering AmeriCorps?
9. Can you describe what your relationship is like with your supervisor at your host site?
 - a. Are there ways you could see this as being stronger?
10. Can you describe what your relationship is like with your supervisors at VHCB AmeriCorps?
 - a. Are there ways you could see this as being stronger?

Those are all the questions we have for you! Before we wrap up, is there anything else on your mind that you would like to discuss related to VHCB AmeriCorps?

Appendix C: AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey

2021-2022 VHCB Program Exit Survey

Please use this survey to tell us about your AmeriCorps experience. Results of this survey will be used to provide feedback to our grantors on program performance and to improve the program in future years.

Which statement best summarizes your experience with the VHCB AmeriCorps program?

At times, it fell below my expectations
It greatly exceeded my expectations
It met my expectations
It often exceeded my expectations

Please explain your reasons for selecting the response above by indicating the degree to which each of the following statements applies to your experience as a member.

- My sponsor organization was well-prepared for my arrival in terms of having a clear assignment for me and the on-going ability to support my daily efforts.
- VHCB AmeriCorps provided training that was useful to my general personal and/or professional development.
- During my tenure I contributed to the maintenance/expansion of programs/services offered by my sponsor organization.
- During my tenure I was able to create new and/or enhanced systems/practices which enabled my sponsor organization to better fulfill its mission.
- Being a VHCB AmeriCorps member gave me a greater understanding of the challenges facing Vermont and the organizations attempting to address them.
- I was able to acquire new skills as an outcome of my service as a VHCB AmeriCorps member.
- Being a VHCB AmeriCorps member contributed to my ethic of engaging in lifelong service and volunteerism.
- I actively participated in VHCB AmeriCorps trainings, events, and program initiatives.

Somewhat False

Somewhat True
Totally False
Totally True

Please tell us more about any skills you may have acquired or improved during your tenure as a VHCB AmeriCorps member.

- Interpersonal communication and working relationships.
- Personal time management and the ability to organize tasks.
- Problem solving and the ability to create successful strategies in the face of change/adversity.
- Effective communication and public speaking to groups of people.
- Community organizing.
- Use of technology to fulfill your responsibilities.
- Civic engagement/Knowing how to make a difference in the community.
- I am better equipped to secure employment.

Improved Greatly
Improved Little
Improved Some
Not Improved

Please list any skills you improved or gained while serving as a VHCB AmeriCorps Member, including professional, leadership, technical, or other.

Please list any skills you wish you could have acquired or further improved during your tenure as a VHCB AmeriCorps member:

How would you sum up your contribution to your sponsor organization?

My contribution enabled my sponsoring organization to take an important step forward in its development that would not have been possible but for my term of service. [Examples might include improved fundraising, improvement of service delivery, etc.]
My efforts filled an operations gap that otherwise would not have been covered.
While helpful, in reality my work supplemented the core operations of my sponsor and can readily be continued by another member or through direct employment.
For various reasons, I was never able to make as significant a contribution as I had hoped. [Please explain below]

Describe your level of contribution in your own words.

As a result of your participation in the VHCB AmeriCorps program, please tell us how true each of these statements is regarding you.

- I have a deeper understanding or knowledge of the issues faced in Vermont communities.
- I am more effective in addressing issues facing my community.
- I will become more involved in local, national and/or global issues.
- I have a greater understanding of how non-profits and public entities work.
- I am inspired to volunteer and/or participate in service in the future.
- I have created or grown my personal/professional network.
- I was supported by my fellow AmeriCorps Members and/or could use my fellow members as a resource throughout my service.

False
Somewhat True
True
Somewhat False

Please share any other comments about your AmeriCorps experience not included above.

Review of Host Site Supervisor

Please be honest and thoughtful and supply additional documentation if necessary. This is meant as a tool to evaluate supervisory capabilities for next year. This evaluation will remain confidential unless you give permission for us to share with the supervisor.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS- Site and project information, style, listening abilities, one-on-one communication, clear expectations, evaluation, creates an atmosphere of conflict/crisis prevention, etc.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT- Availability, flexibility, teamwork, ideas, feedback, strategizing, encouragement, recognition, professionalism, training opportunities, etc.

KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT OF AMERICORPS REQUIREMENTS- Released Member for AmeriCorps events, monitored hours, maintained weekly meetings, supported/encouraged participation in AmeriCorps initiatives, aware of AmeriCorps rules and regulations.

Exceptional
Very Good/Notable
Good/Competent

Could use improvement
Unacceptable

STRENGTHS: What does your site supervisor do best? What do you appreciate about your supervisor?

WEAKNESSES: What could your site supervisor do to be more effective? In what areas would you like to see improvement and why?

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOST SITE: What improvements could your Host Site for hosting the next AmeriCorps member?

Member Reflection

Please give yourself adequate time to reflect on these questions. Your answers will help you to reflect on your experience and help us to better support other members in the coming years. Thank You for your time, effort and consideration of this.

How will what you learned and/or gained as a result of your service this year help in your professional and/or career development?

What part of your term of service are you most proud of and why?

What were your greatest challenges this year, and how did you overcome them?

