



EVALUATION REPORT

Montana Conservation Corps Program Evaluation Alumni Career Outcomes Survey

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Executive Summary

The Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) serves hundreds of young adults each year by engaging them in hands-on conservation efforts across Montana. As interns, field crew members, and program or field leaders, individuals gain career-advancing skills while bolstering leadership and civic engagement through service (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024). This evaluation focused primarily on measuring the career outcomes and aspirations of MCC adult programming alumni.

The evaluation results found that most MCC adult programming alumni report high success levels in discerning their preferred career paths, obtaining important career skills, and full-time work shortly after their participation. While some negative responses and skill acquisition shortcomings were identified, they were relatively minor and do not tarnish MCC's reputation and generally impressive performance results.

The evaluators recommend that MCC consider fine-tuning its curriculum and analyzing its organizational culture to address the few identified shortcomings and consider establishing (or guiding the establishment of) a professional development/networking organization specifically for MCC alumni. The combination of these actions may contribute to even greater long-term career success for MCC program participants.



Introduction

The Montana Conservation Corps is a conservation-oriented nonprofit, whose mission statement reads, “Inspiring young people through hands-on conservation service to be leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens who improve their communities” (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024). Through the medium of meaningful and physical conservation work, the MCC seeks to develop or increase a variety of skills in the young people who participate in their programming. Improving confidence, developing practical skills, fostering leadership, and communication competency of participants are some of the many desired results that MCC hopes to generate. These skills serve not only to develop the skills and competencies of adulthood in the short term but also to improve the long-term outcomes of participants in the years following their terms of service. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative metrics measuring MCC’s impact on these various skills, competencies, and attributes is beneficial for MCC as they provide the context and data necessary to draft meaningful and useful applications for grant funding (which is a vital source of MCC revenue), communicate with stakeholders, and to interact with potential donors. Furthermore, the results provide valuable evidence to future youth about the benefits of participating in MCC programs.

The Montana Conservation Corps has cooperated with Montana State University to receive evaluations from graduate students in the past, the results of which have been used to inform decisions regarding curricula and other components of MCC’s operations. In continuing this partnership, this evaluation was conducted by three Masters of Public

Administration graduate students (“Evaluators”) at Montana State University (Flor Vega-Castillo, Tracy Gatlin, and Ryan Stagg), as part of their Spring 2024 Program Evaluation Course. The Evaluators worked closely with two MCC staff members (Brad Koontz, Statewide Program Manager, and Stacey Williams, Vice President for Programs) (“Representatives”) throughout the process. Through detailed and iterative dialogue between Representatives and Evaluators over several weeks, some of MCC’s main concerns were identified:

1. The impact that MCC’s adult programming had on participants’ career outcomes, and
2. The proportion of MCC adult programs alumni that pursue careers in conservation or environmentally related fields due to their term(s) of service.

As a result of that deliberation and dialogue, a primary evaluation question was identified:

How has participation in MCC Programming affected participant’s career outcomes and career aspirations?

To evaluate this question, Representatives and Evaluators decided to investigate MCC’s young adult and leadership development programs by administering a survey to alumni who completed their last term of service in a five-year period, between 2018 and 2022.

Purpose and Context

The Montana Conservation Corps was established as a small organization in 1990 and fielded the first work crews in 1991. Shortly afterward, in 1993, MCC secured

AmeriCorps funding, which effectively doubled its budget and gave it the necessary capacity to grow over the next several decades (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024). The course of that growth has led to the MCC's preeminence among conservation corps nationwide. Due to its success and popularity, MCC established partnerships with various organizations, including businesses, non-profits, and federal agencies such as REI, the National Park Foundation, and the US Forest Service (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024).

As with any nonprofit funded (at least in part) by public dollars, MCC is subject to reporting and budgetary requirements established by the organizations that provide grant funding. Basic organizational and accounting information is captured annually through the mandatory IRS Form 990, but the genuine interpersonal and environmental impacts of the MCC are not thoroughly accounted for through that process. In an increasingly competitive environment, nonprofits must demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs to obtain scarce financial resources from government agencies (Ebrahim, 2016).

Therefore, this evaluation's primary goal is to gather data illustrating the effectiveness of MCC adult programming in impacting the career and conservation outcomes and aspirations of program alumni. As a result of this evaluation report, MCC staff will be better prepared to consider potential improvements to their existing programming and curricula and demonstrate the identified outcomes in more detailed,

effective, and compelling grant funding applications. Additionally, the results will be used in MCC marketing materials, strengthening the communication of the program's success.

