

Corps to Careers

How Service and Conservation Corps
Help Build Tomorrow's Workforce | Fall 2017



**The
CorpsNetwork**

Strengthening America through
service and conservation



A member of Citizens Conservation Corps (WV) learns historic preservation skills while serving on a project at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. This project was part of the Hands On Preservation Experience (HOPE Crew) program in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



COVER IMAGES:

Front:

(L) American YouthWorks

(R) Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Back:

(L) Climb CDC

(credit: The Nature Conservancy)

(R) New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg

Contents

2	What are Service & Conservation Corps? About The Corps Model
4	About The Corps Network Essential Skills
6	Hard Skills
9	Education
12	Wraparound Support Services Exit and Follow-Up Support

Corps to Careers

How Service and Conservation Corps

Help Build Tomorrow's Workforce | Fall 2017

What are Service & Conservation Corps?

Service and Conservation Corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults (generally ages 16 - 25) and veterans (up to age 35) in defined terms of service completing important conservation, recreation, infrastructure, disaster response, and community development projects on public lands and in rural and urban communities. Through service to our country, Corps participants - or "Corpsmembers" - gain hands-on work experience and develop in-demand skills. Corpsmembers are compensated with a stipend or living allowance, and often earn an "education award," or scholarship. Many Corps also provide Corpsmembers educational programming and access to personal, career and academic counseling. Corps annually enroll over 25,000 diverse young adults and veterans across all 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa.

Today's Corps continue the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the federal program created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression to put unemployed young men to work building parks and restoring America's infrastructure.

The service projects in which Corpsmembers are engaged include, but are not limited to:

- trail maintenance and construction
- historic preservation
- stream and habitat restoration
- home weatherization
- lot abatement
- tree planting and maintenance
- recycling facility operation
- solar panel installation
- wildfire suppression
- hazardous fuels removal
- disaster response
- invasive species removal

About the Corps Model

"The Corps Model" describes the programmatic structure seen at Corps throughout the country. The elements of the Corps Model are:

1. education
2. job training and workforce development
3. community service, and
4. counseling and mentorship

These elements work in tandem with each other to provide young people a comprehensive learning experience.

How it Works

When young people enroll in a Corps, they usually become a member of a crew. Each crew, consisting of about eight to twelve Corpsmembers, is led by a trained Crew Leader who acts as a mentor and teacher. At many Corps, enrollees are also paired with a counselor who helps them plan personal, career and academic goals.

Through classroom and field instruction, Corpsmembers can earn professional certifications and learn technical skills from their Crew Leaders, Corps staff members and outside organizations with which the Corps partners. Corpsmembers practice their skills by engaging in community and environmental service projects designed to meet pressing local needs. By serving alongside their fellow crewmates to complete these projects, Corpsmembers build a sense of civic responsibility, gain hands-on work experience, and learn important lessons in teamwork, leadership and conflict resolution.

In return for their service, Corpsmembers receive a stipend or living allowance. Many Corps also provide Corpsmembers with a scholarship (see section on Education Awards) that can be used to help pay-off student debt or finance further education. When Corpsmembers graduate from the Corps (terms of service typically range from three months to a year), Corps staff and counselors help with the transition. Corpsmembers receive help building their résumé and practicing interviews. Many Corps have partnerships with local employers and workforce agencies. Corps also usually operate alumni associations through which Corpsmembers can make professional connections and learn about job opportunities. Corpsmembers leave their Corps experience with an understanding of the work world and a sense of responsibility to the environment and their community.

Job Training & Workforce Development

Corps provide Corpsmembers with job training and certifications to help them prepare for green careers

Education

Corps connect Corpsmembers to educational opportunities. Some Corps help young people earn their high school diploma or GED and prepare for postsecondary success

Counseling & Mentorship

Corpsmembers have the support of Crew Leaders and Counselors



Community Service

Corpsmembers gain hands-on work experience and put their job training to use by participating in service projects designed to meet important community and environmental needs

Exit & Follow-Up Support

Corps provide connections to education, employers. Corpsmembers receive guidance to help take the next step after their term of service.

