

Youth Corps Emerging Practices for Education and Employment

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The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, CNCS engages more than four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet local needs through three major programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

CNCS contracted with Abt Associates Inc., an independent and nonpartisan research firm, to conduct the study.

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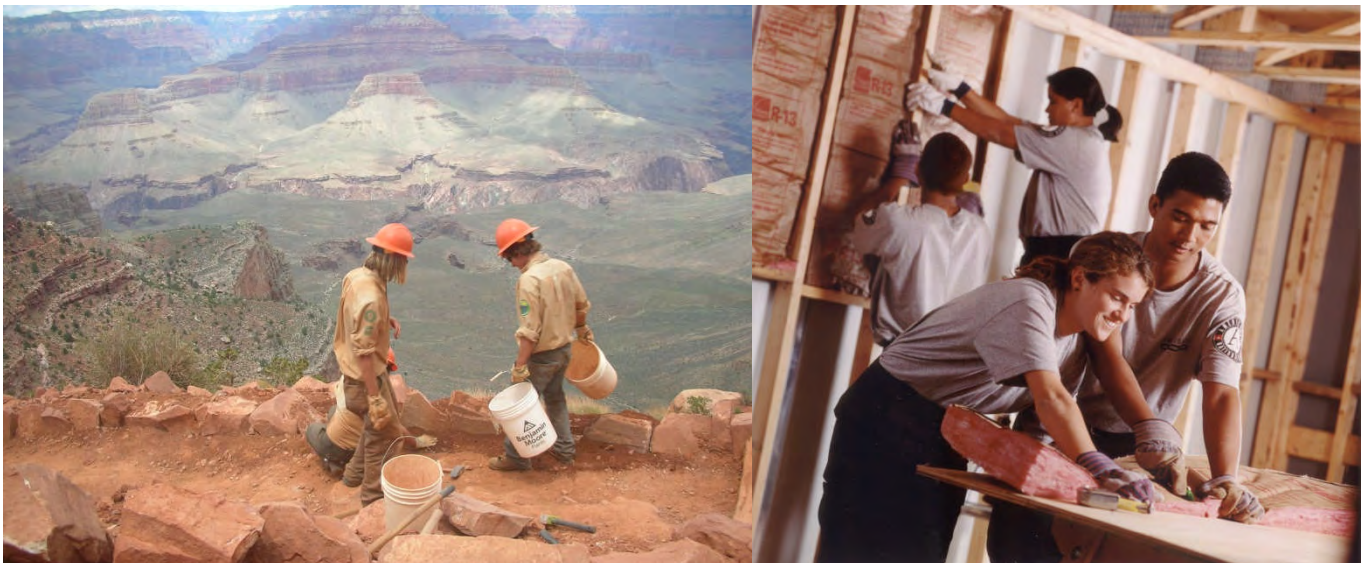


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Introduction

Conservation and Service Corps, or youth corps, are a diverse set of programs united in their common mission of engaging members, primarily young adults ages 16–25, in a combination of community service, workforce development, and education. Youth corps programs are designed to have a positive impact on both the communities in which they operate and the lives of members.¹ Members contribute to their communities through a wide variety of service projects. Some examples of youth corps services include tutoring and mentoring students from disadvantaged circumstances, improving parks and other public lands, providing human services, and aiding in disaster relief. In return for their participation, members receive mentoring, a modest stipend, and a broad range of supports including significant educational opportunities, employment training, life skills development, and the opportunity to improve their communities. Though there is no single program model, all of these program components are intended to contribute to members' developmental trajectories so that they will be better educated, strengthen their job skills, have higher employment and wage rates, be more economically secure, and be more personally and socially responsible.

The *Youth Corps Emerging Practices* project provides insight into aspects of corps' service delivery systems that may lead to positive member outcomes in employment or education (or both). It was conducted by Abt Associates Inc. under contract from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) following an impact evaluation, *The National Evaluation of Youth Corps*.² In trying to understand and learn from the results of the *National Evaluation of Youth Corps*, CNCS contracted with Abt Associates to conduct a follow-up investigation, *Youth Corps Emerging Practices*. CNCS was interested in developing in-depth knowledge of the practices youth corps were adopting to enhance members' educational and employment opportunities.

The information presented in this document was gathered in Spring 2011 through discussions with partner organizations, staff and members at four youth corps of varying type, size, resource base, service projects, and scope: Civic Works, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, and Sequoia Community Corps.³ For further discussion about the methodology, please see Appendix A.

The practices identified here may respond to Goal 2 of CNCS's Strategic Plan for 2011–2015, in that they may help members "find professional, education or civic growth opportunities in their service experience."⁴ Additionally, this project reflects CNCS's commitment to learn from the national service network about emerging practices and make that information accessible to all members of the national service community.⁵ While the impact evaluation estimated the effects of youth corps on members who enrolled in 2006-2007, *Youth Corps Emerging Practices* describes the approaches to member development that have evolved in the field since 2008. Ultimately, the practices and lessons described in this learning document may be used by CNCS, youth corps practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders as:

- ***Profiles of emerging practices for promoting youth education and work-readiness within the youth corps model.*** While similar practices have shown promise in other contexts,⁶ this study focuses on their emergence in youth corps. Their evolution within youth corps is of interest because of the populations served and the model that underlies the corps of youth development through service.
- ***A toolbox for youth education and employment service providers.*** This learning document both describes the implementation of each practice and highlights lessons from each corps for other practitioners to adopt or

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adapt in their own programs. It provides the tools, information, and peer contacts for those interested in developing similar initiatives for youth education and work readiness.

- ***A complement to the existing research on youth corps that provides an in-depth investigation of corps' service models and variations.*** This document offers context for the findings from the *National Evaluation of Youth Corps* by presenting a ground-level view of corps' practices in the areas of education and work readiness. As such, this learning document provides a comprehensive perspective on the ways in which youth corps programs may influence young people on their paths to employment and further education.

Member Development through Education and Work Readiness

Disconnected youth, defined as young people not working or in school, often lack the strong social networks to connect with employers or institutional supports.⁷ A 2009 Congressional Research Service report estimates that 1.9 million (5.1%) of youth ages 16–24 fall into this category. Disconnected youth are more likely to be female, minority, less educated, and poorer; to have children; and to have parents who are less educated and less employed than are their better connected peers.⁸ Disconnected youth face numerous long-term consequences if they cannot reconnect. Drawing from the fact that past work experience is a predictor of future wages and lifetime earnings, researchers suggest that young adults ages 16–24 who are both out of school and out of work are far less likely to reach sustenance levels of income if they do not attain access to work experience and/or further education.⁹ Over her or his lifetime, a high school dropout is estimated to earn \$630,000 less than she or he would have earned with at least a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) credential.¹⁰ Dropping out of school also is associated with greater reliance on public assistance, negative health outcomes, and increased criminal activity.¹¹ Youth unemployment reverberates throughout a person's lifetime: youth who do not permanently transition to the labor force are far more likely to depend on public assistance in later adulthood.¹²

“The youth corps structure meets all of the original founders' passions. From social justice to economic development to providing resources to young people to environmental restoration and conservation—these were all part of the organizational model.”
Executive Director (and co-founder)
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps

Youth corps have traditionally focused on reconnecting these disconnected youth through member development initiatives and service, enabling them to develop a path to family-sustaining jobs and/or postsecondary education. Youth corps' practices are customized to meet local needs, and often have features similar to promising practices in the larger field of youth development. For example, some youth corps' educational practices align with the best available evidence and expertise on helping students transition to

postsecondary education. Based on their review of the literature, The U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Science recommends a set of practices for helping students navigate the path to college.¹⁴ Included in these practices is enabling students to enroll in courses that will prepare them academically for college-level work (including offering the relevant courses and advising students to take them).¹⁵ As described later, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (RMYC) offers courses and curricula that prepare members for college-level work as part of their service and through RMYC's partnership with the University of New Mexico-Taos. Similarly, Los Angeles Conservation Corps surrounds members with adults and peers who build and support their college-going aspirations¹⁷ as part of their transition program and pilot program to track and support a cohort of alumni through their postsecondary experiences.

Through service and member development initiatives, youth corps may create significant value for their members. Youth who serve may gain valuable experience, skills, and connections for education and work-readiness. The *National Evaluation of Youth Corps* found that almost two-thirds of members indicated that their youth corps affiliations gave them connections that helped them to obtain a job, and over three-quarters said their time in youth corps had given them an advantage in looking for a job.¹⁸ While the impact evaluation did not find

significant short-term impacts on members' educational attainment or probability of being employed or in school,¹⁹ it did document members' considerable satisfaction with their youth corps experience.²⁰ Seventy-nine to 90 percent of members were satisfied or very satisfied with their youth corps experience in terms of advancing their education, receiving encouragement to continue their education, gaining skills for getting a better job or career, finding a job/earning money, exploring future job or educational interests, and having an experience that would look good on their resumes.²¹ By connecting members to employment or postsecondary education, youth corps set members on the path to long-term self-sufficiency. Furthermore, members who successfully complete their service in AmeriCorps-funded programs or are enrolled in AmeriCorps' Education Award program may receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$5,550.²² This award may be used to pay education costs (e.g., tuition, fees) at qualified institutions of higher education, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans. Through service, work readiness training and education, youth corps may address members' developmental needs.

Finally, youth corps may also create defining experiences for members. While *Youth Corps Emerging Practices* focuses on member development in the areas of education and employment, it is important to note that these practices occur in the context of service. By immersing young people in a culture of service, youth corps may contribute to members' senses of self and their communities. Eighty six percent of members surveyed in the *National Evaluation of Youth Corps* were satisfied or very satisfied with their youth corps experience in terms of gaining understanding of the community in which they worked.²³ While members may join youth corps to advance professionally (e.g., to complete a high school diploma, to earn the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, or for job placement), many may emerge with a long-term commitment to service. The member stories in this document are representative of how youth corps experiences define young people. Members may enter the corps for employment or educational opportunities, then graduate inspired to help others and with plans to continue serving their communities.

Emerging Practices Overview

This document highlights emerging practices from four youth corps programs. Each practice has evolved since 2008 as a youth corps' local solution to community problems in the micro labor market, barriers facing members, and members' need for increased education. While they have been customized to the local context, these practices have features similar to those of promising practices in the larger field of youth development.²⁴ Further, corps' own data on these initiatives document early successes with these practices. A common characteristic of the practices is a deliberate analysis of local challenges to further the goals of member development in education and/or work-readiness within the context of service. Consistent with the *Corporation for National and Community Service Strategic Plan: 2011–2015*, the emerging practices may help members "Find professional, educational, or civic growth opportunities in their service experience."²⁵ Each youth corps' emerging practice is described in terms of its key elements, outcomes, and the members' experience. An example of each practice in the context of a youth corps program is provided (members' demographic characteristics at program entry are shown in Appendix B). The four emerging practices are:

Creating reciprocal partnerships with community colleges. Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (RMYC) and the University of New Mexico-Taos are working together in a mutually beneficial partnership.²⁶ Their shared goals are to promote postsecondary educational attainment for members, diversify the college's student population, and increase educational opportunities for nontraditional students (i.e., members). Members are able to accelerate their postsecondary education by earning college-transfer credits for their service with RMYC. The program gives members the opportunity to participate in postsecondary education in a low-cost and low-risk setting, and prepares them for postsecondary success and for participation in the workforce.

***Promoting a “culture of college”:* Increasing expectations for success in postsecondary education.** Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) has adopted a corps-wide focus on increasing members’ enrollment and success in postsecondary education.²⁷ LACC supports this focus by facilitating members’ post-program transitions and designing supports to increase their academic and work performance. One support is LACC’s independent charter school, which has the flexibility to operate dedicated two-month blocks of school and work. Corps leaders recognized that while financial supports were available, their members did not have sufficient networks and skills to succeed in postsecondary education. To promote the near-term success of alumni in postsecondary education and their long-term success at work, LACC offers post-program support in the form of mentoring, academic coaching, and part-time work.

Preparing members for long-term careers. Civic Works’ Baltimore Center for Green Careers (BCGC) has positioned itself as a trainer, contractor, and social enterprise incubator in Baltimore’s emerging “green” sector. Members’ training is aimed at career development (not just job attainment) as they acquire skills, earn a broad range of industry-recognized certifications, and are exposed to experiences that enable them to advance on the job.²⁸ Civic Works attributes its high rates of job placement and the sustainability of its program to its ability to understand and address employers’ needs, be flexible in working with employers, and be strategic in taking risks.

Cultivating strategic alliances for job placement. Sequoia Community Corps (SCC) demonstrates a commitment to its members by placing exiting members in stable jobs that have a pathway to long-term careers.²⁹ It does so by taking an employer’s view of the labor market through strategic allocation of resources and partnerships. When SCC leaders realized that members were remaining in the program indefinitely, they dedicated time and resources to support member transition with an eye to employers’ perspectives. Additionally, SCC partnered with the local One-Stop Career Center and unions to identify employment opportunities to provide its members and alumni with a fuller range of opportunities.

While these emerging practices developed as independent solutions to local problems, they align with promising practices documented in the youth development literature. For example, the employment partnerships highlighted in this document provide the holistic services for members in a comprehensive employment delivery system³⁰ and have the elements of high-performing workforce partnerships.³¹ Further, each profiled corps program credits these practices for facilitating positive member outcomes (e.g., educational attainment, job placements, civic and community engagement). While these emerging practices are currently being undertaken on a small scale within youth corps, early findings suggest that they may be promoting youth education and work readiness within the context of service. If the corps’ early outcomes persist and can be replicated in other sites, these practices may be rich areas for future inquiry.