Stakeholder Analysis

The Montana Conservation Corps engages with, depends on, and benefits a wide variety of stakeholders, both public and private. In analyzing these stakeholders and their relative importance and influence on MCC operations, we find first and foremost AmeriCorps. MCC first obtained AmeriCorps funding in 1993, which effectively doubled its budget (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024). This funding support has continued to the present day. As a federal agency, AmeriCorps is particularly interested in detailed studies and reporting that indicate their return on investment (ROI) to ensure that public dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively. For example, AmeriCorps recently completed an ROI study in September of 2023 which concluded that investment in MCC “results in favorable impacts, especially under the medium- and long-term scenarios as benefits accumulate” (ICF Incorporated, 2023). As one of MCC's primary funding sponsors, MCC's staff and board of directors have a significant interest in producing results through reporting and relevant studies that respond to AmeriCorps's mission.

Other federal agencies such as the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the US Forest Service work intimately with the MCC through mutually beneficial partnerships and contracts (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024). An example of these relationships is via a payment for services model, in which these federal land agencies compensate MCC for its work on creating and maintaining trail systems, along

with other related conservation work. This provides another valuable source of funding for MCC's operations and highlights the importance of maintaining both those relationships and a strong corps of volunteers and staff so that necessary work can be completed.

Current, past, and future MCC program participants are also important stakeholders to consider. A significant portion of MCC's curriculum includes its Leadership Development Program (LDP), which works to mold young adults into leaders with interpersonal, team building, civic engagement, and practical skills (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024). Assuming this curriculum functions as intended, alumni will experience relative success in their future careers and engage in conservation work. This population directly influences future participants through word of mouth, and potential for pay-it-forward donations. This evaluation serves to investigate that question and identify any relevant patterns that emerge in the data.

Lastly, donors represent another category of financial support for MCC, and this evaluation will provide evidence of the program's meaningful outcomes, a narrative vital to securing donations. Access to clear and understandable data describing the impact that MCC has on participants and conservation efforts enables MCC staff to create marketing and reporting materials that can be utilized to solicit future donors and encourage current donors to continue their contributions.

It is also worth acknowledging the general public's stake in MCC's operations. For example, MCC has built/maintained over 1,700 miles of trails, treated/monitored over

3,500 acres of invasive weeds, and reduced wildfire fuels in over 400 acres of land, along with many more accomplishments (Montana Conservation Corps, 2022). This results in clear public benefits in many ways, such as providing recreation opportunities to the public, reducing wildland firefighting costs, and protecting and enhancing the natural environment. As a result, the public has a significant stake in the success and longevity of the Montana Conservation Corps.

The stakeholders for whom this evaluation is primarily intended are Montana Conservation Corps staff. As the agents with the greatest ability to implement necessary changes, incorporate resulting data into public reports, and hold the direct responsibility of applying for grant funding, their stake in MCC's operations is crucial. Therefore, the Evaluators have drafted this report with the express intent of creating a product that can be clearly understood and utilized by staff to affect organizational change, increase longevity and sustainability, and understand the strengths and weaknesses of their adult programs.

Literature Review

Conservation Corps programs across the United States, when studied, have routinely demonstrated that participants report a combination of professional and social improvements which directly result in improved career outcomes. A study of California Conservation Corps (CCC) participants asserted that long-term positive social impact depends heavily on receiving employment early in their working lives. That same study concluded that participation in the CCC “facilitated significant gains in self-worth and

professional growth for this under-skilled and underserved age cohort,” specifically youth (Demsey, 2012, p. iii). Other studies indicated that participation in service-learning resulted in higher starting salaries and reduced time to receive a first raise for program graduates. (Matthews et al., 2015). Such a broad relation to conservation, however, should not necessarily be taken for granted. Studies analyzing combinations of contextual factors such as conservation policy implementation modes have proved difficult to measure due to a lack of data and confounding variables. To understand the effects of policy more concretely on conservation efforts, more research is needed (Börner et al., 2020). Therefore, the literature implies that more study into the effects of organizations like Conservation Corps is necessary to better understand their impact on both conservation and participants.

As a starting point for the survey design, the Evaluators used MCC’s post-service reports from 2022 and 2023 to help determine how demographic questions should be phrased, and what sort of personal impact measures have been used in the past. This basic framework was then built upon using measures and phrasing found throughout the literature (Montana Conservation Corps, 2022) (Montana Conservation Corps, 2023).

