



**The CorpsNetwork**

Strengthening America through  
service and conservation

# Starting a Corps



## What is a Corps?

Corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults (generally ages 16 – 25) and veterans (up to age 35) in service projects that address recreation, conservation, disaster response, and community needs. Through service to our country, Corps participants – or “Corpsmembers” – gain work experience and develop in-demand skills. Corpsmembers are compensated with a stipend or living allowance and often receive an education award or scholarship upon completing their term of service. Additionally, Corps provide educational programming, mentoring, and access to career and personal counseling.

## What can a Corps bring to your city?

**Park and Infrastructure Improvements:** Corps partner with park and resource managers to engage Corpsmembers in projects to maintain, create, and improve local parks and green infrastructure. Project examples include:

- Construction and maintenance of gardens and urban farms
- Graffiti removal
- Installation of green stormwater management systems
- Invasive species removal
- Landscaping
- Lot abatement
- Stream cleaning
- Tree planting/maintenance
- Trail construction/maintenance

**Workforce Training:** Corpsmembers gain hands-on work experience and receive training and certifications that prepare them for careers in the growing restoration and resource management fields. They also develop essential skills in leadership, communication, and conflict resolution.

**Community Engagement:** Corps help create and improve spaces that bring the community together. In the process, Corpsmembers build a sense of responsibility for their community and realize their personal ability to make a difference.

## Elements of the Corps Model

All Corps include these three elements. Organizations interested in starting a Corps should work with community stakeholders to design these elements to fit your community's specific needs.

### **Service Projects:**

What are priority projects that Corpsmembers can complete?

### **Corpsmember Development:**

What educational, workforce, and personal development opportunities will you provide?

### **Organizational Operation:**

Some Corps are standalone nonprofits. Some are housed within larger organizations, educational institutions, or even within local government. How will you handle the administrative and finance needs of the Corps?



## Starting a Corps 101

- 1. Feasibility Study:** Determine the needs of your community and create buy-in from local stakeholders. During this phase you must authentically engage the community in finding opportunities where your Corps can support their goals.
- 2. Program Design and Funding Outreach:** Develop a roadmap to take your Corps from an idea to an operational program. You will choose a management entity and make decisions about your mission, service focus, and Corpsmember focus. You will also develop and implement a plan for partnership and funding development.
- 3. Program Development:** With funding available, hire a Program Director and define operational systems, establish service projects, and develop a curriculum/workforce pathway for your future Corpsmembers.
- 4. Program in Operation:** It is important for a Corps to periodically evaluate and adapt programming. Additionally, the Corps needs to collect robust data on their Corpsmember and project outcomes. Demonstrating success can help direct the program towards effective strategies.
- 5. Accreditation:** The final stage is official designation as an Accredited Corps. The Corps Center of Excellence Accreditation is an in-depth review of general operations, financial management, risk management, governance standards, and Corps operations.

### Corps Accomplishments

The Corps Network, the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, represents 130+ Corps across the country. In 2018, these Corps collectively enrolled 25,000 participants.

#### 2018 Outcomes Snapshot

**1,400,478** acres of habitat restored

**1,044,819** trees planted

**67,984** acres  
of invasive species treated

**13,967** miles of trails  
improved or constructed

**10,715** community spaces  
improved or constructed

**2,347** miles of waterway restored

**12,747** certifications earned

**3,020** Corpsmembers enrolled in a  
high school diploma/GED program

## Where do I start?

The Corps Network offers technical assistance for any organization, agency, or community interested in exploring the feasibility of a Corps and developing a Corps. Services include facilitated discussions or site visits with established Corps, as well as manuals and templates for program design. For additional information and resources, please contact: Bobby Tillett, Member Services Manager, [btillettt@corpsnetwork.org](mailto:btillettt@corpsnetwork.org)

## The Corps Network

Established in 1985, The Corps Network is the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. Our 130 Corps provide young adults and veterans the opportunity to serve our country through projects on public lands and in rural and urban communities. The Corps Network supports Corps by advocating on their behalf, providing access to funding and projects, and offering expertise in Corps operations and programming.