Creating Reciprocal Partnerships with Community Colleges

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps Taos, NM

The targeting and enrollment of at-risk or disenfranchised adolescents requires that a holistic commitment to youth development be integrated into the mission of the rural Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (RMYC) and its program initiatives. RMYC staff work with project partners to ensure that they both understand and embrace that mission. While employers and community stakeholders may not resonate with every aspect of a youth development model, they recognize that the program's population needs to increase their commitment to and advancement in education. As such, RMYC's expanding partnership with a community college,³² the University of New Mexico at Taos (UNM-Taos), is seen as a critical program dimension that has considerable potential to generate value for the young people of both the Corps and the University.

Recognizing and building on an aligned mission

RMYC and UNM-Taos are joined in a mutually beneficial partnership based on their shared goal of promoting educational opportunities for local youth. The relationship was inspired by UNM-Taos's existing dual-enrollment partnerships with area high schools. Using a similar model, both RMYC and UNM-Taos gradually recognized the shared opportunity inherent in their aligned goals of youth and community development. Beginning in 2008, RMYC's personal development training was credited as "Life Skills" in the General Studies Department and was parallel to the university's freshman seminar. Over time, additional college-transfer credits have been offered through RMYC, thereby expanding the opportunities for members' educational advancement (see next section).

Overview: Rocky Mountain Youth Corps

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (RMYC) was founded in 1995 with a mission to "Inspire young adults to make a difference in themselves and their communities. Through training and team service, RMYC is a stepping stone to new opportunities."

RMYC serves youth from Taos, New Mexico and the surrounding rural areas with three primary programs: field crews focused on environmental stewardship and conservation; the After School Program (ASP) in which high school students provide free mentoring to local youth; and the Community Health Crew, which partners with local health care providers to promote healthy lifestyle choices in youth and young adults. Today, approximately 128 members per year enroll in RMYC, and typically serve in either 450-hour or 900-hour AmeriCorps slots.

"We're from here. The people at Rocky Mountain Youth Corps are our cousins, they're our brothers and sisters, they're our sons, they're our daughters. It's to our best interest to support each other. It's what can we do as a community to give young people the opportunities and support to succeed. It's a common thread whether you're talking to the corps, the university, the college, the town, the hospital."

*Dean of Instruction
University of New Mexico-Taos*

The relationship between RMYC and UNM-Taos benefits both partners. With UNM-Taos's offering of college-transfer credit to members, RMYC was able to expand members' educational interests and opportunities. At the same time, this policy allowed the university to be proactive in supporting a broader and more diverse population in the Taos community. In the years since the partnership was established, the relationship has extended beyond the granting of dual enrollment college-transfer credits to the sharing of staff. For example, UNM-Taos faculty serve as supervisors for the After School Program and the Dean views RMYC as an institutional resource for his

university. The Dean notes that he, “Honestly sees Rocky Mountain Youth Corps as one of our satellite campuses. If they have someone trained and certified, then let’s use that individual on their site to do our training—whether they’re enrolled in Rocky Mountain [Youth Corps] or UNM-Taos.”

RMYC and UNM-Taos support their partnership through a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) as well as ongoing collaborative planning. RMYC works with the university’s Department of Instruction to enroll RMYC’s members in credit-bearing classes during their term of service, align RMYC curricula with extant university coursework (both certificate and degree programs), and certify instructors for those classes.

Framing service as an experiential learning opportunity

Members’ personal development training was equivalent to a freshman “Life Skills” course offered by UNM-Taos. Their challenge was to recognize and formalize the educational potential in the RMYC field service programs (e.g., forest thinning, trail building), which traditionally have been viewed as manual labor. By focusing on the concepts members learn, rather than the day-to-day activities in which members are engaged during their service, administrators were able to identify and better articulate the educational value of their projects.

For example, one field crew completed a project in trail restoration following fire and flood damage, with the ultimate goal of reintroducing native trout into a local river. Under the guidance of a knowledgeable supervisor, the crew had the opportunity to learn about fire damage, erosion control, and the ecological issues around keynote species and to earn upper-level science credit in “Natural Resource Management Internship.” The Dean understands the service experience above and explains its value as a course, “When I look at that [project], we are not far from taking that job—they consider it a pick and axe job—and taking it to the next level where it’s an outstanding educational experience...So after hours, when [crews] sit around and talk about it, you can make it a rich educational opportunity. It’s something I think a higher education institution would value and really be willing to give [college-transfer] credit.”

“What [field crews] are learning on an 8-day spike trip is what I cover in 2 or 3 chapters of the textbook. Who’s going to retain the information better—the student I have in class or the student who’s actually doing it?...It’s not going to be delivered in the same way. It’s going to be a little haphazard...They’re going to retain the information, they’re seeing it first-hand. For me, that’s an exceptional educational opportunity that I can’t get with even a top-notch instructor in the classroom.”

Dean of Instruction

University of New Mexico-Taos

One key to providing college-transfer credits for service is clearly communicating that the Corps’ activities align with the university’s expectations. For each prospective course, RMYC submits a syllabus to the Department of Instruction, which then assesses the curriculum from an accreditor’s point of view (a sample syllabus from RMYC is provided in Appendix C). Courses at RMYC are viewed as similar to the college’s internships, and are assessed using member portfolios.³³ Courses in academic areas are assessed by recognized experts in the field at UNM’s main campus; courses in personal development are assessed by UNM-Taos’s Dean. Additionally, UNM-Taos reviews instructors’ credentials and experience to ensure that they have the appropriate background in the subject. For example, the field crew supervisor above was approved to teach upper-level science because he has a master’s degree in biology. UNM-Taos’s Senior Instructional Service Associate checks in with the supervisors/faculty approximately five times during the semester, and final grades are coordinated through RMYC’s Training Director. Through these processes, RMYC and UNM-Taos ensure that members’ educational experiences are rigorous and valued.

Eliminating barriers to members' education

The third party in this partnership is the members themselves. Obtaining their buy-in to advancing their education is challenging but essential. Prior to enrolling in RMYC, only 18 percent of members have had some experience with higher education. While all members receive the educational content during their term of service, only a limited percentage (36% in 2010) chooses to receive the college-transfer credits for their training. Encouraging members' interest in higher education remains a challenge in spite of a concerted effort on the part of RMYC and UNM-Taos to promote this option. RMYC has worked to eliminate members' primary barriers to education: the financial cost of the college-transfer credits, perceived relevance of the desired credentials, and the time commitment of formal education.

"We see folks who have been out of the educational system for a few years...If we can get them on the GED path with college [-transfer] credit simultaneously, we can give them the idea that, 'Wow, I can do this. I'm at college-level.' That might be a message that's entirely new to this individual...We have the ability to introduce a different understanding of their own capacity."

*Executive Director
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps*

RMYC subsidizes any college-transfer credits members receive while enrolled. Fees for all required courses, like the Community Health Crew's course, are fully paid by the Corps, with support from community partners like Holy Cross Hospital and investors in this crew model. RMYC contributes 75 percent of the cost of any additional college-transfer credits. Further, courses are paid for by RMYC at the beginning of the semester, and the 25 percent member contributions are gradually repaid to the Corps as stipend deductions over the entire term of service. RMYC funds the college-transfer credits through its AmeriCorps grant, general operating fund, and grants from philanthropic groups like the Santa Fe Community Foundation and the Daniels Fund.

Equally important as the financial challenge is the need to ensure that college-level educational engagement (as well as associated college-transfer credits) is perceived as useful to members. In the early stages of this partnership, the emphasis was on identifying college-transfer credit opportunities for existing Corps activities. Over time, the partners realized the need to shift their efforts to align RMYC's educational offerings with those offered by the university and those that lead to future credentials. RMYC's Training Director describes the shift as follows: "When we first started this, we were making syllabi that...represented the trainings we did. But they didn't actually count for [college-transfer] credits that lead to a real degree or certificate. What we've done in the last two years is align them with existing programs." Now, for example, After School Program members can earn college-transfer credit towards an education or early childhood education degree. The six college-transfer credits members may earn represent a pathway towards a postsecondary credential that members value and could lead to increased employability.

In addition to addressing prospective financial and curricular barriers, RMYC has sought to streamline the education pathway by adapting the offerings to its unique field-based settings. In this way, members can combine their service hours with education. While most RMYC crews are based in or near Taos County—and can return to the RMYC office for trainings from the training staff—RMYC has had to adapt its training for "spike" projects³⁴ and satellite crews. Lessons are organized into "units" of activities or instruction, with detailed lesson plans, which can be taught by trained crew supervisors and "Training Specialists" (a member hired into that role) during breaks. By decentralizing the location and responsibility for training, RMYC has further modified the delivery model to best accommodate its unique educational context.

The member experience: Rocky Mountain Youth Corps

Each of RMYC's service opportunities is based on a crew model in which groups of 6 to 10 young people serve together under the leadership of a Crew Supervisor. Crews are purposefully composed of members from diverse backgrounds and experience levels.

Daniela's Story*

"I went into [Rocky Mountain Youth Corps] thinking it was a job—and it was—but it was so much more. It was a lot of learning experiences for both me and the kid I tutored," reports Daniela, a Taos native and alum of RMYC's After School Program. In October 2008, during her senior year of high school, Daniela enrolled in RMYC as a way to earn money. She had "Never thought about becoming a teacher" when she first started tutoring her student, a troubled kindergarten boy.

At first it was difficult because she had so little experience with children. Gradually, working with her supervisor, a faculty member at UNM-Taos, and with her crew, she found ways to serve with her student more effectively. As they progressed together, Daniela grew confident in her abilities and more engaged with the work. She explains, "Rocky Mountain wasn't just a job. I took it into my schoolwork. I was constantly thinking in class, 'What can I do to help this kid?'" Through her service with RMYC, Daniela developed both work skills and a passion for serving others.

Daniela is now a full-time student at UNM-Taos and is continuing her coursework towards a degree in early childhood education. Her time with RMYC started her on the path towards that credential by enabling her to earn dual enrollment college-transfer credits in "Early Childhood Education: Mentoring and Tutoring" and a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Daniela still keeps in touch with her crew and sees her former supervisor at the college.

Daniela credits her time at RMYC for her success: "Everything they taught me at Rocky Mountain prepared me for this job." Moreover, Daniela's experience with RMYC provided her with direction and a passion for teaching. She says, "I did the tutoring and I fell in love with it. I fell in love with everything we were doing. I fell in love with the kids. And that's what's led me to early childhood education."

*All members' names have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

Members apply to specific job postings at RMYC and are assigned to a crew. Field crews complete projects in environmental stewardship, forest restoration, wildfire prevention, or watershed maintenance, and have the opportunity to earn subsidized college-transfer credits in courses such as "Introduction to Team Service and Land Management" or "Weatherization and Building Science." The After School Program (ASP) crews are comprised of high school members who tutor and mentor elementary-age youth in Taos County's only free after-school program. For their service, reflection, and weekly training, members receive credit in "Early Childhood Education: Mentoring and Tutoring" at UNM-Taos. RMYC's newest initiative, the Community Health Crew, blends the traditional crew model (two days per week collaborating on public health marketing tasks) with an internship (three days per week in individual placements with health-care providers). During their one-year term, all Community Health Crew members are required to take a community health worker course at UNM-Taos, paid for by RMYC, and are eligible for additional dual-enrollment college-transfer credits.

At orientation members complete an individual development plan, which is used to track members' progress during their term of service. Members conduct a self-assessment and are evaluated by their supervisors at multiple time points during their term of service. RMYC connects members with support services (e.g., counseling) on an as-needed basis. Each crew receives training weekly, either through their supervisors, RMYC's training staff, or community partners. The culmination of each member's time with the Corps is the "Presentation of Learning," which coincides with graduation. In a five-minute speech to their crew, family, and community, members reflect on their journey to the Corps, review their accomplishments at RMYC, and share their future plans.

In 2010, 36 percent of members earned college-transfer credits through UNM-Taos. Exit surveys report that 59 percent of members plan to return to school and another 21 percent plan to find employment after graduating from RMYC. Additionally, the Corps collects data from a pre/post “resiliency survey” of members. Findings identify increases in members’ community integration and civic engagement over their terms of service.

Future directions and lessons learned

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and the University of New Mexico-Taos have forged a mutually beneficial partnership to promote postsecondary educational opportunities among members while diversifying the student population at the college. Building on their existing relationships, RMYC and UNM-Taos have plans to expand educational offerings for the community. RMYC recently helped the college identify a weatherization certification that the university intends to offer. This certification could provide valuable and affordable training opportunities for RMYC’s field crew. UNM-Taos also was recently designated “UNM Health Sciences North,” which gives them access to significant additional training and financial resources in the health professions. The partners are exploring whether this designation can lead to additional credit-earning opportunities for RMYC’s community health crew and internship opportunities for UNM-Taos students.

The RMYC and UNM-Taos partnership has features similar to the essential elements and core commitments of other promising programs for connecting disconnected youth with postsecondary opportunities.³⁵ Like the Gateway to College program, RMYC and UNM-Taos offer college-transfer credits in a sustainable partnership with intentional collaboration by all parties. Members are given innovative field and service-based learning opportunities, and member development is supported in a holistic fashion. Key lessons from the ongoing success of the partnership are:

- ***Allow for gradual exposure and decision making.*** The RMYC model allows members to “wade in” to postsecondary education gradually. In some instances they have the opportunity to gain exposure to postsecondary education with few decisions to make and minimal personal investment. In other instances the time or monetary investment is limited, which allows for experimentation with limited risk or exposure. The key is to avoid a major “all or nothing” decision (i.e., Am I pursuing postsecondary education or not?) that members may not be ready to face.
- ***Share the investment over time.*** While it is important that members are provided a low-risk introduction, it is critical that they eventually are required to share fully in the investment. This can be a combination of time, money, and workload responsibility. The program should continue to emphasize that others are willing to invest in members. This underscores the message that postsecondary education is more than just a “personal choice.” In the eyes of RMYC, postsecondary education is one of the underpinnings of their program philosophy and one of the fundamental building blocks of their youth development model.
- ***Maintain the rigor.*** All parties involved (particularly RMYC members) must be aware that they are not advancing their education in a watered-down setting to accommodate either a non-traditional past or an unconventional educational setting (e.g., a field service site). While thorough competency development is at the heart of this priority, it is important that members recognize that they are performing and thriving as postsecondary students in every way. This is particularly critical if members had never considered college-level work as a realistic option.