How have you grown or developed as an individual through your service?

What advice would you give to AmeriCorps site supervisors to help improve the service experience for AmeriCorps members?

What suggestions would you make to improve the VHCB AmeriCorps Program?

Which was your favorite AmeriCorps sponsored training or event?

List any trainings or events that you wish would have been offered by AmeriCorps:

What are your next steps?

- Obtain employment work.
- Obtain employment work in Vermont.
- Become employed with my sponsoring organization.
- Become Employed in a field relevant to my AmeriCorps service.
- Become employed in non-profit, public, or social sector.
- Attend undergraduate school.
- Attend graduate school.
- Attend undergraduate or graduate school in Vermont.
- Continue with VHCB AmeriCorps for another term.
- Continue with another AmeriCorps program.
- Apply/participate in the Peace Corps
- Participate in another service program including the military, NGO, or other volunteer program.
- Rather not share.

How has your AmeriCorps Experience influenced your next steps?

Would you recommend VHCB AmeriCorps to others?

No
Undecided
Yes

Appendix D: AmeriCorps Member Progress Reports

Compiled from 2017-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2020-2021 reports.

I confirm that I have referred to the Performance Measure Information in section 5 of the VHC AmeriCorps Member Handbook that was given to me as part of my AmeriCorps Orientation. Additionally, I acknowledge: -Data is only to be reported once per service term and should not be duplicated from preceding quarterly reports. This report does not include figures recorded in previous reports submitted in the current service term. -Please DO count anything from previous quarters that was missed, overlooked, or otherwise not counted. -Members serving at a host site with multiple AmeriCorps members should work with the other members to ensure double-counting does not occur. Members may submit a joint report. -Data logs and documentation should be stored at the host site and be accessible to AmeriCorps Program Staff if need be. -Data (Individuals, acres, units, etc.) may be counted in multiple questions and/or categories in this report. -Data from ISP and other service activities outside of normal host site duties should be included in this report. -Be as qualitative as possible in text responses. -Do not leave any questions blank. Use "0" for questions that do not apply to you.

Human Impact Indicators

Housing Services

- Economically disadvantaged individuals including homeless individuals, receiving housing placement services.
- Economically disadvantaged individuals, including the homeless, transitioned into safe, healthy, affordable housing.
- Number of all individuals receiving services to remain in their housing.

Financial Services

- Economically disadvantaged individuals receiving financial literacy services.
- Demonstrating improved financial literacy.
- Units of information disseminated, aimed at improving financial knowledge.
- Individuals that received job placement services such as job seeking help, resume/application assistance, training, etc.
- Individuals with improved access to healthy foods or improved food security.

Independent Living Services

- Older adults /disabilities receiving services to live independently.
- Reported having increased ability to live independently.
- Number of individuals receiving independent-living or residential services.
- Access to food/nutrition and/or live independently.

Specified Populations Served

- Homeless individuals that received housing, resident, employment services.
- Homeless families that received housing, resident, employment services.
- Veterans who received housing services including housing placement, financial counseling, case management, etc.
- Number of Veterans receiving services.
- Number of military families receiving services.
- Number of individuals receiving services to prevent or treat drug use or addiction.
- The number of individuals that received services at least 3 times.
- The number of individuals that are over the age of 65 and/or a person living with a disability.

Environmental Stewardship Education

- Individuals receiving environmental education or training in environmental stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices.
- Of the individuals receiving environmental education or training in environmental stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices, the number that were elderly, living with a disability, living in poverty, or minorities?
- Of the individuals receiving environmental education or training in environmental stewardship, those that were under 18.
- Individuals with an increase in knowledge of environmental stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices based on administered pre/post tests.
- Individuals that reported a change in behavior or intent to change behavior within one year in order to better protect the environment and/or reduce energy consumption.
- Individuals who completed pre/post tests to assess improved knowledge and/or Individuals that were surveyed for a change in behavior or the intent to change behavior.

Housing Impact Indicators

- Number of housing units that have received services intended to improve energy efficiency and/or reduce carbon emissions.
- Units of housing improved or made available such as through landlord negotiation, weatherization, home repairs, etc.

Recreation & Parks Infrastructure Impact Indicators

- Total number of acres of parks or other public lands that were treated/stewarded:
- Number of acres that were assessed by the host site as improved according to the host sites land management plan/goals:
- Number of miles of trails/paths that were created, maintained, or otherwise stewarded.

Natural Environment Impact Indicators

- Number of miles of rivers, shoreline, or other waterways that were maintained, cleaned, or otherwise stewarded.
- Number of acres of land or waterways that were stewarded with an intent to improve water quality.
- Number of trees planted and/or maintained.
- Managed or monitored acres.

Program Indicators

- How many books did you review this quarter as part of the AmeriCorps Book Club, if any?
- The number of hours you dedicated to R.A.R.E Opportunity in this quarter.
- Total amount of funds raised, including donations, grant procurement, In-Kind donations value, etc.
- Number of systems used by host sites such as information gathering, data tracking, organization outreach, community engagement, and internal communications that are improved through member service.
- Number of organizations that have received capacity building services to expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of services and/or programs?