

Grant Continuation Assessment and Performance Report

Task Force Final Recommendation:	Forward to CNCS recommendation for funding full continuation request (see page 8)
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Legal Applicant:	Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
Program/Project Name:	Maine Conservation Corps

	Yes	No
Legal Applicant CCR on SAM is active	✓	
Legal applicant is not on federal excluded parties list in SAM	✓	

	From (date)	To (date)
Grant Period (full 3 year time)	Jan 1, 2019	Dec 31, 2021
Continuation period covered by request	Jan 1, 2020	Dec 31, 2020
Performance period under review *	Jan 1, 2018	Dec 31, 2018 *period is final year of prior grant. New grant has not begun so there is no performance to report on. New grant did make changes to model.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

(Executive Summary from original application)

The Maine Conservation Corps proposes to have 109 AmeriCorps members who will complete vital environmental stewardship activities throughout the State of Maine, with a focus on counties exhibiting the highest levels of poverty and simultaneously the lowest population levels. AmeriCorps members will be both the providers and beneficiaries of service, completing stewardship initiatives, while receiving job training and skill development. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for treating or constructing 200 miles of trail with 40 disadvantaged individuals completing job readiness training as AmeriCorps members. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage 700 community volunteers who will be engaged in skill development activities to perpetuate the stewardship efforts of members. This program will concentrate on the CNCS focus areas of Environmental Stewardship and Economic Opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$660,224 will be matched with \$688,256 in public funding and \$654,523 in private funding and \$109,993 of in-kind contributions.

(From 2018-2019 continuation narrative field)

The opportunity performance measure (O12) and applicant determined outcome were removed in accordance with CNCS instructions. Narrative sections and the logic model continue to reflect O12 as an objective of Maine Conservation Corps.

The budget was modified to include fees associated with criminal history checks. The CNCS rate of \$54 was added to the Maine rate of \$31 for a total of \$85 per covered position. All 109 AmeriCorps members and 4 Team Leaders were included in the calculation of covered positions. Team Leaders are seasonal staff. If Team Leaders return in subsequent years, their break in employment is beyond 120 days. The CNCS share in the executive summary was updated to align with the budget section.

No other modifications are proposed for the continuation application.

(Staff note for Commissioners)

The Corporation for National and Community Service drastically revised the national performance measures and issued the new set with the 2019 application for funds. In an unusual step, CNCS instructed all grantees – even those in the middle of grant operations – to revise their performance measures to match something in the new set. FYI, the original set now removed from Conservation Corps, read as follows:

- O12 was an output measure and read “Number of economically disadvantaged National Service Participants who are unemployed prior to their term of service.”
- Outcome was applicant determined and a slight modification of a national performance measure. The modification made it applicable to members at the end of service and read “Number of individuals who are employed, continue education, enter military or national service.”

ENROLLMENT/RECRUITMENT/RETENTION:

(Provide analysis of grantee performance in areas of recruitment, enrollment, retention.)

ME-CC filled all 81 slots for 100% enrollment. For members enrolled before the CNCS policy change (July 2, 2018), every member was enrolled within the 30 day window. In July, CNCS implemented a completely new timeline and set of pre-requisites for enrollment that gives programs fewer than 5 calendar days to enroll. ME-CC managed to meet those deadlines as well.

Retention of full-time and minimum time (summer field teams) was 100%. Four individuals left without earning an education award – 2 were half time; 2 were quarter time. Overall retention was 95.1%

As of the deadline for continuation application submission, ME-CC had reported 280 people applied to serve in their program.

COMPLIANCE:

» Program operation

The monitoring site visit for the last year of ME-CC’s 2015-2018 grant was conducted in October 2018. Only 4 minor issues were identified: the member handbook does not have instructions for members on how to request and view their personnel file; a section of the grievance procedure was omitted; and the final performance evaluation for members does not inform the member whether they have qualified for the education award or not. On the latter, there is a record in the person’s file but the importance of the evaluation is that it is a document members can keep.

