



JustServe AmeriCorps, a National Service program of Solid Ground

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2011-2012 Pathway to Career Corps Program Description

The Pathway to Career Corps is a pilot project using the National Service experience to transform the lives of young adults (aged 18 to 24) who are facing lifelong unemployment, underemployment and poverty in our community.

Starting in fall 2011, young people who enroll in the Pathway to Career Corps will receive intensive case management, job training and experience, leadership development, exposure to living wage career options, and college preparation and navigation—all based in a year of service to the community as AmeriCorps Members.

The program will serve a racially mixed group of young men and women, the majority of whom will be People of Color—based on the rate of poverty and unemployment in communities of color in Seattle/King County.

The Pathway to Career Corps experience is made up of five elements:

1. Intensive Coaching & Case Management

Each Pathway to Career Corps Member will receive weekly, individual mentoring and coaching from Solid Ground AmeriCorps program staff, to meet basic workplace expectations and build “soft” skills for future job opportunities. This includes communication and conflict resolution skills, to motivate others and work through challenges in the workplace.

Solid Ground staff will also guide Members in developing and making progress on a personal career path plan, over their AmeriCorps year. This includes: identifying the Member's career interests and core strengths and abilities; identifying specific career paths that the Member is interested in, within a career ladder of increasing wages; identifying the degrees and certificates required for the jobs desired; and researching different schools that provide that post-secondary education, application process and cost.

Each Pathway to Career Corps Member will receive a monthly AmeriCorps living stipend of \$1,008 (before taxes).

Each Pathway Member will also receive an Education Award of \$5,350 to enroll in post-secondary education, on completion of their AmeriCorps year.

Pathway to Career Corps Members also receive health insurance coverage, childcare benefits and an Orca bus pass during their AmeriCorps term, and are eligible for Basic Food and other DSHS benefits.

Solid Ground staff will also coordinate with case managers from local Workforce Investment Act-funded (or other relevant) workforce development programs for young adults, to help Members access the resources they need for personal stability (e.g. stable housing, parenting resources, mental health counseling, etc.). This partnership with local case managers adds an extra layer of support to the Member in case they face crises that threaten their AmeriCorps year.

2. Service to the Community

Each Pathway to Career Corps Member will contribute 32 hours of service to the community each week.

For the majority of this time (28 to 30 of these hours), Members will be focused on a year-long work plan at a local nonprofit or public agency. We have selected each partner host site based on their ability to engage Pathway Members in direct service that addresses an important local community need (e.g. addressing the digital divide, building low-income housing, addressing health disparities, supporting education for low-income children).

We have also selected each host site based on their capacity and commitment to support and develop low-income young adults.

Each site also gives the Member exposure to one of the Puget Sound's high demand, living wage economic sectors:

*Technology: Pathway to Career Corps Members will help to engage youth from throughout Seattle/King County in social justice work, by managing and creating content for the Metrocenter YMCA's Puget Sound Off! website. Pathway Members will also rebuild and refurbish computers at InterConnection, a nonprofit that makes computer technology accessible to local nonprofits and underserved communities. Pathway Members may also be based at the YMCA's Digital Connectors Program, where they would be trained to provide IT support to local nonprofits and local computer labs serving low-income people.

*Building & Manufacturing: Pathway Members will help to build houses at the Seattle and South King County chapter of Habitat for Humanity. Pathway Members may also work with King County Deconstruction, helping to dismantle, salvage and recycle materials from condemned housing in the floodplain.

*Health Care: Pathway Members will help to provide wellness education for vulnerable seniors at Asian Counseling and Referral Services, and nutrition education for low-income families at Cooking Matters. Pathway Members will also assist with health education for teens at Sea Mar Health Clinic.

*Education: Pathway Members will help provide reading readiness activities at early childhood education programs.

Through these placements, Pathway Members will serve and impact the lives of hundreds of vulnerable youth and adults throughout Seattle and King County.

Final site assignments will be made at the end of our summer hiring process, which includes a Pathway site information fair and individual site interviews, to ensure a good match between site and Member.

We will continue site development year-round, to ensure that we have a strong wait list of projects and to prepare for future program cycles.

Pathway Members will also participate in ongoing service projects, as an AmeriCorps team.

