



The
CorpsNetwork



Delaware River Climate Corps

Formative Evaluation FINAL Report

April 2023

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	4
Pilot Implementation Successes	5
Pilot Implementation Challenges	6
Recommendations	7
Introduction	10
Overview of Delaware River Climate Corps Program	10
Overview of Evaluation Method	11
Implementation Progress	13
Pilot Implementation Successes	16
Corpsmember Achievement	16
Additional Funding	17
Community Impact and Partnership	18
TCN Support	18
Pilot Implementation Challenges	20
Recruitment	20
Corpsmember Needs	21
Reimbursements	22
Navigation of Funding	22
Recommendations	24
Provide Centralized Resource Access	24
Build On Funding Advocacy and Support	25
Improve Access to Wraparound Services and Corpsmember Supports	25
Stabilize TCN Staffing and Processes	26
Support Watershed-Wide Connection	26
Share Pilot Program and Corpsmember Success Stories	27
Conclusion	28
Appendix A: Methodology	30
Appendix B: Data Tools	32



NEW YORK

NEW JERSEY

MARYLAND

Atlantic

Executive Summary

Introduction

With funding from the William Penn Foundation, The Corps Network (TCN) has established the Delaware River Climate Corps (DRCC), a climate resiliency program that hires workers from underserved communities and trains them in conservation and other green careers. TCN identified 8 communities to develop new Corps as part of DRCC throughout Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey. TCN then selected local organizations to develop and manage each Corps and establish a pilot program in the 8 communities, while expanding 2 existing Corps programs.

TCN hired Thomas P. Miller & Associates, LLC (TPMA) – a consulting firm based in Indianapolis, Indiana – in May 2022 to conduct a formative evaluation of the DRCC pilot program. This formative evaluation sought to assess key successes that TCN can leverage as well as identify barriers to success and areas for improvement that TCN can consider for future DRCC programmatic improvements primarily through interviews with TCN, technical assistance (TA), and Corps staff. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the William Penn Foundation.

Pilot Implementation Successes

Corpsmember Achievement

Corps staff reported increases in confidence and personal growth.

Corps staff noticed meaningful change in Corpsmembers' self-efficacy from the beginning of programming to the end saying, "At the start, members didn't even want to say 'hi,' but at the end, they started taking the lead on voluntary activities." This growth in Corpsmembers' confidence and leadership ability fulfills one of the goals of Corps programming to prepare members for successful workforce participation.

Members that completed Corps' programming experienced successful post-program placement toward further opportunity.

Beyond confidence and leadership growth, Corps staff reported placement in further education and direct career placement for Corpsmembers post-program completion: "We placed folks who were part of the Climate Corps with an average wage...[that] is higher than our standard." Exposure to green job training translated into placement in higher wage positions that provide opportunity for continued upward mobility.

Additional Funding

Corps staff were able to support programming and Corpsmembers by securing additional funding through multiple sources.

TCN's advocacy and support was critical in connecting Corps with sustainable funding streams. Corps staff also worked hard to secure state and local funds, including foundation, university-sponsored, and other funding sources. In some cases, this funding allowed for expansion of Corps work during pilot implementation, while other funding secured will support program continuation and expansion in the second year of implementation.

Community Impact and Partnerships

Corps' notable work enabled them to establish robust partnerships, helping to build a foundation for community support.

Several Corps staff shared positive feedback from community partners, field sites, and local government representatives. One Corps staff member said, "People from our community are asking us to do the job. They trust us and members have proved their work ethic." These interactions cultivate effective relationships for continued program success and support even further sustainable funding streams, mentioned above. Another Corps staff member reported, "The city... made a statement that the program had more than paid for itself halfway through the program. They sent funding for the next year."

TCN Support

TCN's knowledge and accessibility made them a valuable resource for Corps throughout implementation.

All Corps staff spoke positively about TCN's administrative and programming support, with several mentioning how responsive TCN and TA staff have been. Corps staff also appreciated TCN's ability to work with such a diverse array of sites with varying characteristics. One Corps staff described TCN staff as, "Already prepared with tools and resources to help navigate through issues." TCN staff showing up to cohort graduations was also highlighted, demonstrating the personal investment TCN staff has in site and Corpsmember success.

Pilot Implementation Challenges

Recruitment

Although Corps staff were able to hire and graduate Corpsmembers, recruitment was found to be a significant challenge given Corps site experience and capacity.

Some Corps had difficulty gaining Corpsmembers or the Corpsmembers that joined their cohorts were not their ideal candidates, meaning they varied from their original target groups or had to require less for Corpsmembers' incoming skills. Also, Corps had to combat the allure of competing jobs that may have provided a similar wage; this resulted in sites needing to use additional funding to augment Corpsmember wages.

Corpsmember Needs

Corpsmembers often had different or greater needs than Corps staff expected to address, which required shifts in programming or staff tasks.

Mental health issues, basic needs, and attendance and communication skills were some of the Corpsmember issues mentioned by Corps staff. Mental health needs were mentioned across Corps. While referral to services was a common response, another Corps staff member said, "I know a lot of community members and organizations I can refer them to, but, like that kind of puts the ball back on them," meaning it requires more of the Corpsmember to get connected to assistance.

Reimbursements

Several Corps experienced consistent issues with reimbursements, which strained Corps resources.

Reimbursements for Corps were delayed, and this proved a risk to the operational capacity of Corps programming. Corps were trying to operate within the parameters of the grant period and reimbursement delays affected when and how program tasks and payments could be completed.

Navigation of Funding

Corps staff experienced obstacles finding appropriate matching funds for AmeriCorps grants and navigating funding development.

Matching funds, particularly with AmeriCorps dollars, meant abiding by another host of requirements and tracking of dollars; this added to the administrative responsibilities of the Corps staff. There was also a realization that not all Corps had the same funding knowledge and understanding; this was found to be an underlying assumption during the process and trainings did not comprehensively address all funding development issues.

Recommendations

Provide Centralized Resource Access

Develop a user-friendly technical assistance hub to improve Corps capacity.

Corps staff noted valuable support and technical assistance provided by TCN and other TA staff throughout program phases, but suggested a central place to collect materials that distills helpful information in accessible, referenceable formats such as an overall handbook, “cheat sheets” for funding sources, and recorded trainings for review. As discussed in the interim report, facilitating a platform for cross-Corps sharing of experiences and insights would add to this resource access and actively engage Corps sites in co-creation.

Build On Funding Advocacy and Support

Continue to advocate on behalf of DRCC programming with large private and public funders and support access to sustainable funding streams.

TCN’s fund development and advocacy drove success as the DRCC program moved from early pilot phases through program implementation and transitioned to second year preparation. Corps staff appreciated this role and suggested refining TA materials to facilitate Corps site capacity-building for developing their own further funding, while TCN maintains and expands additional opportunities.

Improve Access to Wraparound Services and Corpsmember Supports

Explore possibilities for providing accessible services and benefits connection as well as socioemotional support for Corpsmembers across sites.

Corps staff worked to address significant Corpsmember soft skills gaps, which at times affected attendance and communication between Corpsmembers and Corps staff. Earlier intervention to provide guidance in Corpsmember development of these skills could improve Corps site experience as they focus on hard skills attainment and field site relationships. Corps staff also suggested greater mental health and socioemotional support that could be facilitated more efficiently across DRCC by TCN-based offerings. Continuing to develop resources and funding support for supplementing wage, benefits, transportation, and housing needs would also be helpful for successful program operation.

Stabilize TCN Staffing and Processes

Determine the most effective TCN staffing structure to support smooth administrative processes and effective communication with sites.

