

**Title:** NCCC Sponsor Field Guide

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## National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

# Sponsor Field Guide



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This handbook contains guidance for project sponsors on how to successfully follow AmeriCorps NCCC’s project sequence and the process for the development, implementation, and close-out of NCCC service projects.

## THE AMERICORPS NCCC MISSION:

**“To Strengthen Communities and  
Develop Leaders Through Team-Based National and  
Community Service.”**

NCCC strives to support community organizations  
in the successful implementation and completion of service projects  
that build local capacity and meet community needs.

# PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

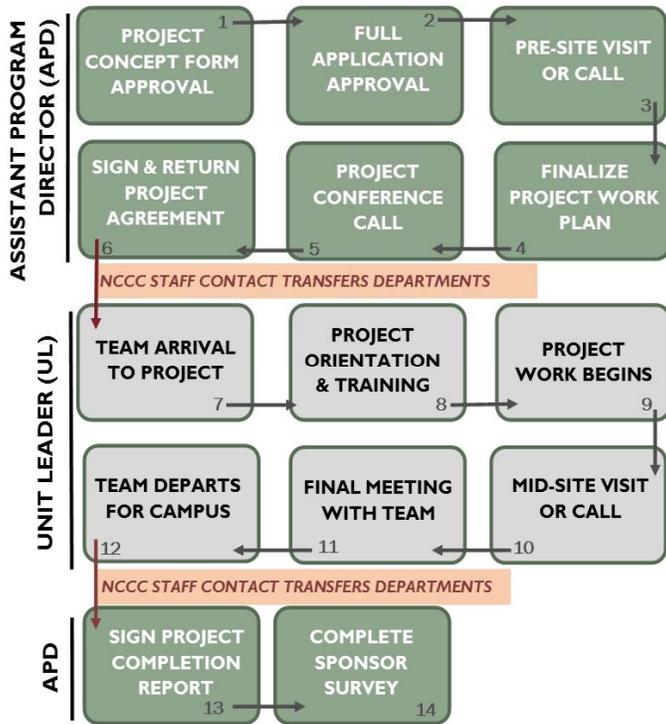
## AmeriCorps NCCC as Community Partners

The Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) is a full-time residential, national service program that deploys diverse teams of young adults, ages 18- 24, for 10 months of service to address community priorities including:

- Natural and Other Disasters    - Infrastructure Improvement
- Energy Conservation            - Urban and Rural Development
- Environmental Stewardship and Conservation

Sponsoring Organizations and AmeriCorps NCCC Members partner to address community challenges through meaningful and measurable service. **This chart highlights each step and the corresponding NCCC staff contact throughout the course of a project.**

Each step of AmeriCorps NCCC's unique project development and management structure is highlighted in the flow chart below.



**Project Sponsors primarily work with NCCC full-time staff Assistant Program Directors (APD) and Unit Leaders (UL).**

APDs conduct outreach and work with project sponsors on the development of specific projects. APDs guide sponsoring organizations through the application process to ensure support for project preparation, requirements, and logistics in addition to conducting pre-site visits. APDs work with Unit Leaders (UL) and Team Leaders (TL) to begin the project implementation phase approximately two weeks prior to team deployment and to monitor progress throughout the project.

ULs are project managers who work with Project Sponsors, Site Supervisors, Team Leaders, and Corps Members to ensure projects are implemented and completed according to the project application requirements and schedule. ULs serve as the project sponsor's point of contact in the event something cannot be addressed by the TL, the primary NCCC field liaison. ULs supervise TL and Corps Members' (CM) daily activities, address team-related concerns (e.g. logistics, disciplinary issues), and track projects through weekly progress reports. ULs conduct the Project Mid-Site Visit or Call including the project sponsor, site supervisor, and TL to review progress and address any issues or concerns impacting the project.

## NCCC's PARC Model facilitates Service Learning throughout the duration of the project.

Service Learning (page 5), facilitated through the PARC Model (Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Celebration), is a methodology in which Members acquire the knowledge and skills needed to perform community service projects and gain an understanding of the value and impact of their work. Service Learning forms the framework for Members to learn from each other and to reflect on their experience on projects and the communities in which they serve.