This will include mobilizing youth and adults from all backgrounds to participate in community service projects on 9/11 Day of Remembrance, Veterans' Day, MLK Day, National Volunteer Week, National AmeriCorps Week and other important dates and holidays over the service year.

Pathway Members will also help mobilize other youth and young adults from throughout Seattle and South King County to participate in Youth Undoing Institutional Racism, a leadership development program sponsored by American Friends Service Committee. With 13 Members, the Pathway to Career Corps will be a strong presence in this program and help adult YUIR mentors to provide ongoing outreach and recruitment to other youth. The mission of YUIR is to help youth understand the impact of racism themselves and on the community, build skills to undo internalized and institutional racism, and become active and positive community organizers. YUIR activities include: community building between young people from different backgrounds and geographical areas of King County; cultural sharing; critical analysis of institutions impacting young people in our county; and dialogue with civic leaders like the City of Seattle Mayor and Police Chief.

3. Job Skills, Career Planning & College Navigation Training

Pathway to Career Corps Members will also participate in 8 hours of training as an AmeriCorps team, on Fridays.

Half to two-thirds of the time in our year-long training curriculum will be focused on helping Members gain job skills, job search skills, awareness of different living wage career options and pathways (including guest speakers and tours to worksites in different economic sectors), and information about how and why to go on to college.

We will start the year with a three week job skills and life skills boot camp, to prepare Members to go out into their sites. Then, we will continue to build on job skills training over the program year--so Pathway graduates have a reputation in the community as individuals who come into the workplace with great "soft" skills. Staff will reference topics from Friday team trainings when they provide individual coaching and mentoring to Members.

We will also spend extensive time, over the first half of the program year, giving Members exposure to different living wage career options. (We would love to partner with Boeing, this fall, on exposure to jobs in aerospace.) This will be paired with training in Dependable Strengths, so Members can identify career options that they are interested in and that are the right fit for them.

This will be presented along with timely information about how apply to college and vocational training. Seattle Jobs Initiative and the Workforce Development Council of Seattle/King County have also committed support to Solid Ground, to train Pathway Members on labor market information,

As a result of the Pathway to Career Corps:

- 100% of Members completing the program will be able to envision long-term living wage career path options—and know the practical steps to get there.
- More than 80% of Members will go on to enroll in post-secondary education toward a living wage career path, within a year of completing their AmeriCorps term.
- More than 80% of Members will strengthen their workplace skills.
- More than 80% of Members will strengthen their communication, conflict resolution, cross-cultural and leadership skills (skills which are important for lifelong service and leadership to the community).

increasing wage pathways in economic sectors, and post-secondary education needed for specific career pathways. We will also use resources from the Goodwill College Navigator curriculum, to train Members on how to access post-secondary education.

4. Leadership Development Training

The remainder of the time in Friday team meetings will be spent on training in effective civic engagement and social justice. This starts with effective communication and conflict resolution skills, and how to work with people who have different styles. (This is also fundamental to Members' success at their sites.) We will also train Members in how to lead and motivate a group, and help Members to identify and work from the strengths of their leadership style. Members will share experiences from and teach each other about the issues that they are working on at their different sites. They will also become informed about other human and environmental issues in our community, through guest speakers and videos. We will use some of our Friday afternoon training time to debrief Members' challenges and successes at YUIR.

We are focusing deeply on social justice, in the Pathway to Career Corps, for a number of reasons. Service learning has the greatest impact on students' cognitive development when it has a social justice emphasis [Y. Wang and R. Rodgers, "Impact of Service Learning and Social Justice Education on College Students' Cognitive Development", January 1, 2006, *Naspa Journal* 43, 2, 316-317.] The focus on social justice also engages and reconnects young people who have become disillusioned about educational institutions, the employment sector and our society.

5. Preparation for Post-Secondary Education

The Pathway to Career Corps will get Members onto a college campus, to help them make practical progress toward meeting the entrance requirements for post-secondary degree and certificate earning programs.

All Pathway to Career Corps Members will enroll in Adult Basic Education at Highline Community College (total of 5 hours per week, Monday and Wednesday evenings). These classes will help to ensure that all Pathway Members exit their AmeriCorps term prepared to pass the Compass test and enroll in I-BEST or other degree and certificate earning programs ready to succeed academically. The Highline ABE instructor will work with AmeriCorps program staff to integrate contextualized learning into Member's AmeriCorps service activities, to support Members' academic progress. Pathway Members that have dropped out of high school (and who have not yet earned their GED) will also be able to complete their GED, through these Highline classes. Solid Ground will provide a bus pass and coordinate with sites to help Members travel to the Highline campus on Monday and Wednesday evenings.