Several Corps staff were frustrated by delays and complications in the reimbursement process, which made for additional stress in an already stressful first-time program roll-out. While all sites were able to weather this funding disruption, TCN should continue to develop effective staffing capacity and ensure reimbursement processes can be effectively administered in the event of staff turnover or role changes.

Support Watershed-Wide Connection

Continue to build on successful in-person events that bring sites together to share experiences and insights across the watershed.

Corps staff continued to note how great in-person events were for connecting to other Corps and engaging with decision-makers. They also reported Corpsmembers enjoying meeting other Corpsmembers from across the watershed and getting exposure to new experiences. However, not all sites had the same opportunities for these enriching activities and many Corps staff, in both initial and second round interviews, discussed a desire to further develop cross-Corps connection in-person and otherwise.

Share Pilot Program and Corpsmember Success Stories

Celebrate and share the significant achievements of TCN, site organizations, and Corpsmembers during this pilot experience.

Corps sites were proud of their ability to get their pilot programming off the ground and successfully graduate their first cohorts. TCN provided effective planning and implementation support for pilot success and continues to innovate in response to changing needs. Corpsmember experiences demonstrated significant growth in knowledge, skills, and perspectives, and achieved placement into further opportunities for success. TCN should celebrate these achievements with Corps staff and Corpsmembers, as well as partners and funders. TCN should also actively communicate compelling pilot stories not only throughout The Corps Network, but to potential partners, funders, and the public through an intentional communication plan and tools for Corps in the centralized resource hub.



Introduction

Overview of Delaware River Climate Corps Program

The William Penn Foundation awarded a \$1.65 million grant in 2021 to The Corps Network (TCN) to establish the Delaware River Climate Corps (DRCC). This Corps is the region's first climate resiliency program that hires workers from underserved communities and trains them in conservation and other green careers. TCN identified 8 communities to develop new Corps and 2 to expand as part of DRCC throughout Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey. TCN selected local organizations to develop and manage each Corps and establish a pilot program in the 8 communities and expand in 2 additional communities as part of this funding.

Along with its partners, PowerCorps PHL and Moonshot Missions, TCN provided technical assistance (TA) to establish the Corps, plan for a pilot cohort, and start a pilot cohort program in 2022 at the 10 Corps sites. The pilot program grant period concluded in February 2023. The sites included:

- Promise Neighborhoods Lehigh Valley (PNLV) in Allentown, PA
- Native American Advancement Corp (NAAC) in Bridgeton, NJ
- Hopeworks in Camden, NJ
- Isles, Inc. in Trenton, NJ
- New Jersey Youth Corps in Phillipsburg, NJ
- PowerCorps PHL in Reading, PA and Philadelphia, PA
- Friends of Upper Delaware River (FUDR) in Hancock, NY
- Children First America Delaware County (CFA) in Chester, PA
- Delaware Center for Horticulture (DCH) in Wilmington, DE

TCN hired Thomas P. Miller & Associates, LLC (TPMA) – a consulting firm based in Indianapolis, Indiana – in May 2022 to conduct a formative evaluation of the DRCC pilot program. Formative evaluation focuses on the implementation experience and provides insights into program processes. Because this program was in a pilot stage, evaluation activities focused on gathering staff experiences and lessons learned as well as building tools that would allow TCN to assess site-specific characteristics and determine program results for future comparative analysis as the initiative moves into multi-year implementation.

Overview of Evaluation Method

This formative evaluation sought to assess key successes that TCN can leverage as well as identify barriers to success and areas for improvement that TCN can consider for future DRCC programmatic improvements. This evaluation included calls with TCN staff and an introduction call with each Corps early in the evaluation before any data collection began. In addition, TPMA conducted interviews with staff at each Corps, TCN staff, and TA staff. The first round of interviews was conducted in September 2022, culminating in an interim evaluation report in December 2022. A second round of interviews was conducted in February 2023. This report emphasizes findings from the second round of interviews but incorporates findings from the first round to assess any changes over the course of the pilot program.

Data Sources

UPDATE CALLS AND MEETINGS WITH TCN STAFF.

TPMA facilitated monthly calls with TCN and William Penn Foundation staff to discuss DRCC program implementation progress and general updates. In addition, these calls focused on evaluation goals and progress as well as project coordination (e.g., identifying interview participants, scheduling interviews). In addition, prior to initial interviews, TPMA facilitated additional meetings with key TCN staff to discuss contextual details such as an overview of each Corps and their program, current TCN data collection practices, and DRCC program funding.

INTRODUCTION CALLS WITH CORPS STAFF.

Prior to conducting the first interviews with Corps staff, TPMA facilitated introduction calls with each Corps. These calls introduced the TPMA team to each Corps and provided an opportunity to share an overview of the evaluation. In addition, Corps staff shared staffing information and capacity for data collection, their goals for the DRCC program, an overview of their pilot program/progress, and their engagement with TCN/TA staff in the early phases of the grant.

CORPS STAFF INTERVIEWS.

TPMA scheduled and conducted two rounds of one-hour group or individual interviews (depending on staff program involvement) with staff from each of the 10 Corps. These interviews focused on successes, barriers, and recommendations related to the phases leading up to pilot cohort programming and throughout pilot implementation. At the time of the first round of interviews, some Corps were near pilot cohort program completion while others had not yet started. At the time of the second round of interviews, all Corps had completed their pilot cohorts and were in planning and recruitment stages for the next program year.

TCN AND TA STAFF INTERVIEWS.

TPMA consulted with TCN to identify TCN staff directly involved with the DRCC program prior to its inception, during the program planning phases, and during implementation of the pilot program. In addition, key staff were identified from PowerCorps PHL who were providing TA support to DRCC program Corps. TPMA then scheduled and conducted an initial round of 30-minute, one-on-one interviews with four TCN staff members and two TA staff members. A second round of 30-minute, one-on-one interviews was conducted with four TCN staff members and one TA staff member. These interviews focused on staff's overall experience with the grant, their engagement with other Corps/staff, and successes, challenges, and recommendations for planning future DRCC program cohorts.

DOCUMENT REVIEW.

To provide context for the DRCC program and the development of the interview guides for the formative evaluation, TPMA consulted with TCN regarding available documents. TPMA created a shared folder for TCN to upload relevant documents. TCN provided TPMA with several documents about the DRCC program, its structure, TA offered, and other program details, which TPMA then reviewed prior to the first and second round of interviews.

Data Analysis

A general inductive thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data generated from the interviews. More information on data analysis, method, and limitations can be found in the [Appendix A](#). The protocols for the interviews are included in [Appendix B](#) of this report.

Implementation Progress

Corps Pilot Cohort Completion

At the time of this report, all 10 Corps had successfully completed their pilot programs. All 10 Corps pilot programs are currently transitioning to a second round of program cohorts, with two additional Corps in development. Additionally, Corps have participated in TA webinars and one-on-one sessions with TCN and other TA staff throughout the grant to aid in program planning and implementation. Beginning with initial kickoff in Fall of 2021 through Winter of 2022, topics included building partnerships, fund development, equitable practices, recruitment, and workforce development structure.

**PROMISE
NEIGHBORHOODS
LEHIGH VALLEY
(PNLV)**

Promise Corps
Lehigh Valley

22

WEEKS

3

CORPSMEMBERS

40

HOURS PER WEEK



Water efficiency, urban agriculture, & invasive species removal
FOCUS

**NATIVE AMERICAN
ADVANCEMENT
CORP (NAAC)**

Cohanzick Climate
Corps

12

WEEKS

6

CORPSMEMBERS

40

HOURS PER WEEK



Weatherization, energy efficiency, & lead remediation.
FOCUS

HOPEWORKS

26

WEEKS

12

CORPSMEMBERS

25

HOURS PER WEEK



Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) maintenance and GIS mapping, which included Utility Mechanic Training
FOCUS

ISLES, INC.