About The Corps Network

The Corps Network, the national association of Service and Conservation Corps, provides leadership and support to over 130 Corps across the United States. TCN supports Corps by advocating on their behalf, providing access to funding and project opportunities, and by offering expertise in Corps operations and programming. Every year, The Corps Network's efforts enable over 23,000 diverse young people, ages 16 – 25, to strengthen communities, improve the environment and transform their lives through service in Corps programs. The Corps Network was founded in 1985. It is headquartered in Washington, DC.

To learn more about The Corps Network, please visit www.corpsnetwork.org.

Essential Skills

Corps prepare young people with the basics to succeed in any workplace

Successful employees need more than diplomas and professional certifications. Someone whose résumé is packed with credentials might still struggle to find and keep a job if they don't know how to take direction or work well with others. Previously referred to as "soft skills," the habits and interpersonal skills that complement a person's technical abilities are now frequently referred to as "essential skills."

The Corps Model allows young people to experience the group dynamic and responsibilities of the work environment. Crew Leaders, counselors and fellow crewmates can help a Corpsmember navigate this environment and understand what is considered work-appropriate behavior. Corpsmembers learn that they are ultimately responsible for their own actions.

Through classroom instruction, strictly enforced rules and the countless "teachable moments" that arise when diverse young people learn and work together, Corps help their participants understand that attitude and personality can be just as important, if not more important, than the skills listed on a résumé.

Green City Force (NY)



Maine Conservation Corps (ME)



SERVICE AS A PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT

According to a report by the Corporation for National and Community Service (the federal agency which oversees AmeriCorps), Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment, people who volunteer – regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, geographical area, or local job market conditions – are much more likely to find employment than people who do not volunteer. The key findings included:

- Volunteers have a **27 percent** higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers
- Volunteers without a high school diploma have a **51 percent** higher likelihood of finding employment
- Volunteers living in rural areas have a **55 percent** higher likelihood of finding employment

Serving in a Corps, or otherwise volunteering, helps young people increase their job prospects by helping them expand their social and professional networks, learn skills and take on leadership roles.

Learn more:

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/volunteering-pathway-employment-report>

http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/employment_research_report.pdf

Essential skills & values learned in Corps

Punctuality and Accountability

Corps enforce attendance policies. Corpsmembers are expected to show-up on time and ready to work and learn. Working in crews means that Corpsmembers who don't put in effort learn that their decisions and actions not only affect themselves, but can impact the whole team.

Teamwork

Organizing Corpsmembers into crews allows young people to work side-by-side with people from a wide range of socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds. Corpsmembers learn how to problem-solve and work effectively with people who are different from themselves.

Leadership

The Crew-based model gives Corpsmembers the chance to experience leadership responsibilities. Corpsmembers who work hard and set a good example for others advance to serve as Assistant Crew Leaders or Crew Leaders.

Conflict Resolution

Learning how to resolve conflicts appropriately is extremely important when working in crews. Crew Leaders are trained to help Corpsmembers talk through their issues and many Corps teach anger management tactics.

Self-Presentation and Appropriate Behavior

Most Corps have a uniform and enforce a dress code. Many Corps operate a "Mental Toughness" orientation, during which Corpsmembers learn the importance of self-discipline.

Pride in Work

When a service project is complete, Corpsmembers can look back on the trail they cleared or the playground they built with a sense of accomplishment. Corpsmembers interact with the people and organizations that benefit from their service and learn the impact they can have.



Urban Corps of San Diego County (CA)



Youth Conservation Corps (IL)



Limitless Vistas, Inc. (LA)

Hard Skills

Corps help their participants earn credentials and gain work experience

The Corps Model emphasizes “service learning”: Corpsmembers are trained in specific skills and then have the opportunity to apply these skills through service projects. For example, Mile High Youth Corps in Denver, CO operates an Energy and Water Conservation program through which Corpsmembers are trained to install sink aerators, low-flow toilets, programmable thermostats and other resource-efficient fixtures. Under the supervision of trained Corps staff, crews of Corpsmembers then visit low-income Denver households to install these resource and money-saving retrofits. Corpsmembers walk away from the experience with “hard skills” – the technical ability to install energy and water-saving retrofits – as well as “soft skills” – the ability to interact professionally with the families benefitting from the retrofits.