**Preparation:** Learning about the organization's community and the need addressed in the project during project orientation, and throughout the project

**Action:** Serving communities and member development opportunities

**Reflection:** Understanding the importance of the service through discussion, journaling, and sharing what the service experience means to the Members, Sponsoring Organizations, and the community

**Celebration:** Commemorating the time and value of the service project experience while recognizing accomplishments and obstacles overcome

# PROJECT PREPARATION

## **The Project Sponsor Application includes a project work plan and an orientation and training agenda.**

The Project Work Plan is a detailed, well-planned daily and weekly schedule that includes designated times for project specific training and orientation. Sponsoring organizations are required to update the project work plan to accurately reflect the most current information. When reviewing and updating the work plan:

- ⇒ Ensure adequate inclement weather (indoor) tasks for at least 25% of project dates
- ⇒ Include prioritized tasks in the event that unexpected circumstances affect the original plan's implementation
- ⇒ Prepare the site supervisor and staff for the team's arrival.

Note: Service Learning (page 5) can be included in but not constitute entirely for inclement weather plans.

## **Ensuring Tools, Equipment, and Permits are Secured**

Prior to the AmeriCorps NCCC Team's arrival, ensure tools and equipment provided by your organization are prepared and ready for use. Confirm any tools requested for both the project and housing with the APD. Secure all required work or site permits. Review safety protocols and safety items and procedures specific to the project (pages 7-8).

## **NCCC's Sponsor and Introductory Conference Call**

A sponsor agreement is an agreement that specifies the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of your organization and NCCC. An authorized representative from your organization *must* sign a Sponsor Agreement with NCCC before NCCC Teams begin working on a project. A conference call will introduce your organization to the NCCC Team Leader (NCCC Member) and supervising Unit Leader (NCCC Staff). Additionally, the call will confirm any last-minute questions and final details before the NCCC Team arrival.

# ORIENTATION

## **Project Orientation**

Sponsoring Organizations prepare an on-site orientation for the Members covering the scope and intended impact of the project that includes:

- Team and site supervisor introductions
- History, background, and mission of the organization
- Tour of the organization's facilities
- Summary of the project scope, goals, and intended community impact
- Overview of work plan and tasks for the upcoming week
- Rules, guidelines, safety issues, and emergency procedures
- Introduction to the community and local culture  
(Directions to local hospitals and clinics, grocery stores, banks and ATMs, parks, places of worship, etc.)

## **Housing Orientation**

Sponsoring Organizations provide or coordinate an orientation of the housing facilities for the NCCC Team. Topics for discussion include:

- Ground rules and expectations of the team
- Any access limitations and processes, including keys or lodging access codes, and any curfews
- Smoking policies
- Cleanliness expectations and supplies overview
- Emergency procedures

In addition, the NCCC Team will complete a Pre-Housing Inspection Form which Sponsoring Organizations review, validate, and sign. The form will document the condition of the housing facilities at team arrival and is used with the Post-Housing Inspection Form (page 8).

## **Project Specific Training**

Prior to beginning work, Corps Members must be provided the technical training necessary to complete the project including each task outlined in the work plan. Trainings for the team must be basic and introductory to cover all skill and experience levels.

# SERVICE LEARNING

## Overview of Service Learning in NCCC

Service Learning for AmeriCorps NCCC is a methodology through which members acquire the knowledge and skills needed to perform community service projects and gain an in-depth understanding of the value and impact of their work. Service Learning is gained through orientation and training for the project, the project activities, and from learning about the social issues the project impacts.

## The Role of the NCCC Project Sponsor in Service Learning

The sponsor plays an important role in ensuring the team understands the purpose of the service project. Below are simple suggestions to assist in facilitating thoughtful conversations and cultivating a strong service learning opportunity both initially and over the course of the project.

