



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS WORKING LANDS CLIMATE CORPS (WLCC)

Overview

The Corps Network, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) /United States Department of Agriculture, AmeriCorps, and the National Association of Conservation Districts, is accepting applications from eligible organizations to participate in the newly established Working Lands Climate Corps.

Launching in 2024, the Working Lands Climate Corps (WLCC) will train the next generation of conservation leaders for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry. The WLCC is a part of the American Climate Corps (ACC), and service members will receive technical skills training, education awards, and career pathway opportunities. WLCC members will receive on-the-ground experience with partners and organizations who conduct programming to support the adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry practices and systems.

Eligible organizations may apply to host one or several WLCC members. Awarded organizations will work collaboratively with state and/or county-level NRCS staff to facilitate and track the climate work of WLCC members. This project aims to engage at least 100 Working Lands Climate Corps members with host organizations across the country.

WLCC members will be enrolled as AmeriCorps members contingent upon funding availability. Host organizations are highly encouraged to provide a living allowance/training stipend of at least \$15/hour. The minimum living allowance/stipend is \$11/hour. Members will also receive a *Segal AmeriCorps Education Award* of up to \$6,895 upon successful completion. Exact education award amounts will vary depending on the length of the member's term of service. (*See Appendix B*)

Award Mechanism:	Cost Reimbursement Grant; No match required.
Period of Performance:	Requested projects should begin no later than September 30, 2024.
Duration of Award:	12 months

Important Dates

Applications are due by 5 pm on Friday, March 22, 2024. Awards will be announced by March 31, 2024.

Projects are expected to begin no later than September 30, 2024.

Technical questions may be submitted via email at rfp@corpsnetwork.org through March 1, 2024. Responses to frequently asked questions will be made publicly available.

Eligible Applicants

Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) US organizations, Tribal governments, units of state, territory, or local government, and special district governments are eligible for this opportunity. Applicants must have an active SAM.gov registration.

Projects proposed by organizations based in the service area and/or in partnership with Service and Conservation Corps and/or Soil and Water Conservation Districts are encouraged to apply.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed based on the following rubric:

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points
The applicant's proposed plan for recruiting and enrolling eligible participants. <i>(See Appendix B)</i>	15
The applicant's proposal adequately defines specific projects within the scope of eligible activities.	30
The proposed project's ability to meet a defined climate, community, and/or organizational capacity-building need.	30
The proposed budget's efficiency and leveraging of resources to support WLCC member stipends, training, development and/or project implementation.	15
The proposal's objectives include benefits to historically underserved/socially disadvantaged communities.	10
Total Points Available	100

Scope of Work and Eligible Activities

Funding may be used to support activities in a) **Outreach and Education**, b) **Conservation Technical Assistance**, c) **Workforce Development and Training**, or any combination of the above.

Funding may not be used to support the costs associated with the implementation of conservation practices for which members are trained, including labor, materials, or other professional services. Organizations may, however, submit applications for projects that include project implementation, provided such costs are paid from other funding sources.

Outreach and Education

Applicants may propose projects that conduct outreach and education to promote the availability of financial and technical assistance programs for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry available from the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other similar partner programs.

Outreach activities will integrate an understanding of the NRCS conservation planning process, an overview of Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry practices, and available climate solutions to help producers meet their conservation needs.

Activities may include:

- Hosting public meetings and field days;
- Developing outreach materials such as newsletters, media stories, etc;
- Developing training resources and materials;
- Supporting trainings on climate-smart practices;
- Conducting capacity-building activities to expand the reach of conservation and climate-smart practices;
- Conducting outreach and education activities to increase awareness of fire resilience and wildfire risk;
- Reaching underserved producers/communities with climate-smart agricultural resources; and/or
- Performing on-farm energy awareness activities as part of outreach NRCS program solutions to reduce farm operation energy use and other climate solutions.

Conservation Technical Assistance

Applicants may propose projects that support the delivery of conservation assistance in managing natural resources by working with conservation planners, technical service providers, and other partners to expand the delivery of conservation activities that advance climate-smart agriculture, healthy lands, and other natural resource concerns.