At many Corps across the country, Corpsmembers are required to earn certain credentials in order to participate in service projects. Corps take safety very seriously: Corps are accountable to their Corpsmembers, the community, and to the organizations that sponsor the service projects in which Corpsmembers are engaged. Before even holding a chainsaw, Corpsmembers undergo extensive classroom and field training in chainsaw operation and safety. Many service project sponsors, such as land management agencies like the U.S. Forest Service or the National Park Service, assist in Corpsmember training. Before performing forestry-related service projects on USFS or NPS properties, many Corpsmembers must pass an agency-sanctioned chainsaw/sawyer certification test. While participating in service projects, Corpsmembers have the opportunity to build relationships with professionals in the field in which they’re being trained. Through their service, Corpsmembers can prove their skills and determination to potential future employers. Many Corpsmembers have been hired directly out of the Corps into positions with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management or other project sponsors.

While participating in service projects, Corpsmembers have the opportunity to build relationships with professionals in the field in which they're being trained. Through their service, Corpsmembers can prove their skills and determination to potential future employers. Many Corpsmembers have been hired directly out of the Corps into positions with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management or other project sponsors.

Partnering with local colleges & employers to meet labor market needs

When young people enroll in a Corps, they usually become a member of a crew. Each crew, consisting of about eight to twelve Corpsmembers, is led by a trained Crew Leader who acts as a mentor and teacher. At many Corps, enrollees are also paired with a counselor who helps them plan personal, career and academic goals.

Through classroom and field instruction, Corpsmembers can earn professional certifications and learn technical skills from their Crew Leaders, Corps staff members and outside organizations with which the Corps partners. Corpsmembers practice their skills by engaging in community and environmental service projects designed to meet pressing local needs. By serving alongside their fellow crewmates to complete these projects, Corpsmembers build a sense of civic responsibility, gain hands-on work experience, and learn important lessons in teamwork, leadership and conflict resolution.

In return for their service, Corpsmembers receive a stipend or living allowance. Many Corps also provide Corpsmembers with a scholarship (see section on Education Awards) that can be used to help pay-off student debt or finance further education. When Corpsmembers graduate from the Corps (terms of service typically range from three months to a year), Corps staff and counselors help with the transition. Corpsmembers receive help building their résumé and practicing interviews. Many Corps have partnerships with local employers and workforce agencies. Corps also usually operate alumni associations through which Corpsmembers can make professional connections and learn about job opportunities. Corpsmembers leave their Corps experience with an understanding of the work world and a sense of responsibility to the environment and their community.

Mile High Youth Corps (CO)



Corps and local workforce Systems

Corps have a history of partnering with local Workforce Development Boards (formerly known as Workforce Investment Boards, or WIBs). Originally created to help implement the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, Workforce Development Boards track and research local workforce needs; leverage resources by coordinating federal, state and local workforce development efforts; and help connect job-seekers with in-demand career-tracks. Partnering with local Workforce Development Boards can help Corps provide members with relevant education and pragmatic employment goals.

In coordination with the July 1, 2015 implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the successor to WIA, The Corps Network partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) to produce *Snapshot: Youth Corps and Workforce Partnerships*; a research-based publication that provides information on how Corps and local workforce systems can collaborate. The release of this publication was especially pertinent as WIOA is focused on helping America's Opportunity Youth – young people who are out of school and out of work – gain job experience and additional support to succeed in the labor market.

Through partnerships with local Workforce Development Boards, Corps can offer their participants access to a comprehensive array of services that might not be available through the Corps alone. Corpsmembers gain hands-on service and work experience, education, and career-readiness through enrollment in a Corps and can simultaneously benefit from professional career guidance, case-management, and other supportive services offered through the workforce system. Partnering with Corps can also benefit Workforce Development Boards and their relationships with local employers as this creates a connection with the next generation of employees.



