

An Introduction to: The Corps Network and Conservation Corps Partnerships



**The
CorpsNetwork**

Strengthening America through
service and conservation

Presentation Overview

Part I

Background on Corps and The Corps Network

Speaker: Mary Ellen Sprenkel, *CEO*

Part II

LA Conservation Corps and their River Corps Program

Speakers: Yasmin Mero-Corona, *Program Coordinator*
Alexis Miranda-Vences, *Corpsmember*

North Carolina Youth Conservation Corps Partnership with Army Corps of Engineers

Speakers: Jan Pender, *Project Director for YCC, Conservation Trust for NC*
Destiny Locke, *Corpsmember*





Part I: Background on Corps & The Corps Network

What is The Corps Network?

- National Association of Youth Service and Conservation Corps
- 30+ years of experience (*founded in 1985*)
- Based in Washington, DC

Our Mission

To provide critical leadership to the Corps movement and our nation's Service and Conservation Corps as they harness the power of youth and young adults to tackle some of America's greatest challenges and transform their own lives.

Service and Conservation Corps basics



Corps are

- Based on the model and philosophy of Great Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps
- Comprehensive youth development programs that engage young people, ages 16 - 25 and returning veterans up to age 35, in service to their communities and the environment
- Operated by nonprofits or units of state and local government

In exchange for their service, Corpsmembers receive

- Job training / hands-on work experience
- Academic programming
- Supportive services
- Opportunities to develop an interest in the great outdoors, an ethic of community and environmental stewardship and leadership skills
- Stipend based on living wage

The Corps Model



Corps share these elements:

- Engage Corpsmembers in crews or individual placements
- Corpsmembers work under supervision of trained Crew Leaders and mentors
- Intensive Corpsmember and Crew Leader orientation/training
- Individualized Corpsmember assessments and personal planning
- Academic programming
- Workforce development
- Paid service-learning/work experience
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement
- Corpsmember transitional support/follow-up services

Corps emphasize Workforce Development



- Help young people develop “soft” and “hard” skills essential for career success
 - **Soft:** e.g., showing up to work on time, appropriate dress, workplace behavior
 - **Hard:** e.g., how to do basic construction, build a trail, restore a habitat
- Award industry-recognized Credentials & Certificates in range of fields
- Conduct Career Pathway planning
- Provide pre-apprenticeship programming
- Encourage development of relationships with potential employers

Corps also emphasize education



- Drop-out re-engagement
- High School Diploma/GED
- Environmental education
- STEM education
- Postsecondary enrollment and transition support
- Education Awards and Scholarships
 - in 2014, TCN enrolled over 3,000 Corpsmembers in our AmeriCorps Education Awards Program (EAP)
 - Corpsmembers can earn up to \$11,000 for 2 terms