- Emphasize why the organization applied for a team during the project orientation (page 4) and check-ins (page 6):
  - How will the community be impacted by the team's service work and overall presence?
  - How might the community be impacted if a team was not chosen to complete this service work?
  - Where does this service fit in to a larger community issue at the state or national level?
- Consider any additional training opportunities that may benefit Members and expose them to a wide variety of opportunities, skills, and social and community issues the project addresses.
- Share your professional and life experiences with the team, advise them on Life After AmeriCorps (LAA) opportunities, or take part in an informational interview about your position.
- Check in on a weekly basis and engage in constructive dialogue with the team about successes, areas for improvement, skills gained, and reflection about the performed work and organization's mission
- Include a mix of service learning opportunities to help Corps Members gain an understanding of the relevant issues and problems facing the organization or project



Examples of service learning opportunities include:

- Inviting local experts to speak about issues related to the project goals.
- Creating an opportunity for the team to interact with those directly impacted by their work to learn from their stories.
- Having the team attend staff meetings to gain a better understanding of how their Sponsoring Organization works and to learn more about the staff.
- Participating in a team's weekly reflection activity facilitated by the team's Service Learning Initiators.
- Giving the team time to read an article or watch a movie addressing issues connected to the project and discuss as a group.

Your organization should begin to think about how to expand these examples of service learning to align with your project, organization,

and community prior to the team's arrival.

# NATURAL DISASTERS

## Disaster/Fire Response

NCCC Members and staff are part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and American Red Cross National Disaster Response Network. In addition, the NCCC assists local, state, and national forest services with wildfire suppression. Potential Project Sponsors should note that in the event of a natural disaster or homeland security crisis, Members may be recalled from projects to serve as part of the relief efforts. This could result in a decrease in the number of Members assigned to your project, a delay in the deployment of a team, or cancellation of a project.

# CHECK-INS AND DEBRIEFS

## Weekly Team Leader Check-Ins and Team Debriefs

Communication is key to ensuring a successful project and positive environment. The Sponsoring Organization's Site Supervisor will be expected to meet at least weekly with a) the Team Leader and b) the full NCCC Team to discuss:

- Service accomplishments
- Schedule changes and upcoming tasks
- Strengths and areas for improvement
- Team morale and engagement

These topics should be discussed both from the perspective of the NCCC Team and your organization.

## Mid-Site Visit or Call

Partway through the project, the Unit Leader, or another NCCC Staff person, will conduct a Mid-Site Visit or Call. The purpose of this visit or call will be to discuss the following elements related to the project:

- Accomplishments, strengths, and areas for improvement
- The NCCC Team's performance and engagement
- Clarification on policy or NCCC structure

It is your organization's responsibility to work with NCCC Staff to coordinate and attend this mid-site visit or call.

## Changes to the Project

NCCC strives to meet the goals outlined in the project application and work plan. Changes to the work plan should first be discussed with the Team Leader prior to the entire team and may require a **project amendment** submitted to the campus for approval. To prevent project delays, submit changes to NCCC staff as soon as possible.

Examples of changes that may require an amendment include:

- ⇒ Tasks with additional safety or liability concerns such as using a chainsaw or large equipment, working with youth, etc.
- ⇒ Tasks with a different agency that has not been previously approved
- ⇒ Change in housing location
- ⇒ Major changes to the primary goals and scope of work

# TRANSPORTATION

## Federal Government Vehicles

AmeriCorps NCCC vehicles may only be used for official purposes. These vehicles may only be driven by NCCC Staff or NCCC Members who have completed NCCC's classroom instruction and driving test. Federal Government vehicles may only be used to transport NCCC Employees and Members and project related cargo that is the property of NCCC.

## Sponsoring Organization Vehicles

Sponsor vehicles may be driven by a designated NCCC driver for official project tasks and purposes only. The Sponsor Agreement indicates if NCCC drivers are authorized to operate the organization's vehicles or not. If sponsor vehicles are used, the Project Sponsor and/or Partnering Organization agrees to ensure that such drivers are authorized operators under the Sponsor's automobile liability insurance, and further agrees to hold harmless AmeriCorps NCCC for any damages to the Project Sponsor's vehicles that may occur as a result of the NCCC's authorized use of such vehicles. The Project Sponsor and/or Partnering Organization also agrees to assume all costs of repair for any damages to Sponsor's vehicles. Refer to the Sponsor Agreement signed by your organization for more information about vehicle use and liability.

# SAFETY GUIDELINES

Safety is a critical component of any project. Ensuring the safety and security of AmeriCorps NCCC Members and others in the community is a top priority of the NCCC program. NCCC takes safety seriously and aims to establish transparent and open communication and awareness between NCCC Members, NCCC Staff, and your organization's staff and volunteers.