Activities may include:

- Coordinating and attending field visits;
- Assisting in field surveying and site inspections;
- Data collection across large areas to support area-wide conservation planning;

- Any clerical activities that would further support the delivery of technical assistance to farmers and landowners (e.g., assisting with documentation and paperwork necessary for conservation agreements with private landowners);
- Support the collection of data to support the benefits of climate-smart agricultural practices (soil sampling, water quality monitoring, etc);
- Assist with easement monitoring;
- Working with a conservation professional, assisting with technician-level actions to support conservation practice design; and/or
- Supporting conservation planning activities and working with a partner conservation professional to conduct full-cycle project support as described below.

Phase	Description of Activities
Identify Problems and Opportunities	Working with a partner conservation professional to help contact landowners and document known problems, opportunities, shared concerns, or a perceived threat
Determine Objectives	Assisting in defining objectives given the stakeholders needs and values as well as the resource use regarding onsite and offsite ecological protection.
Inventory Resources	Assisting in collecting appropriate natural resource, economic and social information for the planning area.
Analyze Resource Data	Assisting in studying the resource data to clearly define existing conditions for all the natural resources, including limitations and potential for the desired use.
Formulate Alternatives	Assisting in reviewing and developing options to achieve the goals for the land, by solving all identified problems, taking advantage of opportunities, and meeting the social, economic, and environmental needs of the planning project.
Document Decisions	Assisting the conservation planner with documenting the decisions and plan.
Implementation Planning	Assisting with planning and design of a system of climate-smart conservation practices.
Measuring, Monitoring, Verification, and Reporting	Assisting with measuring and quantifying environmental outcomes (e.g., estimated greenhouse gas benefits). Assist with monitoring and verifying the completion of practices, as well as supporting any required documentation and reporting.

Workforce Development

Applicants may propose projects that provide workforce development and training opportunities through experience in the field to support a core set of skills, including:

- Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Practices;
- Climate Resilience/ Adaptation;
- Environmental Justice;

- Outreach/Engagement with Farmers and Rural Communities;
- NRCS Conservation Planning Process;
- Leadership Development; and/or
- Career Pathways Opportunities.

Applications must be submitted online. [Click here to access the application.](#)

Additional Resources

- [Appendix A – Partner Profiles](#)
- [Appendix B – AmeriCorps State and National, a Primer](#)
- [Appendix C – Budget Guidance](#)
- [Appendix D – Application Preview](#)
- [Budget Template](#)
- [Application](#)

APPENDIX A – PARTNER PROFILES

About the Natural Resources Conservation Service

As the USDA’s primary private lands conservation agency, NRCS generates, manages, and shares the data, technology, and standards that enable partners and policymakers to make decisions informed by objective, reliable science.

And through one-on-one, personalized advice, NRCS works voluntarily with producers and communities to find the best solutions to meet their unique conservation and business goals. By doing so, we help address climate change and ensure the long-term sustainability of American agriculture. We’re also focused on the American farmer, especially those underserved by our programs as well as those trying to break into new markets, like organics.

NRCS was born out of troubled times — the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s. Dust storms ravaged the Nation’s farmland, stripping away millions of tons of topsoil and carrying it all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. What originally began as the USDA Soil Conservation Service in 1935 is now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a name change that highlights our broader mission of natural resource conservation.

Today, through voluntary conservation programs, NRCS helps producers, soil and water conservation districts, and other partners protect and conserve natural resources on private lands throughout the United States. With approximately 2,300 Service Centers in communities nationwide, NRCS and other USDA employees work side-by-side with producers in every State and territory.

About The Corps Network

Founded in 1985, The Corps Network is the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. Our 150 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 through advocacy, providing access to funding and project opportunities, and by offering expertise in Corps operations and programming. Every year, The Corps Network’s efforts help enable over 20,000 diverse young people and recent veterans to strengthen communities, improve the environment, and transform their lives through service in Corps programs.

Corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults (generally ages 16 – 30) and veterans (up to age 35) in service projects that address conservation, climate resilience, and community needs. Through a term of service that could last from a few months to a year, 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 service. Additionally, Corps provide participants educational programming, mentoring, and access to career and personal counseling.

Access the directory of Service and Conservation Corps at <https://corpsnetwork.org/find-a-corps/>.

About the National Association of Conservation Districts

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 individuals who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on private and public lands in the United States.

NACD's mission is to promote responsible management and conservation of natural resources on all lands by representing locally-led conservation districts and their associations through grassroots advocacy, education and partnerships.