In the 2000s, alumni studies at universities were a rapidly growing field resulting from a combination of internal and external demands for assessments. The content of these studies often analyzes factors such as job satisfaction, income, occupational attainment, and engagement in civic and political activities (Cabrera et al., 2003). When determining how best to measure MCC participants’ career outcomes, the Evaluators

leaned heavily on university-designed questionnaires and outcome studies for both question content and organizational flow in designing the career outcomes survey. The Evaluators also note that, like universities, non-profits face a challenging variety of demands for assessment, including from donors/funders, clients, and their own staff and Board of Directors (Ebrahim, 2016).

An analysis of multiple studies was used to create an effective, reliable, and valid survey design. Some of the information collected by these studies was purely quantitative, such as income evaluation, while others were qualitative/mixed-methods and sought to measure outcomes like job satisfaction. Below is a brief explanation from where different survey elements were drawn, whether used for inspiration or direct content:

- Salary and weekly work hours (Kool et al., 2016).
- Perceived employability and career motivation (Akkermans et al, 2012).
- Job satisfaction, income, occupational attainment, civic and political engagement, and tolerance for diversity (Cabrera et al., 2003).
- Conservation behavior, environmental career, environmental awareness, interests in career, ability to work with others, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and active involvement in natural resources work (Driver & Johnson, 1984). This questionnaire was specifically studying long-term benefits of participation in the Youth Conservation Corps.

- Independence, responsibility, teamwork, and affinity for nature (Prechel, 2015).
This questionnaire was utilized as a pre- and post-test for Youth Conservation Corps participants.
- Effective communication, teamwork, and leadership (Manathunga et al., 2009).
- Reflection on motivation, reflection on qualities, networking, self-profiling, work exploration, career control, perceived employability, and work engagement (Akkermans et al., 2014).

The literature cautions against utilization of the same training programs and performance measures over time and highlights the importance of constant reevaluation and improvement (Manathunga et al., 2009). Some confounding variables, such as current market conditions, can have a dramatic effect on both short- and long-term participant success (such as initial employment). To further complicate matters, measures of those market conditions are oftentimes shaky at best (Sagen et al., 2000). The Evaluators therefore caution readers to take the results of this career pathways survey within the context of these limitations and consider extraneous factors that may influence MCC alumni.

Of interest in the literature is evidence supporting the value of alumni networking communities. An effective alumni network/community has the potential to serve as an asset for “conserving institutional resources, supporting members and contributing new resources for alumni-institutional professional development” (Bui & Jeng, 2021, p. 46). At present, MCC maintains an alumni resources page with numerous career resources but

has not established or facilitated the creation of an alumni network to serve broader professional development purposes (Montana Conservation Corps, 2024).

Evaluation Design

The Evaluators and Representatives used a summative evaluation to assess the MCC Young Adult and Leadership Development programs' outcomes. A survey instrument, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, was selected to understand the career outcomes of the MCC programming. An initial 30-question survey was created in Qualtrics and pilot tested to all (approximately 45) MCC staff on March 14, 2024. The pilot test closed on March 15 with 20 responses. Feedback from MCC staff aided in the collaborative decisions to improve clarity and reduce the survey length. Six questions were removed, and the structure of several questions were revised to improve survey flow and response.

The final Qualtrics survey consisted of a maximum of 24- questions, depending on question logic. Of the total questions, 21 questions were quantitative in nature, primarily using a variety of multi-choice style questions to capture career experiences of the alumni. Nominal (e.g. Yes/ No), Ordinal (e.g. Likert) and Interval/ Ration (e.g. Last year of service) were all included within the survey. Three qualitative questions were included to provide context and internal reliability in combination with quantitative data results. For these responses an essay text box provided space for participants to describe their individual and nuanced experience. Overall, it was estimated that the survey would take 8-12

minutes to complete. A target sample of 180 alumni was sought from the population of 1,379 individuals who completed their last term of service between 2018 and 2022.

The official survey was administered through MCC's Qualtrics license to protect alumni's identifiable information. Direct emails were sent through Qualtrics to the alumni group on March 21, 2024; these communications included an individualized link to the survey. To encourage quick responses, MCC provided a \$30 gift card as an incentive to all individuals who completed the survey up to our cap of 180 responses. Though financial considerations impacted the sample size, we maintained a 95% confidence level, with an approximate 7% margin of error. The timing of the survey closure exceeded the cap, resulting in 226 survey responses by March 27, 2024. This reflects a 16.3% response rate collected in 7 days.

Results

Several metrics of the survey respondents were compared with the alumni population. Overall, the ratio of the sample fell within less than 10% points of variation, with quantity of field crew members being the largest outlier with 13% less respondents than the population would have suggested. A slight over sampling of Field Crew Leaders by 10% from the population comparison, may be due to the nature of the relationship that position has with MCC, as they are the longest serving group.