## AmeriCorps NCCC Team and Team Members

NCCC Teams are expected to follow the *National Personal Safety Guidelines* at all times during their service. The NCCC Team Leader will be expected to conduct a safety briefing each day and ensure that tools and safety equipment are in good working order. Teams may not have been trained on the specific safety requirements, expectations, or hazards unique to your organization's environment.



## Sponsoring Organization and Site Supervisors

Sponsoring Organizations are required to provide necessary safety training and orientation specific to project and project site conditions. The organization's on-site supervisor should be someone who currently has the technical skills, abilities, and knowledge to perform the tasks at the project site and will train members on completing the project tasks safely.

## In Case of Emergency

If there is a medical, safety or security, or other emergency situation, contact official emergency personnel as soon as possible. Immediately contact NCCC Staff to inform them of the situation and provide relevant details.

## Use of Personal Protective Gear and Clothing

AmeriCorps NCCC Team Members are expected to wear protective clothing, equipment, and protective gear as needed on the work site. Evaluated on a task-by-task basis, protective gear and clothing can include, but is not limited to: proper eye protection, gloves, hard hats, fire or mold resistant clothing, boots, and ear protection. If your organization does not have the protective gear necessary, contact the appropriate NCCC Staff. NCCC may be able to issue appropriate gear to Members.

## Vehicles, ATVs, Four-wheelers, GATORS

NCCC approved drivers will be the only NCCC Members driving sponsor vehicles. With proper training and safety equipment the following are examples of vehicles that Members are permitted to drive: ATVs, 4-wheel mules, gators, and tractors.

## Painting

For projects that involve painting, the organization's Site Supervisor is responsible for ensuring:

- Indoor areas are properly ventilated when Members work with paints or wood stains
- Proper safety precautions are taken in project areas with suspected lead paint. NCCC Staff must approve Members to work in such areas



## Hand and Power Tools

For projects involving hand or power tools, the organization's site supervisor will be responsible for ensuring:

- Tools are in proper working conditions
- Members are trained by a skilled and qualified individual on how to safely and properly use tools
- Members are supervised by a skilled and qualified individual while using the tools
- Only Members trained and authorized by AmeriCorps NCCC may operate chainsaws (TLs will identify authorized Members)
- Tools are only used in safe environments

# SAFETY GUIDELINES (continued)

## Environmental Safety and Inclement Weather

The NCCC Team Leader and the organization's Site Supervisor are responsible for working together to determine if daily conditions, such as temperature, precipitation, and wind chill are appropriate for service work assignments. Cold weather conditions below 20 degrees Fahrenheit (when adjusted for wind chill) and hot weather conditions above 85 degrees Fahrenheit may require special precautions. At these temperatures, site supervisors must ensure Members:

- Are dressed appropriately for the weather conditions
- Have access to an adequate supply of clean water
- Are working in pairs
- Are closely and frequently monitored
- Are given the opportunity to take more frequent breaks
- Are assigned outside for limited periods of time
- Wear SPF 15, at a minimum, sunscreen/block
- Are trained to recognize and be alert to symptoms of heat exhaustion and dehydration or symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia

## Ladders, Scaffolding, and Roofing

For projects involving ladders, scaffolding, or roofing, the organization's Site Supervisor will be responsible for ensuring:

- A skilled and qualified individual trains Members on how to safely and properly use ladders and scaffolding
- A skilled and trained supervisor is monitoring the setup of scaffolding at all times.
- Tools are only used in a safe environment
- Members do not work on a roof if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- Only trained individuals from your organization design hoists to handle desired loads
- NCCC Members have a spotter when using a straight or extension ladder

# PROJECT CLOSEOUT

## Final Team Debrief

Before a team completes a project and returns to the NCCC campus, the Sponsoring Organization holds a final debrief with the team and Site Supervisor(s). This debrief is a time to reflect on the team's challenges and accomplishments, to communicate project information and relevance to the AmeriCorps NCCC mission, and to process and evaluate the overall experience.

## Post-Housing Inspection

At the end of the project, the Team Leader completes a Post-Housing Inspection Form. The Post-Housing Inspection Form is similar to the Pre-Housing Inspection Form (page 4) and ensures housing is left in the same condition it was at the team's arrival. The Sponsoring Organization is expected to review, validate, and sign off on the condition of all housing facilities where NCCC members stayed upon the team's departure.