The review of data management and human resources did not reveal any issues.

The program participated in meetings and trainings required by their agreement. They also conducted service projects for the national days of service.

Worth noting is that the very experienced staff opted to attend the six days of MCCS training for new grantees as a refresher.

» Member management

The ME-CC issues noted above are to be incorporated into the program year that starts January 2, 2019. ME-CC reports that recruitment is an issue. They are used to many applicants for each slot and the rate of applications submitted for 2019 openings is far below their prior experience.

ME-CC has been pro-active in handling some mental health issues that have become more prevalent among members. They participate in the national Member Assistance Program (similar to an EAP) and ensure all members can access the free assistance when needed. They have identified depression and anxiety as the most commonly appearing concerns. Staff are all trained with a program called Mental Health First Aid and they are considering extending the training to all members since the field teams are away from the office base for long stretches.

There are generally 10 field teams with staff leaders. When several leaders resigned for various reasons during the fall quarter, ME-CC reduced the number of teams in order to ensure members had appropriate supervision and support.

» Program Finances and Agency Fiscal Issues

None known or identified by MCCA. Conservation Corps was one of the programs selected for a CNCS Inspector General audit this fall. They have not had a formal exit conference with the firm the IG contracted to conduct the audit.

ME-CC met and slightly exceeded the required match. Periodic Expense Reports come in regularly but the quarterly reporting has not. MCCA staff have needed to prompt the fiscal staff.

» Performance Measures:

REMINDER – ME-CC has only reported on 3 quarters. Their 4th quarter report for the period ending 12/31 is due 1/20/19. That quarter is the final report for the grant that ran 2015-2018.

Service Activities --

EN5: Number of miles of trails or waterways (owned/maintained by national, state, county, city or tribal governments) that are created

Target: 125 miles

Actual: 233

EN5.1: Miles of trails or rivers improved

Target: 120 miles

Actual: 208

O2: Number of economically disadvantaged individuals receiving job training and other skill development services

Target: 30

Actual: 10

The challenge with this measure is that members have to self-identify as economically disadvantaged. The program has found another way to determine this and will report final accomplishment in January 2019 (their final report for the 2018 calendar year).

OUTCM17980: Number of individuals who are employed, continue education, enter military or national service

Target: 25

Actual: 12

Member Development –

MD1: Number of completed & approved Member Development Plans with at least two improvement goals (1 personal, 1 program)

Target: 38

Actual: 9

MD2: Number of individual members with improved skills, knowledge, and abilities used to carry out service assignment responsibilities and tasks.

Target: 35

Actual: 0

Report on actual not due until 4th quarter (Jan 20, 2019)

Capacity building –

G3-3.1: Number of community volunteers recruited by organizations or participants

Target: 125

Actual: 233

G3-3.3: Number of organizations implementing effective volunteer management practices

Target: 15

Actual: 0

Report on actual not due until 4th quarter (Jan 20, 2019)

PROPOSED CONTINUATION BUDGET:

As of January 2019, ME-CC will become a Fixed Amount grant recipient which means a detailed budget and financial reporting are not requirements. The program will be reimbursed based on enrollment and retention. This type of grant shifts the focus to performance results, operational compliance especially with regard to member onboarding and support, and evaluation.

The program is requesting the same number of slots (109) and MSYs (49.16) at the same cost per MSY (\$13, 429). The increased funding in the budget is a result of CNCS directing programs to add the cost of using a new criminal history background check vendor that the federal agency has mandated.

2018-2019 award: \$660,224

2019-2020 request: \$660,224 plus \$9605 for background checks

EXPANSION/SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST:

No expansion requested.

OTHER:

Ordinarily, the topics below would reference the first year of operation for the new grant. ME-CC is making some modifications to its operations but the Commission will not be able to assess those until the July report.