Quantitative

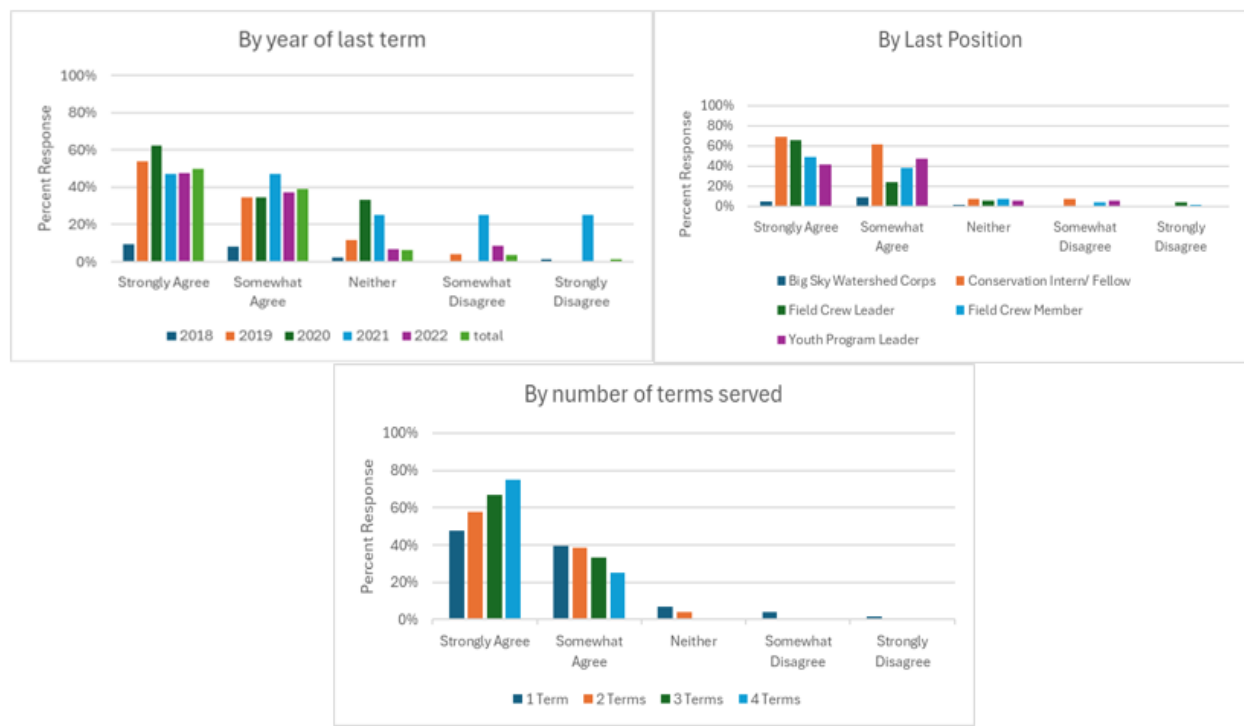
Our preliminary descriptive analysis of the data was largely positive. We separated our analysis into two parts, quantitative and qualitative. To set about the quantitative elements, we first reviewed direct survey responses. Results indicated 76% of 216 alumni found post service full-time work, and 74% report their work being related to their career aspirations. Furthermore, 84% percent of 190 alumni who reported current employment indicated being able to find full-time work in less than 6 months.

To examine the survey results more extensively, we focused a descriptive statistical analysis on three independent valuables of: last term of service year (2018 to 2022), position during last term of service (Big Sky Watershed Corps, Conservation Intern/Fellow, Field Crew Leader, Field Crew, or Youth Program Leader), and number of terms served (1 to 4 terms). These variables were identified and requested by MCC as a high priority. Crosstab analyses were used to compare these independent variables to a variety of dependent variables, looking specifically at the percentage of responses as a mechanism to provide continuity across variation. An initial set of five independent variables were prioritized by MCC. The results are discussed below. Important to disclose is that the number (n) of respondents who served more than two terms was too low to provide any generalizations.

A. Serving with the Montana Conservation Crosp (MCC) helped me build technical skills that are helpful or will be helpful in the future.

