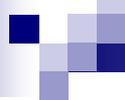


# Excellence in Corps Operations

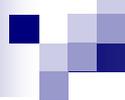
CNCS  
Executive Directors Meeting  
September 23, 2008





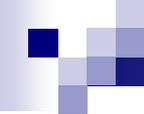
# ***Goals of this session***

- Familiarize participants with the ECO self-assessment and peer review process
- Explain its benefits to AmeriCorps programs
- Explore the possibility of widespread use across AmeriCorps programs



# ***What will we discuss?***

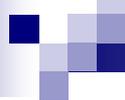
- The Corps Model
- Overview of the Corps Network
- The Excellence in Corps Operations Process
- CNCS Recognition of ECO
- Factors to Consider for Utilizing ECO



# ***Presenter***

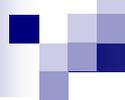
Marty O'Brien

Vice President & Chief Operating Officer  
The Corps Network



# ***Corps: Strengthening America through Service & Conservation***

- Meeting needs in local communities
- Preparing youth and young adults for life-long civic engagement
- Re-engaging disadvantaged young people in their communities
- Supporting conservation and natural resource management



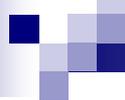
# ***Corps Today***

- Enroll primarily disadvantaged 16-25 year-olds in full-time community service, training and education
- Complete meaningful service and conservation projects meeting key community needs



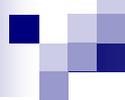
# ***Corps Today***

- Operated by private non-profit organizations or state and local government entities
- Funded by fee-for-service projects, state and local government, federal grants and the private sector



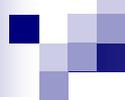
# ***Corps Today***

- Offer versatile, cost-effective programs
- Strengthen communities through service and conservation
- Increase long-term civic engagement
- Provide a means for disadvantaged young men and women to move into responsible, productive lives



# ***The Corps Network***

- 136 Corps operate in 43 States and DC
- Corpsmembers enrolled annually: 25,000
- Annual service hours delivered: 16,934,881
- Additional volunteers generated each year: 295,631



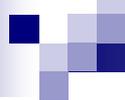
# ***The Corps Network***

- Serves as the voice for Corps nationally
- Builds partnerships to support Corps
- Promotes positive youth development
- Promotes an ethic of service
- Assures quality programming
- Provides training and technical assistance
- Administers national projects

# ***What is ECO?***

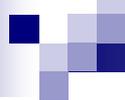
Excellence in Corps Operations is a **peer assessment** process which recognizes Corps that make a commitment to ***high-quality standards*** and **continuous improvement**.

Its purpose is to promote and recognize excellence in the Corps movement and provide **evidence** of a Corps' continued self and outside evaluation. Corps use the process as a tool to **identify strengths and challenges** and **bolster program quality**.



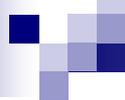
# ***What is ECO?***

- ECO status is awarded to Corps who complete the ECO process for a period of five years.
- Corps can renew their ECO status by completing the ECO Renewal process.



# ***ECO By the numbers***

- Since 2001, 43 Corps have completed the ECO process
- 25 Corps have renewed their ECO status
- A total of 25 individuals have been trained to serve as lead or supporting peer reviewers
- 12 Corps are currently participating in the 2008 ECO process



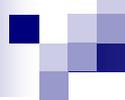
# ***ECO Standards are...***

**Peer-Determined Standards.** Agreed upon by a committee of the nation's Corps directors and other senior-level staff.

**Assessment.** Involves both a peer assessment and self-assessment process.

**Collaboration.** Special ECO Standards documents of The Corps Network are available to programs that have been through the Colorado Youth Corps Association accreditation process, the California Conservation Corps local Corps certification process, the New Jersey Youth Corps annual monitoring and the National Youth Employment Coalition's PEPNet process.

**Technical Assistance.** Corps compare their own operations to high-quality standards and develop a continuous improvement processes to maximize their effectiveness. The Corps Network ECO is the driving force for The Corps Network's technical assistance program.

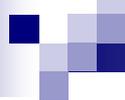


# ***ECO Standards are...***

**Report.** Self-assessments and peer assessments form the basis on which the peers produce a report detailing recommendations and suggestions for Corps. The report also details the Corps effective practices and makes those available to the public.

**Recognition.** Corps committed to high standards and continuous improvements are recognized with an ECO Award. Federal agencies and national funders see The Corps Network ECO recognition as a significant indicator of a program's commitment to excellence.

**New Corps Development.** Groups planning new Corps programs can use The Corps Network ECO Standards and effective practices in their program development.



# ***ECO Standards are Not a***

**Corps Definition.** The Corps Network ECO Standards do not present a precise definition of a Corps, nor do they differentiate between service and conservation and other types of Corps.

**Membership Requirement.** The Corps Network ECO Standards are not a requirement for The Corps Network membership, nor is their use restricted to members of The Corps Network. However, those who are not members of The Corps Network must pay a fee to participate in the process.

**Formal Accreditation.** The Corps Network ECO Standards focus on high-quality Corps operations and recognize Corps that make significant commitments to excellence. They are not a formal accreditation process that gives Corps a 'rating' or 'score.'



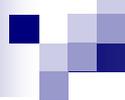
# ***ECO Standards Sections***

- Purpose and Activities
- Organization and Management
- Program Design
- Corpsmember Development
- Work and Service Projects
- Evidence of Success



# ***ECO Self-Assessment Process***

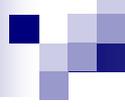
- Two to three months of preparation
- Brainstorming sessions with all relevant staff, organized by section of standards
- Assign one person to take notes during sessions and write the document
- Circulate the final draft of the document to staff for feedback



# ***Benefits of ECO***

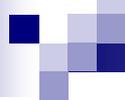
**Why your Corps Should Participate in ECO:**

- The Value of Self-Assessment
- Experienced Peer Reviewers
- Cost-Effective Assessment
- A Forum to Gather Partners



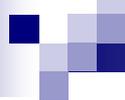
# ***Benefits of ECO***

- Access to the Knowledge of the Corps Community
- Resource for Corps Staff and Stakeholders
- Fundraising
- Marketing
- Stepping Stone to Additional Assessments and Certifications



# ***CNCS Recognition of ECO***

- In 2006, the Corporation for National and Community Service recognized ECO as a legitimate form of internal evaluation for AmeriCorps programs receiving less than \$500,000.
- To date, more than 40 organizations have expressed interest in utilizing the ECO process



# Key Questions:

- How can the ECO process be accessed by non-members of The Corps Network?
- What costs are associated with the management of the ECO process and ECO site visits?
- How can State Commissions support AmeriCorps programs in utilizing the ECO process?



# For More Information...

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The Corps Network

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[www.corpsnetwork.org](http://www.corpsnetwork.org)

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