- ***Recognize the educational content of corps activities.*** Ultimately, the value of the partnership lies in its gradual emergence as a “two-way street.” It began in traditional fashion with members being afforded the opportunity to receive credit at the same time they serve with their crews. Over time, however, UNM-Taos began to recognize the inherent educational value of the Corps’ activities and now sees it as a learning opportunity for their more traditional student base. This creates a reinforcing cycle of mutual benefit and respect that elevates both institutions as well the value of postsecondary education.

Promoting a “Culture of College”: Increasing Expectations for Success in Postsecondary Education

Los Angeles Conservation Corps Los Angeles, CA

Approximately three years ago, the Los Angeles Conservation Corp’s (LACC) Board of Directors made a strategic decision to focus on promoting members’ transition to postsecondary education. The Board felt that it needed to emphasize “Improving the college culture and getting people into college,” and that this focus required more than financial support. Most LACC members were eligible to receive the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award and three scholarship programs that the Corps privately funds. However, even with these resources, few corps alumni were able to persevere in postsecondary education. As a result, since 2008, LACC leaders have altered their delivery of high school education, established a formal transition program that eases members’ movement to postsecondary education or employment, and increased post-program monitoring and support. LACC’s leadership acknowledge that the emphasis on postsecondary education caused them to “change their mindset” in framing their expectations and providing services for their members, which impacted several areas of program design and delivery.

Customizing educational opportunities: LACC’s independent charter school

LACC operates three independent charter schools located strategically throughout Los Angeles, through its partnership with the Los Angeles Education Corps (LAEC).³⁶ One of these schools specifically targets Young Adult Corps members³⁷; the other two schools target younger students. Given the relatively large size of LACC/LAEC’s charter schools, program administrators believe it is more beneficial, both financially and operationally, to have their own independent charter. Because the charter school is independent, it can craft a curriculum and schedule that fit members’ needs and, increasingly, prepare members for postsecondary education.

LAEC has developed mandatory courses such as “College and Careers,” during which the Member Development Coordinator connects members’ career aspirations to relevant continued education. Hired in 2008 to focus solely on postsecondary enrollment, the Member Development Coordinator finds that, “For many [members], it’s the first time they’re thinking about college or postsecondary education as an opportunity for them. We try to start that conversation as early as possible because a lot of times

Overview: Los Angeles Conservation Corps

Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) was founded in 1986 by former U.S. Secretary of Commerce and Trade Ambassador, Mickey Kantor, as part of the conservation corps movement that swept California during the 1980s. While the state-run network of California Conservation Corps was based in rural areas and often operated as residential programs, LACC was founded as a stand-alone non-profit with an urban focus. Its intent is to address the particular challenges of high unemployment and the need for both jobs and environmental work in greater Los Angeles. “The primary mission of the LA Conservation Corps is to provide at-risk young adults and school-aged youth with opportunities for success by providing them with job skills training, education and work experience with an emphasis on conservation and service projects that benefit the community.”

LACC celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary this year, having grown to be the largest youth corps program in the country with an annual budget of approximately \$24 million. LACC serves 17,000 young people through its after-school programs, three charter schools, and its Young Adult Corps. The vast majority of members are enrolled in the Clean and Green after-school program for middle and high school students. The Young Adult Corps serves nearly 400 youth each year. Members spend their time in eight-week blocks focusing, alternately, on completion of their high school diploma at the program’s charter school and on-the job training on service projects.

Promoting a “Culture of College”: Increasing Expectations for Postsecondary Education

we’re the first person in this young man or woman’s life who’s approached them about being a college student, letting them know they are college material.” The instructor further encourages members’ interest in postsecondary education by showing them statistics from the Department of Labor that workers with more education have higher earnings and lower unemployment rates than those with fewer credentials. LACC not only raises aspirations for postsecondary education, but has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Los Angeles Trade and Technical Community College that allows members to earn college credits for vocational education undertaken as part of their service. Therefore, alumni can leave the Corps with some or most of the credits toward a certificate or associate’s degree.

For core classes, the Executive Director of LAEC has adopted texts that are all aligned to the state’s standards in order to prepare its members to pass the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). The most recent graduating class had an 85% passing rate for the CAHSEE exam—on par with the pass rate at the other two LACC/LAEC charter schools. Acknowledging that LAEC initially experimented with a variety of curricula and reporting formats, the Executive Director of LAEC reports that now the curricula have become increasingly traditional in order to facilitate members’ transfer to other educational systems.

To keep members focused on their educational goals, LACC moved from the more typical operating schedule in which members alternated a week in school with a week on the service project. For the past two years, members have alternated eight weeks in school with eight weeks of work on service projects. Academic support staff have found that having the members in school for longer periods helps increase their focus on academic instruction and helps members retain the content. Workforce staff found a similar effect at job sites: members develop more skills, retain these skills, and have continuity by staying on a project for longer periods. Members also seemed satisfied with this schedule.

“[The two-month blocks of study] is the best schedule we’ve ever had. It works fantastically... We offer a stipend [while they are in school], which is very unique. Prior to the two-month cycle, it was one week of school, one week of work. We found that when they went to work and came back, they kind of forgot their algebra or fell off course. Now, the consistency of having them for two months straight every day in the classroom serves them so much better.”
*High School Principal,
Los Angeles Conservation Corps*

Transitioning members to education

Recognizing that some members are reluctant to leave the Corps because “sometimes we’re a safety net for young people,”³⁸ LACC developed a formal transition program that “pushes people to their goal”³⁹ of full-time employment or postsecondary education. LACC hired a full-time Transition Services Coordinator in 2010 to proactively guide members into employment or postsecondary education. Lately, “Very few members *aren’t* interested in college.”⁴⁰ Members want to pursue postsecondary education or training because of the Corps’ efforts to build a culture of college, and the local economy where members find themselves in competition for jobs with job-seekers who have bachelor’s or master’s degrees.

During the seven-week transition program, members who are interested in postsecondary education or training work with the Member Development Coordinator. “We try to remove a lot of those myths and barriers [to postsecondary education]... The two barriers our [members] always say are time and money. Either it takes too much time or it costs too much money.” To address those perceived barriers, the transition program includes workshops on financial aid and budgeting for college with a mix of grants, financial aid, and part-time work. He points out to members that attending college on their budgets is realistic. “They’re working for us (for 32 hours a week for 50 weeks a year) for less money than they qualify for in free financial aid.” Among the supports available to LACC members are free tuition at area community colleges and aid dispersed through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The Member Development Coordinator helps prospective students

file the FAFSA. Members also go on visits to college campuses that are hosted by LACC alumni enrolled in the institutions, which allows the prospective students to understand they are peers of college students.

“After around a year and a half...their time has come to transition out into full-time placement in either education, employment, or a combination of the two...We’ve given you a lot of skills. Now it’s time to use your AmeriCorps money, your scholarship money and maybe go to school full-time and find a part-time job.”

*Corpsmember Transition Services Coordinator
Los Angeles Conservation Corps*

The implementation of a defined transition program has required LACC to develop new procedures. The Transition Services Coordinator ensures that members are channeled into the transition program using standardized criteria. Currently, the trigger for a member to leave the Corps is completion of her or his high school diploma; however, some may stay longer if they are successful in obtaining specialist positions or promotions within the Corps (e.g., placed as an intern with an employer or as a driver for LACC projects). A month before

entering the transition program, members receive a letter informing them that they will move from the regular corps to the transition program (see appendix C for a sample of LACC’s member transition letter). The Transition Services Coordinator feels it is crucial to have dedicated staff for transition activities rather than assume that these activities can be a shared responsibility of all staff. During their transition, members are supported by the full-time Transition Coordinator, the full-time Member Development Coordinator, and Master of Social Work student interns who provide assessment and facilitate a transition support group. The program operates four days a week, with Fridays available for other educational or support activities. During the transition program, members receive a stipend of \$100 a week and are not allowed to work on projects for wages. It is key for workforce staff and LACC leadership to cooperate to enforce these transition expectations.

Bolstering financial resources with other supports for postsecondary success

Historically, LACC has supported members’ transition to postsecondary education through a scholarship fund established by its founder.⁴¹ While LACC has provided scholarships for over 20 years, it has been “Good on financial support but not on other kinds of support ([for postsecondary education],”⁴² and, “There wasn’t much information on how we were placing people.”⁴³ Further, while 30–40 percent of LACC alumni began postsecondary education, few were able to persevere. In response, LACC has formalized support systems for alumni with partner community colleges and are piloting an intensive program for a cohort of alumni.

To facilitate members’ postsecondary success, LACC has formalized MOUs with Los Angeles Trade and Technical and East Los Angeles community colleges and has a letter of understanding with Sierra Community College in Sacramento (See Appendix C for a sample MOU between LACC and a community college). These MOUs designate staff at the colleges that are to provide support to members. For example, instead of having to go through the standard and often confusing admissions and class registration processes, members can go directly to a dedicated liaison. This support helps former members navigate the environment of college bureaucracies.

LACC also was awarded competitive funding from the National Youth Employment Coalition (in conjunction with the Gates Foundation) for a pilot program to track and support

“The past two years we’ve had a greater emphasis on college transition. The corps has always done a great job with providing financial resources for people that want to move on. But my twenty year experience here has seen that not many people are successful with that transition even though there’s money. This postsecondary initiative thing, that has really been the only thing I’ve seen work in twenty years ...Just to have a dedicated staff person working with this cadre of people who are post-program in a sense...That’s where my sights have been set now. I want to focus on college preparatory to get people into college and keep them there....

I’ve become a believer. I think [LACC members] can make it in college.”

*Executive Director,
Los Angeles Education Corps*

Promoting a “Culture of College”: Increasing Expectations for Postsecondary Education

a cohort of 53 alumni through their postsecondary experience over a three-year period. The purpose of the pilot is to provide the kind of support and guidance typically given to middle class students by their parents or other supportive adults, but that is not generally available to LACC’s alumni outside of the Corps. This cohort receives tutoring and academic coaching from students at four-year institutions on their coursework, building effective study habits, and navigating college administrative functions (e.g., how to add or drop classes). The Education Coordinator recruits students in the pilot and other LACC scholarship recipients as role models and asks them to guide campus tours for members (prospective students). After two semesters in the pilot program, three alumni have completed vocational certifications; many are on track to transfer to four-year institutions; and 72 percent of the cohort is still in consistent contact with the staff. Recognizing that members must have the means to support themselves while going to school full-time, LACC is increasingly identifying part-time job opportunities for the student alumni. As part of this support, the program has a small number of its alumni who are enrolled in college working in part-time administrative jobs at the Corps.

The member experience: Los Angeles Conservation Corps

LACC operates as an open-entry, open-exit program with cohorts of about 40 members beginning the program every two months. LACC is selective about enrolling young people. The three-week intake process includes interviews and academic assessment, and culminates in a four-day “spike” project during which applicants travel to a park or forest where they stay overnight and do conservation work. This experience is reported as being very moving for the members, most of whom have never left urban Los Angeles. The members return from the spike to a celebration of their completion of the intake process, with family members and friends invited to attend. The newly hired members then attend the next eight-week session of school to acclimate to a schedule and begin developing soft skills and habits that will also serve them at the work site.

Marlin’s Story

Marlin, a 21-year-old Hurricane Katrina victim originally from Gulfport, Mississippi, “Never thought I’d have a second chance at receiving a high school diploma.” He entered Los Angeles Conservation Corps in September 2010 as a homeless transplant to Los Angeles with no high school credits and a history of juvenile incarceration. “I lost everything back in 2005. My mind-frame was gone. I had no job. My life was not on the right path.” Some of his peers had been killed because of their involvement with the streets or were facing long prison terms. “I told myself I refused to become another statistic of that type of activity...I sacrificed deep leaving my comfort zone.”

On a visit to Los Angeles, Marlin saw an LACC member wearing his uniform on a city bus and inquired about the program. At the time, he had no place to live or local support network. “I let [LACC] know I was here by myself, no family. And they turned me on to their case management program. They told me about their Transitional Living Program...Thank God I got the apartment the next day.” Through the Transitional Living Program (TLP), Marlin receives an apartment for up to 18 months, an individual development account (IDA) to build savings, as well as additional case management (e.g., help to obtain a driver’s license).

Currently at Young Adult Corps High School, Marlin expects to pass his high school exit exam soon, finish his credits, and graduate next year. Outside of his regular work and school duties, Marlin participates in LACC’s leadership and student councils, offering other members peer support and mentoring, and helping plan special events like the prom, graduation celebration, and a senior trip. Marlin recently earned the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award and plans to continue his education after leaving the corps.

Ultimately, he hopes to use his experience with service in LACC to mentor other at-risk youth. “My mission is to go back into the inner cities and help teach, train and motivate other young adults about how to change and stay on that right track. I learned it the hard way but I feel like from my experience, I could pass it on as advice.”

The Young Adult Corps School serves approximately 120 members (ages 18–24) working towards their high school diplomas in each two-month session. Enrollment in the charter school is compulsory for the 90 percent of members entering LACC without a high school diploma or GED. Additionally, members receive a stipend of \$100 a week while they are in school.⁴⁴ LAEC reports a graduation rate of almost 100 percent for those who

continue in the Corps; in 2011, 147 members graduated from the Young Adult Corps School. The Youth Adult Corps members have a pass rate for the CAHSEE exam equivalent to those in other LAEC charter schools.