The association was founded on the philosophy that conservation decisions should be made at the local level with technical and funding assistance from federal, state and local governments and the private sector. As the national voice for all conservation districts, NACD supports voluntary, incentive-driven natural resource conservation programs that benefit all citizens.

Access the directory of Conservation Districts at <https://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/conservation-district-directory/>.

APPENDIX B – AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL, A PRIMER

AmeriCorps State and National is a network of local, state, and national service programs that connects thousands of Americans each year in intensive service to meet our country’s critical needs in education, health, the environment, economic opportunity, veterans, disaster services, as well as other unmet needs.

AmeriCorps members commit to serving a term of service of up to 1,700 hours, providing direct service or capacity-building service in communities across the country. At least 80% of the members’ hours must be spent in direct service. Up to 20% of their service hours can be devoted to education and training.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible to enroll as an AmeriCorps member, Working Lands Climate Corps members must meet the following minimum criteria:

- a) Be at least 17 years old at the start of service.
- b) Have a high school diploma or equivalent or agree to obtain a high school diploma prior to using the earned education award.
- c) Be a citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States; and
- d) Satisfy the National Service Criminal History Check eligibility criteria.

Individual host sites may develop additional enrollment criteria, including, but not limited to, age, education, and/or physical requirements.

Term of Service

Members are enrolled in a term of service of up to 1,700 hours. All AmeriCorps members have up to 12 months to complete their term of service; however, a host organization may have specific start and end dates during which the member will earn hours.

Service terms are of varying length and may be selected based on what suits the program’s needs and structure. Members may enroll in up to four (4) terms and earn a maximum of the equivalent of two full-time education awards.

Host organizations should select the service term that can be completed within the program’s period of performance.

Term Type	Minimum Hours Required
Full Time	1,700
Three Quarter Time	1,200
Half Time	900
Reduced Half Time	675
Quarter Time	450
Minimum Time	300

Member Benefits

Upon successful completion of a term of service, Working Lands Climate Corps members will receive a *Segal AmeriCorps Education Award*. The education award may be used to repay student loans and pay eligible educational expenses for higher education and training programs. The amount of the education award depends on the member's enrollment date and the term type in which they are enrolled. Host organizations are not responsible for paying the education award.

Members enrolled before September 30, 2024

Term Type	Education Award Amount
Full Time	\$6,895.00
Three Quarter Time	\$4,826.50
Half Time	\$3,447.50
Reduced Half Time	\$2,626.27
Quarter Time	\$1,824.07
Minimum Time	\$1,459.26

Members enrolled between October 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025

Term Type	Education Award Amount
Full Time	\$7,395.00
Three Quarter Time	\$5,176.50
Half Time	\$3,697.50
Reduced Half Time	\$2,817.14
Quarter Time	\$1,956.35
Minimum Time	\$1,565.08

During service, Working Lands Climate Corps members must receive a living allowance, and host organizations must meet the tax and insurance requirements as stated in Section VIII of the [AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions](#).

Host organizations are encouraged to provide a member allowance that is the equivalent of \$15/hour or more whenever feasible. At a minimum, the living allowance must be the equivalent of \$11/hour.

Working Lands Climate Corps members are not employees, and the living allowance provided is not a wage. The amount paid to members should be the same each period and must not fluctuate.

Additional costs associated with hosting AmeriCorps members may include housing, transportation, uniforms and personal protective equipment, and expenses for individual criminal history checks and training.

Prohibited Activities

Per CFR § 2520.65, AmeriCorps members are prohibited from conducting the following activities while earning hours toward their term of service.

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

- (1) Attempting to influence legislation;
- (2) Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- (3) Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- (4) Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- (5) Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- (6) Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- (7) Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- (8) Providing a direct benefit to—
 - i. A business organized for profit;
 - ii. A labor union;
 - iii. A partisan political organization;
 - iv. A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative;
 - v. An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities; and
- (9) Conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- (10) Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
- (11) Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

Notwithstanding item 8 above, projects completed in partnership with businesses or individuals organized for profit are not automatically excluded from this opportunity. Host organizations working in collaboration with businesses or individuals organized for profit must ensure that

project activities completed by the AmeriCorps member provide a direct community benefit in lieu of benefit to the for-profit entity. (*Authority: AmeriCorps Benefit to Business FAQs*)