We are also exploring a second partnership with Seattle Vocational Institute, for pre-apprenticeship training for Pathway Members, in 2012-2013. Members enrolling in pre-apprenticeship training could be placed in low-income housing construction/repair or other not-for-profit building sites, within our team.

Plans for Expansion

We will pilot the Pathway to Career Corps with an initial team of 13 Members in 2011-2012. We are working with the Workforce Development Council of Seattle/King County, the Seattle Office of Economic Development, King County Workforce Development and local vocational schools and community colleges, now, to expand the program in 2012-2013.

Major Partners

In addition to the service sites described above, eight key partnerships strengthen the Pathway to Career Corps:

- 1) Skill Link: A pilot program based in four community colleges throughout Washington State, supported by the Gates Foundation, the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and the Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, to help at-risk young adults succeed in Adult Basic Education and go on to credit-bearing college programs. Pathway to Career Corps Members will make up 13 of the 30 young adults who will participate in the 2011-2012 Skill Link cohort at Highline Community College. The Skill Link model is made up of case management, cohort based workforce development training, and enrollment in Highline's Adult Basic Education classes. There is a strong overlap between the training objectives in the Skill Link cohort and the job training, career planning and college navigation pieces of our AmeriCorps team training plan. For this reason, Solid Ground will collaborate with the Skill Link partners (Highline Community College and Multi-Service Center) to design and provide job skills, career planning and college navigation training to all 30 Skill Link students on Friday mornings. Then we will use the room provided at Highline Community College for the rest of the day, for other AmeriCorps team training topics. The Skill Link partnership connects Pathway Members to an even larger group of peer supports as they go through their AmeriCorps year, beyond their immediate team of 13. As we go through the year, Pathway Members may also provide a social justice and civic engagement training to the other 17 Skill Link students who are not enrolled as AmeriCorps Members, in the Friday cohort time.
- 2) Multi-Service Center, and other workforce development feeder programs: Multi-Service Center and other local Workforce Investment Act-funded (and other relevant) employment programs for low-income young adults will leverage case management for Pathway to Career Corps Members over the AmeriCorps year, working hand in hand with Solid Ground to ensure that Pathway Members have all of the resources and support possible to succeed in AmeriCorps. Multi-Service Center is also the lead partner on the Highline Skill Link project, and will work with Solid Ground to plan and present workforce development training to the 30-student Skill Link cohort (including the 13 Pathway Members) on Fridays.
- 3) American Friends Service Committee: AFSC will provide a week-long Undoing Racism Freedom School training for the Pathway to Career Corps Members in October. This will prepare Pathway Members to deepen their work at their site, and become active with Youth Undoing Institutional Racism. Then, AFSC will continue to support Pathway Members through weekly Youth Undoing Institutional Racism leadership development activities, for the rest of the AmeriCorps year.
- 4) City of Seattle Office of Economic Development and King County Workforce Development: Seattle and King County have provided feedback on our 2011-2012 program strategies, and

referrals to potential 2011-2012 service sites. OED and King County are also working closely with Solid Ground on our 2012-2013 program expansion and new vocational training partnerships.

- 5) Workforce Development Council of Seattle/King County: The WDC worked with Solid Ground from 2010 to 2011 to design the Pathway to Career Corps, helping to identify potential service sites, leverage case manage from WIA-funded and other local employment programs serving young adults, and connecting the Pathway to Career Corps to Skill Link.
- 6) Seattle Jobs Initiative: SJI has committed training and technical assistance to the program, including providing college navigation training for Pathway to Career Corps program staff.
- 7) Norma Timbang: Independent consultant, providing a year-long evaluation of Solid Ground's workforce development, leadership development and social justice education work with Members.
- 8) Partners from the business community: Currently, we are recruiting living wage career professionals to serve as speakers and mentors for Pathway Members. We are also seeking partnerships with high demand economic sector businesses in the region, for tours and speakers about career opportunities in different living wage career pathways (including aerospace).