Trenton Climate Corps

12

WEEKS

12

CORPSMEMBERS

40

HOURS PER WEEK



Tree planting/inventorying, GSI maintenance, and weatherization, including EPA Lead Safety, PACT, and OSHA trainings.
FOCUS

**NEW JERSEY YOUTH
CORPS**

Delaware River Climate
Corps

46

WEEKS

8

CORPSMEMBERS

35

HOURS PER WEEK



Water testing, invasive removal, and tree planting, First Aid/CPR & Herbicide Application training
FOCUS

**POWERCORPS
READING**
Reading Climate Corps

33
WEEKS

10
CORPSMEMBERS

35
HOURS PER WEEK



Habitat restoration, landscaping, urban forestry, education, and OSHA 10 and GI Maintenance training
FOCUS

POWERCORPS PHL

23
WEEKS

82
CORPSMEMBERS

40
HOURS PER WEEK



GSI maintenance, urban forestry, habitat restoration, waterway restorations efforts, OSHA 30 & Chipper Operation
FOCUS

**FRIENDS OF UPPER
DELAWARE RIVER
(FUDR)**
Upper Delaware River
Climate Corps

12
WEEKS

6
CORPSMEMBERS

40
HOURS PER WEEK



Culvert inventory, invasive removal, waterway restoration and education & NAACC certification
FOCUS

**CHILDREN
FIRST AMERICA
DELAWARE
COUNTY (CFA)**
Tabitha Corps Chester

12
WEEKS

7
CORPSMEMBERS

30
HOURS PER WEEK



Landscaping and GSI maintenance
FOCUS

**DELAWARE
CENTER FOR
HORTICULTURE
(DCH)**
Branches to Chances
Climate Corps

12
WEEKS

6
CORPSMEMBERS

40
HOURS PER WEEK

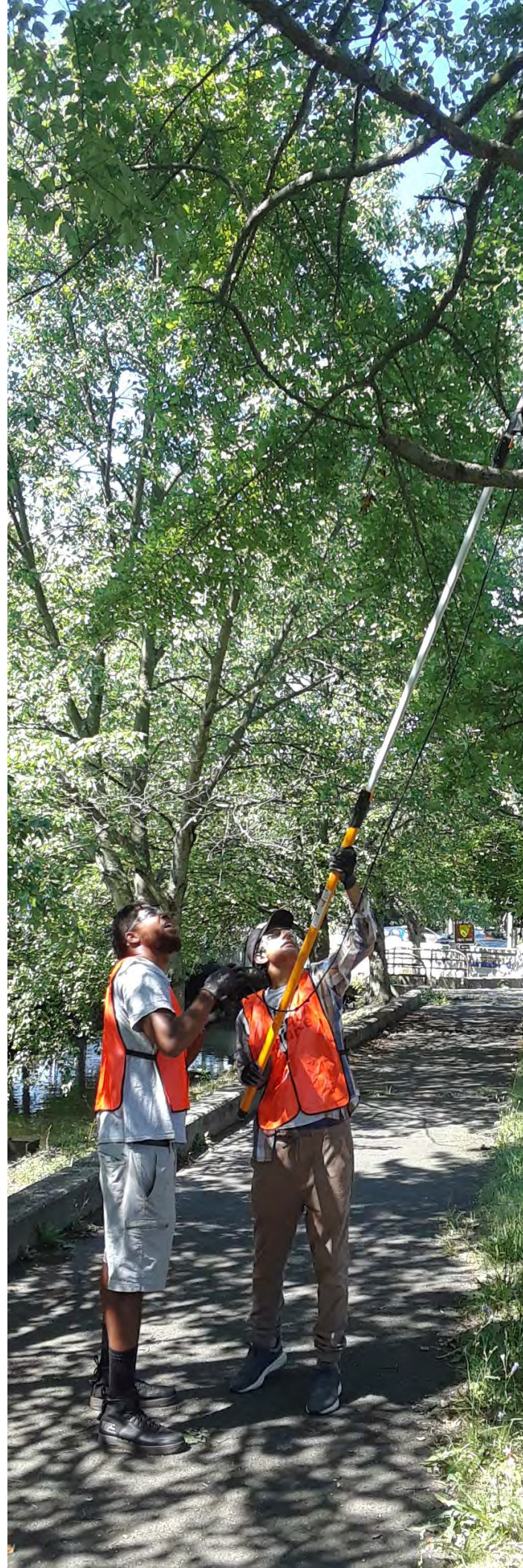


Culvert inventory, invasive removal, waterway restoration and education & NAACC certification
FOCUS

TCN Lessons Learned and Changes in Progress

Navigating TCN as Funder and Program Support and Clarifying Communication and Structure.

TCN staff mentioned their own observations that at times, there may have been uncertainty in how Corps could or should engage with TCN since they are playing multiple roles as funder and technical assistance provider as well as general program support. TCN staff are already thinking of potential role separation and clarification to address these perceived tensions in TCN's position as funder and program support. TCN staff also discussed communication and structure efficiencies for future programs. Terms of services and numbers of members were discussed, which currently have quite a bit of variation. One TCN staff member said "[some Corps] they have continued to add on to the term of service and their exit strategy isn't as defined within what that term experience is for the member. To me that's a little concerning." The scale of programs was also an aspect that would benefit from more clarification, according to Corps staff. Others discussed anticipated needs and plans that did not quite transfer into the reality of where plans ended up. A TA staff member stated, "It's like we went on a vacation with a bunch of outfits that were about program design and like youth engagement, and the weather was different than we thought." In response, staff may create a DRCC Corps Handbook or more formal guidance for Corps.



Pilot Implementation Successes

Successes are elements that positively affected the program pilot experience. These findings were synthesized from data collection to capture key successes in DRCC program planning and implementation as well as stories about program impact that can be further leveraged to accelerate areas for programmatic success.

Corpsmember Achievement

Corps staff reported increases in confidence and personal growth.

Corps staff shared that Corpsmembers demonstrated a noticeable improvement in self-confidence as a result of Corps' programming, "At the beginning, [Corpsmembers] were kind of reserved or intimidated...[after participation we saw] the change in their voice and pep in their step. We've taken shy people and shown them they have a confidence level." This sentiment was echoed by additional Corps staff, "At the start, members didn't even want to say 'hi,' but at the end, they started taking the lead on voluntary activities." An important goal of Corps' programming was to provide members with the skills they need to enter or advance in the workforce. An improvement in Corpsmembers' self-efficacy is an essential step to their forward momentum. This growth is particularly valuable when considering the target population of many of the Corps' programming; Many Corps' sought to fill the gap for populations in their community that were lacking opportunity. One Corps staff member noted of their Corpsmembers, "They came to us from the shelter...It really makes us feel good when we can transition people into society." Another Corps' staff member summed up this success, "To me the success is taking an at-risk person and building their confidence with something they probably never would have been exposed to."

Many members that completed Corps' programming experienced successful post-program placement toward further opportunity.

In addition to enhancing participants' personal growth, Corps staff sought to expose program participants to employment opportunities with the intent to place participants in a related career. Corps staff recounted the opportunities that were provided to their members, "Getting people good exposure to workforce training, to urban agriculture: That's been really great in a lot of ways because...[it alleviates] regulations [that] pose barriers for the reentry population." Beyond exposure to workforce training, many Corps saw the placement of participants after graduation from programming and, in some cases, noted higher salaries than previously obtained. One Corps staff member expressed, "Our goal is to get full-time work and [the DRCC funding] allowed us to expand our programming and that has really paid off." They continued, "We placed folks who were part of the Climate Corps with an average wage... [that] is higher than our standard."

