



The  
CorpsNetwork

## Climate Corps Programs

A Community Approach  
to Bolster Climate Resiliency



### What is a Corps?

A Corps is a comprehensive workforce development program that engages young adults in conservation-related service. Corps help young people improve their own lives and the lives of others.

Corps are locally-based organizations that provide service opportunities for young adults (generally ages 18 – 30) and veterans (up to age 35) that could last from a few months to a year. Participants gain work experience and develop in-demand skills, are compensated with a stipend equivalent to at least \$15 per hour, and often receive a financial award upon completion of the program which can be used toward postsecondary education and/or student loans. Additionally, Corps provide participants educational programming, mentoring, and access to career and personal counseling.



#### Community Benefits

- ✓ Improve community sustainability through energy efficiency retrofits, park infrastructure maintenance, environmental restoration, and more.
- ✓ Complement local government workforce to complete projects that may otherwise go undone.
- ✓ Leverage federal funding and programs such as AmeriCorps, YouthBuild, and others.
- ✓ Lower unemployment rates for young adults.
- ✓ Prepare residents for jobs in new green industries.



#### Participant Benefits

- ✓ Upskilling and job training to improve chances of getting hired for new green jobs.
- ✓ Industry-recognized credentials and certifications that increase earning potential.
- ✓ Educational opportunities such as high school diploma attainment or GED prep.
- ✓ Hands-on service-learning opportunities.
- ✓ Monetary award to support college expenses and/or student loans after successfully completing a term.
- ✓ A team of professionals to help participants access critical social services.



## Partnerships With Corps

Corps can help local leaders address complex and interconnected challenges in their communities.

The unprecedented federal funding for infrastructure, outdoor recreation, and climate resiliency enhancements recently included in the Great American Outdoors Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act, is opening doors for local investments in small and large-scale projects.

Across the country, Corps have become vital partners with local governments to leverage this funding in more effective and impactful ways. **Strong Corps programs complete priority project work, provide paid service opportunities to local residents, and help establish a career-ready workforce for the climate resiliency and mitigation sectors.**

With a robust Corps in place, cities can ensure that local residents both play a role in the transformation of their city and have a pathway to the employment opportunities that these projects bring.

## How Can I Engage a Corps?

Are you sure there isn't already a Corps working in your community? Visit The Corps Network's Find a Corps page to see where the existing 150+ Corps currently serve. If there is not a Corps in your area, you have two options for bringing a Corps to your community.

1. Partner with an existing Corps to setup a satellite site in your city.
2. Build a new Corps from the ground up working with local partners and stakeholders.

Both options have unique benefits and challenges, but the best approach depends on the local conditions for establishing and sustaining a Corps. Luckily, The Corps Network has 35+ years of experience supporting communities and city leaders as they weigh the feasibility and pathway for establishing a Corps. To inquire about which approach is best for you, contact Bobby Tillett, Member Services Director at The Corps Network, [btillett@corpsnetwork.org](mailto:btillett@corpsnetwork.org).

# City-Corps Partnership Snapshots

## See examples of Corps across the country

### Operation Fresh Start (Madison, WI)

Operation Fresh Start (OFS) offers an opportunity for emerging adults to gain self-sufficiency through education, mentoring, and employment training. Participants in OFS Legacy program build affordable homes and work to maintain and improve natural areas throughout Dane County, including most Dane County Parks and Madison's City Conservation Parks. OFS programs offer young adults in Dane County **opportunities to gain meaningful, supported work experience while completing their high school diploma and earning industry certifications.** Through funding provide by the United Way of Dane County, the City of Madison, Dane County Department of Human Services, the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and a variety of federal governmental sources, OFS is also able to provide wrap around services to over 300 participants annually and career placements in the green industry trade.



### San Jose Conservation Corps (San Jose, CA)

San Jose Conservation Corps provides young adults with knowledge and skills to be successful in their chosen careers while engaging them in programs that create a more climate-smart and resilient future for the city of San Jose. San Jose Conservation Corps partners with public agencies throughout the area, such as the City of San Jose, Santa Clara Valley Water District, and the Santa Clara County Parks Department. Corpsmembers serve with these agencies on environmental and community projects that improve public spaces throughout San Jose. Projects include neighborhood cleanups, sidewalk repair, building fences and picnic areas, and water conservation. Corpsmembers also work on tire and e-waste recycling in partnership with the City of Sunnyvale and in collaboration with East Side Union High School District.