- » Sustainability: New and Existing Partnerships
- » Sustainability: Recognition of program in community and community participation in implementation
- » Sustainability: Increased resources (human, financial, etc.)
- » Misc. comments

2017-2018 Compliance Overview (CFRs, policies, grant provisions) Information is in grantee progress reports, eGrants member management portal, MCCS staff monitoring reports and site visits. Additional information from Grantee interviews.	Successful	Unsuccessful	Cited for problems?
AmeriCorps Members			
1. Member management requirements (except 4 items below) are compliant.	✓		
a. Member enrollment cycle completed within 30 days.	✓		
b. Member eligibility documents complete and accurate.	✓		
c. Member enrollment and retention within CNCS tolerance for variability (typically 5%). See table in below for data.	✓		
d. Member time logs are signed and approved in accordance with regulations.	✓		
2. Member training requirements are met.	✓		
3. Personnel system for program staff results in compliance with grant/contract/provisions.	✓		
4. Member host site selection, agreements, training, performance monitoring, and supervision are compliant.	✓		

5. Program administrative system results in compliance with grant regulations, contract, special terms/conditions.	✓		
6. Program Progress Reports complete, accurate, and submitted on time.	✓		
a. Needs/Service Activities performance measure targets are met or, if multi-year, on target to be met.	✓		
b. Member Development performance measure targets are met or, if multi-year, on target to be met.			Cannot determine until final report in Jan19
c. Strengthening Community performance measure targets are met or, if multi-year, on target to be met.			Cannot determine until final report in Jan19
7. Fiscal systems result in program compliance.	✓		
8. Financial reports complete, accurate, submitted on time.		✓	Program Income and AFR not filed
9. Income Reports (including cash & in-kind match) reported quarterly:		✓	
10. Adequate match reported on PER's: Overall budget <u>77.57%</u> Match in latest financial (YTD=Oct.); <u>74.24%</u> Contract rate	✓		
11. Engagement of non-AmeriCorps volunteers <u>584</u> Vol-to-date; <u>2,619</u> Hours served; <u>4.5</u> Avg hrs/vol	✓		
12. Inclusion and accessibility requirements are met.		✓	
13. Performance data system in place to track and report progress related to grant/contract data and performance measures.		✓	
Comments: Fiscal staff have already been reminded the Program Income and AFR need to be submitted quarterly. Those reports will arrive before this continuation request is reviewed.			

2017-2018 Member Data for performance period (to-date)

	Total MSYs	Total slots	1700 hr	900 hr	675 hr	450 hr	300 hr
Original Award	35.03	86	8	31		30	17
Current after <u>2</u> instances of slot conversions	34.95	81	9	32		28	12
Enrollment to-date	34.95	81	9	32		28	12
% of enrollment			100%	100%		100%	100%
Exited before service term complete				2		2	
Retention rate (%)*			100%	93.8%		92.9%	100%

*(enrollment-exit early)/enrollment=retention rate

Comments on Member Data: Overall retention rate is 95.1% and prior year retention rate was 95.5%.

Grantee Expectations and Sustainability: This information is found in Progress Reports. Additional information from Interview with Grantee. Factors related to research-based indicators of sustainability.	Exceeded	Met	Unsuccessful
• Develops community partnerships to foster community ownership, sharing of resources, service coordination and infrastructure development.		✓	
• Accesses community support for volunteer/member development and training that is beyond what was required in the program design and budget.		✓	
• Develops Oversight/Advisory Committee/Boards to effectively involve target community in implementation		✓	
• Expands the base of community volunteers as means of growing ability to deliver services		✓	
• Access additional funding from diverse sources	✓		
• Successfully expands program/site service delivery		✓	
• Access additional equipment/supplies/materials/resources/training (beyond those budgeted) to accomplish unexpected projects		✓	
• Build community awareness to advocate the importance of the project to potential supporters and general community.	✓		
Comments: Maine Conservation Corps has competed successfully for AmeriCorps funding since 1994. "Met" is a reflection of the skills and organizational development one would expect in a program this old.			