Additional Funding

Corps staff were able to support programming and Corpsmembers by securing additional funding through multiple sources.

Corps' DRCC programming garnered awareness and interest from the community. This increase in support led to several Corps receiving additional funding to stimulate continuation and expansion of similar programming. Some of the success the Corps had in identifying funding opportunities came from the support of TCN, "[TCN] supported us in exposure to opportunities for more funding and opportunities for our members to apply to receive special grants." By leveraging multiple funding sources, the Corps have been able to secure the longevity of the program. Corps commented that the additional funding allows them to "keep on supporting [the] work" that Corpsmembers are completing in the program.

Corps staff highlighted additional funding opportunities that they have identified and accessed including (but not limited to) funding from City and State Governments, United Way, Community Foundations, and Universities. One Corps staff highlighted the impact of additional funding, "I couldn't have imagined last year at this time... that we would have been able to do as much service as we did, and [have] it affect the lives of as many people as we did."

Community Impact and Partnership

Corps' notable work enabled them to establish robust partnerships, helping to build a foundation for community support.

Multiple Corps staff highlighted the excellent feedback they have received related to Corpsmembers and their work. One noted, "[One Corpsmember] just received a great accolade for his attitude and work ethic. It's almost to the point where the regulars were looking forward to seeing them. That was a good story to hear." Similarly, another Corps staff person shared, "The city...made a statement that the program had more than paid for itself halfway through the program. They sent funding for the next year." Corps staff identified that they "grew relationships with nonprofits and people in the community and connected with resources for trainings."

Indeed, in growing partnerships throughout the community, Corps staff were able to facilitate sustainability of their programming through additional funding (as discussed above) as well as increase opportunities for their Corpsmembers in the workforce through networking. As one Corps staff stated, "People from our community are asking us to do the job. They trust us and members have proved their work ethic." With the positive feedback received from the community regarding Corps' programs and Corps program Corpsmembers, promising partnerships have been established, along with the opportunity for increased impact.

TCN Support

TCN's knowledge and accessibility made them a valuable resource for Corps throughout implementation.

Throughout the interview process, all Corps staff provided overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding the support they received from TCN. Corps staff described TCN's support as "seamless," "successful and helpful," "useful," and "informative." Especially with the current work functioning as a pilot, thorough support for the Corps was essential. Knowledge and capacity as well as programming varied significantly across the Corps involved in the DRCC pilot. One Corps staff explained, "I think every program is like a fingerprint...it's all so different. You have so many different experiences with individuals, it's like a one-on-one book of how to raise each person." Despite this, Corps staff not only felt supported by TCN, but reported receiving the resources that they needed to be successful. Corps staff noted that TCN was "Already prepared with tools and resources to help navigate through issues" and that "They have been sharing trainings and resources that are helpful."

Beyond just providing the assistance that was required, Corps staff expressed that TCN was extremely accessible and made a clear effort to be present with their ongoing support. Corps staff shared, "Involvement was intentional from the TCN representative in the DRCC committee – That means a lot." They continued that their TCN contacts "have made a point of showing up to things and being really invested in the program...they showed they want to be there."



Pilot Implementation Challenges

This section provides insight into the challenges associated with DRCC program planning and implementation and suggests barriers that might need to be addressed for this or similar programs in the future. These findings were synthesized from data collection to capture key challenges to program planning and implementation that identify opportunities to improve program implementation.

Recruitment

Recruitment of Corpsmembers into the programs was a significant challenge across the DRCC, which resulted in Corps lowering expectations.

One Corps staff member said, "Recruitment is the challenge. Securing the funding is one thing, but now that we have the money you gotta fill the spots." Corps staff noted that they tried a variety of outreach approaches to connect with potential members. Lists, email contacts, and hiring platforms did not always yield Corpsmembers for their programs. In some instances, Corps noted they had to become more relaxed about the Corpsmembers they brought into the program. In some cases when interested candidates came forward, Corps staff ran into non-responsiveness and a lack of follow through in the application process, which resulted in fewer members even though there were many interested candidates. They reported that there were instances of interested Corpsmembers who filled out applications but failed to bring in supporting documentation which hindered official entrance into the program. One Corps staff member noted, "Just waiting for supporting documents and if you have them come in with supporting documents then you can move along, but then it just never manifests." Some Corps staff have pivoted in response to recruitment challenges by going out into the community physically more and developing partnerships that directly connect them to potential Corpsmembers.

The low wages associated with the Corps staff persons' positions also affected the recruitment of Corpsmembers.

Corps discussed the competition and allure of other hourly wage jobs that paid more than their programs offered. One Corps staff member said, "The base wage is pitiful." And another noted, "That was a big thing, the salary rate. Here they can get a job pumping gas down the street for same or above." Corps sought to augment their wages, for example, with AmeriCorps monies. However, if further incentivizing with AmeriCorps dollars, sites then had to abide by deadlines for AmeriCorps. "We had a deadline for AmeriCorps, had to onboard them by December 31st...so there was some urgency for that process." These deadlines and requirements were not necessarily conducive to TCN or cohort timelines. Therefore, some Corps were constrained to recruit individuals while meeting competing deadlines and requirements that would offer their Corpsmembers more meaningful wages.

Corpsmember Needs

Corpsmembers often had different or greater needs than Corps staff expected to address, which required shifts in programming or staff tasks.

Corps staff reported several issues that impacted Corpsmember participation: "Our Corps staff persons had some challenges, and I think that was, you know, translated into challenges for the program." The most cited issues included access to transportation and housing services, mental health challenges, and communication skills. Corps staff had to do more management of Corpsmembers than they initially expected to ensure attendance and completion of programming. One Corps staff member described this by saying, "Issues with timeliness and attendance, getting there on time and professionalism like calling in and saying I'll be late and so forth...soft skills and time management principles. We tried to stress the importance of that."

Many Corps staff mentioned mental health issues as a common challenge: "We maybe have members with mental challenges or disorders, we don't necessary have the staff member to provide that with the level they need in order for them to continue." Another Corps said, "I would definitely say it's more focused on mental health, and for others it was definitely like wrap around services and I know a lot of community members and organizations I can refer them to, but, like that kind of puts the ball back on them." These Corps staff noted that they do not necessarily have the expertise to satisfactorily assist Corpsmembers with more personal issues that may affect program participation.

Reimbursements

Several Corps experienced issues with reimbursements, which strained Corps resources.

Reimbursements were particularly precarious because funding determined the livelihood of program and staff activities. One Corps staff remarked, “Our program was over and still waiting to be paid for 4 months...If you’re a startup and depending on funds to run things then it makes it hard to continue.” Another Corps staff echoed, “Our reimbursements weren’t being processed in a very timely fashion.” Corps staff also noted the processes they completed to get the funds were different than other grants, which gave funding up front. Another Corps mentioned the rippling effects of reimbursement delays on program, implementation timelines, “Always trying to juggle to make sure we’re keeping the grant agreement [in line] with what we’re supposed to do when we’re supposed to do it.”

TCN also acknowledged the challenge with reimbursements. As communicators with certain Corps, there was awareness that their TCN staff members’ assigned sites ran into headaches about reimbursements. A TCN staff member said “I think that for process, I guess the money aspect, the reimbursement aspect of it was little shaky. So, I think that moving forward if we can kind of get that under control.” Another TCN staff member discussed recent grant management and internal role changes in response to the issue with reimbursements.

Navigation of Funding

Corps staff struggled in finding appropriate matching funds for AmeriCorps grants and navigating funding development.