Corps provide wraparound and supportive services to maximize Corpsmember success



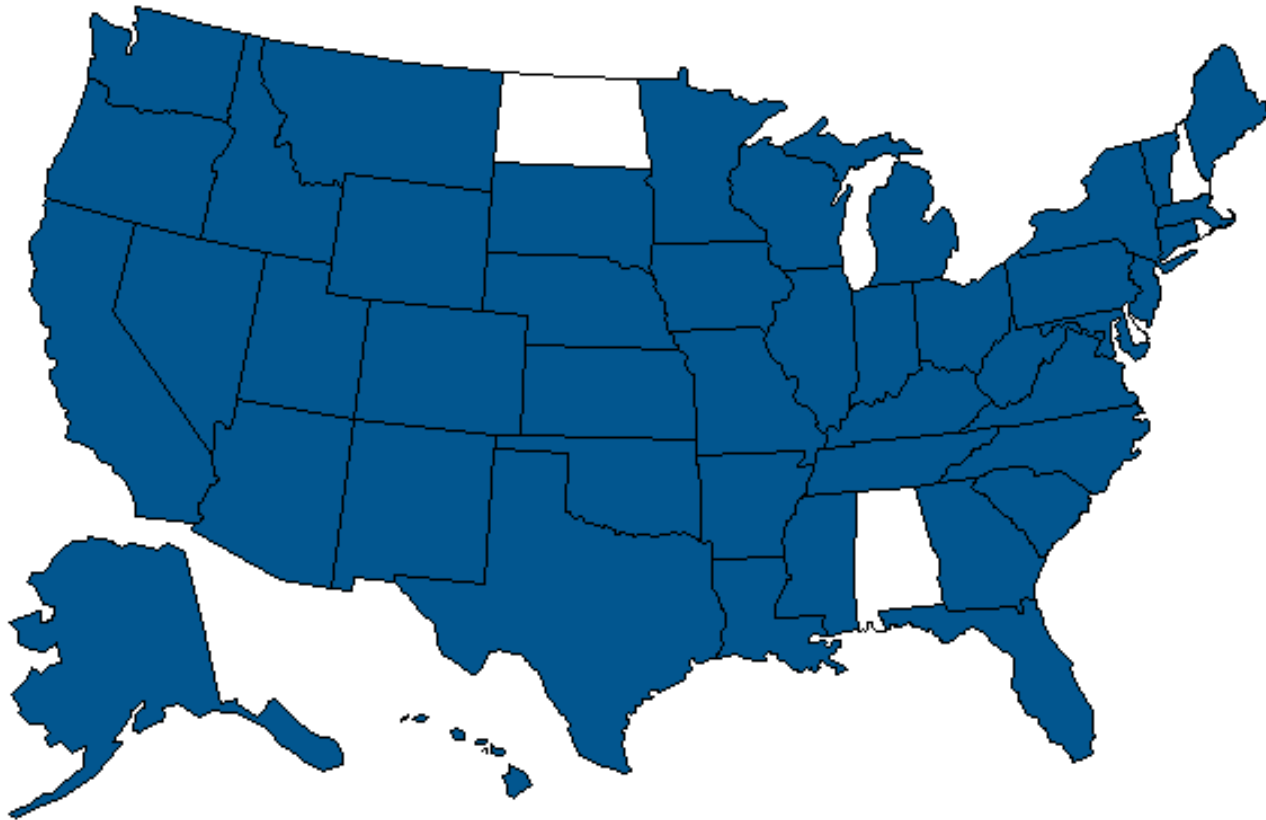
Examples Include:

- Childcare
- Healthcare
- Financial literacy and planning
- Career counseling
- Parenting classes and family counseling
- Fitness and health programming
- Transportation assistance



TCN – Corps Locations

States where Full or Affiliate Members are Based



120 Corps across the country

See a full list of Corps by state at:

<https://www.corpsnetwork.org/impact/corps-by-state>

Corps engage diverse participants

23,000 Corpsmembers in 2014

53% of Corpsmembers were people of color

30% from urban communities

32% living below the poverty line

37% unemployed prior to enrollment

11% formerly court involved

25% not in school and had no high school diploma

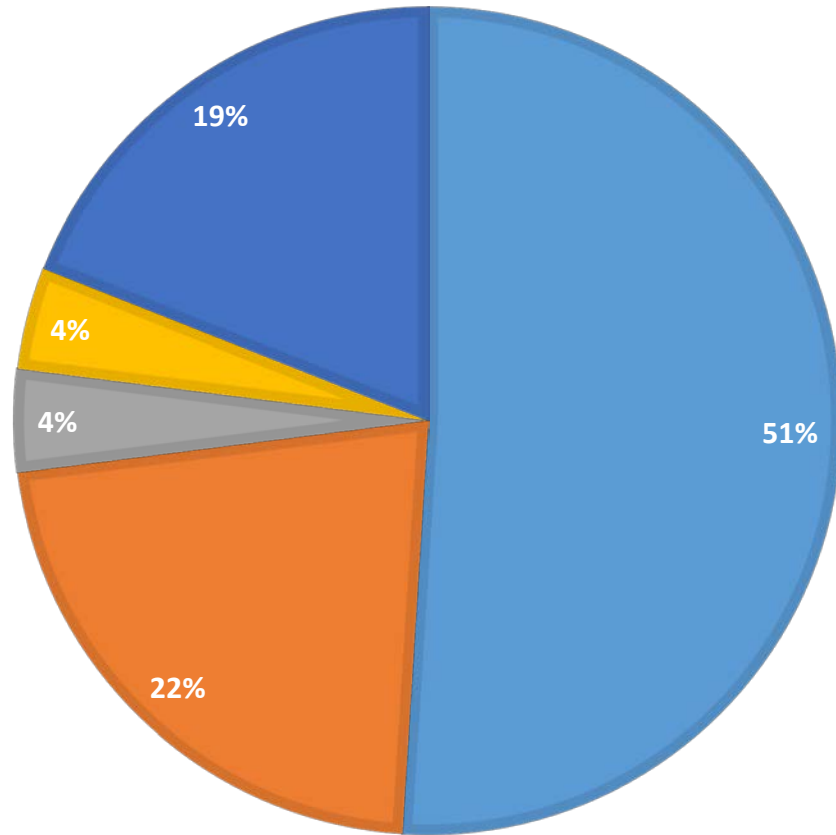
29% in high school or an alternative education program



