SNAPSHOT:
YOUTH CORPS AND WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS

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The Corps Network
National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB)
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
With approximately 6 million youth and young adults not connected to school or work, the need to equip them with relevant skills that prepare them for the future is significant. The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and its emphasis on serving out-of-school youth and providing work experience, presents optimal timing for relationships to develop between the workforce system and Youth Corps. Through partnerships, Corps and workforce system providers can offer comprehensive youth development programming to reconnect youth to education and the workforce.

The Corps Network, the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) at the U.S. Department of Labor have been encouraging partnerships between workforce providers and Corps over the years with a goal of increasing employment, training and service opportunities for youth. Through its engagement in the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, a key effort under the President’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, as well in support of the President’s National Service agenda, ETA has provided guidance and encouragement to the workforce system in creating new and strengthening existing partnerships in an effort to support a job-driven workforce system. In 2013, The Corps Network collaborated with and supported NAWB in researching how Workforce Development Boards (formerly Workforce Investment Boards or WIBs) and Corps work together. Through a series of interviews, workforce development boards and Corps were asked a number of questions designed to identify promising practices and issues to be addressed in order to increase collaboration among Corps and the workforce system. In doing so, we learned there are a number of promising partnerships that exist across the country already. We also learned there is a need for more information and greater clarity on the roles the workforce system and Corps play and what they can offer through partnership.

This Snapshot aims to help Corps and workforce system providers see each other as assets in the shared mission of reconnecting the millions of disconnected youth throughout the country and better utilize existing resources for a more effective national workforce development system. The Snapshot also highlights three strategies that can be replicated by other Corps-workforce partnerships:

1. Leveraging funding
2. Co-enrolling participants
3. Co-locating services
Service and Conservation Corps (Corps)
Since their first successful implementation during the Great Depression with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Corps have been an important strategy to engage a diverse population of young adults and accomplish meaningful projects for the benefit of the nation. Modern-day Service and Conservation Corps engage thousands of youth each year through a model that includes mentors (Crew Leaders) guiding crews of youth in performing service and conservation projects in communities or on public lands. Tied to those projects are educational, workforce development, and supportive services to ensure Corpsmembers are gaining meaningful credentials and success after their term of service in a Corps. Corps offer comprehensive youth development programming to thousands of youth each year, many of which are currently enrolled in or are eligible for Department of Labor Youth-funded activities, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA Youth program (formerly the Workforce Investment Act or WIA).

Corps Program Offerings:
- Job training
- Academic programming
- Leadership skills
- Supportive services
- Projects in conservation, infrastructure improvement, and other human service projects identified by communities.

The Workforce System
Through WIOA, which takes effect on July 1, 2015, ETA allocates funds to states to provide local workforce agencies resources to deliver a comprehensive array of job-driven and youth development services to low-income youth, ages 14-24, who face barriers to employment. Local communities, in partnership with the One-Stop Centers (currently branded as American Job Centers) and under the direction of local Workforce Development Boards, provide youth opportunities to attain educational and skills training, participate in postsecondary educational training, and secure employment with career and promotional opportunities. Through the Workforce Development Boards and their providers, youth are offered training and employment services, including work readiness, career guidance, skill assessments, case management, re-engagement opportunities, supportive services, basic skills and literacy training, and occupational training. In strong partnership with employers and youth-serving agencies in the community, they also provide work experience, leadership development opportunities, and mentoring. To develop partnership opportunities that can help you meet your workforce goals, learn what the public workforce system can offer, and identify and contact your local Workforce Development Board. In addition, many local areas have Standing Youth Committees (formerly Youth Councils) where coordination of youth services takes place.

To contact your local board or committee, visit: http://www.servicelocator.org/wibcontacts/.

Members of Anchorage Park Foundation’s Youth Employment Program (YEP) work together as a team on a trail project. Corpsmembers gain hands-on job experience under adult supervisors.
Partnering between Corps and Workforce

Work experience opportunities help young people develop valuable skills, and serve as critical stepping stones on the path to a career. Work experience opportunities through a Corps model, in particular, can provide youth with important skill development, such as teamwork, responsibility, and determination, and an education about natural resources and conservation. It also can teach them to be good stewards of public lands and resources, and can provide a career pathway into public service, conservation or other green jobs sectors.