Over the course of their enrollment in LACC, all members work for at least six months (in two-month cycles) doing “general crew work” that may include cleaning up business corridors, graffiti abatement, urban forestry projects, weatherization, or recycling. In conjunction with project supervisors, case managers advise members on skill-building or discuss specialty areas they may want to pursue. While members work on service projects, they earn between \$8 and \$10.50 per hour, depending on their experience and special qualifications they have attained (e.g., being a crew driver). Members may take vocational education classes through Los Angeles Trade and Technical Community College and earn credits and certifications relevant to their work. Some become very proficient in construction or the use of heavy equipment. Other members, especially after earning their high school diploma, may enter a specialty training program such as brownfields mitigation training.

Members interact throughout their service with the program’s case managers, who help members address common barriers to employment and connect them with counseling and medical services. In addition to providing a wide range of wrap-around support services, LACC leases 10 apartments that it subleases to homeless members. The Member Transition Services Coordinator emphasizes that it is important “To identify [and address] post-transition needs from the start.” Potential barriers to employment range from the lack of a driver’s license or outstanding tickets, to criminal records (including career-limiting felony records for some members). Because these barriers require time and energy to resolve or remove—“It can easily take three months to get a driver’s license”—having staff with dedicated time to focus on their resolution is crucial.

Future directions and lessons learned

Los Angeles Conservation Corps’ increased expectations for member success in postsecondary education is prompting the Corps to identify new ways that they can support alumni in part-time jobs as well as strategies to promote their educational success. The program continues its entrepreneurial efforts to secure funding for service projects and to help support the members’ education stipends. LACC’s educational leadership indicates they would like LACC to be able to continue offering additional “post-program case management” to help more alumni adjust to and thrive in postsecondary education after the end of the postsecondary support pilot program. Based on their early experiences with the postsecondary pilot program, they have found that the first year, particularly the initial semester, is a difficult transition for their alumni.

LACC’s practices to promote a “culture of college” within a service program align with many of the key elements and operational features of Jobs For the Future’s Back on Track to College model.⁴⁵ LACC’s model, particularly the transition program, features enriched preparation, postsecondary bridging and first year support for members. Key lessons from LACC include:

- ***Avoid limited positioning as a training or employment program.*** While training and employment are critical program components, LACC has positioned itself more broadly as part of an extended pathway towards economic self-sufficiency. Services extend beyond traditional design boundaries to include, for example, “post program case management.” Pairing extended transitional supports with clear expectations for transitioning out of the program helps to ensure that members do not become overly focused on a fixed period of service that could lead to either viewing enrollment as a short term solution (i.e., “something to do”) or a longer term “crutch.”

- ***Seek to minimize service fragmentation.*** LACC’s effective transition strategy is accomplished through a seamless service package that provides ongoing and consistent support to members. To promote this strategy best, it is incumbent on the corps to proactively minimize traditional tendencies toward service fragmentation. This has been accomplished effectively at LACC through, for instance, its full integration with charter schools, its wrap-around case management services, the formal identification of dedicated support staff at select colleges, and its employment of a full time transition coordinator.
- ***Constantly reinforce the education/employment connection.*** LACC has made a strategic commitment to promoting a “culture of college” through its emphasis on transition to postsecondary education. However, none of underlying supports for this strategy (from case management to curriculum and instructional design) ever promote educational opportunities in isolation. Rather, all educational pursuits are simultaneously geared to promote occupational and work readiness skills that can ultimately lead to success in the job market.

Preparing Members for Long-Term Careers

Civic Works Baltimore, MD

Civic Works' Baltimore Center for Green Careers (BCGC) is a unique enterprise founded in 2010 with a mission is to "Create and implement business and employment development initiatives that contribute to environmental sustainability and create pathways out of poverty for Baltimore residents." It pursues this mission by simultaneously addressing the supply of and demand for workers entering the city's emerging "green" sector. BCGC is addressing workforce supply through its traditional identity as a training provider. Additionally, it generates demand through an expanded market presence as a social entrepreneur and fee-for-service contractor. The Green Projects Director explains, "If the [green] industry is a triangle: social enterprise/incubator, contractor, [and] trainer, we do all of that... We're hitting the industry from all angles right now." These efforts directly target the potential and emerging talents of unemployed or underemployed Baltimore residents with barriers to employment—limited education, criminal records, and minimal job experience.

Aligning curricula to a broad array of employer needs

BCGC ensures its members are work-ready by providing industry-recognized trainings and credentials that employers value. This level of focus gradually emerged after BCGC⁴⁶ found its first trainings in brownfields remediation⁴⁷ proved to be overly academic, and that graduation and placement levels did not meet expectations. Ultimately, BCGC redesigned its curricula in partnership with select local employers.

Based on employers' input, BCGC adopted a curriculum that focused on a broader array of skill-based competencies and professional certifications. Civic Works' Executive Director credits this partnership with its

"We offer much more training per person... [Given their certifications,] our guys that are alums are now 3 to 4 times as valuable to employers because they can be used on more jobs. It gives them more leverage when it comes to somebody with no work experience or a criminal record or some other barrier to employment."

*Green Projects Director
Baltimore Center for Green Careers
Civic Works*

success: "We have the trainings that employers told us they wanted to see. We have an employer advisory group. And so, even in this somewhat down economy, we have a pretty good placement rate." This curricular strategy, which has been consistently implemented over time, is an effort to provide "harder to employ" members with the broadest competitive edge when entering the labor market. For example, members in the brownfields remediation training currently earn eight certifications in the course of their six-week training program, including OSHA 40-hour Hazardous Waste Site Worker (required by the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] grant); OSHA Confined Space Operations; EPA Renovation, Repair and

Overview: Civic Works

Civic Works, Baltimore's urban service corps, was founded in 1993 with 20 members and a mission to "Build a future for Baltimore's youth through community service and skills development." Since then, Civic Works has expanded beyond its initial work in low-income housing to include a variety of programs that focus on community revitalization, education, energy conservation, and workforce development in the Greater Baltimore community.

Approximately 500 participants enroll in Civic Works annually; approximately 200 are AmeriCorps members. These members participate in any one of Civic Works' 15 unique programs, including the REACH! charter school, the Healthcare Careers Alliance, and the Baltimore Center for Green Careers. The programs within Civic Works are largely autonomous and the structure of the members' experiences differs widely between programs. Each program was created in response to a community need and works in partnership with local businesses and governments.

Preparing Members for Long-Term Careers

Painting; and Maryland Lead Abatement Worker and Inspector. BCGC continues to evolve the curriculum for each of its training programs to meet employers' needs.

Reducing the hiring risk: Emphasizing members' occupational competencies

In addition to adding to the supply of trained workers, BCGC consciously and aggressively sought to lower the risk (and potential cost) of hiring its members. Many of its members⁴⁸ enroll in BCGC with limited work experience, nontraditional resumes, or criminal histories. In response, BCGC sought to refocus its placement strategy on members' occupational competencies and away from these traditional employment barriers.

Most notably, BCGC (in response to employer input) instituted a "workday interview" as a low-cost and low-risk way for potential employers and members to assess one another.⁴⁹ Rather than undergo a formal interview with a potential employer, members seek to prove their mettle on a day-long work trial. This emphasizes occupational competencies rather than traditional interview skills or the members' resumes. The workday interview "Is something that we're spreading as an interview technique—it's something that's working for everybody."⁵⁰

"[The workday interview] gives [employers] a chance to see our culture and vice versa. It's a great chance for someone coming from a nontraditional background—someone who isn't going to have a great resume or fabulous interview skills. If you can just go out and show them you can do the work, that's beautiful. And it gives you a no-risk way to see the company."
Green Projects Director
Baltimore Center for Green Careers
Civic Works

Towards the same end, BCGC proactively seeks to cultivate an inclusive image and reputation by recruiting and training a broad spectrum of members. It does not want to be viewed as serving only one group (e.g., a re-entry program for ex-offenders) for fear of being "pigeonholed" or subject to preconceptions in the market place. Likewise, BCGC is deliberate in presenting its members as job-ready rather than a "work in progress." BCGC has received funds from the Maryland Department of Human Resources and the Open Society Foundations to incentivize employers to hire its members.

Generating demand for emerging talent

More than simply providing members with marketable skills and credentials, BCGC also actively provides some alumni with post-Corps jobs. In addition to hiring them as trainers for the next generation of members, BCGC also hires them as employees for its own social enterprise. This social enterprise both provides alumni with employment and repositions BCGC in Baltimore's green industry.

"Our goal with the social enterprise [Energy Ready] was to create jobs in Baltimore's green economy—good-paying jobs—and to affect the green economy so we could have some say over who has access to those jobs and what the pay is."
Green Projects Director
Baltimore Center for Green Careers
Civic Works

While jobs were being generated through various one-time American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) investments, BCGC recognized the importance of building more permanent green sector opportunities within the City of Baltimore's economy. Success would require both training qualified workers *and* providing work opportunities for its alumni. To meet this vision, BCGC expanded its core work by responding to requests for "cool roofs" (Energy Star approved reflective roofing systems) installation and basic home energy improvements. Through these

projects, BCGC discovered that the market was so new that very few employment opportunities existed in the city—despite significant market demand created through weatherization rebates offered by utilities and the state. BCGC viewed this as opportunity to play an expanded role in this emerging market. In collaboration with

University of Baltimore business and marketing students, BCGC developed a business plan for a social enterprise, “Energy Ready,” which was launched in 2009.⁵¹

Energy Ready is currently an established contractor earning revenue to support BCGC’s programs, an employer hiring its alumni, and a field classroom for its members. At present Energy Ready has four active crews⁵² performing a full slate of home performance services, from audits to home energy efficiency retrofits. BCGC alumni are employed as installers, supervisors, and trainers, and current members receive their field training on Energy Ready jobs. BCGC provides members with graduated training experiences, and prepares them for multiple levels of jobs.

Additionally, Energy Ready affords BCGC (traditionally a training provider) the unique position of being an employer in the workforce development sector. Members benefit from field experience in completing real contracts *and* from BCGC’s position and reputation as an employer. “It’s a much different dynamic [with other employers]: we’re competitors and peers as opposed to [just] a workforce development agency, which can sometimes have a bad name. There can be these negative connotations if you’re calling up an employer and asking them, ‘Please, please take our folks.’ But we have the luxury of saying now, ‘You know, we employ these people on our contracts.’ We’re able to put our money where our mouth is.”⁵³

The member experience: Civic Works

Each of BCGC’s job training programs is built on intensive classroom, lab, and field training and results in each member earning a portfolio of in-demand certifications. The training programs are designed to distinguish members in an emerging market where hiring patterns and employment preferences are evolving.

Darius’s Story

Civic Works “Gave me a chance, gave me hope,” says Darius, a BCGC alum and current Energy Ready supervisor. In 2009, Darius, a Baltimore native with two young sons, a criminal history and no job experience, enrolled in the brownfields remediation job training program along with 12 other members. After graduating, Darius was one of the only ones in his class not to get hired immediately. BCGC reached out and hired him as staff, installing “cool roofs”—Energy Star approved white roofing systems that reflect solar heat. Within weeks he was promoted to the energy retrofit crew, and trained as an installer. In 2011, Darius rose to the position of supervisor for Energy Ready, supervising job sites and leading a crew of installers. To supplement his current experience and certifications, he’s currently working on his BPI home energy auditor certification. What started as a job has transformed into something more for Darius. He says “I’m not only here for a paycheck, I’m here to make homeowners more comfortable and to make their houses more energy efficient...it makes me feel good to pay my bills and, at the same time, to help somebody save.” BCGC gave Darius skills and employment in the emerging green sector and instilled in him a commitment to serving others.

Darius sees his success as inspirational to others. “Seeing me transition from running the streets to wanting to better myself can make others look at you and say ‘I want to do that, too.’ It’s a good thing. My changing myself makes them believe they can change themselves, too.”

This fall, Darius will enroll in the business management program at Baltimore City Community College. His goal is to start his own business—“be put in a position where [I] can help people [like me] get hired who can’t get hired just because they have a criminal background.” He says, “Everybody makes mistakes, but everybody deserves a second chance...Civic Works gave me my second chance. I’m so grateful”

BCGC’s applicants undergo an extensive recruitment, application and selection process, which can last up to three months and includes orientation, referrals, two interviews, and assessments. Of the 150–200 applicants annually, 40 are selected for the brownfields remediation training program and 14 for the energy efficiency retrofit program. Brownfields members learn and work in crews of 20 in either the spring or summer and earn eight industry-recognized certifications. Energy retrofit classes train four-person crews that spend a month in the classroom and on-site lab, followed by two months as field members with BCGC’s contracting company, Energy

Preparing Members for Long-Term Careers

Ready, serving low-income homeowners. This program culminates in members' earning three industry-recognized certifications.

"We're not just training individuals for a job; we're training them for a career."

*Career Developer
Baltimore Center for Green Careers
Civic Works*

Additionally, members receive instruction in soft skills and work-readiness, and are provided with individual case management and coaching. Members meet one on one with their case manager on a weekly basis and attend classes in personal and professional development. Following members' job placement, BCGC staff follow up with each member monthly for a year. Staff also survey employers about their new employees. To support placements, BCGC acts as an intermediary between its alumni and their employers.

Since training began in 2003, 89 percent of alumni in brownfields remediation have been placed in employment. Currently in its first year, the energy efficiency retrofit program has graduated 8 of its 10 members; the remaining two are completing their 450 AmeriCorps hours in the Corps before they begin work.

Future directions and lessons learned

While Civic Work's Baltimore Center for Green Careers' efforts are in a developmental stage, program staff realize that the green industry remains a dynamic market, particularly with so much weatherization work being supported through short-term ARRA investments. BCGC continues to build current capacity through Baltimore Energy Entrepreneur (BEE), a social enterprise incubator that increases the capacity of experienced home improvement contractors to provide residential energy efficiency. The vision is for BEE alumni to provide additional capacity to the Baltimore green sector and, ultimately, hire BCGC alumni. At the same time, BCGC recognizes the importance of keeping an eye on the future to ensure that its training and development strategy is not built around today's funding opportunities. To this end, it is tracking potential opportunities in new construction (if the housing market stabilizes) and storm water management. While these efforts are currently being undertaken on a very small scale, a strong employment story is emerging at Civic Works' BCGC.

