

## **DRAFT Policy on one organization applying for grants from multiple Volunteer Maine Programs**

If the goal of the grant program is to expand impact and/or member positions, the program needs to clearly articulate how their use of funds will increase member impact (through increased member positions, or otherwise).

If one organization is sponsoring programs from different Volunteer Maine funding sources, care must be taken to delineate the two programs internally and externally. For example, members in each program will likely have access to different benefits and be held to different standards depending on the funding source's authorization.

The positions funded by different sources need to have different position descriptions. The majority of service activities need to be substantially different.

In grant applications, applicants will be asked to describe how the new positions will be distinguished from existing positions (or other proposed positions) and the applicant should differentiate by describing, member qualifications, core service activities, term length/intensity, and/or performance measures.

*Reviewed by the GTF on Sep 8, 2023 and recommended for adoption.*

POLICY on the minimum Stipend for Maine Climate Corps Programs, funded via MCCA grant competitions (*This does not apply to independently funded programs that are part of the Maine Climate Corps Network*).

The historic living allowance for AmeriCorps members has lagged behind Maine's minimum wage and created a situation where only individuals with other financial means can afford to serve. In order to return to the intent of National Service service (making it possible for all who want to serve to do so), the Commission requires that any grant awarded via the Maine Climate Corps competition be required to provide a living allowance/stipend to qualifying members equivalent to 212% of the Federal Poverty Line. The Commission will determine the required minimum living allowance annually prior to competitions and use the same minimum for all competitions in a program year.

REV 9/2023

## **MCCS Administrative Policy: Acceptance of Grantee Progress Reports**

Background: **The grants** administered by MCCS are monitored, in part, using a series of Progress Reports from grantees. The reporting schedule and format are described in the grant contract.

Generally, the format is an electronic reporting system that captures the number of community volunteers enlisted to assist with the project activities; the units of service accomplished or delivered during the period along with the number of beneficiaries; findings of evaluations regarding the quality and quantity of the service activities; narrative reports of progress on sustainability, training volunteers, developing partnerships, and several other areas of interest to the Commission.

One fundamental expectation of both the Commission that all information about **service members** active during the reporting period is fully and completely reported.

Policy: The Maine Commission for Community Service will not accept as “Complete” any progress report which, though filed on time, is based on incomplete, missing, or unapproved member time logs.

*Adapted 9/2023, to not be specific to AmeriCorps.*

## Maine Climate Corps Three Year Host Site Policy

It is the intent of the Maine Commission for Community Service to provide all appropriate entities with an equitable opportunity to **host Maine Climate Corps members** and to ensure that Host site member placements:

- Do not displace employee or volunteer functions,
- Do not supplant state or local funds supporting host site programs,
- Do not create dependency within the organization for the continued use of **Maine Climate Corps**
- And, instead, encourage the creation of increased capacity within the host site organization to sustain the work after the end of member placements, especially by using local volunteers

To these ends, the Commission limits its subgrantees to member placements at host sites for terms no longer than three consecutive years.

The intent of this three year rule is to encourage subgrantees and partner organizations to use the resources they have been awarded to build capacity within their organization to meet needs without state support.

It is the considered opinion of the Commission that three years is adequate time for organizations to do so. Members cannot become the equivalent of long term temporary staff positions, even for new programs addressing complex or lasting community needs. Subgrantees and local partners must work to build the capacity to sustain the effort, not simply provide a needed service for the period of funding.

### Extended placements prohibited

Programs may not continue to place members providing the same, or nearly the same service, for periods longer than three years with the same host site.

### Three year term defined

For the purpose of this policy, “three year term” means a period of three consecutive years in which a Commission funded subgrantee places members at the same host site for the purpose of engaging in service to meet a set of outcomes described in a Corporation funded grant.