Partnering with the workforce system can offer a number of benefits to Corps. For example, they can conduct outreach, facilitate recruitment, and provide case management and support to youth while in the Corps. They can partner to help pay wages for youth engaged in summer and year-round employment opportunities, when funding is available. They can assist Corps in meeting education and employment goals by helping to: place youth into employment or into secondary or postsecondary education, during or at the completion of the program; build career readiness and other employment-related skills; and attain occupational skills training and credentials. Workforce Development Boards and workforce providers can also offer connections to employers and access to labor market information that guides decisions for which sector(s) and occupation(s) a program will offer training.

Likewise, partnering with Corps can offer a number of benefits to Workforce Development Boards and their providers. Corps aim to address the needs of the community in which they are located. They can offer youth hands-on leadership development and mentoring opportunities as well as work experiences on a variety of projects in the areas of conservation and service, such as public land management, renewable energy and efficiency, green infrastructure, wildfire remediation, transportation, and disaster recovery, to name a few. To learn where Corps are located and the types of work experience projects they offer, visit The Corps Network.

Examples of successful partnerships

As resources to support these kinds of activities are certainly not endless, local Workforce Development Boards, youth workforce providers and Corps seek ways to be creative and innovative in leveraging capacity and resources for the purpose of providing youth and young adults with meaningful work and learning experiences. Through Corps and workforce system partnerships, youth can be offered a full array of services, supports, and experiences to assist them in their transition to education, career, and adulthood.

“By collaboratively working with the local WorkSource One Stop Offices and WIA Youth Program in our region, we are able to reach more youth, leverage more resources for their success, and more effectively connect with the business community to support our graduates in meaningful work after the Corps.”

Laura M Handy
Heart of Oregon Corps (HOC)
Executive Director

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa members review a project plan with their supervisor.
Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB) is located in San Rafael, CA and, in addition to running numerous Corps crews, operates a charter school and a number of conservation related education and workforce development programs. CCNB partners with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) [called Workforce Development Boards under WIOA] and county and city governments to better leverage funding, work-based learning, and youth employment opportunities for their Corpsmembers through three different Youth Ecology Corps Crews operating in Sonoma, Marin, and Napa Counties.

As one of the few youth employment providers in the area, CCNB thus views leveraging of funding and government resources as critical to serving as many youth as possible. Specifically, the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps works with the Sonoma County WIB, and the Sonoma County Water Agency on leveraging both WIA and County funding, and projects to provide employment opportunities for youth through the CCNB, by working on stream restoration and maintenance projects that help the county’s bottom line. It also provides important work experience, small stipends, and job skills to the Corpsmembers. Corpsmembers also receive training through the Corps using WIB-approved curriculum to obtain a Work Readiness Certificate that is incorporated into the Corps service-learning curriculum.

Through this partnership, the WIB utilized WIA Youth funding, while the water agency provided matching funds for the WIB, projects, expert guidance in the field, mentoring, and career exploration activities for the youth, like touring the water agency facilities and instruction on ecology and the impacts of the projects. CCNB provides the Corps model of comprehensive youth development services as well, which include education, workforce, and supportive services. The program also includes an Opportunity Fair that features exhibitors that provide information about educational and career pathway options for Corpsmembers. Corpsmembers also design a Gallery Walk to celebrate their accomplishments and display their work portfolio.

The other CCNB Crews follow similar models of leveraging partnerships and resources. For example, the Marin Corps collaborates with Marin Employment Connection, Marin County, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and California State Parks to provide work and learning opportunities to youth. In partnership with Marin Corps, the Board works to develop the projects and screens Corpsmembers. Another example includes CCNB’s Napa Corps. This Corps collaborates with the Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District. Corpsmembers from Napa can continue their education by enrolling for the fall semester at Napa Valley College.

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Members of New Jersey Youth Corps participate in Waders in the Water: a training designed to teach Corpsmembers the skills needed to pursue careers in aquatic habitat management. The training is offered through Trout Headwaters, a leading aquatic habitat management company.