Respondents agree that participating in the young adult programs at MCC led to the development of technical skills required in their current or future job. An overwhelming

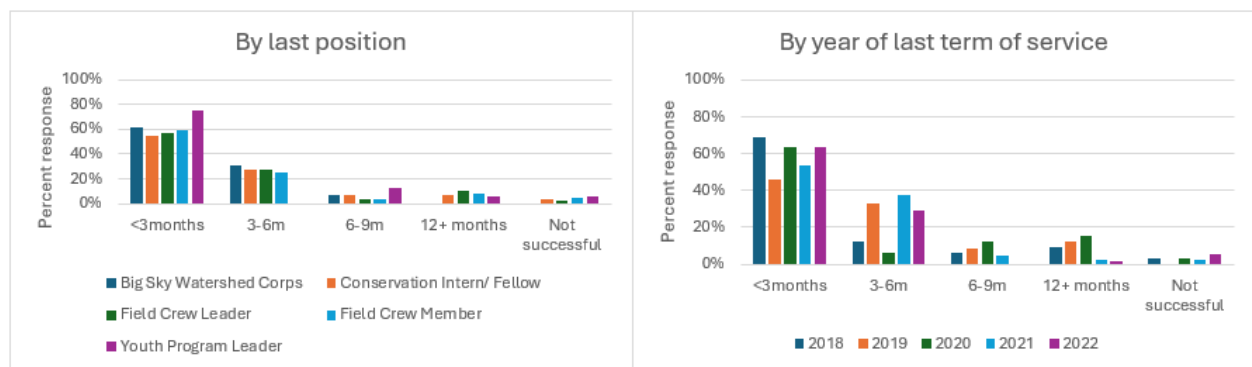
majority of the respondents agree that their service helped build valuable skills. However, reviewing across the variable of year of last term of service, we begin to see the covid pandemic years likely impacting participants views. Less satisfaction is reported for individuals who served during the covid pandemic period, particularly 2021. It is also worth noting that given that less than 3% of respondents completed more than 2 terms, we are unable to generalize if skill acquisition changes with additional terms.



B. How long did it take you to secure a full-time position?

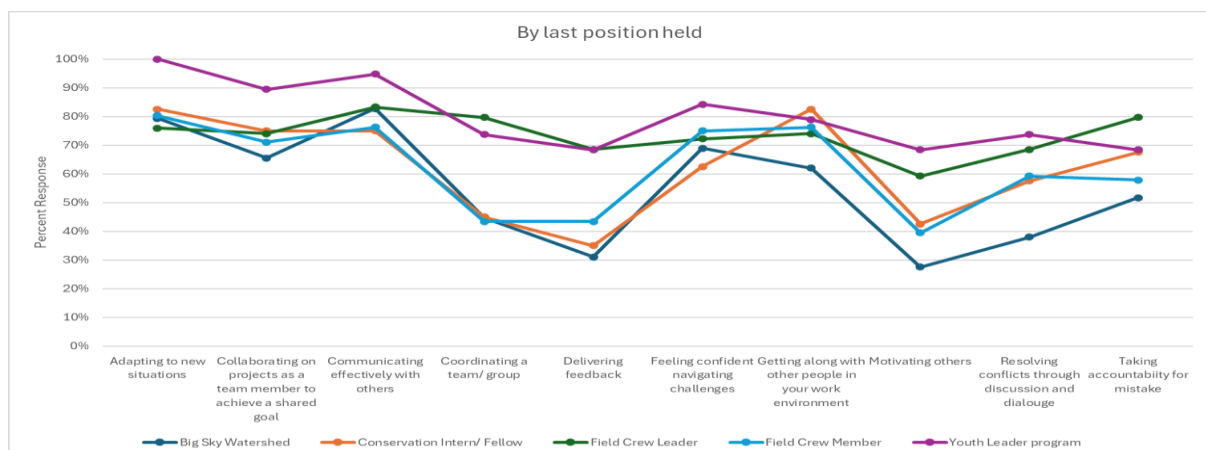
Again, the data indicates that in general individuals can secure post-service full-time employment quickly. Overall, 85% of the alumni responded they were able to secure work in less than six months. We do see that, to some degree, the type of position may

slightly impact the length of time to secure employment. The pandemic, particularly for those completing service in 2020, likely affected some alumni' ability to secure work.



C. Which of the following skills did you gain from your MCC experience that you rely upon in your job and/ or studies (selecting all that apply)?