Examples of certifications offered at Corps

- Wilderness First Responder
- Forklift Certification
- HAZMAT
- HAZWOPER
- HVAC
- Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting
- NABCEP (North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners) Certification: PV Installer (solar panel installation)
- OSHA 10 Hour/30 Hour
- Red Card
- Home Builders Institute Training Asbestos removal
- BPI (Building Performance Institute) Certified Building Analyst
- BPI Insulation / Air Sealing Tech
- Certified Home Energy Rater
- Chainsaw/Sawyer Certification
- Class A, B, C Feller
- Commercial Driver's License
- DOE Weatherization Tech L1
- First Aid/AED/CPR
- Wilderness First Aid
- Pesticide Applicator

THE SKILLS EVERY EMPLOYEE NEEDS

The National Network of Business and Industry Associations released a publication, *Common Employability Skills – A Foundation for Success in the Workplace: The Skills All Employees Need, No Matter Where They Work*, describing the foundational skills that all employers, across all sectors, look for in their employees. These skills, which overlap with those that Corpsmembers develop through their Corps experience, fall into four categories:

- **Personal Skills** treating others with respect, maintaining professionalism and composure, demonstrating a willingness to seek new challenges, displaying responsibility, ability to adapt;
- **People Skills** ability to work effectively with others, maintaining open lines of communication, demonstrating good listening skills and sensitivity, valuing diversity and different ideas;
- **Applied Knowledge** critical thinking, ability to read and understand work materials, ability to write clearly, knowledge of basic math principles, ability to use technology to communicate and manage projects; and
- **Workplace Skills** ability to plan and prioritize, ability to solve problems and make decisions, ability to understand and meet the needs of customers or clients

Learn more:

http://businessroundtable.org/sites/default/files/Common%20Employability_asingle_fm.pdf

Education

Corps help young people become good students and connect to the education they need

While the main elements of the Corps Model are present at all Corps, specific programming can vary greatly from one Corps to another. A Corps' programs are designed to meet the educational and training needs of the Corpsmembers. Some Corps require that Corpsmembers be at least 18 years old and have a high school diploma. Some Corps attract college students or recent college graduates exploring their career options. Still other Corps predominantly engage young people who need a second-chance at earning their high school diploma or GED.

All Corps provide Corpsmembers with educational programming. For some Corps, this means teaching Corpsmembers the science behind the environmental conservation projects they complete, or preparing Corpsmembers with the information they need to educate members of the community about conservation practices. At other Corps, education is a primary focus of the programming; in addition to receiving job training, Corpsmembers take math, English and the full range of classes offered in traditional high schools.

More than 20 member organizations of The Corps Network offer high school diploma or GED courses. Corps generally offer a smaller class size and more one-on-one attention than a traditional high school. In addition to having the support of their teachers, students at Corps can also turn to their Crew Leaders and counselors. Many Corps also give high-performing students and recent graduates the chance to tutor other Corpsmembers, thus giving students an additional layer of support.

Pathways to College: Postsecondary Success Education Initiative (PSEI)

At some Corps, the academic programming is designed to provide remedial education and college prep. A good example of this can be found at Green City Force (GCF), a Corps based in Brooklyn, NY. To be eligible to enroll in GCF, Corpsmembers must live in a New York City Public Housing Authority property and have their high school diploma or GED. In addition to receiving job training, Corpsmembers take an intensive college prep course. At GCF, and similar Corps throughout the country, Corpsmembers learn good study habits and bring their reading, writing and math skills up to a college-ready level.

In 2012, The Corps Network became a partner in the Postsecondary Success Education Initiative (PSEI): an effort developed in 2009 to connect low-income and disadvantaged youth to college and postsecondary education. Led by The Corps Network, YouthBuild USA, the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) and Jobs for the Future (JFF), PSEI strengthened the ability of youth-serving programs to offer more rigorous academics and postsecondary support.

Through the PSEI, local youth-serving programs throughout the country (including five member Corps of The Corps Network: Conservation Corps North Bay in San Rafael, CA; Civicorps in Oakland, CA; Green City Force in Brooklyn NY; Greater Miami Service Corps in Miami, FL; and Youth Conservation Corps in Waukegan, IL) received grant money that could be used to collect data to inform academic programming; build curricula and purchase books and school materials designed to make students more college ready; and pay for application fees and transportation costs for low-income students. PSEI Corps ensured that their Corpsmembers had the academic abilities to not only transition to college, but persist in a postsecondary program. Corps offered college-level instruction, career planning, and counselors to support the Corpsmembers throughout their first year of postsecondary education.