"If the market is emerging, you can get frustrated with that. I go to lots of meetings where people say, 'What is a green job?,' 'There are no green jobs,' 'I was told there would be green jobs.' Or you can see it as a wonderful opportunity to create jobs. And you can control the fact that now I don't have to fight to get someone a job."

*Green Projects Director
Baltimore Center for Green Careers
Civic Works*

BCGC prepares members for long-term careers in the emerging green sector with practices that are similar to the effective strategies and operational activities of high-performing workforce partnerships.⁵⁴ Through its work, BCGC has developed sectoral expertise in Baltimore's emerging green sector; it aligns resources and brokers relationships between employers and members as part of creating value for those parties. These types of workforce partnerships can then create what The National Fund for Workforce Solutions terms "systems impact" – serving as a "catalyst for improving sector-wide practices, local workforce development systems, and public policy."⁵⁵ Key lessons from BCGC's work are:

- **Understand the micro labor market.** Many planning decisions are based on broad trends in metropolitan or regional labor markets. While these are valuable indicators of pending employment opportunities, it is important that corps (which typically operate on a very small scale) are familiar with their "micro" labor market (e.g., community, neighborhood) to understand more immediate prospects. Through this level of investigation (which may be as rudimentary as researching local Yellow Pages or help wanted listings), BCGC was able to confirm that the home performance market in the city of Baltimore was more in a start-up

mode (with unmet demand) relative to the outlying county that has been better served. This insight was critical since much of Baltimore County is largely inaccessible to BCGC members.

- ***Identify a training strategy to match the marketplace.*** Insight into the micro labor market (discussed above) will help shape the appropriate training strategy to improve the likelihood of successfully entering the market. For instance, breaking into the green training market in the city of Baltimore (in its very early stages of growth) called for a broad-based strategy that covered multiple competencies and certifications as well as supervisory skills. A more saturated or mature market (such as the outlying county), in contrast, would have called for a more targeted training design that focused on a narrower set of skill development needs.
- ***Learn to think like an employer.*** While youth corps programs differ in content and focus, they share the common aim of helping members achieve economic stability in the job market. BCGC has clearly demonstrated the value of understanding the demand side of the market. This has led to changes in their job interviewing practices, placement of graduates with competitors of their social enterprise, and commitments to work with existing contractors to actually create long-term job opportunities for their alumni.
- ***Combine opportunism and strategy.*** The limited resources available to fully support at-risk members requires that corps be opportunistic about the funding they pursue and the programs they offer. At the same time, it is essential that they adhere to a long-term strategic plan that supports their core mission so that they are not simply chasing the next available funding opportunity. While BCGC's brownfields mitigation training emerged from an available EPA grant, it ultimately became a first step in building a long-term investment in the emerging green sector. This required that BCGC attentively track evolving trends in the field (e.g., weatherization, home performance audits, home remediation, and new construction trends) rather than simply tracking new funding opportunities.

Cultivating Strategic Alliances for Job Placement

Sequoia Community Corps Visalia, CA

Recognizing that unemployment is one of the most significant challenges in the rural Tulare area, Sequoia Community Corps (SCC) has taken a proactive “employer-centric” stance, in which it emphasizes strategic partnerships with employers, unions, and other organizations to place alumni in local jobs. With an unemployment rate of over 19 percent in their service area, SCC’s approach to finding members’ employment had to be holistic. SCC fulfills the “need to demonstrate to participants we have a credible vehicle for them after the Corps”⁵⁶ through a diverse set of partnerships with job providers. The strengths of SCC’s job placement practices are in integrating these practices throughout the Corps’ activities and overcoming fragmentation between Corps and job providers. Community Services Employment Training’s (CSET) Deputy Director emphasizes that “we want to break down all the silos” between service areas in the organization. SCC’s leaders have also taken that ethos to cultivate partnerships at three key points of entry into the local labor market. CSET’s Deputy Director also notes that, despite the high unemployment rate, SCC is having success at placing members into local jobs through the strategies described below. In the last year, it has dramatically increased its rate of placing exiting members into employment and is on track to place 75 percent of members exiting in the present quarter, with a goal of 70 percent retention of the alumni placed.

Taking an employer-centric approach to job placements: SCC’s transition program

Following the model of integrated program delivery, SCC initiated a transition program about one year ago. To help members transition successfully from the Corps to employment and/or continuing education, they enlist a wide range of staff: all the Corps’ directors, case managers, a Job Developer hired in January 2011, and work supervisors.⁵⁷ Members’ triggers for the transition stage are earning a high school diploma and attaining job skills that they need to be marketable to employers. Before members can enter the transition program, work supervisors ensure that members are job-ready then vouch for the members’ preparation to succeed in a job outside the Corps. During the three- to four-month transition process,⁵⁸ members finish skill development, refine soft skills for the job search, and connect with potential employers.

While the immediate goal of the transition program is to place the exiting members into successful employment, staff always keep in mind SCC’s strategic goal of meeting employers’ needs. One way SCC has accomplished this is by increasing their understanding of employers’ perspectives. For example, two senior SCC staff with employer-focus were hired recently to promote member development. The new Director of the SCC brought to the Corps a

Overview: Sequoia Community Corps

Originally established as Tulare County Youth Corps, Sequoia Community Corps (SCC) is housed within Community Services Employment Training (CSET), a Tulare County non-profit community action agency. SCC’s “Mission is to engage young men and women in meaningful work, public service and educational activities that assist them in becoming more responsible citizens, while protecting and enhancing California’s environment, human resources and communities.”

SCC is located in Visalia, CA, which has over 120,000 residents and is the largest city in agricultural Tulare County. Like Taos, NM, home of the rural RMYC corps, Tulare County is experiencing a high unemployment rate—almost 19 percent. Among the SCC’s target demographic of members, the rate is even higher.

SCC operates projects in recycling, construction, urban forestry, and weatherization.

Approximately 155 members enroll annually in SCC. More than 80% of members enter without a high school diploma or GED; therefore, they are co-enrolled in SCC’s charter school, which is affiliated with the John Muir charter school network that also serves other California Conservation Corps.

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business mindset and an understanding of employer needs, expectations, and culture. He joined the organization after decades of management experience in private residential construction. SCC's Job Developer brought to the Corps an understanding of the barriers faced by many SCC members in taking their next steps. She previously ran a successful tutoring/mentoring program for minority students entering college.

"Our goal from the day they walk in the door is to get them out again with the tools they need to be good employees."

Director

Sequoia Community Corps

To meet their commitment to placing exiting members in jobs, the Job Developer provides SCC members work-readiness trainings and orients them to the labor market. This includes workshops on topics employers care about, such as computer literacy, writing resumes and cover letters, and "dressing for success." On Fridays of in-school

weeks, members attend work-readiness workshops with her and at the CSET-operated One-Stop Career Center (see below). The Job Developer also works with members to remove any barriers to employment such as arrest records and outstanding traffic tickets. In the transition phase, the Job Developer interviews each member about his/her experiences and goals so that preparation and placement are tailored to the member's long-term aspirations and current needs. One strategy the Job Developer employs is providing members with realistic expectations for the labor market. For example, she instructs members about benefits offered in public sector or union employment.

To ensure the viability of the job matches she has made, the Job Developer follows up with both the employers and the alumni employees for up to one year to make sure the fit is a good one and to help resolve any problems. "Everyone we placed [since January 2011] is still there. We're getting great reviews, [members] are eager to work."⁵⁹ Additionally, the Job Developer cultivates relationships with local employers by giving presentations to prospective employers about members' training and skills. In this way, she positions members for current job openings and raises the visibility of the Corps among employers over the long term.

Partnering with unions through pre-apprenticeship programs

Although unions currently play a relatively small role in Tulare County's construction sector, SCC deliberately worked to establish partnerships with local unions because the trades provide lifelong careers with good wages and benefits. Furthermore, SCC anticipates increased demand for union labor with many union workers approaching retirement at the same time the municipal and county governments have instituted ordinances with requirements for hiring local labor. This partnership benefits the unions as well – because Tulare County's base of union workers is small, unions are more actively recruiting qualified workers like those from the Corps. Through its activities and union partnerships, SCC is strategic in laying the groundwork for its alumni's post-Corps placements. "For the first time, unions understand there's a pipeline through the Corps."⁶⁰

"I finished my high school diploma in a month [at SCC]. I work full-time at YouthBuild. I just finished my pre-apprenticeship program—I'm tested and approved. I plan to do the five-year program to become a journeyman electrician."

Member

Sequoia Community Corps

SCC's training program has been approved as a "pre-apprenticeship program" for the Northern California Laborers Union and its partners. As formalized in a 2010 MOU between CSET and the union, the Corps' 12-week training program has been customized to meet curriculum guidelines set by the union (as an example for other corps, Appendix C provides the SCC's pre-apprenticeship approval and MOU). Some of the pre-apprenticeship instruction, such as Cal-OSHA training, is provided by SCC staff, and other training is provided by contractors.

As a result of this partnership, SCC's members who successfully interview with the union can gain non-competitive, direct entry to a union apprenticeship. Further, alumni who join the apprenticeship program enter the four-year

program credited with 500 hours of education completed under their SCC service and start above the lowest pay grade. At the last union recruitment event attended by members from the pre-apprenticeship program, three of those members were hired as journeymen apprentices with wages starting at \$16 an hour.

“We want [the unions] to know that we will deliver; meet their expectations [for workers].”

Director

Sequoia Community Corps

SCC has cultivated a pipeline for their members to enter unions based on a relationship of mutual respect. But the leaders recognize that not all corps have positive relationships with unions. In California, for example, California Conservation Corps have an exemption to local prevailing wage laws, which make Corps cost-effective to contractors and potential competition for unions. SCC has been careful to frame its partnership as beneficial to the unions.

CSET’s Deputy Director explains to unions that SCC generally takes smaller projects than union workers would. Further, it partners with unions on projects where members cannot do some of the technical work. This respects the expertise of union workers as well as enables members to learn about more skilled labor and become acquainted with local unions. This strategic partnership helps open up the trades as viable lifetime careers for SCC alumni.

Fostering a win-win partnership with the One-Stop Career Center

SCC also has established a mutually beneficial relationship with the local One-Stop Career Center (One-Stop). For the last three years, SCC’s parent organization, CSET, has operated Tulare County’s Workforce Investment Act-funded One-Stop. SCC gains access to employment opportunities for its members (50 percent of SCC’s job placements come through the One-Stop) and the One-Stop is connected with job-ready candidates. Both organizations receive credit for a successful placement, working to their mutual advantage.

Their relationship with the One-Stop also offers SCC staff and members unique access to job placement resources. The Job Developer receives job leads from colleagues at the One-Stop on a weekly basis. As part of their transition to employment program, members prepare for upcoming job interviews by dressing for and conducting multiple rounds of videotaped mock interviews. They also receive feedback from employment specialists and their peers, and practice their responses to the most frequently asked and difficult questions posed in job interviews.

The One-Stop has provided SCC with numerous other benefits. It hosts job fairs where members have private access to employers during the initial hour of the event. Blue Ribbon Mentoring is a job shadowing and mentoring program run through the One-Stop. This program allows small groups of members to visit prospective employers, meet with Human Resource Department and other staff, and observe the workplace in a process where both the members and employers can assess the potential fit before a formal interview or application is submitted. The program works especially well for members who are reluctant to move into the workforce by allowing them to visualize themselves in an actual job.

SCC values its mutually beneficial partnership with the One-Stop and yet recognizes that the relationship between other corps and their local One-Stop may not be as positive. Corps and One-Stops may have misconceptions about the populations each one serves or have strong opinions about their own unique role in promoting employment. The Executive Director at CSET believes that One-Stops can provide Corps with such important benefits that she recommends persistence in partnering with them: “If the One-Stop system has not seemed responsive to your corps’ needs, [then] get involved in the system, become a resource, and become a partner. Join the Youth Council or the Board of Workforce committees so that people get to know you.” SCC’s executive director sits on her One-Stop’s Board and thus can influence its policies and operations. Additionally, SCC has

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proven that the partnership can benefit the One-Stop as well. SCC demonstrates that corps can be a reliable source of job-ready candidates that can help One-Stops meet their placement goals. SCC members “come to us job-ready,” commented a job developer from the One-Stop.

The member experience: Sequoia Community Corps

Like many corps, SCC operates as an open- entry, open- exit program. Members enter the program in small cohorts about twice a month. Members typically enter the program as high school dropouts and spend alternating weeks at SCC’s charter school and service projects where they improve their community while earning a high school diploma and gaining skills to prepare them for full-time employment upon leaving the Corps. SCC focuses on members’ skill development so that members are job-ready at program exit. Members interact with the Job Developer beginning in orientation and throughout their program. She constantly reminds them that enrollment in the Corps is not the same as a job: “This is a job training program. This is not a job.”

SCC organizes its service projects into three main tracks: construction, weatherization and energy efficiency, and recycling. Upon program entry, new members choose one of SCC’s three tracks and usually will work in that area during their entire tenure at the Corps. Members typically work in teams of four, called “pods,” which generally include one experienced member who can mentor newer members in “hard” and “soft” work skills. These pods tend to be stable over time, building teamwork and camaraderie. Each member usually completes all of the training modules within the chosen area, which helps build substantive expertise. Additionally, once members have earned a high school diploma, they often are eligible to apply for specialty training programs that lead to further credentials and skill building.

Sara and Dan’s stories

Dan and Sara are recycling specialists at SCC. “We educate the public about recycling - why it’s important,” Sara says. The specialist position allows members to develop a range of work skills beyond the collection and sorting of recyclables. Public speaking, client relationships, and clerical skills are key competencies for these members. The recycling program director trains the specialists to give 45-minute talks at schools and community events. The specialists, furthermore, are responsible for “setting up accounts with businesses to put our [recycling] bins there.”