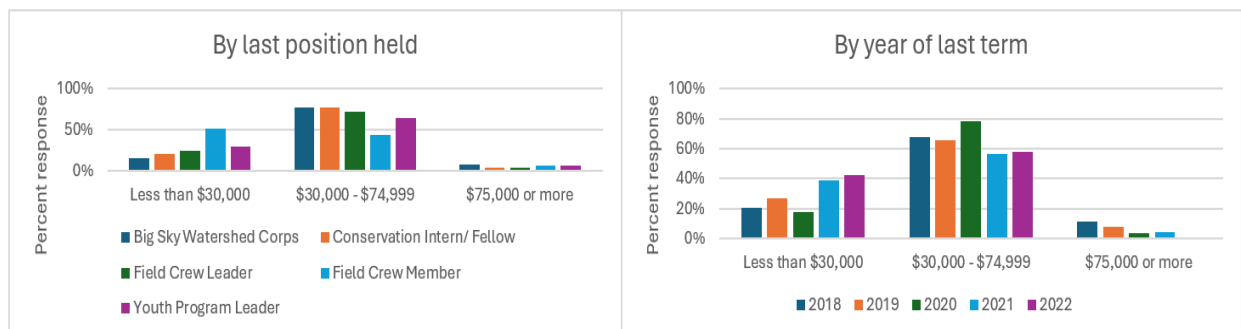
For this question, survey respondents had the opportunity to indicate specific skills they gained during their term of service. The question may have primacy bias, given that the first and second options had the highest results. In general, across positions held we can observe a consistent pattern. The result suggests three consistently lower skill acquisitions: delivering feedback, motivating others, and coordinating a team/group, based on position. This was consistent when isolated to each of the three independent



variables. However, cumulatively, the lowest responses were for resolving conflicts through discussion and dialogue (48%) and confidence in navigating challenges (51%).

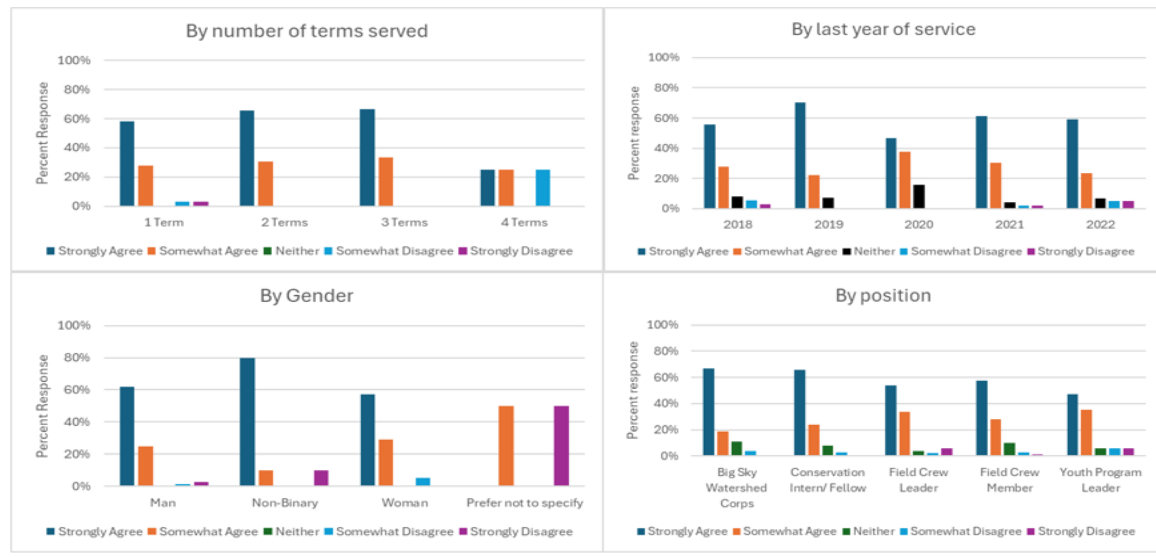
D. What was your total individual income last year?

Income was also reported in a predictable pattern, with the midrange of salaries, \$30,000 to \$70,000 being the most common from MCC alumni. This is consistent with the 2022 US Median Income of individuals, reported at \$47,960 per the US census (Guzman & Collar, 2023). Notably, Field Crew Members earn less than all other positions. Additionally, the covid years of 2020 – 2022 show reduced salaries across all alumni.



E. Serving with MCC helped me become more employable.

A whopping 87% of alumni responded positively that they were more employable due to their service with MCC. Though no major findings, we could infer that there is a slight increase in employability for those who complete two terms of service, and that the leadership positions and non-binary individuals showed the highest metrics of dissatisfaction.



Qualitative

The survey included three qualitative questions to which participants could provide detailed context to their MCC experience. The Evaluators focused on one question, given time limitations, and prioritized the Representatives' interest towards question #20.

Question 20: How would you describe the role that serving with MCC played with your employability and/ or job skills?

Of the 205 survey responses to qualitative questions, 171 completed (83%) and 34 were non-responsive (17%) to question #20. Of these completed responses, 162 expressed positive views (86%) and 9 of them stated negative experiences (4%). We conducted a preliminary analysis using a word cloud exported from Qualtrics, and then engaged in data consolidation using a paraphrasing technique. Finally, we imported it to NVivo, and created coding of 15 different themes.