Corps staff discussed challenges in determining matching funds. One Corps staff member emphasized, “Our biggest struggle is figuring out match for [the] AmeriCorps grant.” A TA staff member stated, “We did lots of training convenings, but we didn’t do a financial one...that there was this assumption that these Corps were established conservation corps, and they already had financial best practices abilities.”. The funding also affects spaces or land leased for work and other tools that need to be covered. Corps staff remarked “and we run out of space. So, we’re in the middle of purchasing so. But we have no support cost for that...I’ve heard that there are grants that do supplement some of these programs, but we don’t have access.” Capacity-building or other grants could help to alleviate some impracticalities of AmeriCorps or other tedious funding streams, according to Corps staff. Another Corps staff person suggested “Capacity building grants--not necessarily outsourcing--but providing opportunities for members to develop their capacity [would be useful in a program like this].”



Recommendations

Key recommendations focus on decreasing the impact of challenges to program planning and implementation and leveraging the DRCC program's accelerators and successes. The following recommendations are provided for future program implementation.

Provide Centralized Resource Access

Develop a user-friendly technical assistance hub to improve Corps capacity.

Corps staff expressed a desire for more effective and accessible documentation of the highly valuable technical assistance material, including templates, funding opportunity overviews, and training videos. "The AmeriCorps documentation is so massive. Has no one outlined the highlights from that to look through?" Funding "cheat sheets" and recordings of trainings to refer to were also suggested.

Additional assistance with workforce development models and developing partnerships for workforce development was reported as a need in the first round of interviews and was also brought up again in the second round as something that Corps staff could focus on this year, now that first pilot cohorts have been successfully completed. Virtual convenings and trainings could also include accessibility options for Corps staff to get the most out of these opportunities. Corps staff mentioned captioning, which assists those whose first language is not English and others. Ensuring staff can understand and participate fully by being mindful of these potential barriers not only addresses some past challenges, but also sets TCN and DRCC up for success as programming expands.

Build On Funding Advocacy and Support

TCN should continue to focus on advocating on behalf of DRCC programming with large private and public funders and supporting access to sustainable funding streams.

Corps staff cited this support as a key driver of success in this first pilot year as well as moving forward into the second year of programming. TCN “bringing home” significant continuing funding should be celebrated, and complemented by refining TA materials, particularly for navigating AmeriCorps funding opportunities, as well as addressing differences between state funding regimes, so that Corps staff can themselves pursue these kinds of funding sources successfully while TCN develops further opportunities. One Corps staff person suggested “Capacity building grants--not necessarily outsourcing--but providing opportunities for members to develop their capacity [would be useful in a program like this].” TA that addresses more flexible funding opportunities at local levels, mentioned by another Corps staff member, could be a good addition to existing funding TA and provide opportunities for Corps staff to share their experiences in this area or guest experts to advise TCN and Corps staff on developing local funding and fee-for-service models that support diversified, sustainable funding relationships for long-term workforce development and environmental stewardship efforts.

Improve Access to Wraparound Services and Corpsmember Supports

Explore possibilities for providing accessible services and benefits connection as well as socioemotional support for Corpsmembers across sites.

Corps staff noticed that Corpsmembers had some significant soft skill gaps in addition to those meant to be most directly addressed by the program itself through green job training. TCN could develop DRCC Corpsmember onboarding that includes earlier soft skill/employability skills-related materials and training to set expectations and provide scenario examples, phrases/tips for communication, and other concrete tools that Corpsmembers can practice using as they move through Corps programming.

Lack of soft skills, coupled with mental health or social challenges meant that Corpsmembers sometimes required more support than was possible for Corps staff to provide. Multiple Corps staff suggested the development of TCN-wide access to services, with one Corps staff saying, “TCN could provide support with driver’s licenses, keeping connections for scholarships...job opportunities or even just emotional support.” Another Corps staff member also suggested mental health support resources, someone to contact directly that could “sit down on a Zoom” with a Corpsmember, rather than having to refer them indirectly to other services. Corps staff also recommended training in conflict resolution for both Corps staff and Corpsmembers.

Other Corps staff noted additional Corpsmember transportation and housing support as virtually necessary for program operation in their area. These additional supports could help address some of the impact that a less-than-competitive wage level might have on recruitment and retention of target populations in the long-term. Funding development and advocacy within and without the CNCS and federal system as mentioned above could support expansion of benefits and supports provided to Corpsmembers.

Stabilize TCN Staffing and Processes

Determine the most effective TCN staffing structure to support smooth administrative processes and effective communication with sites

Corps staff understood that TCN staffing and roles in administrative processes shifted over the course of program implementation, saying, “They have the same issue we have...If they have more people on it, it may be faster and smoother. It may be a smidge better since they just hired a couple people.” Based on TCN staff interviews in the second round of interviews, TCN has mostly adjusted to these challenges, but should explore ways to ensure that any future TCN staff turnover does not affect their ability to reimburse Corps in a timely fashion.

Support Watershed-Wide Connection

Continue to build on successful in-person events that bring sites together to share experiences and insights across the watershed.

. Like the widely lauded visit to PowerCorps PHL in the first round of interviews, Corps staff expressed enthusiasm and appreciation for in-person experiences such as the trip to Harrisburg. One Corps staff said, “We were amazed to see the diversity in the type of Corps programs.” Another mentioned that the Corpsmembers really liked meeting each other and were still talking about it long after the event. Other Corps, who were not in Pennsylvania, mentioned in-person workshops that provided valuable insights.

Overall, Corps staff would appreciate more opportunities to connect, with one Corps staff member saying, “I wish there was a way to feel more connected. We’re hyper-localized...there’s no central place where we can all come together. Having cohesion across Corps would be helpful.” Those who were not involved in the Harrisburg trip suggested supporting similar experiences for Corps in other states, or perhaps visits to Corps with similar characteristics outside of DRCC, beyond PowerCorps PHL as a well-established urban organization. Combined with feedback from first round interviews, it is clear that Corps staff and Corpsmembers would benefit from more in-person experiences that allow them to network with partners and decisionmakers or simply share experiences and ideas with one another in a beyond-the-screen environment.

Share Pilot Program and Corpsmember Success Stories

Celebrate and share the significant achievements of TCN, site organizations, and Corpsmembers during this pilot experience.

Several Corps Staff shared vivid, compelling, and sometimes funny stories from Corpsmember field work experiences that demonstrate just how deeply impactful in immeasurable ways DRCC programming has already been in this pilot year. One example includes surprise and disbelief on the face of one Corpsmember as they pulled a bike out of a waterway. Other stories have Corpsmembers initiating youth engagement and teaching moments in their communities based on new knowledge and skills gained. An example from our interviews includes the following:

“One of my favorite stories, we were sitting in the field, about a month into service and one of our members I see him standing off to the side, looking like he was messing around, and he’s playing with a butterfly, and he goes, ‘Oh, this is a swallowtail and I’m like, ‘What is that?’” and he starts telling me about the swallowtail. We had graduates go out with the birdwatching group...The woman, I had never met her, she comes to graduation and says that she’s been doing this over 35 years and [a Corpsmember] almost knew more about birds than she did. When they are going to the nature center, they’re not there to do the education, they are supporting so kids can get education, but they are listening to it too and picking it up and then transferring knowledge. These are indigenous practices, polyculture, you learn this stuff from your grandma, but there’s a desire for it, a want for it.

They didn’t know they had desire to do it, but once they do, it completely opened their mind. And more important, it changed the people they worked with. People look at our members and make accusations, pre-judge them, do all the types of things that make it hard for our members to succeed and this program gave them opportunities to change how those people saw them. Now they want to hire them to actually represent them as the maturity of our community. The success is just more than I could have ever imagined.”

