

Frequently Asked Questions

BIG SKY WATERSHED CORPS



Since the program's start in 2014, BSWC members have:

- Educated more than **165,000 community members**
- Recruited and managed over **15,000 volunteers**
- Improved more than **625 miles of Montana waterways**

All while building skills, gaining confidence, and encouraging partnerships across Montana communities.



*Tools for Living,
Experience for Life*

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The Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) will assist watershed communities to make a measurable difference in local conservation efforts while strengthening the experience of young professionals.

AmeriCorps members will focus on watershed research, planning and project implementation, watershed education, outreach, and community engagement.

BENEFITS

What are the benefits of being a host site?

Host sites will gain the assistance of a highly motivated college graduate (multiple members per site is possible) to assist with project implementation and program capacity building. Host supervisors will also benefit from training sessions provided by the program.

What are the benefits of being a corps member?

While in service, a member will receive student loan forbearance (for qualified loans), health insurance, eligibility for SNAP benefits and a bi-weekly living stipend of \$1,200. Members will also receive an education award of \$7,395 upon successful completion of the program.

PROGRAM LOGISTICS

Who is administering the Big Sky Watershed Corps?

MCC will disburse member stipends, health insurance and benefits and will conduct programmatic monitoring and evaluation.

When will the member start and end their term of service with the host site?

Members will complete a minimum of 1700 hours between January and the end of November.

Who will pay for the member's health insurance, workers compensation, etc.?

MCC will disburse member stipends, health insurance and benefits, conduct pro-programmatic monitoring and evaluation, and is responsible for workers' compensation. MCC will also help identify and develop potential host sites and member projects.

What is the frequency and duration of mandatory trainings during a member's service?

Four training events will be provided. There will be three 3-day events and one 2-day event. These include orientation (January), education and outreach skills training (February), technical skills training (May), and a graduation celebration of service (November).

Who covers the cost of the trainings?

Member transportation, food, and lodging will be provided by the program for mandatory BSWC training events.

Are supervisors required to attend any trainings?

Yes. Supervisors are required to attend two days of the Orientation training in mid-January.

BSWC: Frequently Asked Questions

Is vacation and sick leave included in the 1700 hours that a member will serve?

Yes. Members receive 5 days of vacation. Hosts determine the timing of vacation/sick leave/holidays.

Who will recruit corps members?

MCC will manage recruiting, however, host sites are encouraged to recommend local individuals for consideration.

Will the host site be involved in the interview process?

Yes. Host sites are responsible for contacting and interviewing candidates that have passed an initial screening by MCC, and make all final decisions. If requested, MCC may place members without host site review.

What happens if a member needs to leave the program early?

A member can be replaced if less than 30% of the term has been completed [510 hours].

REQUIREMENTS

How much does it cost to host a Big Sky Watershed Corps Member?

Host sites are responsible for a cash cost share of \$18,500 per member. In addition, hosts will provide a vehicle with gas or reimburse members for work-related travel at the IRS rate. Host sites are also encouraged to add additional cost share that can be utilized to provide a housing stipend directly to the BSWC member.

Is there any funding assistance available to lower the cost share?

Yes, program partners have secured some financial resources to assist host sites that are unable to meet the full match requirement and are committed to identifying other sources of support.

Does the entire cost share need to be paid up front?

No. Half of the cost share is required initially and the second half within the first 6 months. MCC will work with organizations to create an appropriate payment schedule that meets both programmatic and host site needs.

How much supervisory support needs to be provided to a member?

A minimum of 5 hours per week but hosts are encouraged to provide ongoing supervision and mentorship.

What equipment needs to be provided to a member?

Members need suitable office space with a telephone, computer, and internet access.

OBJECTIVES

Can a member be used strictly for daily office tasks?

Activities such as answering the phone, making copies, typing, and filing may be necessary but should not form the focus of a corps member's work.

What objectives must host sites meet?

Member activities must help meet core programmatic goals of watershed health and protection, education and outreach, member development, and volunteer generation. Host organizations that also clearly demonstrate a commitment to mentorship of the member(s) will be given priority.

What are sample deliverables for program objectives?

Member deliverables will include: the number of volunteers recruited/trained/managed; the number of miles of waterways improved; and the development and delivery of educational materials/individuals educated, workshops, and events with students and community members.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
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The Big Sky Watershed Corps supports local efforts for healthy watershed communities.