Both Sara and Dan are young parents who entered SCC without a high school diploma. “When I moved here, I needed a job,” Sara says. Dan agrees that “Mostly you want financial security” for yourself and your family. Both are graduating from SCC’s charter high school this year and plan to use their Segal Education Awards for higher education. Sara thinks “A lot of us who come in here are already motivated” to succeed, adding that she appreciates the opportunity to combine work and education during the day (instead of having to work and take GED classes at night) so that she can spend more time with her child in the evenings.

Specialist positions allow motivated members to learn additional skills coming out of the Corps, and autonomy in their work as well. “We get to have input if something’s not working out.” Sara’s “Favorite part is being able to have my say.” In addition to problem-solving issues with recycling routes, collections, and material processing, “We have the freedom to be creative,” reports Dan. He suggested to his supervisor that the recycling division produce a newsletter for SCC “and he told me, ‘If you want to take it on, go for it.’” The first edition is a six-page, full-color newsletter, demonstrating the communication and desktop publishing skills Dan gained through work and his studies at the SCC charter high school.

Historically, it had become increasingly convenient for members to stay in the program for multiple years, even after they had earned their high school diploma. SCC’s new transition program and newly appointed Job Developer use the Corps’ strategic partnerships to create pathways for post-Corps success. In the last year, SCC has increased the number of exiting members each quarter (from 15 a year ago to a projected 65 for the quarter ending June 2011). The average wage of job placements for exiting members is between \$10 and \$11 an hour and the jobs often come with benefits, compared to a local minimum wage of \$8 an hour.

Future directions and lessons learned

Sequoia Community Corps' employment-focused vision has led to its increased recognition as a reliable source of job-ready applicants. Its strong partnership with the local One Stop has developed into a mutually beneficial relationship, with both organizations receiving credit for placement of program members. As a result, opportunities for members to gain good paying jobs have increased significantly, in spite of the lagging economy. SCC would like to expand these opportunities further through entrepreneurial proposals to develop their own job-generating enterprises.

By cultivating strategic partnerships with employers, SCC implements many of the effective practices of a comprehensive youth employment delivery system.⁶¹ For example, SCC and CSET act as a convening and administrative entity to bring together community stakeholders in partnerships. Furthermore, SCC provides its members with high quality work experience and career exposure, coupled with strong case management. Key lessons from SCC's success in placing members in employment are:

- ***View the job placement efforts as an extension of members' training.*** At SCC, considerable effort goes into formulating and customizing an in-depth placement strategy for each member. While this is essential to providing quality and stable job opportunities, SCC also views the process as an extension of their education and training interventions. While members' acquisition of job skills is central to their job placement, SCC feels it is equally critical that members understand hiring requirements, wage standards, and developmental opportunities (e.g. the pre-apprenticeship program). This learning process is further reinforced through such initiatives as employer visits and job shadowing opportunities.
- ***Adopt traditional marketing principles to support the job placement process.*** Successfully placing members is always a challenge given the current job markets and members' traditional barriers to employment. To operate effectively in this environment, SCC has committed itself to basic marketing principles to support its efforts. Specifically, they have made a concerted effort to understand their customers' needs so that a more customized job search strategy can be crafted for each individual. They also understand the job placement (like all marketing) is all about relationship building. This has allowed SCC to build strong and lasting connections with employers and unions that lead to repeat "business."
- ***Anticipate future demand.*** While current job opportunities and relationships are critical to today's placement success, SCC recognizes the importance of continuing to look ahead. By carefully tracking future labor market demands, such as construction projects, demographic trends (to track replacement demand), and legislative developments, SCC is better able to customize its programs and partnerships in a way that will ultimately create opportunities for future members.

Lesson Learned from Emerging Practices

Youth corps around the country strive to prepare young people for employment and postsecondary education through service and member development activities. *Youth Corps Emerging Practices for Education and Employment* highlights emerging practices used by corps to transition members to good jobs and/or postsecondary education. The four programs highlighted in this document reflect some of the more noteworthy investments and service strategies that are currently being implemented. While these corps are quite diverse in terms of volunteer mix, service opportunities, and developmental strategies, a more careful examination provides insight into some important commonalities. These commonalities tend to be shared philosophies and design principles rather than a commitment to a particular program approach or intervention. Several of these shared principles are summarized below.

- ***Understand the marketplace.*** Youth corps that target disconnected youth are positioned in a unique segment of the labor market. To succeed as a “niche” player it is important that corps fully understand the marketplace in which they operate. The corps highlighted in this document recognize that considerable time and energy must be spent on understanding short and longer term growth trends, hiring needs, skill requirements, and local and regional investment possibilities. It is this insight that allows the corps to make proactive strategic planning decisions and to limit the extent to which they are passively driven by funding opportunities.
- ***Work within a developmental continuum.*** All of these youth corps recognize that they are but one of many interventions and support resources along (what are ideally) paths towards members’ economic self-sufficiency. Corps’ understanding of their role as part of this continuum is critical to their self-identity and approach to member development. Specifically, these corps generally do not think of themselves as singular or self-standing training or development programs. Rather, they understand that they are part of a long-term and comprehensive intervention that requires multiple resources and extended time. This critical insight has resulted in considerable attention being devoted to structuring the nature and dynamics of the transition process itself.
- ***Don’t go it alone.*** Many youth corps programs are limited in their size and scope and often have comparable constraints regarding their service capacity and capabilities. To compensate for these limitations, the corps have established working partnerships with public agencies, postsecondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, and employers to carry out their missions. While this expanded base of resources and expertise are generally critical to the programs’ success, it is the enhanced community integration that is the ultimate value of these partnerships. Most notably, they have allowed the corps to grow beyond a narrow identity as stand-alone programs to that of more visible and credible community resources that are vital to addressing the youth development challenge.
- ***Never lose sight of the prize.*** Youth corps programs and their members are engaged in a range of service activities and developmental interventions. While the operational details of these activities will vary, the broader context for successful programming does not. Regardless of the age, gender, history, or other characteristics of their members, these corps recognize that successful interventions must directly or indirectly promote members’ success in the job market. Keeping members’ long-term goal in clear view is of utmost importance as corps determine their most effective programming and resource allocation options.

Peer Contacts

Abt Associates Inc. conducted this research for the Corporation for National and Community Service. The report authors wish to acknowledge the contributions of the individuals associated with the corps featured in *Youth Corps Emerging Practices*. Corps staff, program partners, members, and alumni graciously spent time talking with researchers about their corps. Abt appreciates their time, candor, insights, and thoughtfulness.

For individuals and programs interested in learning more about these corps and their practices, the following peer contacts have been designated:

Civic Works

John Mello, Green Projects Director

jmello@baltimoregreencareers.org

(410) 929-6124

<http://www.civicworks.com/>

<http://www.baltimoregreencareers.org/>

Los Angeles Conservation Corps

Bruce Saito, Executive Director

bsaito@lacorps.org

1-877-9LACORP

(213) 362-9000

<http://lacorps.org/index.php>

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps

Carl Colonius, Executive Director

colonius@youthcorps.org

(575) 751-1420

<http://www.youthcorps.org>

Sequoia Community Corps

Mary Alice Escarsega-Fechner, Deputy Director, CSET

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(559) 732-4194 ext. 656

<http://www.cset.org/sequoia-community-corps>

Appendix A: Methods

Corps were selected by Abt Associates Inc. in collaboration with CNCS and The Corps Network. Corps were drawn from the population of corps that participated in the companion impact evaluation.⁶² That is, programs discussed in this learning document were selected from the population of service and conservation corps in The Corps Network that also participated in the impact study. A two-stage process was used to select the four exemplar corps: 1) identify corps with emerging programmatic elements, and 2) select corps with emerging practices for member development in the areas of education and employment.

Identification of corps with emerging programmatic elements: Corps were first selected on the basis of whether they had attained Excellence in Corps Operations (ECO) status. ECO is a self-assessment and peer review process that recognizes corps that have made a commitment to continuous improvement and high quality standards set by The Corps Network and experts from service and conservation corps.⁶³ To attain ECO status, corps undertake a comprehensive internal assessment of their structure and operations. This assessment is reviewed by three peer reviewers during a two and one-half day site visit. ECO status is awarded to corps that complete the entire ECO process and submit annual report forms. ECO status must be renewed every five years. There are approximately 40 youth corps that currently hold ECO status. Seventeen corps were identified that held ECO status and participated in the impact study for the *National Evaluation of Youth Corps*.

Selection of corps with emerging practices for member development in the areas of education and employment: From the pool of 17 potential corps, The Corps Network recommended six corps that served disconnected youth and had strong practices in employment and education. Abt Associates then conducted phone interviews with the executive directors and staff at the six corps programs and ranked the corps according to their self-reported outcomes, initiatives, and perceived strengths in member education and work readiness practices. On the basis of these rankings and in consultation with The Corps Network, Abt Associates chose four corps for participation in *Youth Corps Emerging Practices*.

The four youth corps that participated in the project are Civic Works (Baltimore, MD), Los Angeles Conservation Corps (Los Angeles, CA), Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (Taos, NM), and Sequoia Community Corps (Visalia, CA). Abt Associates senior researchers held telephone discussions with the corps' executive directors and staff, and conducted a two-day site visit to Corps programs, partner organizations, and host sites in May 2011.

Researchers also conducted 48 discussions with executive directors, supervisors, work-readiness and education coordinators, work-readiness and education partners, crew leaders, and members. Guided discussions addressed the Corps programs' history, the evolution of their member support services related to work-readiness and educational attainment, collaborations with public and community partners, and member experiences. These discussions were based on site-specific discussion guides customized with information provided from the Corps' websites, phone calls with Corps' executive directors, and conversations with experts at The Corps Network. The discussions elicited the unique features of these emerging practices, and identified strategies that may be useful to other Corps in developing their own work-readiness and education initiatives. The results from these discussions and site visits were used to prepare the information presented in this document. Each Corps reviewed its section of the document for accuracy.

Appendix B: Member Demographics

Exhibit B.1

Demographic Information at Program Entry^a

Average Characteristics	Civic Works ^b	Baltimore Center for Green Careers ^c	Los Angeles Conservation Corps ^d	Rocky Mountain Youth Corps ^e	Sequoia Community Corps ^f
Number of members	210	43	379	128	170
Gender					
Male	34%	91%	49%	53%	85%
Age					
Under 18 years old	3%	0%	0%	64%	0%
Age 18–24	64%	16%	95%	34%	92%
Over 24 years old	33%	84%	5%	2%	8%
Race					
African American	59%	86%	40%	1%	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Hispanic	1%	2%	51%	83%	75%
Multi-racial/Other	2%	0%	6%	1%	4%
Native American	0%	0%	3%	8%	4%
White	35%	12%	0%	9%	17%
Level of Education Upon Entering Corps					
Less than a high school diploma	10%	16%	90%	64%	87%
High school diploma or GED and no college	23%	49%	10%	18%	9%
Some college	53%	23%	6%	16%	0%
College degree	14%	7%	0%	2%	0%
Additional Characteristics					
Court-involved	-	79% ^g	31%	4%	42%
Parents	-	-	25%	7%	31%
Veterans	1%	23%	0%	0%	0%

^a Based on the most recent data provided by the corps

^b FY 2010-2011, Because BCGC serves a distinct population from Civic Works, their demographics are presented separately

^c FY 2010-2011

^d June 1, 2010 – May 31, 2011

^e 2010

^f FY 2010-2011

^g 79% charged; 84% arrested

Appendix C: Sample Materials from the Corps

Sample college-transfer course syllabus (RMYC)

UNM – TAOS
Syllabus
Semester: Summer, 2011

Course Name & #: Land Management & Team Service - Arts & Sciences 198 (Youth Conservation Corps)

Instructor: [REDACTED]

Office Hours: Friday 8:00-12:00 at Rocky Mountain Youth Corps office.

Contact: [REDACTED]

Textbooks: (Provided by RMYC)

Money Management, New Mexico Educators Federal Credit Union

1st Aid/CPR Manual, American Red Cross

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps Individual Development Plan

EnCorps Resources Website: Conflict Resolution

North American Skills & Ethics, Leave No Trace Center For Outdoor Ethics

Course Description/Goals:

This course is designed to teach skills and approaches to educational attainment and making measurable progress toward personal goals. Focus will be placed on successful transition to college or career. Discussions, trainings, presentations, and practical application in related topics will provide perspective and support skill development. Potential career paths in land management, conservation, and community service will be explored through on-the-job training.

Student Learning Objectives:

Students will demonstrate growth and commitment in:

- Independent livings skills such as conflict resolution, personal finances, physical and emotional health.
- Increased leadership and communication abilities.
- An identified set of short and long-term goals, focusing on successful transition to career or college.
- Increased public speaking and presentation skills.
- A resume, cover letter and professional portfolio
- Safe practices on-the-job, including tool use and good decision making in outdoor settings.
- Environmental stewardship and responsible land ethics.

Expectations: It is expected that students in this class will actively participate in all expectations of a regular work week at Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, which includes arriving on-time and attending work Monday-Friday from 3:00-6:00 PM. Uniforms must be worn and safety precautions followed.

Course Requirements

- Projects – Small group projects and individual work on developing healthy life habits.
- Presentations – Mid-term and end of term Presentations of Learning will consist of a public speech on personal growth and lessons learned during term. Presentation will be accompanied by a portfolio consisting of self-reflection and professional materials.

Appendices

- Evaluations - Regular review and evaluation by student and supervisor of the Individual Development Plan will document progress in areas of growth and identify continued needs
- Exercises – On the job training daily.
- Field Trips –Three (3) service projects benefiting the greater Taos community

Attendance Policy:

Students must attend class regularly and punctually. Excessive absences may result in a student being dropped from the class. It is UNM-Taos policy that a student MAY be dropped by their instructor after three absences.