Word cloud (preliminary analysis on Qualtrics)



As the responses we got from the survey participants included long sentences, multiple sentences and sometimes took the form of a long paragraph, we paraphrased those to make it more concise and to focus on keywords. The recommendation we got during one of our meetings with MCC representatives was to convert each response into a phrase with 4-to-6 words limit. We engaged in that activity for all 171 entries. As a result,



we obtained a more detailed word cloud, developed in NVivo, where new verbs and nouns were highlighted.

Themes / NVivo

The parent codes are listed below, for a more specific list of the child codes, please see Appendix C.

Acquired or increased job skills: 30 references

Reference to the acquisition or improvement of job skills, including communication, interpersonal, outdoors skills, etc. Respondents stated that their overall experience serving at MCC equipped them with the right abilities to be more attractive during a job search and or to secure permanency in their current workplace. Those skills range from interpersonal skills to more specific and technical skills.

Examples from raw data:

“I gained a lot of technical, hard science, and field skills with this role. It remains the most hands-on environmental science experience I have had. Serving an AmeriCorps term has also held a lot of weight with job interviews and as a networking talking point.”

“Throughout my BSWC term, I was able to gain experiences from technical water quality monitoring skills to project management and communications. I appreciated the ability to wear many hats and try all sorts of new things at my host site. I wanted to continue working in Montana/the West, and experience in and knowledge of this place was a big reason why I landed my current job.”

“I gained so many valuable skills from MCC. I was a crew leader on the chainsaw crew and was offered positions on multiple forests as a wildland firefighter based on the skills that I gained there. I also have been given many opportunities because of the leadership and teaching skills that MCC gave me.”

Job opportunities: 17 references

Reference to whether or not MCC aided in access to job opportunities and how (certifications, networking, etc.). In this theme, we find responses regarding how specific MCC-related training and other platforms or benefits provided by MCC directly influenced the respondents' job opportunities. Some include anecdotal evidence on how they secured a job after their term of service.

Examples from raw data:

“I was hired immediately during an interview for a part time job in between my next term of service solely because I had served with AmeriCorps. Quite a few people in this line of work have told me that MCC has a great reputation and they love them. MCC has given me so much experience and valuable skills that have made me a great job candidate.”

“Because I returned to my internship district, I had already done the job and had most of the skills already. I had experience in the same place doing things I had already done so my previous employers wanted me to come back.”

“In addition to a LOT of trigger time on the saw doing fuels work, I was able to go on a fire crew assignment and gain direct experience on the fireline. These skills and experiences strengthened my resume. Additionally, NPS put on a very valuable, in-depth USA Jobs application presentation for us MCCers.”

Professional Development: 17 references

Reference to professional development (resume building, skill set, confidence, etc.). In the top three of the main parent codes, we find Professional Development. The participants commented on how their service at MCC positively impacted their professional development. As a result, we see a wide range of instances where this theme is evident, going from resume building to conflict resolution.

Examples from raw data:

“Improved job skills, resume, and professional connections”

“I would say MCC has set me apart from some applicants because I work in finance and it is more uncommon to see a resume that has a term of service on it. It has certainly been a good conversation starter in interviews and I think it helps speak to my character and drive.”

“Most of my other career experiences, past and future, were research related. Some technical skills are applicable in certain positions, but not most that lie within my interest now. I do immensely appreciate the focus on other, non-technical trainings: value of self-

reflection, addressing unconscious bias, conflict resolution, and others. I personally value these types of skills because they help me become the kind of person I want to be and have encountered similar training and exercises only in the other trail crew position I held. My term with MCC is what made my resume stand out to my next employer, and I believe the soft skills training made me a better communicator and teacher as I pursue my graduate degree. Also, I do remember the session near the close of the term where we were presented job resources, networking opportunities, and guidance on USAJobs resumes. My next role was secured through USAJobs, so maybe that session had a direct impact on my apparent employability.”

Career Connections and Opportunities: 13 references

Reference to connections helpful in securing employment (including direct referrals to the Forest Service and other agencies). Most of the respondents affirmed that MCC is a place where participants can expand their networking and therefore their opportunities to gain a full-time job in a related type of agency or performing similar tasks. Some of the examples refer to training, community culture, exposure to current employees at such agencies, among others.

Examples from raw data:

“MCC and AmeriCorps in general is highly favorable among employers.”

“It helped me get my foot in the door with continued employment with the USFS. It helped me learn what kind of trail work I love to do and what I value in a leadership team and work community culture. I learned how much I love chainsaws.”

