



The Corps Network
Strengthening America through
service and conservation

Accreditation: Corps Center of Excellence



→ What is a Corps?

As defined by The Corps Network – the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps – a Corps is a comprehensive youth development program that engages diverse young people (generally ages 16 – 25) in team-based service projects designed to address important community and environmental needs. Corpsmembers develop job and leadership skills and often have access to educational opportunities, counseling, and career assistance. In exchange for their service, Corpsmembers receive a stipend as well as an education award or scholarship.

Corpsmembers typically work on service projects like these...



Preventing wildfires

Weatherizing homes

Restoring streams and wetlands

Constructing hiking trails

Operating recycling facilities

Building urban parks & gardens

→ What is an Accredited Corps?

Accreditation is granted by the Corps Center of Excellence (CCE), an independent subsidiary of The Corps Network. CCE is administered by an Advisory Committee made up of retired and former Conservation Corps leaders, retired and former federal land management agency staff, and other experts in youth and Conservation Corps.

Accreditation is granted to Corps that, by undergoing CCE's rigorous evaluation process, can demonstrate a high level of accountability to the community, project partners and Corpsmembers. Corps must show that they are compliant with CCE's General Operational and Governance Standards and Corps Operational Standards (see reverse).

Accredited Corps have proven their ability to...

- Provide safe, appropriate, meaningful experiences to the young people they engage in service projects
- Provide high-quality project outcomes to partners
- Responsibly manage finances, staff, and day-to-day operations

"Demonstrating that you meet industry standards is an important marketing tool for Corps that let's potential partners and stakeholders understand that your program produces high-quality outcomes. It shows that Corps programs are an excellent investment that benefits both the young people they serve and their communities."

- Mary Ellen Sprenkel
President & CEO, The Corps Network





The Accreditation Process

Requirements:

Organizations must have at least 2 years of experience operating a Corps in order to apply for Accreditation. Corps not ready for Accreditation can request a volunteer mentor.

Peer Reviewers: The Accreditation process is handled by a group of Peer Reviewers: a team of experienced staff from Corps throughout the country and staff of The Corps Network.

Step 1: Notice of Intent - Corps submit a notice of intent to undergo the Accreditation Process.

Step 2: Application – Corps submit a written application that includes their supporting documents (internal operations documents, data, etc.). Based on the quality of the work submitted, Peer Reviewers determine whether to move to Step 3 of the process (a site visit) or recommend that the Corps pursue Mentorship.

Step 3: Site Visit – Two to three Peer Reviewers visit the Corps under consideration to witness day-to-day operations.

Step 4: Report & Decision – The lead Peer Reviewer prepares a summary report of findings and shares it with the CCE Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee shares the report with the applicant, allowing them the opportunity to respond to any remaining issues, and makes a decision on whether to grant Accreditation.



Endorsements a Corps can be endorsed as one or more of the following Corps Models

21st Century Conservation Service Corps:

Corps whose projects include significant outdoor activity and connect Corpsmembers to the great outdoors.

Human Service Corps:

Corps whose mission is to improve and remediate a variety of human service problems in their community or within a target population – i.e. the Corps may focus on mentoring, serving local organizations like food banks or community centers, engaging in activities that promote economic development, etc.

Education Corps:

Corps that provide curricula that allows Corpsmembers to complete a high school-level credential and prepares them for post-secondary education.

Workforce Development Corps:

Corps with YouthBuild or Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding, or have formalized their commitment to increasing the work-readiness of individual Corpsmembers by connecting them to supportive services and employers.



Learn more: at www.corpsnetwork.org/accreditation

The Standards

CCE General Operational & Governance Standards:

Examples these standards include...

- Corps has a governing body to which they provide regular financial reporting
- Corps maintains adequate liability and workers compensation coverage
- Corps has policies to ensure drug-free workplace, equal employment opportunities
- Non-profit Corps have policies for regular financial oversight

CCE Corps Operational Standards:

Examples of these standards include...

- Corps has policies and procedures to assess project site hazards
- Corpsmembers have safety equipment appropriate to their assignment
- Staff have qualifications to teach Corpsmembers safe, proper tool usage
- Corps have emergency response and crisis management plan
- Corps offer opportunities for Corpsmembers to offer input and reflection
- Corpsmembers receive a tangible financial benefit (stipend, living allowance, etc.) and/or academic award (school credit, scholarship, etc.)

Why do Corps undergo the Accreditation Process?

Continuous Improvement

Accreditation offers Corps the opportunity to assess their standards and compare every aspect of their operations to peer-determined best practices.

External Validation

Accreditation offers objective, independent validation that the Corps is being monitored to meet high standards.

Professional Relationships

Accreditation builds confidence and trust among all stakeholders (the Corps' board, funders, partners, staff, Corpsmembers, families of Corpsmembers, community members) that they are involved with a high quality organization that embodies industry best practices.

Do Corps have to pay for Accreditation?

Yes: Corps pay on a sliding scale based on their annual budget. The fees fully fund the staffing and administrative costs to run the Accreditation program.