



Obama Priorities: Job Corps' Approach to Implementation

Background: Job Corps' Is the Nation's Most Successful Intervention for Marginalized Youth

Job Corps is the nation's largest and most successful residential education and job training program for poor, difficult to serve, out-of-school, at-risk, marginalized youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Job Corps has 127 campuses in operation, or under construction, in every state as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and has served more than 2 million young people during its 45 year history. Historically Job Corp has placed 85 percent of its graduates in employment, higher education or the military within six months of graduation. Job Corps carries on Sargent Shriver's legacy of improving the lives of the most disadvantaged in our communities through service-oriented programs.

Job Corps Advances President-Elect Obama's Poverty, Green, and Community Service Agendas

Building off these efforts and the clear demand within our economy and our politics, Job Corps is poised to advance President-elect Obama's agenda on three fronts: creating pathways out of poverty, building capacity in the green economy, and promoting community service.

Creating Pathways Out of Poverty

Job Corps is the final safety net in our education system. Few, if any programs, can match Job Corps' record of success with our nation's most marginalized youth population. A flagship of the War on Poverty, Job Corps prepares marginalized youth for careers in skilled trades that can carry them into the middle class. Despite the conventional wisdom that middle class careers require post-secondary education, there are still numerous pathways to the middle class through skilled trades including health care, security, business technology, and the emerging green sector. At the same time, Job Corps continues to encourage and offer all its students opportunities to pursue higher education or the military which continue to be reliable avenues into the middle class.

Building Capacity in the Green Economy

According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the lack of a skilled workforce is the largest non-technical barrier to the advancement of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. There is a burgeoning demand for individuals familiar with green construction, green auto maintenance, and green manufacturing. Job Corps centers are already retooling their existing curricula in these fields to be the Green Job Corps President-Elect Obama has called for and to ensure our graduates capitalize on the economic opportunities the emergence of this new 'green' sector represents. Following its members' lead, the National Job Corps Association recently engaged in a partnership with Chicago-based Green Advantage to introduce green construction certifications to our hundreds of construction programs.

Promoting Community Service

Modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the New Deal, Job Corps has always embraced service-learning as integral program component. Job Corps' tens of thousands of skilled trainees can and should be immediately mobilized to contribute to the Clean Energy Corps, Health Corps, Homeland Security Corps, and Veterans' Corps that President-elect Obama has proposed. Job Corps' national reach makes it an ideal launching ground and contributor for such an effort.

Conclusion: Job Corps Should be a Centerpiece of President-Elect Obama's Workforce Agenda

President-elect Obama has stated, "youth are not an interest group, they are our future." With President-elect Obama's leadership, Job Corps can leverage the vast potential our nation's young people to help lift our local communities out of the despair too many find themselves mired in. As we retool our economy, we cannot afford to forget the millions of youth who are at-risk of being left behind.