“MCC gave me crew leading experience and most importantly we worked under the supervision of the Forest service on most of our projects which gave us direct work experience for working in the FS.”

Valuable Experience: 13 references

Reference to gained work-related experience which was helpful to secure a job. Another parent code is Valuable Experience, as a shared sentiment among a good number of our respondents. Some of them refer to this code while explaining that without their MCC’s experience, their job search would’ve been more challenging or different. Some others commented on their career aspirations being influenced by their term of service as well.

Examples from raw data:

“A huge role. I entered the program with a strong interest in working with one particular org to get my foot in the door and it successfully did that!”

“Serving in MCC gave me hands-on experience that helped me become a permanent seasonal with the Forest Service. I became more comfortable working a mixture of solo

and as part of a team. I became better at tracking achievements, resume building, and professional networking.”

“Serving with MCC allowed me to gain experience working and living with a small team in remote environments for multiple days at a time with biting insects and the potential to encounter wild animals. Many of the jobs I was looking to apply to after my trail season asked for this kind of experience; I was able to use my trail season with MCC as an example for how I dealt with things like intense heat, wet boots, tired coworkers, etc. I also gained more confidence in myself. MCC was the first job I moved out of state to live with roommates from across the country and the first time I had extensively backpacked or camped in wilderness areas.”

Recommendations

As a result of this evaluation’s data analysis, and considering information analyzed during the literature review, the Evaluators have drafted three recommendations for the Montana Conservation Corps. The Evaluators would like to note that the primary intent of this evaluation was to design, implement, and analyze a survey of MCC alumni, not to conduct a holistic analysis of current programs and provide significant recommendations. These recommendations are therefore broad and consider that the Evaluators are operating with limited information and insight:

1. Alumni reported on their leadership skill acquisition during their time with MCC.

Those enrolled in the Youth Leader Program or as Field Crew Leaders reported

relatively high leadership skill acquisition across the board. Field Crew Members, however, reported lower skill acquisitions, specifically in “coordinating a team/group” and “motivating others.” While this lower threshold of leadership skill acquisition is to be expected for Field Crew Members as they are not serving in a leadership role, MCC’s adult programming may benefit from minor curriculum adjustments to account for and reduce this disparity.

2. All analyzed alumni position categories (Field Crew Member, Field Crew Leader, etc.) reported that “delivering feedback” was the skill least obtained as a result of MCC adult program participation (some groups barely exceeded 30%). Although there is no clear answer for how to best address this shortcoming, MCC should consider a combination/portion of its curriculum and organizational culture as areas of improvement.
3. As discussed at the end of the Literature Review section of this report, MCC maintains a career resources page on its website. However, no alumni professional development/networking organization, instituted by MCC or otherwise, seems to exist or is advertised for program alumni. Creating, or assisting in the implementation, of such an organization could yield tangible benefits for MCC program participants (namely “conserving institutional resources, supporting members and contributing new resources for alumni-institutional professional development”) (Bui & Jeng, 2021, p. 46).

Limitations

The Evaluators recognize that several limitations accompany this evaluation and advise readers to consider them before utilizing the survey's quantitative or qualitative results too broadly. The time available to complete the evaluation was very limited due to its reliance on the one-semester class schedule of Program Evaluation (PSCI 559) at Montana State University. Research question identification, literature review, survey design, instrument revision, survey implementation, data analysis, and report drafting had to be completed in ten weeks. The strict time constraint limited the evaluation and resulted in the evaluation of only one of three qualitative questions, limited quantitative analysis, and less research informing survey design.

Furthermore, the Evaluators are all students in the Montana State University Masters of Public Administration program. None are statisticians, which resulted in less complex quantitative analyses, the likes of which may have resulted in more enlightening or useful data. Additionally, this evaluation was conducted alongside course instruction on Program Evaluation itself. In other words, the Evaluators are not professional program evaluators but rather students of the profession.

None of the Evaluators had prior knowledge of or experience with MCC, and therefore a significant amount of time was required for familiarization prior to initiating the evaluation process. This had an impact on the depth and scope of the Evaluators' recommendations.



The \$30 per survey participant incentive was provided by MCC with a limit of 180 participants, which potentially restricted the number of potential respondents and resulting data. Also, because MCC had a financial stake in the survey's outcomes, the Evaluators were dedicated to asking and analyzing questions to best fit MCC's needs. Certain lines of inquiry and points of study were removed in favor of a shorter survey that directly served the Representative's interests and limited the evaluation's scope.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Appendix B: Quantitative Data

Appendix C: Qualitative Data