**Strategy 2: Co-Enrollment Opportunities**  
**Bend, OR**

Heart of Oregon Corps (HOC) is located in rural Oregon and is one of the few youth development providers for this area of the state. HOC works to empower and inspire positive change in the lives of young adults through jobs, education and stewardship. In doing so, HOC partners with all facets of the workforce system locally, including the local Workforce Investment Board, which covers 24 rural counties called the Oregon Consortium & Oregon Workforce Alliance, the associated WorkSource One-Stops, and the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC), which is the WIA Youth and Adult services provider for the area.

Youth enrolled through WorkSource One-Stops that could benefit from participation in the Corps are referred and **co-enrolled in the HOC and the One-Stop**. Youth receive workforce and education services through the One-Stop, such as GED® services, job skills assessments and referrals. HOC provides them with essential skills training, work experience and often complimentary career development services, work-based learning opportunities and postsecondary bridging supports, as needed.

HOC reciprocates this relationship and refers youth who are assessed and identified as needing **more intensive services** to the COIC while they are enrolled in the Corps. These youth are then co-enrolled to benefit from both unique services. Some youth that may not be ready for a work experience in a Corps are referred to the COIC first. The COIC may then refer them back to the HOC once they have received critical services and are believed to be ready to be successful at a “**first job**.”

Additionally, HOC and the workforce system partner on other aspects of youth development. A representative from the workforce system sits on HOC’s employer advisory council and assists HOC with **curriculum and career pathway development**, in addition to **job placement** for Corpsmembers after their time in a Corps. This relationship is also strengthened through a letter of support from the workforce system pledging to **share data and link youth to the appropriate service** needed for them to be successful.

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Strategy 3: A Co-Location Model
Fort Collins, CO

The Larimer County Conservation Corps (LCCC) is an accredited Corps through the Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) and is based in Fort Collins, Colorado. Housed or “co-located” within the Larimer County Workforce Center (LCWC), the LCCC was initiated by workforce center staff that identified a need for youth development services that a traditional Conservation Corps model could fulfill. As the program was first implemented over 20 years ago, local, private businesses provided support to increase job skill attainment for youth in the community.

Within this unique model, the LCCC is integrated with a Youth Services Team and is directly supervised by a WIOA (formerly WIA) Center Manager. As part of this integration or “co-location”, the LCCC receives support from various County departments including: Human Resources, Risk Management, Fleet Services, and a Fiscal Department. The co-location also streamlines the dual enrollment process and provision of services to participants by allowing LCWC staff to connect with both youth serving in the field and at the LCWC. LCWC staff also assists the Corps in identifying and screening applicants who will benefit most from the Corps and/or LCWC services.

The LCCC is partially funded through WIOA (WIA) Youth funds, and eligible WIA youth Corpsmembers become co-enrolled with the LCWC. Co-enrolled Corpsmembers receive all LCWC services and have the opportunity to advance their skill set and overall work preparedness. Corpsmembers also gain industry-recognized credentials such as technical certifications. Other dollars that support the LCCC are obtained through “fee-for-service” projects, which are often selected through partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies.

As a result of being co-located, the LCCC adds a benefit to the workforce system by assisting with outreach and recruitment for LCWC youth enrollments. The Corps serves youth and young adults, ages 14-24, providing a diverse audience to LCWC Youth Services such as professional development workshops and/or accessing funds to support internships or schooling. Since a portion of Corps participants identify themselves as low-income and are often found to be WIA eligible, the LCCC further assists these populations by utilizing the knowledge base of the LCWC to leveraging federal funds such as using Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds to sponsor Corpsmembers in need of services or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in order to pay for work experience opportunities.

In September 2013, Larimer County was one of several communities affected by devastating floods creating long-term implications to local residents and the surrounding environment. Through the benefit of co-location with the LCWC, the LCCC has succeeded in serving displaced workers through a National Emergency Grant and continues to provide support to local, state and federal agencies with disaster recovery for the long-term sustainability of the environment and community.

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