These successes move beyond the quantifiable outcomes that TCN seeks to measure moving forward using the combination of survey tools developed, and provides compelling content to share with community, city/ county and state leaders, employers, education providers, funders, and future Corpsmembers and Corps staff that can support long-term partnerships, funding sustainability, and recruitment. TCN should explore dedicated communication efforts, perhaps including a DRCC communications plan with resources all sites can use to tell the DRCC story that can be included in the centralized resource hub for sites to draw on for their own efforts. A celebration of this first pilot year, whether in-person, hybrid, or virtual could shore up watershed-wide identity, provide another avenue for cross-Corps connection, and might include Corpsmembers, partners, community leaders, and funders.

Conclusion

TCN staff, TA providers, and Corps staff worked well together to successfully plan, create, and implement DRCC programs at all 10 sites. In both rounds of interviews, Corps staff were pleasantly surprised by their ability to stand up brand new programs in such a short time and shared impactful Corpsmember growth. TCN and Corps staff celebrated funding wins that will allow the DRCC initiative to continue and expand. Challenges with recruitment and Corpsmember needs reflect important insight for improving outreach and support for increased participation and transformative outcomes. Program Profile, Director Survey, and Program Outcomes tools will help TCN collect more specific data and make further connections between processes and outcomes in the future. Ongoing capacity for fund development and sustainability will be something that TCN, TA providers, and Corps staff can continue to build on in the next year. Importantly, easily accessible resources and regular meaningful cross-Corps connection can facilitate sharing of innovative responses to challenges that arose during pilot implementation and cultivate a true watershed-wide identity for DRCC sites. Celebrating and sharing the success of DRCC pilot implementation together will reinforce effective collaboration and communicate the existing and potential impact of programming on Corpsmembers, communities, and their environments.



Appendix A: Methodology

Data Sources

Interviews

Discussion guides were developed prior to the interviews, outlining questions for each group. Questions were developed to avoid “leading” or providing any indication that TPMA holds a certain hypothesis around anticipated responses. These questions also contained probes to generate follow-ups to certain concepts, and TPMA continued to probe until reaching data saturation within the interview (when Corpsmembers are not putting forth any new ideas, concepts, or themes in response to follow-up questions). Discussion guides were reviewed by TCN after development and were provided to TCN, TA, and Corps interviewees prior to the interview.

Qualitative Data Analysis Methods

Qualitative data from interviews were coded and analyzed using a general inductive thematic analysis to identify categories, subcategories, and themes.

Thematic Analysis

A general inductive thematic analysis ¹ was used to analyze the qualitative data generated from interviews. This approach was selected because of its usefulness in drawing clear links between research questions or objectives and data collection results, and because it provides a theoretical foundation for subjective meaning to be interpreted and extrapolated from discourse. Emerging themes were developed according to the analytical framework and through a review of detailed notes taken from interviews and TPMA’s extensive experience with the body of program evaluation knowledge built through our work.

¹ Thomas, D.R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27, 237-245.

Limitations

As with any research, limitations to the chosen method are acknowledged and addressed to the extent possible within the design. The limitations to this report include the following:

Partial and Biased Findings

Qualitative and perceptual research methods offer valuable insights but are, by nature, partial and biased. Triangulating² results from multiple sources, such as comparing findings from secondary research with interviews, creates more credible results.

Researcher Extrapolation

Analyses conducted with an interpretive analytical framework can lead to researcher extrapolation where interpretation may go too far beyond what is present in, and supported by, data. To³ address this, TPMA used collaborative inquiry; through presenting findings to stakeholders for elaboration, corroboration, and modification, TPMA confirmed and updated analyses.

2 Brewer, J., and A. Hunter. Foundations of multimethod research: Synthesizing styles. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006.

3 Guest, Greg, MacQueen, K.M., and Namey, E.E. Applied Thematic Analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011.



Appendix B: Data Tools

Corps Staff Interviews

Interview #1 with Corps

Thank you for taking the time to chat with us today. As you are aware, TCN has hired Thomas P. Miller and Associates in Indianapolis to complete an independent evaluation of the DRCC program. (Introduce self and note taker). We are using this time to understand your experience in the early stages of the grant and program implementation. We are looking to document successes and challenges to help TCN identify opportunities to better support Corps in the DRCC program now and in the future.

Nothing you share today will be tied to you by name. TPMA will use the information along with the information from other Corps for reporting to TCN to improve the experience with the grant. Information we use in our reporting will be attributed to "Corps staff" (or similar generic descriptors).

We appreciate all your feedback on your participation in the DRCC program, both positive and negative, and we hope to have a very open dialogue about your experiences. We'd like to hear from everyone so please join in when you have feedback to share. We do wish to capture your feedback as accurately as we can so we would like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to verify our notes and will not be shared with anyone outside of the TPMA team working on this evaluation. Is it OK for us to record? (HIT RECORD)

OVERALL PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION (10 MINUTES)

1. (Introductions if there are new individuals on interview that were not on intro call, confirm staff roles [even if on previous call])
2. Please provide an update of your DRCC program implementation.
3. On a scale of 1-10, where one is low, how would you rate the overall process of the DRCC program and grant process?
 - a. Potential Probe: Please explain rating.
 - b. Potential Probe: What has worked well?
 - c. Potential Probe: What hasn't worked well?
4. How effective has the initiative been in assisting you to meet your goals thus far?
 - a. Follow-up: What is still needed for you to reach your goals related to this initiative?

SUCSESSES & CHALLENGES (20 MINUTES)

5. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks did you face in the phases of the grant prior to program implementation?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
 - b. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks have you faced thus far in program implementation?
 - i. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
6. What early successes have you have experienced thus far in the grant?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think has led to those program successes?
 - b. Probe: What specific aspects of the grant and supports provided have led to those successes?
7. How do you think program Corpsmembers and those in the community impacted by your DRCC program are perceiving the DRCC program that your organization is/has implemented?
 - a. Follow-up: What feedback have you received thus far from the program Corpsmembers?
 - b. Probe: How do you think the larger community (i.e., where program is being implemented) has perceived the program so far?
 - b. Follow-up: Why do you think this is? What have you learned so far as a part of this process?

EXPERIENCE WITH STAFF/TA (5 MINUTES)

8. How has your experience been interacting with TCN staff?
 - a. Probe: Please explain
 - b. Follow-up: What would you recommend for improving the process in working with TCN up to this point in the program?
9. How has your experience been with the TA offered through the DRCC program?
 - a. Follow-up: What TA has been most useful to this point?
 - b. Follow-up: What TA has been the least useful to this point?
 - c. Follow-up: What TA do you still need to successfully participate in the grant and implement your program?

FUNDING (10 MINUTES)

10. Did you apply for a Service Planning Commission Grant?

a. If yes

i. Why did you choose to apply for this grant?

ii. How was the process applying for this grant?

iii. (If received)

1. Please explain how you have utilized the grant thus far.

2. How has the process in receiving funds been to this point?

b. If no

i. Why did you not apply for this grant?

11. What other funds are you utilizing to fund your DRCC program initiative?

FUTURE NEEDS/PLANS (10 MINUTES)

12. How is the DRCC program providing you with the kinds of assistance and support you need to carry out your program successfully?

a. Probe: What has been most helpful in the grant? Least helpful?

b. Follow-up: What additional supports are needed for you to be successful in the DRCC program?

c. Probe: What else could be provided during the remainder of the grant to improve your experience and make the grant process more successful?

d. Follow-up: What type of help could you imagine needing beyond this grant?

13. Is there any additional information you would like to share?

14. ***Ask notetaker if they have any additional questions.

NEXT STEPS/WRAP-UP (3-5 MINUTES)

15. Overview of interview #2: Will focus on overall successes, challenges, and areas for improvement after the first year of program implementation.