### Host site defined

Host sites are geographically and programmatically distinct placement sites where members provide the majority of their service under an MOU or site agreement with a single eligible organization. This policy does not pertain to single site subgrantees, those operating a program without separate host sites and without MOU’s or host site agreements, as re-compete assessments include review of sustainability and examination of displacement and supplantation.

Compliance regulation regarding organizations with multiple members depends on whether the organization is hosting members under one or under more than one grant. Members serving to meet one set of program outcomes would fall under the three year rule. Organizations operating distinct programs would be assessed based on the prevailing program outcomes.

## Exceptions to the three year rule

The Commission recognizes that there are certain circumstances that make it overly burdensome or impossible for programs to comply with the three year host site rule. These exceptions fall into four broad categories:

1. Programs partnering with geographically isolated sites (i.e. areas of the state with so few eligible organizations capable of supporting a member, that moving members to a new host site is impractical or impossible),
2. Programs with exceedingly narrow missions or operating programs with narrow eligibility requirements (i.e. programs operating projects so specialized that there are exceptionally limited options for host site partnerships),
3. Grantee partners may serve as host sites for years 4, 5, and 6 of a re-compete application if the host site organization undertakes Service Enterprise certification beginning in year 4. Sites are expected to submit for Service Enterprise certification by the end of year five.
4. Host sites that support members serving with or at multiple work sites over time (i.e. a host site providing office space or support for a member working primarily off site with secondary sites).
  - a. Programs in this situation would need to alter the secondary sites within the three year term.

In order to keep members at host sites for longer than three years, programs need to identify the type of exception prior to the end of the three year term and describe in writing to the **Contract Administrator** the circumstances of the exception and request an exemption from the three year rule. Requests must include a description of the capacity building efforts and an estimate of the length of the exception.

The Commission also recognizes that unique and unforeseen circumstances may arise and therefore will also entertain petitions for exception to the three year rule that do not fit into the identified exception categories. Petitions must include the specific circumstances, the rationale for exemption, capacity building efforts and an estimate of the length of the exception.

## Application of Policy

Three year rule is a compliance item. Violations of the rule will be a factor considered in continuation and re-compete assessments. Flagrant disregard of the rule could result in withholding of grant funding up to and including termination of grant funding.

## Dissemination of Policy

This policy is available to the general public, applicants and programs and is shared during training of all new subgrantees.

Revised: September 2023

## Volunteer Maine, the state service commission Policy on Grant Continuations

The **multi-year grant programs** administered by Volunteer Maine presently operate under the expectation that each year after the initial award the grantee will submit a detailed request for funds and other resources. The level of the annual request is determined by the projected needs outlined in the initial grant application. The annual review process will consider each request and the review findings will become the basis for annual grant awards of funds and other resources. This policy reflects, and is integrally connected to, the Commission's approach to grantmaking and formal statements of Expectations of Grantees.

The Maine Commission for Community Service is committed to being a strong steward of public resources and ensuring that investments in grant awards are contributing to the vision, values, and goals of the Commission as well as its funding partners. Therefore, Grantee performance shall be explicitly considered in annual grant continuation reviews and be a major factor in determining subsequent awards in a grant cycle.

Annual grant continuation reviews will take into account

- the Grantee's compliance with relevant fiscal, management, and program performance regulations;
- the demonstrated capacity of the program to meet grant performance expectations as outlined in the grant proposal that was originally funded; and
- the documentation provided in the continuation application and materials.

In weighing these factors, as well as any others that may be specific to the grant program itself, the Commission will assign equal weight to the factors related to quality and the factors related to compliance.

Commission decisions about the level of funding and resources to award each year may include:

- awarding the resources requested in the original grant application;
- reducing the award based on its assessment of the grantees capacity to use and manage grant resources; or
- offering (when available) expanded resources based on the Commission's assessment of the grantee's capacity to use and manage grant resources.

In the event that the overall amount of funds or resources available to the Commission substantially changes, the review process also will determine the degree to which any or all grant awards will be reduced or increased.