29% had at least some college

17% college graduates

TCN Corpsmember demographics - 2014



59.5% male 39.9% female

- White
- African American
- American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Other

*21% of Corpsmembers also identified as Hispanic

TCN Corpsmember Achievement - 2014



- **Nearly 50%** earned certifications or credentials
- **61%** who needed a high school diploma or GED earned one through their Corps
- **92%** of Corps provide life skills trainings (financial literacy, time management, etc.)
- Students in The Corps Network's Postsecondary Success Education Initiative
 - Over a **2 grade level** math increase
 - **85%** of participants participated in College/Postsecondary Preparation activities
 - **83%** of participants received Career Awareness counseling
 - **66%** of participants applied to college
 - **55%** enrolled in postsecondary programs (48% college, 8% non-college)
 - **75%** overall retention rate; **74%** of participants who enrolled in college have been in college for at least a year



TCN Project Accomplishments - 2014



8,761

miles of trail constructed or improved



4,703

gardens, parks and playground constructed or improved



2,336,725

trees planted



213,206

People benefitted from education programs delivered by Corps



472,424

acres of invasive species removed



11,412

low-income homes weatherized or retrofitted to improve energy efficiency



30,072,000

pounds of waste collected and properly disposed of/recycled

Corps Project Examples

Enhance Recreation on Public Lands by:

- Constructing, maintaining and designing sustainable trails
- Building, restoring and painting cabins and structures
- Constructing and repairing stone and log retaining walls, bridges, water bars and erosion control measures
- Installing signage and interpretive stations
- Building, restoring, and maintaining campgrounds and other recreational facilities
- Surveying trails and recreational facilities for ADA compliance
- Conducting visitor use surveys and GIS mapping
- Monitoring visitor safety and risk management
- Maintaining and restoring road corridors including tree/brush/rock removal and re-vegetation

Protect Wildlife and/or Restore Public Lands (Ecological Restoration) by:

- Decommissioning old trails and roads
- Installing and maintaining irrigation systems
- Performing erosion control measures, including soil and shoreline stabilization
- Preserving and restoring stream bank and riparian habitat
- Preserving and restoring wetlands, prairies and savannahs
- Inventorying and removing invasive weeds and other species; applying herbicide with certified/trained participants
- Installing and/or removing fencing
- Constructing wildlife openings, food plantings and cover patches
- Building nesting boxes and platforms, fishing piers, boat docks and fish cribs
- Conducting population studies and GIS inventories
- Monitoring cultural resources
- Conducting boundary surveys and marking

Protect Communities and Public Lands from the Devastating Effects of Wildfire by:

- Implementing controlled burns
- Removing hazardous fuels
- Implementing timber stand improvement projects
- Constructing fire breaks
- Responding with initial attack fire crews
- Providing fire camp support

Enhance Neighborhoods and Community Public Spaces by:

- Constructing and maintaining community/neighborhood gardens
- Constructing, maintaining and improving park shelters, kiosks, cabins
- Building and maintaining bike and walking paths, both hard and soft surface including trails that meet ADA standards
- Landscaping public spaces
- Planting grasses, trees, seedlings, and shrubs; collecting seeds
- Maintaining and removing trees and shrubs
- Building, restoring, and maintaining playgrounds
- Removing litter and graffiti
- Installing recycling containers and administering recycling programs
- Cleaning and restoring abandoned lots
- Installing rainwater collection systems
- Installing signage

Prepare Communities for Disasters and Respond When Needed by:

- Stabilizing mud slides and protecting levees
- Undertaking erosion and flood control
- Supporting— and, at times, providing — fire crews
- Removing debris and hazardous trees
- Blue tarping damaged roofs

Save Energy and Promote Energy Independence by

- Weatherizing homes and structures
- Re-lamping facilities
- Conducting energy audits
- Installing insulation, sealing air flow and replacing windows
- Installing solar panels

Preserve Historic Structures

- Renovating historical buildings and sites
- Preserving artifacts
- Stabilizing foundations
- Masonry
- Stabilizing pre-historic sites
- Constructing interpretive displays
- Decommissioning outdated structures

Corps provide project logistical support



Corps provide all Corpsmembers with

- Uniforms
- Equipment / tools
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Training on tools, safety and project-specific skills
- Transportation, food, lodging for off-site projects

Funding for Corps

Corps receive most of their funding from federal grants, foundation grants, and fee-for-service* partnerships with diverse agencies, including:

Land Management Agencies

- U.S. Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Reclamation

Other Agencies

- EPA
- AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service)
- Department of Labor
- Department of Transportation

* Majority of Corps funding comes from fee-for-service

Corps are Cost-Effective

From a 2012 cost analysis conducted by the National Park Service and Booz Allen Hamilton Utilizing TCN Corps to complete a project – as opposed to contract or in-house labor – can save as much as **50%**

- Using conservations corps instead of NPS crews saved, on average **65%**
- Using conservation corps instead of contractor crews had an average savings of **83%**
- Corps crews had an average savings of **\$50,000** per project over NPS crews
- Corps can do the same work for **½** the cost, or **2x** the work for the same amount



Corps Project Partner Satisfaction



- Recent surveys show virtually all federal project partners (**99.6%**) say they would work with Corps again
- Corps provide high-quality work
- Crews are self-sufficient -- they come highly trained and closely supervised
 - Average staff to Corpsmember ratio between **1:3 and 1:8**
 - Accredited Corps must provide all Crew Leaders and key staff with 1 – 6 six weeks of initial **training**
 - Accredited Corps must provide Crew Leaders and staff with on-going **professional development** during and between seasons
 - Adequate insurance coverage and workers compensation
 - All Accredited Corps must demonstrate ability to address variety of **risk management and safety concerns**

TCN Leadership and Support

The Corps Network supports and ensures high quality programming for participants and project sponsors by:

- **Advocating** for Corps with the Administration and on the Hill
- Securing **funding** and resources (grants)
- Facilitating large-scale and **national projects**
- Coordinating a national network of **expertise** (national conference)
- Collecting, analyzing and sharing **data**
- Identifying and promoting **best practices**
- Providing training and **technical assistance**
- Administering a comprehensive and rigorous **accreditation program**



TCN Accreditation Program



- **Implemented in 2014** as an expansion and enhancement of our earlier Excellence in Corps Operations (ECO) program
- Promotes **high-quality** programming
- Demonstrates that Corps are **accountable** to partners and Corpsmembers
- Includes **self assessment, desk audit** and a peer-review **site visit**

TCN Accreditation Program, cont'd

- 77 standards in total
- Standards focus on
 - Organizational development
 - Financial management
 - Safety and risk management
 - Corpsmember outcomes
 - Project sponsor satisfaction
 - Best practices
- 14 Corps were accredited in 2014,
11 participating this year
7 are already scheduled for 2016





**Part II:
Let's Hear from some Corps and Corpsmembers!**

LA Conservation Corps and their River Corps Program

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North Carolina Youth Conservation Corps and their Partnership with Army Corps of Engineers

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Natalie Strickland, *Conservation Crew Leader*
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Another Great Opportunity to Learn about TCN!



www.corpsnetwork.org/national-conference



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