16. Identify interview Corpsmembers

17. Interviews are tentatively scheduled for February 2023

a. TPMA will schedule after first of year

Interview #2 with Corps

Thank you for taking the time to chat with us today. As you are aware, TCN has hired Thomas P. Miller and Associates in Indianapolis to complete an independent evaluation of the DRCC program. (Introduce self and note taker). We are using this time to understand your experience during program implementation and pilot completion phases of the grant. We are looking to document successes and challenges to help TCN identify opportunities to better support Corps in the DRCC program now and in the future.

Nothing you share today will be tied to you by name. TPMA will use the information along with the information from other Corps for reporting to TCN to improve the experience with the grant. Information we use in our reporting will be attributed to "Corps staff" (or similar generic descriptors).

We appreciate all your feedback on your participation in the DRCC program, both positive and negative, and we hope to have a very open dialogue about your experiences. We'd like to hear from everyone so please join in when you have feedback to share. We do wish to capture your feedback as accurately as we can so we would like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to verify our notes and will not be shared with anyone outside of the TPMA team working on this evaluation. Is it OK for us to record? (HIT RECORD)

OVERALL PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION* (10 MINUTES)

[DRCC Cheat Sheet](#) (Includes program end dates and Corpsmembers numbers.)

*Implementation: Roughly September-January

1. (Introductions if there are new individuals on interview that were not on intro call, confirm staff roles [even if on previous call])
2. What has changed, if anything, about your role in the program over the course of implementation?
3. Please provide an update of your DRCC program implementation. We are focusing on September-January for this discussion.
4. On a scale of 1-10, where one is low, how would you rate the overall process of the DRCC program and grant process during implementation?
 - a. Potential Probe: Please explain rating.
 - b. Potential Probe: What has worked well?
 - c. Potential Probe: What hasn't worked well?
5. How effective has the initiative been in assisting you to meet your goals thus far?
 - a. Follow-up: What is still needed for you to reach your goals related to this initiative?

SUCSESSES & CHALLENGES (20-30 MINUTES)

6. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks did you face in the phases of the grant during program implementation from September-January?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
7. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks have you faced in completing the program pilot?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think has made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
8. What program implementation successes have you experienced in the grant between September and January?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think has led to those program successes?
 - b. Probe: What specific aspects of the grant and supports provided have led to those successes?
9. How do you think program Corpsmembers and those in the community impacted by your DRCC program perceived the DRCC program that your organization implemented (focusing on feedback from September-January)?
 - a. Follow-up: What feedback have you received from the program Corpsmembers? Has there been any evolution of their perception over the course of the program?
 - b. Probe: How do you think the larger community (i.e., where program is being implemented) has perceived the program? Has there been any evolution of that perception over the course of the program?
 - c. Follow-up: Why do you think this is? What have you learned as a part of this process?

EXPERIENCE WITH STAFF/TA (5 MINUTES)

[DRCC TA List](#) (Includes convenings, trainings, and other events.)

10. How has your experience been interacting with TCN staff since our discussion in September?
 - a. Probe: Please explain
 - b. Follow-up: What would you recommend for improving the process in working with TCN in the next iteration of the program?
11. How has your experience been with the TA offered through the DRCC program since September?
 - a. Follow-up: What TA has been most useful since October?
 - b. Follow-up: What TA has been the least useful since October?
 - c. Follow-up: What TA do you still need to successfully participate in the next iteration of the program?

Funding (5 minutes)

12. What other funds are you utilizing to fund your DRCC program initiative?
13. What do you see as important funding opportunities for the next iteration of the program?
 - a. Follow-up: How could TCN support your funding efforts moving forward?
 - b. Follow-up: How will you apply TCN-provided and other funds to support your DRCC program?

FUTURE NEEDS/PLANS (10 MINUTES)

14. How has the DRCC program provided you with the kinds of assistance and support you need to carry out your program successfully (focusing on the implementation between September and January)?
 - a. Probe: What has been most helpful in the grant? Least helpful?
 - b. Follow-up: What additional supports are needed for you to be successful in the DRCC program?
15. What else could be provided during the next grant cycle to improve your experience and make the programming more successful?
 - c. Follow-up: What type of help could you imagine needing beyond this grant?
16. Is there any additional information you would like to share?
17. ***Ask notetaker if they have any additional questions.



TCN Staff Interviews

Interview #1 with TCN Staff

Thank you for taking the time to chat with us today. As you are aware, TCN has hired Thomas P. Miller and Associates in Indianapolis to complete an independent evaluation of the DRCC program. (Introduce self and note taker). We are using this time to understand your experience in the early stages of the grant and program implementation to document successes and challenges to help identify opportunities to improve the DRCC program in the future.

Nothing you share today will be tied to you by name. TPMA will use the information along with the information from other Corps for reporting to TCN to improve the experience with the grant. Information we use in our reporting will be attributed to "TCN staff" (or similar generic descriptors).

We appreciate all your feedback, both positive and negative, and we hope to have a very open dialogue about your experiences. We do wish to capture your feedback as accurately as we can so we would like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to verify our notes and will not be shared with anyone outside of the TPMA team working on this evaluation. Is it OK for us to record? (HIT RECORD)

OVERALL PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION (5 MINUTES)

1. Please share your role with TCN, what parts of the DRCC program you are involved with and/or overseeing, and when you become involved with this grant program.
2. On a scale of 1-10, where one is low, how would you rate your experience overall working on the grant thus far?
 - a. Potential Probe: Please explain rating.
 - b. Potential Probe: What has worked well?
 - c. Potential Probe: What hasn't worked well?

SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES (15 MINUTES)

3. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks did you face in the planning phases of the grant (prior to Corps beginning program implementation)?
 - a. Probes: Application process, selection process, funding process, etc.
 - b. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
4. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks have you faced once Corps started to implement programs?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
5. What early successes have you have experienced in your role thus far in the grant?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think has led to those successes?
 - b. Follow-up: What have Corps found most helpful in the support offered through the grant thus far?

EXPERIENCE WITH CORPS STAFF/TA (5 MINUTES)

6. How has your experience been interacting with the 10 Corps sites (as relevant to staff member) participating in the DRCC program?
 - a. Probe: Please explain.
 - b. Follow-up: What would you recommend for improving the process working with the 10 Corps up to this point?
7. How has your experience been working with the staff providing TA for the DRCC program (if applicable)?
 - a. Follow-up: What are the current plans for additional TA offered through the grant?

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT (5 MINUTES)

8. How has the process been identifying additional funding stream opportunities for the Corps after the grant concludes?
9. What recommendations do you have to improve the DRCC program for the rest of the current grant?
10. Based on lessons learned in the early phases of the grant, what recommendations do you have to improve future iterations of the DRCC program?
11. Is there any additional information you would like to share?

***Ask notetaker if they have any additional questions.



Interview #2 with TCN Staff

Thank you for taking the time to chat with us today. As you are aware, TCN has hired Thomas P. Miller and Associates in Indianapolis to complete an independent evaluation of the DRCC program. (Introduce self and note taker). We are using this time to understand your experience during program implementation and pilot completion to document successes and challenges to help identify opportunities to improve the DRCC program in the future.

Nothing you share today will be tied to you by name. TPMA will use the information along with the information from other Corps for reporting to TCN to improve the experience with the grant. Information we use in our reporting will be attributed to "TCN staff" (or similar generic descriptors).

