



## Recommendations for a **21st Century Conservation Corps**

*Expanding the Modern Corps Movement to  
Employ Hundreds of Thousands of Americans and Address  
Billions in National and Community Needs*

### **Overview**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 22 million Americans have filed for unemployment since March; this number will only rise. The United States has not witnessed unemployment at this scale since the Great Depression. To help address this rise in unemployment and ensure the stability of our communities, we propose scaling the existing network of Service and Conservation Corps – building a movement similar in purpose to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the New Deal Era – to employ hundreds of thousands of young Americans and complete millions in necessary project work on public lands and in communities across the country.

### **Proposal**

Scale existing Service and Conservation Corps and establish new Corps to engage up to 100,000 young adults and recent veterans annually in conservation, resource management, and sustainable infrastructure jobs.

### **How a 21CCC Would Aid in Relief and Recovery**

**Provide hands-on work experience and a source of income for hundreds of thousands of unemployed young Americans.** *Corpsmembers will receive a wage, stipend or living allowance; participate in educational programming and workforce development; and have opportunities to earn a high school diploma, industry-recognized credentials, and AmeriCorps Education Awards and other financial assistance for post-secondary educational endeavors.*

**Complete millions in important and necessary project work on public lands and in communities across the country.** *Corpsmembers will complete millions of dollars in important project work for federal, state, and local land management and infrastructure agencies. Scaling Corps in urban and rural communities builds on successful strategies to support economic opportunity and meet critical community needs around health, environment, and resilience.*

### **Cost and Return on Investment**

The cost of engaging a participant in educational programming, workforce development and hands-on work experience/service (including a wage or stipend/living allowance) is approximately \$30,000 a year. For an annual investment of \$3 billion, existing and newly established Service and Conservation Corps could engage 100,000 Corpsmembers a year for the next five years (Total: \$15 billion to engage 500,000 Corpsmembers in FY21-FY25).

Because Corps leverage additional funding and resources from other federal, state, local, foundation and corporate grants and donations, they can complete approximately twice as much project work as the amount of the grant. For an investment of \$15 billion over five years, Corps could complete approximately \$30 billion in project work.

## Background

**CCC of the 1930s:** In response to unemployment during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC): a federal work relief program that, from 1933 until 1942, put 3 million unemployed young men to work building America's natural resource infrastructure. Participants received a \$1-per-day wage, meals, housing, and education. In less than 10 years, the CCC built more than 125,000 miles of roads, 47,000 bridges, 318,000 dams, and planted 3 billion trees. The CCC disbanded at the onset of WWII, but the concept lived on.

**Existing Need:** More than 20 million Americans are currently unemployed, with the majority of these individuals being from low-income communities of color. At the same time, federal, state, and local land and resource management agencies collectively have more than \$50 billion in backlogged maintenance needs.

**The Corps Movement Today:** There is a network of more than 130 nonprofit, state, and nationally-operated Service and Conservation Corps, including the Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers, serving in every state and communities across the country. Collectively, these Corps annually provide approximately 25,000 young adults and post-9/11 veterans the opportunity to obtain job skills and further their education while completing projects in partnership with communities and government. Under supervision of a trained Crew Leader, most Corps participants (Corpsmembers) serve on crews alongside up to 10 peers. Some Corps operate individual placement programs to position Corpsmembers in more specialized, internship-style roles, often at federal public lands. Project examples for today's Corps include:

### Public Lands

- Build/maintain trails, bridges, campgrounds and other outdoor recreational infrastructure
- Historic preservation
- Invasive species removal/ habitat restoration
- Wildlife management
- Water quality restoration

### Community

- Lot abatement
- Brownfield remediation
- Urban farming, food security
- Recycling, zero waste
- Build/maintain parks, playgrounds
- Urban development, affordable housing
- Construction
- Sustainable infrastructure

### Disasters

- Flood control
- Debris removal
- Coastal Restoration
- Wildfire mitigation, remediation

### Resource Efficiency

- Energy audits
- Home/public building retrofits
- Solar panel installation

## Program Structure

### Department of Labor

- Establish/administer a 21CCC grant program in the amount of \$3 billion a year for FY21 – FY25
- Coordinate with other federal agencies for potential project work
- Collect and report data on participant and project outcomes

### Federal, State, and Local Land, Resource and Infrastructure Agencies (Project Sponsors)

- Develop a list of shovel-ready project work for FY21 – 25
- Oversee project work in collaboration with Corps staff

### Service and Conservation Corps and other qualifying organizations (Grantees)

- Work with project sponsors (federal, state, and local) to identify project work
- Develop scopes of works and budgets for such project work
- Estimate the number of participants/Corpsmembers that can be engaged on project work
- Recruit Corpsmembers
- Provide Corpsmembers educational and workforce development programming, opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials, wages or stipends/living allowances, health care and other supportive services
- Train Corpsmembers and oversee projects (in coordination with project sponsors)
- Collect data on participants and projects and report to the Department of Labor

### Corporation for National and Community Service

- Provide Corpsmembers opportunities to enroll in AmeriCorps and/or earn an AmeriCorps Education Award.