Though PSEI officially ended in 2014, the initiative gave The Corps Network the opportunity to learn more about interventions that can promote postsecondary success. All of the Corps that participated in PSEI, as well as numerous other Corps throughout the country, continue to offer robust “Corps to College” academics.



Information from PSEI

The Corps Network: 307 PSEI Participants

CORPSMEMBERS' BACKGROUNDS

Race: 71% African American, 17% Hispanic

First Generation Students: 56%

Court-Involved: 34%

SECONDARY CREDENTIAL UPON ENTRY

Diploma: 47%

GED: 10%

None: 43%

POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES

Enrolled in Postsecondary: 55%

Persistence through 1st Year: 74%



LA Conservation Corps (CA)

Getting Back on Track

Young people drop out of school for a range of reasons, including poor grades, family responsibilities, involvement with the legal system or financial obligations. Corps offer these individuals the chance to earn their high school diploma or GED while being paid to receive job training and gain hands-on work experience through service projects. A Corpsmember's schedule might involve mornings in the field participating in service projects and afternoons in the classroom. Corpsmembers don't need to choose between a job and education.

Opportunity Youth Service Initiative

As of 2017, there are approximately 5.5 million young Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor employed. These individuals are known as "Opportunity Youth," referring to the enormous social and economic opportunity they represent if provided the chance to reengage with the workforce and the education system.

Investing in education and job training for Opportunity Youth is far less expensive than paying for the social services these individuals may need later in life. Opportunity Youth cost America billions of dollars every year in lost productivity, lost revenue, increased demand for welfare services, and crime-related expenditures. Corps help reconnect young people to jobs and education, and provide a network of support to make sure they stay on track.

Since 2013, The Corps Network has managed the Opportunity Youth Service Initiative (OYSI), an AmeriCorps program made possible through a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. Through the OYSI, The Corps Network funds 14 Corps to engage Opportunity Youth in environmental job training and education. The OYSI addresses three critical needs:

1. The disengagement of low-income and disadvantaged youth and young adults from employment and education;
2. The labor market need for individuals with conservation-related skills as our aging workforce enters retirement; and
3. Environmental & Housing Issues: The degradation of natural spaces – which is addressed by Corpsmembers performing habitat restoration projects. A lack of affordable housing, which can be addressed through energy-saving retrofits installed by Corpsmembers.





Texas Conservation Corps (TX)

EAP: EDUCATION AWARD PROGRAM

One way The Corps Network helps Corpsmembers pursue postsecondary education is through the AmeriCorps Education Award Program (EAP). In return for their service, Corpsmembers enrolled in EAP receive scholarship money that can be used to pay for future educational endeavors or to help repay student loans.

Upon successful completion of their AmeriCorps term, Corpsmembers serving during the 2017 - 2018 program year are eligible to receive \$1,230.69 to \$5,815 based on length of term of service.

Wraparound Support Services

Corpsmembers have the support they need to be ready to work and learn

Many young people, particularly from low-income communities, face barriers. Lack of transportation, parenting and family obligations, addiction, language barriers, and depression are just a few of the issues that might affect a young person's ability to perform at the highest level. Corps that enroll a large number of "at-risk" or low-income young people provide a range of services to help Corpsmembers succeed in the program and have the freedom to concentrate on education and job training. Many Corps offer public transportation passes, access to childcare, referrals to mental health or addiction counseling services, ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, or guidance in seeking public assistance.

Exit and Follow-Up Support

Corps not only provide young people with job training and education; they provide guidance and resources to help Corpsmembers take the next step. Exit-support is critical to Corpsmember success as many of these young people have never previously searched for, or applied to, full-time positions. Corps staff and counselors help Corpsmembers develop career goals and make a plan for how to meet those goals. Corpsmembers receive help crafting cover letters, compiling their résumé, and practicing interviews. Many Corps also have an "open door policy," allowing Corps graduates to return to the Corps to receive career services in the years following their exit from the program.



Citizens Conservation Corps (WV)

Get Involved:

To find out how you can get involved with Corps and workforce development, contact The Corps Network:

Capri St. Vil
Director of Education and Workforce Development
cstvil@corpsnetwork.org
phone: 202-737-6272

To learn more about The Corps Network, and to find a Corps near you, visit: www.corpsnetwork.org

[This page intentionally left blank]