We appreciate all your feedback, both positive and negative, and we hope to have a very open dialogue about your experiences. We do wish to capture your feedback as accurately as we can so we would like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to verify our notes and will not be shared with anyone outside of the TPMA team working on this evaluation. Is it OK for us to record? (HIT RECORD)

OVERALL PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION* (5 MINUTES) *Implementation: Roughly September-January

1. What has changed about your role/involvement with the grant, if anything, during implementation from September through January?
2. On a scale of 1-10, where one is low, how would you rate your experience overall working on the grant during the implementation phase?
 - a. Potential Probe: Please explain rating.
 - b. Potential Probe: What has worked well?
 - c. Potential Probe: What hasn't worked well?

SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES (15 MINUTES)

3. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks did you face in the implementation phases of the grant (during Corps program implementation)?
 - a. Probes: Monitoring/tracking/tool deployment, supporting Corps, funding processing, problem-solving, future funding preparation, etc.
 - b. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
4. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks have you faced as Corps graduated first cohorts?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
5. What successes have you experienced in your role during the implementation phase?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think has led to those successes?
 - b. Follow-up: What do you think Corps have found most helpful in the support offered through the grant thus far?

EXPERIENCE WITH CORPS STAFF/TA (5 MINUTES)

6. How has your experience been interacting with the 10 Corps sites (as relevant to staff member) participating in the DRCC program during implementation?
 - a. Probe: Please explain.
 - b. Follow-up: What would you recommend for improving the process working with the 10 Corps up to this point?
7. How has your experience been working with the staff providing TA for the DRCC program (if applicable)?
 - a. Follow-up: What are the current plans for additional TA offered through the grant?

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT (5 MINUTES)

8. How has the process been obtaining additional funding stream opportunities for the Corps after the grant concludes? What have you learned about funding over the course of the DRCC pilot?
9. Based on lessons learned in the implementation phase of the grant, what recommendations do you have to improve future iterations of the DRCC program?
10. Is there any additional information you would like to share?
11. ***Ask notetaker if they have any additional questions.



TA Staff Interviews

Interview #1 with TA Staff

Thank you for taking the time to chat with us today. As you are aware, TCN has hired Thomas P. Miller and Associates in Indianapolis to complete an independent evaluation of the DRCC program. (Introduce self and note taker). We are using this time to understand your experience in the early stages of the grant offering technical assistance (TA). We are looking to document successes and challenges to help TCN identify opportunities to better support Corps in the DRCC program now and in the future.

Nothing you share today will be tied to you by name. TPMA will use the information along with the information from other Corps for reporting to TCN to improve the experience with the grant. Information we use in our reporting will be attributed to "Grant staff" (or similar generic descriptors).

We appreciate all your feedback, both positive and negative, and we hope to have a very open dialogue about your experiences. We do wish to capture your feedback as accurately as we can so we would like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to verify our notes and will not be shared with anyone outside of the TPMA team working on this evaluation. Is it OK for us to record? (HIT RECORD)

OVERALL PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION (5 MINUTES)

1. Please share your role within your organization, in what ways you've been involved in the TA offered through the DRCC program thus far, and how long you've been involved in the DRCC TA.
 - a. Follow up: Please explain how you became involved in the TA offered through the DRCC program.
2. On a scale of 1-10, where one is low, how would you rate your overall experience providing TA for the DRCC program?
 - a. Potential Probe: Please explain rating.
 - b. Potential Probe: What has worked well?
 - c. Potential Probe: What hasn't worked well?

SUCCESSSES & CHALLENGES (15 MINUTES)

3. What key challenges have you observed Corps facing, which warrant the need for TA?
4. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks did you face in offering TA prior to Corps program implementation?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
 - b. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks have you faced thus far in offering TA once program implementation began?
 - i. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
5. What TA offered through the grant thus far do you think has been least helpful?
6. What TA offered through the grant thus far do you think has been most helpful?
7. What early successes have you have experienced thus far in offering TA through this grant?
 - a. Follow-up: What success stories (first or second hand) have you seen/heard from Corps sites as a result of the TA you offered?
 - b. Follow-up: What do you think has led to those program successes?

EXPERIENCE WITH STAFF/TA (5 MINUTES)

8. How has your experience been interacting directly with Corps staff?
 - a. Follow-up: How have the Corps received the TA you have offered?
 - b. Follow up: What feedback have you received from Corps staff thus far on the TA offered?
9. How has your experience been interacting with TCN staff?
 - a. Probe: Please explain
 - b. Follow-up: What would you recommend for improving the process in working with TCN up to this point?
 - c. Follow up: What supports/resources do you still need to successfully implement TA through the remainder of this grant?

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT (5 MINUTES)

10. What recommendations do you have to improve the TA offered through DRCC program for the rest of the current grant?
11. Based on lessons learned in the early phases of the grant, what recommendations do you have to improve TA for future iterations of the DRCC program?
12. Is there any additional information you would like to share?
13. ***Ask notetaker if they have any additional questions.



Interview #2 with TA Staff

Thank you for taking the time to chat with us today. As you are aware, TCN has hired Thomas P. Miller and Associates in Indianapolis to complete an independent evaluation of the DRCC program. (Introduce self and note taker). We are using this time to understand your experience during program implementation and pilot completion offering technical assistance (TA). We are looking to document successes and challenges to help TCN identify opportunities to better support Corps in the DRCC program now and in the future.

Nothing you share today will be tied to you by name. TPMA will use the information along with the information from other Corps for reporting to TCN to improve the experience with the grant. Information we use in our reporting will be attributed to "Grant staff" (or similar generic descriptors).

We appreciate all your feedback, both positive and negative, and we hope to have a very open dialogue about your experiences. We do wish to capture your feedback as accurately as we can so we would like to record this interview. The recording will only be used to verify our notes and will not be shared with anyone outside of the TPMA team working on this evaluation. Is it OK for us to record? (HIT RECORD)

OVERALL PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION* (5 MINUTES)

*Implementation: Roughly September-January

1. Please share your role within your organization, in what ways you've been involved in the TA offered through the DRCC program since September.
 - a. Follow up: What has changed, if anything, about your TA role over the course of program implementation from September-January?
2. On a scale of 1-10, where one is low, how would you rate your overall experience providing TA for the DRCC program during implementation?
 - a. Potential Probe: Please explain rating.
 - b. Potential Probe: What has worked well?
 - c. Potential Probe: What hasn't worked well?

SUCCESSSES & CHALLENGES (15 MINUTES)

3. What key challenges have you observed Corps facing in the implementation and completion phases, which warrant the need for TA?
4. What key challenges/barriers/roadblocks did you face in offering TA during Corps program implementation?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you think made this a challenge/barrier/roadblock?
5. What TA offered through the grant thus far do you think has been least helpful?
6. What TA offered through the grant thus far do you think has been most helpful?
7. What successes have you experienced in offering TA during program implementation?
 - a. Follow-up: What success stories (first or second hand) have you seen/heard from Corps sites as a result of the TA you offered?
 - b. Follow-up: What do you think has led to those program successes?

EXPERIENCE WITH STAFF/TA (5 MINUTES)

8. How has your experience been interacting directly with Corps staff during implementation (September-January)?
 - a. Follow-up: How have the Corps received the TA you have offered?
 - b. Follow up: What feedback have you received from Corps staff during implementation on the TA offered?
9. How has your experience been interacting with TCN staff during this time?
 - a. Probe: Please explain
 - b. Follow-up: What would you recommend for improving the process in working with TCN?
 - c. Follow up: What supports/resources do you need to successfully implement TA in the next iteration of the program?

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT (5 MINUTES)

10. Based on lessons learned in the implementation phase of the grant (Sept-Jan), what recommendations do you have to improve TA for future iterations of the DRCC program?
11. Is there any additional information you would like to share?
12. ***Ask notetaker if they have any additional questions.