Grading Policy:

Attendance -	30%
Participation -	30%
Presentation -	20%
Service Learning -	20%

Service-Learning:

Service-learning is the integration of community service into course study; an experiential approach to teaching and learning. The instructor may offer students an opportunity to integrate relevant service-learning into course study. Students interested in incorporating community-based service into their studies, may choose from the service-learning options *outlined in the course description and course outline* to replace some or all class assignments. Service-learning experiences must receive prior approval by the instructor in order to count for credit. The instructor will work with the student to identify appropriate projects and community partners as well as help structure the learning experience. Service-learning activities must meet course objectives, contribute significantly to a community need, include reflection on the service experience, and be part of a student's grade.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):

In accordance with University Policy 2310 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation and who registers with [REDACTED] at Student Services ([REDACTED]-[REDACTED], [REDACTED]@unm.edu). **It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to our attention, as the instructor is not legally permitted to inquire.** Students who may require assistance in emergency evacuations should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow.

Academic Integrity:

The policy of the University of New Mexico-Taos is that academic honesty is one of the basic steps toward personal and academic development. All University policies regarding academic honesty apply to this course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating or copying, plagiarism (claiming credit for the words or works of another from any type of source such as print, Internet or electronic database, or failing to cite the source), fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. The University's full statement on academic honesty and the consequences for failure to comply is available in the college catalog or online at <http://taos.unm.edu>.

Dropping the course:

It is the student's responsibility to drop a course. The instructor is not required, nor should be expected, to drop a student from the official roster. Do not assume that failing to come to class will result in your being dropped from the course.

Due Process:

If you have any problems in the class that cannot be directly handled by talking with the instructor, the appropriate person to contact is the Academy Head or the Student Affairs Department.

Course Outline:

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>SECTIONS</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Assessments</u>
1-2	Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations and Policies of Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. • 1st Aid/CPR Certification • Individual Development Plans: Goal Setting • Life mapping • Journaling 	1 st Aid/CPR test scores Completed IDP Journaling
3	Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trailbuilding Workshop • History of National Service 	Participation in training activities, journaling.
4	Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Engagement • Leadership Development 	Participation in training activities, journaling, discussion.
5	Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Admissions & Financial Aid orientations. • Learning Styles 	Participation in training activities, journaling, discussion, research.
6	Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity & Cultural Awareness • Ethics of Service & Volunteerism 	Participation in training activities, journaling, discussion.
7	Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide Prevention Training • Leave No Trace outdoor ethics • Personal Finance & Budgeting 	Participation in training activities, journaling, discussion.
8	Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Defense • Conflict Resolution • Nutrition & Healthy Life Choices 	Participation in training activities, journaling, discussion.
9	Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Relationships • Sexual Responsibility 	Participation in training activities, journaling, discussion.
10	Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Speaking Skills: Preparing and Delivering a Speech. 	Preparation & Delivery
11	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My AmeriCorps Accounts, college applications. 	Research and completed assignments
12	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Search Skills: Applications, Interviews, Resumes and Cover Letters 	Participation in training activities, journaling, job offers/college acceptance.
13	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Development Plan Review 	Documented progress and reflection on personal goals.
14	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition Plans & mentorship meetings 	Completed transition plan, action steps scheduled w/ mentor.
15	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of final portfolios. 	Complete 5-part portfolio edited and turned in
16	Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Presentation of Learning. 	Passing individual Presentation of Learning and exit paperwork

Sample transition program information (LACC)



June 10, 2011

Transition Letter

On behalf of the LA Conservation Corps (the Corps), I want to thank you for your time and service to the many communities within the County of Los Angeles and all of Southern California. Based on your length of stay at the Corps, it is now time for you to move to the next step in our program. As you know, the Corps is a training program and we encourage each Corpsmember to take advantage of the many opportunities that arise during your stay with the Corps. One of these opportunities is the Transition Program.

As I look at your records, you began the Corps' training program [redacted]. You have been with our training program for [redacted]. During this time you have proven your worth and dedication by working to improve our environment, serve our communities and assist other young people like you to achieve their goals. Although you are in good standing, it is time for you begin the Transition Program and review your college and career plans to move on to the next phase of your career development.

It is our goal to assist you in finding a job or enrolling in college during the 7 weeks of the Transition Program. The Transition Program will typically take place on Monday-Thursday from 8.30am to 2.30pm at the East LA Work Site. Please note, that this schedule could change from week to week based on field trips and other necessary activities associated with this program to help you find a job and/or enroll in college or advanced training courses. For your participation you will be eligible to receive a \$100 education stipend every week for your positive attendance and participation in the transition activities. The Transition Program will begin on July 5, 2011 and will end on August 18, 2011. While attending these classes you will not be able to work on any other Corps projects.

Please take some time to think about what you would like to do in the very near future. [redacted], who is the Los Angeles Conservation Corps's *Transition Services Coordinator*, will be meeting with you to discuss how we can assist you in achieving your future goals through our 7 week Transition Program. Although the Transition Program is mandatory, you may decline participation in the program. Please note that if you decline participation in the Transition Program you will be immediately separated from the LA Conservation Corps after your last day of work. If you do not continue to follow the policies and procedures of the LA Conservation Corps you may be separated from the Corps before this date.

Please let me know if you have any questions. We look forward to meeting with you so together we can plan the next step in your career.

Please initial:

_____ I will participate in the Transition Program

_____ I do not plan to participate in the Transition Program and understand that **Thursday, June 30, 2011** is my last day of work.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Program Coordinator
CC: [redacted]
File

Transition Program Information

Purpose

The purpose of the Transition Program is to provide support and services that will assist you in transitioning successfully from the LA Conservation Corps into a full time job, college/vocational program, or a combination of the two.

Schedule

July 5, 2011 – August 18th

Monday-Wednesday Thursday

8:30 am – 2:30 pm 8:30 -12:00 pm

Times and Weekly Schedule subject to change depending on job interviews, field trips, etc.

Location

East LA Site
[REDACTED]

Los Angeles CA 90023

Location is subject to change depending on the schedule and resources available.

Parking

Street parking only. Metro Gold Line and Buses are nearby for public transportation users.

<http://www.metro.net/>

Thursdays are street cleaning days so allow extra time to look for parking so you're not late.

Clothing

Your LA Conservation Corps uniform is required (steel toe boots not required). As we progress with the program and prepare for interviews, Business Professional and Business Casual clothing will be required.

Pay

Weekly Educational Stipend - \$100/week or \$25/day

Active, positive participation, attendance and completion of assignments are required to receive the educational stipend.

10 Things You Can Do Before Transition Program Starts

1. Start thinking about what **your** main goals will be for the Transition Program.
2. Find your resume and save it on a flash drive or in your email (**if you don't have one don't worry**).
3. Ask your supervisors for references and their contact information.
4. Ask your supervisors and managers for technical and job related skills you have gained while at the Corps.
5. Collect or write down all job related certificates and/or certifications that you hold.
6. Clear up any parking/speeding tickets or holds that exist on your CA Driver's License.
7. Make sure you apply for a CA ID or DL if you do not already have one.
8. Make sure you have the correct proof of identification cards for future jobs and know where they are in your house/apt. (Social Security Card, US Passport, Birth Certificate, Government ID card, etc.)
9. Collect your W-2's and any other financial information to complete the FAFSA for college financial aid.
10. Create a professional email address (name and numbers only) if you do not already have one.

Staff Contact Information

[REDACTED]
Transition Services Coordinator
Corpsmember Development
East LA Site

[REDACTED] ext. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (cell)

[REDACTED]@lacorps.org

[REDACTED]
College Readiness Coordinator
Corpsmember Development
South LA Site

[REDACTED] ext. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@lacorps.org

Sample MOU with a community college (LACC)



LA CONSERVATION CORPS

Administrative Offices

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 15868, Los Angeles, CA 90015

Memorandum of Agreement for the
College Transition / Matriculation Program
Between
Los Angeles Conservation Corps
and
Los Angeles Trade & Technical Community College

Purpose: The purpose of this Memorandum of Agreement is to set forth the terms and conditions under which the Los Angeles Conservation Corps (the "Corps") and Los Angeles Trade & Technical Community College ("Partner") agree to cooperatively participate in the College Transition / Matriculation Program (the "Program"). The Program goals are to increase enrollment of students ("Corpsmembers") into post-secondary education by streamlining the enrollment process and providing the appropriate support services. The Program will complement the mission of the Partner by creating a college bound culture amongst youth and their parents, historically underserved and underrepresented populations, disengaged youth, and underemployed/unemployed youth and young adults.

Responsibilities of the Corps

- The Corps will actively encourage Corpsmembers to enroll with the Partner.
- The Corps will provide case management and additional support services outside of the educational institution.
- The Corps will provide, at no cost to the Partner, job training and paid work experiences to youth (Corpsmembers) enrolled in the Corps.
- The Corps will provide the Partner with recruitment flyers and intake information, as well as accept referrals from the Partner.

Responsibilities of the Partner

- The Partner will streamline the enrollment process for Corpsmembers by providing individualized outreach and support services at a designated site on the Partner's campus.
- The Partner will promote their institution through outreach and recruitment programs at the Corps' sites during enrollment periods throughout the year.
- The partner will provide additional assistance with financial aid applications.
- The partner will refer Corpsmembers to Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSP&S) as applicable.
- The Partner will participate on the Corps' Vocational Services Advisory Board.
- The Partner will provide office or meeting space for the Corps at the Partner's campus where the Corps' College Readiness Coordinator will meet with Corpsmembers when practicable.
- The Partner, where appropriate, will collaborate on initiative and career pathway program models and opportunities.

No Third Party Beneficiaries: This Agreement is not intended to and shall not create any rights for any third parties who are not signatories to the Agreement. Nothing in this Agreement shall constitute any contractual relationship between any others and the Corps or any obligation on the part of the Corps to pay, or to be responsible for the payment of, any sums to any subcontractors of the Partner.

Schedule: The LA Conservation Corps will coordinate with Partner staff to determine the Program schedule.

Compensation: The Partner will not be compensated for the Program.

Time and Effectiveness: Unless otherwise provided, this Agreement shall take effect when all of the following events have occurred:

- (1) This Agreement has been signed on behalf of the Partner by the person(s) authorized to bind the Partner hereto; and
- (2) This Agreement has been signed on behalf of LA Conservation Corps by the person authorized to enter into this Agreement.

Compliance with Applicable Laws: The Partner agrees to comply with all federal, state and local laws, ordinances, codes and regulations and orders of public authorities in the performance of this Agreement.

Termination: We acknowledge that this Agreement proceeds at the will of the parties and any parties may cancel with written notice. In the event any party fails to comply with any term or condition of this Agreement, or fails to provide the services in the manner agreed upon by the parties, this shall constitute a material breach of the Agreement. From LA Conservation Corps, such notice of cancellation should be given in lieu of scheduling further projects with the Partner. From the Partner, notice of cancellation should be given at least 30 days in advance.

Compliance with Applicable Laws: The Partner agrees to comply with all federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, codes, and regulations and orders of public authorities in the performance of this Agreement.

This Agreement may be modified by mutual written agreement of all contractual parties. Furthermore, if any part of this contract is found to be invalid, the remainder of the contract shall continue in effect.

Governing Laws: This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of California, without reference to its choice of law doctrine and with venue in the State of California, County of Los Angeles, Central District.

Sample pre-apprenticeship proposal and MOU (SCC)



Northern California Laborers Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee

██████████ Drive, San Ramon, CA 94583-4098

(██████████) (██████████) • (██████████) (██████████) Fax

July 14, 2010

██████████
Community Services Employment Training
312 N. W. 3rd Avenue
Visalia, CA 93291

Re: Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Dear ██████████:

The following paragraph is being made a part of our apprenticeship standards:

"The Northern California Laborers JATC encourages preparatory/pre-apprenticeship craft training to facilitate entry into apprenticeship. Therefore, in appropriate situations, the JATC may provide "direct entry" into the apprenticeship program to individuals who meet the minimum qualifications for entry into the program and have successfully completed a pre-apprenticeship course whose curriculum and structure has been approved by the JATC."

We are letting people in the pre-apprenticeship community know about this opportunity, and we hope you consider taking advantage of it.

In order for a pre-apprenticeship program to qualify, the program must offer a minimum of 80 hours of hands-on training in the tools, materials and equipment used by Laborers. They must also have a "life-skills" component designed to offer training in the importance of showing up on-time every day while demonstrating a positive attitude and a willingness to learn. Guest speakers may be used to cover some topics. Detailed below are the minimum criteria your pre-apprenticeship program must offer in order to qualify for direct entry status for your graduates:

Curriculum

The following topics must be covered during the course:

- Workplace safety (including personal protective equipment, back and hearing protection, and recognition of hazardous materials);
- What to expect (and what is expected of apprentices) on a jobsite;
- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the various supervisory positions found on jobsites (foreman, project superintendent, etc.);
- Following instructions from supervisors;

www.norcalaborers.org/training/training.html

- Illegal discrimination and sexual harassment;
- Attitude;
- Construction math (i.e. reading a tape measure, calculating volume, etc.);
- Team building exercises/projects (hands-on);
- Identification and proper use(s) of tools, equipment and materials commonly used by Laborers;
- Role and history of organized labor;
- Role, importance and expectations of the contractor;
- Collective bargaining;
- Overview of the state and federal laws pertaining to apprentices;
- Apprentice responsibilities pertaining to record keeping/recording of work hours.

Program Structure

- Program must be at least 12 weeks in length;
- Program must have a pre-acceptance screening process which includes an oral interview;
- Program must have a disciplinary policy in place that contains consequences up to and including dismissal for excessive tardiness, unexcused absences and general misconduct;
- Program must have a substance abuse testing policy.

If your program is interested in qualifying for "direct entry" status and meets the above-reference curriculum and structure requirements, please contact me to set up a meeting at your facility where I will be able to tour your training site and meet your staff. Once completed, I will make a recommendation to the JATC regarding your application.