## Reporting Requirements

At the completion of a project, the Sponsoring Organization receives a Project Completion Report (PCR) for each NCCC team that served with the organization. Sponsoring Organizations are required to review, complete, and have an authorized representative sign the report. The authorized representative is responsible for reviewing the sections of the report completed by NCCC, making any requested additions prior to signing, and promptly returning the report back to the appropriate NCCC campus.

## Sponsor Survey

Following the completion of the project, the organization's Site Supervisor or Sponsor Representative is administered a survey. NCCC uses feedback from these surveys to build on best practices and to identify and address areas for improvement. Survey responses are not anonymous. However, responses do not impact the organization's ongoing or future NCCC or CNCS applications. Sponsoring organizations are strongly encouraged to complete the survey.

# PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

## Service Project Limitations

In the course of any service project, Members may not engage in any project assignments that involve:

- Direct fundraising or any financial transactions
- Preparation of a grant application to the Corporation or to any other Federal Agency
- Any political or inherently religious activities

## Political or Religious Activity

Members may not:

- Participate in partisan political activity as part of their service or duties
- Display posters, stickers, etc. that have a partisan theme while serving or wearing the AmeriCorps NCCC uniform
- Represent themselves as speaking or writing on behalf of AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps, or CNCS
- Give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any other religious activity as part of their service or duties
- Engage in a project in which religious instruction, worship, proselytization, or other religious activity will be conducted

## Prohibited Relationships

Members may not engage in any nonprofessional relationships with staff or volunteers affiliated with your organization.

Nonprofessional relationships include, but are not limited to:

- Intimate or sexual relationships
- Borrowing or lending money, automobiles, or property
- Soliciting contributions for gifts, services, or other gratuities that include the use of position to influence or coerce others into buying commodities, goods, or services
- Allowing services to be performed that have no reasonable connection with AmeriCorps NCCC activities
- Any activity and/or relationship that, in the judgement of the NCCC Staff, may reasonably be perceived to undermine discipline, good order, or morale of AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps, or CNCS

# WAIVERS & LIABILITY

## Waivers

No member of an AmeriCorps NCCC Team (including any Corps Member or Team Leader) shall sign any document provided by the Project Sponsor or any representative or employee of the Project Sponsor, including but not limited to: liability waivers, hold harmless agreements, indemnification agreements, or employment-related documents. In the event that a member of an AmeriCorps NCCC Team signs a document provided by the Project Sponsor or any representative or employee of the Project Sponsor, the signature on any such document shall have no force or effect of law.

## Non-Discrimination Guidelines

Under federal law, a Project Sponsor receiving assistance from the NCCC may not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, political affiliation, or disability (for otherwise qualified individuals). The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, marital or parental status, military service, and social affiliations. Project Sponsors will be required to sign an assurance of non-discrimination as part of the Sponsor Agreement.

## Liability and Worker's Compensation Claims

CNCS is a self-insured federal agency. Consequently, members and federal employees of the NCCC are covered by the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act (liability claims) and the Federal Employees Compensation Act (workers' compensation claims) 42 U. S. C. §12620 (b) & (c). Accordingly, the United States Government will assume responsibility for any injuries or property damage caused by the negligence of a member or an employee who was acting within the scope of his/her employment. Similarly, any on-the-job injuries received by an NCCC member or federal employee will be processed by CNCS and the Department of Labor.

# ACRONYMS

APD	Assistant Program Director
APDT	Assistant Program Director for Training
ATL	Assistant Team Leader
CM	Corps Member
CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service
COB	Close of Business
CRA	Community Relations Associate
CRS	Community Relations Specialist
CTI	Corps Training Institute
DRDO	Deputy Region Director for Operations
DRDP	Deputy Region Director for Programming
DRDUL	Deputy Region Director for Unit Leadership
GSA	Government Services Administration
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
ISP	Individual Service Project
LAA	Life After AmeriCorps
MDA	Member Development Associate
MSS	Member Support Specialist
NCCC	National Civilian Community Corps
PCR	Project Completion Report
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
POC	Point of Contact
POL	Project Outreach Liaison (CM role)
PT	Physical Training
RD	Region Director
SLI	Service Learning Initiator (CM role)
STL	Support Team Leader