## Civic Works (Baltimore, MD)

Working with the City of Baltimore's Department of Housing and Community Development, Office of Sustainability, and local foundation partners, Civic Works' members **install solar panels, complete energy usage assessments, and provide energy efficiency retrofits** for low and moderate-income Baltimoreans. Additionally, Civic Works' fields crews manage an urban farm, transform vacant lots into pocket parks, and install green stormwater infrastructure. Corpsmembers have the option to enter into a variety of green job career pathways through the Civic Works-operated Baltimore Center for Green Careers.



## YouthBuild Louisville (Louisville, KY)

YouthBuild Louisville (YBLouisville) is an education, job training, and leadership program that provides low-income young adults the chance to earn their high school diploma or GED while getting hands-on training and work experience in **construction trades, the culinary field, an Urban Conservation Corps, or professional medical careers**. Primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and Louisville's Metro Government, YBLouisville can offer comprehensive programming and well-designed curricula that will lead to industry recognized credentials, paid internships, and job opportunities.



## Green City Force (Brooklyn, NY)

Green City Force's Service Corps engages New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents in hands-on service experiences that respond to needs in public housing communities. Corpsmembers **cultivate and distribute fresh produce, build sustainable green infrastructure, and engage NYCHA residents in sustainability programs**. Graduates of the 6-month program can continue into GCF's social enterprise model which works with NYCHA, New York State Energy & Research Authority (NYSERDA), and private energy services companies to assist low-to-moderate-income families and small businesses reduce energy consumption and save money.



## The Sustainability Institute (Charleston, SC)

The Sustainability Institute is a leader in advancing sustainability work. With its weatherization and energy upgrade services, The Sustainability Institutes' Environmental Conservation Corps assists low-income households in the greater Charleston metro area who are struggling with unaffordable energy costs. Through partnerships with the City of Charleston, the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, the Energy Foundation, and other private foundation grants, **Corpsmembers retrofit homes with energy and water upgrades**. These projects could save families 20% or more in energy costs. Corpsmembers earn a regionally appropriate certification – the RISES Certification (Resilient, Innovative, Sustainable, Efficient, Safe) – designed to address the specific green building needs, priorities and strategies of the South Carolina region.



## Student Conservation Association – Chicago Community Program (Chicago, IL)

The SCA Chicago Community Program provides **year-round conservation opportunities to high school aged youth and young adults**. Members serve at sites in and around Chicago, in city or state parks, forests, cultural sites, and urban green spaces such as gardens, playgrounds or vacant lots. With funding provide by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Chicago Park District and the National Forest Foundation, SCA participants learn how to work as members of a diverse team of peers; gain knowledge of public land resources and environmental issues; increase understanding of environmental and trail restoration techniques; acquire experience in public service and outdoor recreation; and develop valuable professional skills through teambuilding and leadership activities.



More examples of City-Corps partnerships continued on the next page →

## Build it Green, a program of greenespaces (Chattanooga, TN)

Build it Green (BIG) prepares young adults for careers in construction and energy efficiency through a 6-month to 1-year workforce development training program. Among others, the Corps partners with the City of Chattanooga, Hancock County, Chattanooga-based non-profit Build Me World, AmeriCorps, and the local public utility (EPB). BIG aims to **generate pathways out of poverty** for young adults in the city of Chattanooga through job readiness training, community organizing and outreach training, and **technical training in the green building field**. BIG performs retrofits and other solutions to issues of energy efficiency in low-income areas.



## Greencorps Chicago (Chicago, IL)

Greencorps Chicago is a city-funded green-industry employment program. The Corps provides individuals with on-the-job training, promotes **environmental stewardship, and improves the quality of life for Chicagoans through the maintenance of public spaces** and the restoration of natural habitats. The Corps is operated as a public-private partnership between the Chicago Department of Transportation and WRD Environmental with service project and training partners including the Chicago Park District and Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Graduates of the Greencorps program have gone on to work for major companies such as Cardno, Christy Webber, Safety Kleen, and AES.



## Contact Us

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