Sincerely,


Director of Apprenticeship



Northern California Laborers Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee

██████████ Drive, San Ramon, CA 94583-4098
(████) █████-████ • (████) █████-████ Fax

April 21, 2011

██████████
Community Services Employment Training
312 NW 3rd Avenue
Visalia, CA 93291

Re: Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Dear ██████████:

On behalf of the Laborers Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, it is my pleasure to inform you that CSET has been approved as a pre-apprenticeship program whose graduates may be offered "direct entry" into the Laborers Apprenticeship Program. Your graduates will be permitted to bypass the normal selection procedures and the waiting list made up of individuals awaiting an invitation to join.

Per our administrative procedures, the number of successful graduates accepted will be determined by the business manager of the appropriate local union. Factors that will be considered will be the need for new apprentices and the number of apprentices already on the out-of-work list.

The business manager will inform the apprenticeship office of a number he feels is suitable for the near future. Those graduates who have demonstrated high levels of skill and aptitude and have shown a strong desire to join the Laborers Union will be invited to an informal interview with a representative of the apprenticeship program and the local union. This final process will determine who is invited to join our program. When you are ready to graduate another class, please contact me so that I may initiate the process.

Once again, congratulations and I look forward to long-lasting mutually beneficial partnership.

Sincerely,

██████████
Director of Apprenticeship

Notes

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- ¹ Youth corps vary in the terminology they use to refer to current and former participants. In this document we use “member” and “alumni” for consistency.
- ² Price, C., Williams, J., Simpson, L., Jastrzab, J., and Markovitz, C. (2011). *National Evaluation of Youth Corps: Findings at Follow-up*. Prepared for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc.
- ³ See Appendix B for an overview of each corps’ demographics.
- ⁴ Corporation for National and Community Service. (2011). *The Corporation for National and Community Service strategic plan: 2011—2015*, p. 17. Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National and Community Service.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 21, “Goal 3.”
- ⁶ E.g., Hastings, S., Tsoi-a-Fatt, R. & Harris, L. (2010) *Building a comprehensive youth employment delivery system: Examples of effective practice*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
- National Youth Employment Coalition (2005) *PEPNet guide to quality standards for youth programs*. Washington, DC: National Youth Employment Coalition.
- Partee, G. & Halperin, S. (2006) *Principles and characteristics of six leading United States youth development programs*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.
- Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (2010). *Civic pathways out of poverty and into opportunity*. Denver, CO: Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE).
- ⁷ Because this document focuses on practices relating to employment and education, the term “disconnected youth” is used instead of the broader term “disadvantaged youth”. Disadvantaged youth, as defined by the Serve America Act (Section 1102) are those who are economically disadvantaged and one or more of the following: a) who are out-of-school youth, including out-of-school youth who are unemployed, b) who are in or aging out of foster care, c) who have limited English proficiency, d) who are homeless or who have run away from home, e) who are at risk to leave secondary school without a diploma, f) who are formal juvenile offenders or at risk for delinquency, or g) who are individuals with disabilities.
- ⁸ <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40535.pdf>
- ⁹ Sum, A., Mangum, G., and Taggart, R. (2002). *The young, the restless, and the jobless: The case for a national jobs stimulus program targeted on America’s young adults* (Public Policy Issues Monograph). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University, Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies. Retrieved May 27, 2011 from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED472610>
- ¹⁰ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/dropout08/>
- ¹¹ Waldfogel, J., Garfinkel, I., and Kelly, B. (2007). Welfare and the costs of public assistance. In C.R. Belfield and H.M. Levin (Eds.), *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Moretti, E. (2007). Crime and the costs of criminal justice. In C.R. Belfield and H.M. Levin (Eds.), *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Muennig, P. (2007). Consequences in health status and costs. In C.R. Belfield and H.M. Levin (Eds.), *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- ¹² Brown, B. (1999). America’s disconnected youth: Prevalence, patterns, and outcomes. In Besharov, D. (Ed.), *America’s disconnected youth: Toward a preventive strategy*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

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- ¹⁴ Tierney, W.G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N.F. (2009) *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do: A practical guide* (NCEE #2009-4066). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved June 27, 2011 from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>.
- ¹⁵ Recommendation 1: Offer courses and curricula that prepare students for college-level work, and ensure that students understand what constitutes a college-ready curriculum by 9th grade.
- ¹⁷ Recommendation 3: Surround students with adults and peers who build and support their college-going aspirations. Recommendation 5: Increase families' financial awareness, and help students apply for financial aid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. Exhibit 8.5, "Youth Corps' Members' Perceptions of whether Youth Corps Shaped their Career Choices."
- ¹⁹ At the time of the 30-month tracking survey.
- ²⁰ Ninety percent of enrollees were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall youth corps experience; less than 5 percent reported they were somewhat or very dissatisfied.
- Price, C., Williams, J., Simpson, L., Jastrzab, J., and Markovitz, C. (2011). *National Evaluation of Youth Corps: Findings at Follow-up*. Prepared for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc.
- ²¹ Ibid, Exhibit 8.4, "Satisfaction with Corps Experience."
- ²² The 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act tied the maximum amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to the maximum amount of the U.S. Department of Education's Pell Grant. For terms of service that are approved using 2011 funds, the award value is \$5,550.00 for a year of full-time service, and is pro-rated for part-time service based on the full-time amount. Members have up to seven years to use their awards.
- ²³ Ibid,
- ²⁴ For example, LaLonde, Robert J. (1995). The Promise of Public Sector-Sponsored Training Programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9 (Spring): 149-168; and Long, D.A. (1996). *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*. Chapter 4: What works? Evidence from evaluation research on programs for disadvantaged youths in the United States. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/ceerp.pdf>; Riddell, W.C. (1996). *Evaluation of the effectiveness of employment-related programs and services for youth*. Chapter 3: Evidence on the effectiveness of youth labour market programs in Canada: An assessment. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/ceerp.pdf>; Weeter, C. & Martin, N. (2011). *Cross-System Collaboration for Reconnecting Youth*. National Youth Employment Coalition. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from http://www.nyec.org/content/documents/2-CROSS-SYS_COLLAB_brief_final.pdf;
- ²⁵ Corporation for National and Community Service. (2011). *The Corporation for National and Community Service strategic plan: 2011—2015*, p. 17. Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National and Community Service.
- ²⁶ Although they were developed in the context of this corps program, the components of RMYC's partnership are similar to recommendations those found in other contexts. For example, Gateway to College National Network (2011). *Essential elements and core commitments*. Gateway to College National Network. Retrieved June 20, 2011 from <http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/pdf/ESSENTIAL%20ELEMENTS%20AND%20CORE%20COMMITMENTS.pdf> and Weeter, C. & Martin, N. (2011). *Cross-System Collaboration for Reconnecting Youth*. National Youth Employment Coalition. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from http://www.nyec.org/content/documents/2-CROSS-SYS_COLLAB_brief_final.pdf
- ²⁷ LACC's transition program developed strategies similar to recommendations from the larger youth development literature For example, Gateway to College National Network (2011). *Essential elements and core commitments*.

Gateway to College National Network. Retrieved June 20, 2011 from <http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/pdf/ESSENTIAL%20ELEMENTS%20AND%20CORE%20COMMITMENTS.pdf>.

- 28 While BCGC was created in response to the local context, Civic Work’s program aligns with recommendations for youth-employment programs. For example: Riddell, W.C. (1996). *Evaluation of the effectiveness of employment-related programs and services for youth*. Chapter 3: Evidence on the effectiveness of youth labour market programs in Canada: An assessment. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/eerp.pdf>. LaLonde, Robert J. (1995). The Promise of Public Sector-Sponsored Training Programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9 (Spring): 149-168, and Long, D.A. (1996). *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*. Chapter 4: What works? Evidence from evaluation research on programs for disadvantaged youths in the United States. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/eerp.pdf>
- 29 SCC’s initiatives are similar to practices found in other research to be helpful for building partnerships and supportive systems. For example, Weeter, C. & Martin, N. (2011). *Cross-system collaboration for reconnecting youth*. National Youth Employment Coalition. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from http://www.nyec.org/content/documents/2-CROSS-SYS_COLLAB_brief_final.pdf and Long, D.A. (1996). *Evaluation of the effectiveness of employment-related programs and services for youth*. Chapter 4: What works? Evidence from evaluation research on programs for disadvantaged youths in the United States. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/eerp.pdf>
- 30 Hastings, S., Tsoi-a-Fatt, R. & Harris, L. (2010) *Building a comprehensive youth employment delivery system: Examples of effective practice*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
- 31 National Fund for Workforce Solutions (2010). *Workforce partnership guidance tool*. Boston, MA: National Fund for Workforce Solutions.
- 32 While UNM-Taos is a community college, RMYC refers to their partnership as being with a “university.” That language is used to preserve the corps’ voice.
- 33 Members’ portfolios are comprised of the individual development plans they complete during orientation, their monthly self-assessments, their end-of-course reflection (“presentation of learning”), evaluations completed by their supervisors, and project-specific impact forms that document the procedures and steps taken in implementing the project.
- 34 “Spike” projects are those in which crews camp out at or near their service site for 80 hour blocks rather than returning home after a day of service.
- 35 Gateway to College National Network (2011). *Essential elements and core commitments*. Gateway to College National Network. Retrieved June 20, 2011 from <http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/pdf/ESSENTIAL%20ELEMENTS%20AND%20CORE%20COMMITMENTS.pdf> Additionally, RMYC’s partnership echoes recommendations from Weeter, C. & Martin, N. (2011). *Cross-System Collaboration for Reconnecting Youth*. National Youth Employment Coalition. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from http://www.nyec.org/content/documents/2-CROSS-SYS_COLLAB_brief_final.pdf
- 36 When the schools first opened, they and other California Conservation Corps’s schools operated under the John Muir network. After operating for about five years as a John Muir-affiliated charter school, and unsuccessful attempts to obtain an agreement with the Los Angeles Unified school district, in 2004/05 LAEC obtained an independent charter from the Nevada County, CA school district (the same school district that sponsors the John Muir charter schools). California requires charter schools to be chartered in the district in which they operate, except those that exclusively serve participants in California Conservation Corps or YouthBuild.
- 37 LACC refers to its members in the charter school as “students.”
- 38 Corpsmember Transition Services Coordinator, LACC.
- 39 Corpsmember Transition Services Coordinator, LACC.

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- 40 Member Development Coordinator, LACC.
- 41 LACC's Board controls around \$100,000 annually of scholarship funds raised by the program. Members can access the funds for either college or vocational education, working through LACC's Member Development Coordinator. Additionally, all LACC members are eligible to earn an AmeriCorps education award, but the program has little information about use of that financial support.
- 42 Member Development Director, LACC.
- 43 Division Director of Member Development, LACC.
- 44 LACC funds the school stipend through its fee-for-service projects. It also continues to receive average daily attendance (ADA) funding for members during work blocks because the work projects are viewed as vocational training.
- 45 Jobs for the Future (2011). *Back on track to college: key elements and operational features*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.
- LACC's transition program also relies on practices identified as essential by the "Gateway to College program: <http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/pdf/ESSENTIAL%20ELEMENTS%20AND%20CORE%20COMMITMENTS.pdf> and Weeter, C. & Martin, N. (2011). *Building Capacity for Reconnecting Youth*. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from http://www.nyec.org/content/documents/4-BUILDING_CAPACITY_brief_final.pdf
- <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/eerp.pdf>
- 46 For ease of exposition, all activities that are currently under the purview of BCGC are credited to BCGC. This includes activities that originated in Civic Works prior founding of BCGC in 2010.
- 47 Under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant program targeting training in brownfields mitigation. Civic Works received its first brownfields training grant in 2001, and graduated its first class in 2003.
- 48 Civic Works refers to its members in BCGC as "trainees," and its alumni as "graduates."
- 49 Civic Works has used similar interview practice for its own applicants and would-be members.
- 50 Green Projects Director, BCGC, Civic Works.
- 51 Initially named "3E Energy Solutions."
- 52 Each crew is comprised of three to four installers and one supervisor.
- 53 Green Careers Director, Civic Works.
- 54 National Fund for Workforce Solutions (2010). *Workforce partnership guidance tool*. Boston, MA: National Fund for Workforce Solutions.
- Civic Work's program aligns with recommendations for youth-employment programs. For example:
- Riddell, W.C. (1996). *Evaluation of the effectiveness of employment-related programs and services for youth*. Chapter 3: Evidence on the effectiveness of youth labour market programs in Canada: An assessment. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/eerp.pdf>
- LaLonde, Robert J. (1995). The Promise of Public Sector-Sponsored Training Programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9 (Spring): 149-168.
- Long, D.A. (1996). *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*. Chapter 4: What works? Evidence from evaluation research on programs for disadvantaged youths in the United States. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdcedd/reports/1996-000403/eerp.pdf>
- 55 Ibid, p. 16.
- 56 Director, Sequoia Community Corps.

- ⁵⁷ The vast majority of SCC members leaving with a positive exit enter employment—37 out of 40 (93%) members with a positive exit (that is, employment or education) went to jobs from July 2010 to June 2011.
- ⁵⁸ The transition phase can be shorter if a member obtains a job or enrolls in school.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Deputy Director, CSET.
- ⁶¹ Hastings, S., Tsoi-a-Fatt, R. & Harris, L. (2010) *Building a comprehensive youth employment delivery system: Examples of effective practice*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
- SCC's initiatives also mirror recommendations for partnerships and supportive systems. Weeter, C. & Martin, N. (2011). *Cross-system collaboration for reconnecting youth*. National Youth Employment Coalition. Retrieved June 14, 2011 from http://www.nyec.org/content/documents/2-CROSS-SYS_COLLAB_brief_final.pdf
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- ⁶² Price, C., Williams, J., Simpson, L., Jastrzab, J., and Markovitz, C. (2011). *National Evaluation of Youth Corps: Findings at Follow-up*. Prepared for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc.
- ⁶³ Since 2006, the ECO process has been an acceptable evaluation for CNCS grantees receiving less than \$500,000 a year.