	Successful	Unsuccessful	Cited for problems?	Corrective Actions implemented?
Implementation/Operation Information compiled from staff monitoring and site visits.				
Program activities consistent with original proposal.	✓			
90% of Member assignments relate to funded priority(ies) in original proposal.	✓			
Best Practices used for Recruiting/Screening/Interviewing/Placing Applicants	✓			
Grantee commitment to effective staff development, site supervisor training, etc.	✓			
Continuous quality improvement system tracks community satisfaction with service and program's ability to meet identified need	✓			
Essential Volunteer management practices used with community volunteers.	✓			
Evaluation implementation on target and design meets evaluation requirements.	✓			
Comments: ME-CC volunteer management is largely related to events/projects that engage community volunteers in trail maintenance. The opportunity to strengthen the volunteer management capacity of the entity for which the trail was built or rehabbed is minimal. ME-CC has proposed a very strong evaluation for the coming grant cycle – very unlike the approaches they have taken before.				

Future Plans. The information is found in the Continuation Application Narrative, Budget, and Performance Measures.	Completely	Not at all	Partially	Requires correction/ add'l info?
Grantee articulates lessons learned and uses them to refine plans for the continuation year under review.		n/a		
Proposed budget complies with current regulations and limits on costs.	✓			
Proposed budget has clear explanations of expenses and is free of errors	✓			
Performance measure proposes growth targets, strong data collection plan, and accounts for a majority of ACM slots requested	Data, Member slots	PM targets		
Comments: Performance Measure targets for the year starting Jan 2019 are already 60% higher than the year ending. ME-CC has wisely not proposed an increase for the following year in light of the fact they have not begun.				

Staff Summary Recommendation	Exceeded	Met	Unsuccessful	Conditions
Compliance		✓		
Implementation/Operation		✓		
Progress on Performance Measures		✓		
Grantee Expectations and Sustainability		✓		
Future Plans		✓		
Comments: ME-CC has nearly 25 years experience as an AmeriCorps program and current staff have been with the program for 2 years. The assessment of “met” requirements is an indicator of expectations for a program with their track record. ME-CC has indicated it will continue to use the O12 performance measure as an applicant defined measure and report progress through OnCorps. It has pivoted back to its earlier mission of engaging and supporting young adults who are struggling.				

Task Force Continuation Recommendation	Authorize Proposal	Modify: Increase	Modify: Decrease	Deny Request
Budget	✓			
Volunteers/participants	✓			
Performance targets	✓			
Operating plans	✓			
Other:				

Reasons for recommendation:

Budget -

- Their budget remains acceptable with only the addition of a fee for member background checks added.
- Change in fees added per CNCS rate.
- Very little change over prior year.

Volunteers/participants –

- They are in compliance for enrollment, filling all 81 member slots.
- No modifications included in the continuation proposal.
- Program has met volunteer objectives and filled its slots. Looks like the program could focus more strongly on member skill, knowledge, and ability growth and member development plans. They seem to have fallen short on members who are employed, continue education, enter military or national service, but is this their final

Performance targets –

- They are meeting match requirements and the majority of their performance measures.
- No modifications included in the continuation proposal.
- Seem generally in line with performance. Recommend stronger emphasis on member skills.

Operating Plans –

- No major changes to assess.
- No modifications included in the continuation proposal.
- Program has had many years of success with current model.

Conditions or requirements of continuation award: None

Recommendation on Supplemental or Expansion Request: No request made.

Continuation Recommendation: Award Resources in Next 12 mo Budget Period

	CNCS	Match	Total	Cost Per Member
Financial	\$669,829	\$ n/a - fixed amount grant	\$ 669,829	\$13,625
Percentages			100%	

AmeriCorps Member Positions	Full Time	900 Hr	675 Hr	450 Hr	Min 300
Number of Slot types requested	10	20	71	8	
Member Service Years [Total: <u>49.16</u>]					

Reviewed by Grant Selection and Performance Task Force Members:

Joe Schmidt, Jonathan Barczyk, Ed Barrett

Date: January 14, 2019