[Click here to read the full text of AmeriCorps State and National Terms and Conditions.](#)

APPENDIX C – BUDGET GUIDANCE

General Guidelines

- Budgets must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and the requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance. For allowable, allocable, and reasonable cost information, please refer to the [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#) (2 CFR Part 200) and [NRCS/FPAC Grants and Agreement policies](#).
- There is no match requirement for this opportunity. However, if there are costs that are relevant to your proposed project, we recommend you include those expenses and indicate the amounts covered by resources other than the grant in the “Other Sources” column.
- Each cost should be itemized and include a narrative description and justification along with a basis for determining the total expense charged to the budget in the “Description” column.
- Do not include miscellaneous, contingency, or other undefined budget amounts.

Budget Template

All applications must include a detailed budget. Budgets must be prepared using the budget template provided. Applicants may download the budget template [here](#).

Complete each section of the Budget Template by entering the “Amount/Unit Cost” and “Quantity.” The amounts in the “Total” column will be calculated automatically. Then, enter the amount requested from Working Lands Climate Corps funding in the column labeled “Federal Share.” The amounts in the “Other Sources” column will be calculated automatically. Specific instructions for each section are included below.

Staff & Personnel

List each staff position separately and provide the percentage of effort devoted to this project, the position’s base salary, and the number of individuals filling this position.

Member Stipends/Living Allowance

Select the term length for each Working Lands Climate Corps member you intend to recruit and enroll for this project. Enter the hourly rate equivalent and the number of individuals for each term type selected. The amount of the living allowance will be automatically calculated.

Fringe & Other Benefits

Identify the types of fringe benefits to be covered and the costs of benefit(s) for each staff position and Working Lands Climate Corps member. Allowable fringe benefits typically include FICA, Worker’s Compensation, Retirement, SUTA, Health and Life Insurance, IRA, and 401K. You may provide a calculation for total benefits as a percentage of the salaries to which they apply or list each benefit as a separate item. Fringe rates as a percentage of salary expenses must be supported by an approved negotiated indirect cost rate. Other benefits to be provided directly to Working Lands Climate Corps members, such as housing allowance, transportation allowance, etc., should be included in this section and itemized accordingly.

Member Training & Development

Include the costs associated with member training to support them in carrying out their service activities. If consulting costs for training are included, include the estimated rate for those services.

Staff Training & Development

Include the costs associated with training staff on project requirements and training to enhance the skills staff need for effective project implementation. If consulting costs for training are included, include the estimated rate for those services.

Travel

Describe the purpose(s) for which staff and members will travel. Provide a calculation that includes itemized costs for airfare, transportation, lodging, per diem, and other travel-related expenses multiplied by the number of trips/person. Where applicable, identify the organization's current standard reimbursement rate(s) for mileage, daily per diem, and similar supporting information. Reimbursement should not exceed the federal mileage rate unless justified by applicant policy and detailed in the budget narrative.

Supplies & Technology

Itemize expenses related to the purchase of consumable supplies and materials, including member service gear, uniforms*, and equipment that does not fit the definition below.

**AmeriCorps members must wear an AmeriCorps logo on a daily basis, preferably clothing with the AmeriCorps logo. You may include the cost of uniforms as a budget expense in this section.*

Contractual and Consultant Services

Include itemized costs for consultants related to the project's operations, except those already listed in the *Member Training & Development* and/or *Staff Training & Development* sections.

Equipment > \$5,000

Equipment is defined as tangible, non-expendable personal property having a useful life of more than one year *and* an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit (including accessories, attachments, and modifications). Any items that do not meet this definition should be entered in the *Supplies and Technology* section.

Itemize each requested item, the unit cost, and the number of units you are requesting.

Other Direct Costs

Itemize other project costs that are directly attributable to the project but not included in other predetermined categories. All costs in this category must meet guidelines on allowability.

Indirect Costs

Include the basis for determining the indirect costs charged to the project. Organizations that have an established indirect cost rate for federal awards should provide a copy of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) in the additional documents section of the application. Indirect costs charged to the federal share of this award are capped at 10% of total direct costs.

APPENDIX D – APPLICATION PREVIEW

Working Lands Climate Corps Application

FOR REFERENCE ONLY – ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED USING THE ONLINE FORM

Organization Name:

Unique Entity ID#:

Organization Type:

Is your organization a member of The Corps Network?:

Is your organization a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)?:

Is your organization currently a partner of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)?:

Street Address

Line 1:

Line 2:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Contact Name:

Email Address:

Contact Number:

Page 2 - Project Location

Please provide the location (city, state, and county) of your proposed project. For projects with multiple locations, select "add another project location" for additional sites.

Project Location

City:

State:

County:

Add another project location

Page 3 - Member Information

Working Lands Climate Corps members will be enrolled as AmeriCorps members to provide them with a *Segal AmeriCorps Education Award* upon completion of their term of service.

Members may be enrolled in terms of varying lengths. Term types are:

- Minimum Time (300 hours)
- Quarter Time (450 hours)
- Reduced Half Time (675 hours)
- Half Time (900 hours)
- Full Time (1,700 hours)

Members may not engage in prohibited activities as described in the *Request for Proposals*.

The Corps Network will provide training and technical assistance to applicants with limited or no prior experience with managing and supervising AmeriCorps members.

Please provide the proposed number of members to be hosted by your organization for each term type.

of Full-Time (1,700 hours) Members:

of Half Time (900 hours) Members:

of Reduced Half Time (675 hours) Members:

of Quarter Time (450 hours) Members:

of Minimum Time (300 hours) Members:

Total # of Members:

Page 4 - Project Description

What is the proposed project's focus area? Select all that apply.

Outreach and Education
Conservation Technical Assistance
Workforce Development

Anticipated Project Start Date

Month:

Day:

Year:

Please provide a description of your proposed project.

In your narrative, please address the following questions:

- How does the scope of work support the delivery of climate-smart conservation assistance to address natural resource concerns?
- Will the proposed work be done directly through the delivery of NRCS conservation programs or through a separate program that is aligned with NRCS Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry conservation practice standards? How will the proposed work support the NRCS mission, climate goals, and programs?
- If the applicant will contribute matching funds from a non-Federal program, please describe how the work will complement NRCS programming.
- What activities will WLCC members conduct to support the expansion of climate-smart agriculture?
- How will WLCC members expand your organization's existing on-the-ground capacity to support Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry practices?
- Is the applicant currently based in *and* serving the community where the project is located? What are the organization's plans to ensure that the organization is integrated into the local service area?

Provide your response in the space below. (*Max 1,000 words*)

Page 5 - Member Training and Development

Please describe your proposed member recruitment and training plan.

In your narrative, please address the following questions:

- How will you identify and recruit the WLCC member(s)? Will the member(s) be recruited from the service/project area? If not, how will the program ensure that the members are integrated into the communities where they are serving?
- What are the learning goals for the WLCC member(s)?
- How will the proposed training plan help achieve those goals? Please describe both on-the-job training and structured/formal training that will be offered.
- How will the WLCC member(s) be supported and supervised?
- How will the WLCC member(s) expand the organization's existing capacity level?

Provide your response in the space below. (*Max 1,000 words*)

In partnership with NRCS and the National Association of Conservation Districts, grantees of the Working Lands Climate Corps will have access to a directory of training providers for additional workforce development. **Is your program interested in receiving additional support to conduct member training?**

(If yes)

What types of training would your program require additional support to offer?

The Corps Network is actively seeking additional philanthropic support to help provide additional benefits to Working Lands Climate Corps members. **Is your program interested in receiving additional funding to support member benefits not covered in the proposed budget?**

(If yes)

What types of member benefits would your program require additional support to offer?

Page 6 - Environmental Justice Impact

Please describe how your proposed project will advance environmental justice and reach underserved communities and/or producers. (*Max 500 words*)

Page 7 - Budget and Narrative

Provide a Project Budget to include direct and indirect project costs using the template provided. The budget should include a brief narrative in the *Description* column that explains the assumptions used to develop the budget which provides some justification for the cost and how each line item helps to meet the project deliverables.

Download Budget Template

Upload Budget

Page 8 - Additional Documents

Please provide up to three (3) letters of support from community partners, collaborators, or other stakeholders for your proposed project. Upload individual letters separately.

Letter of Support:

Add another response

Does your organization have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)?

(If yes)

Upload NICRA: