



CONNECTING TO EMPLOYERS

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GUIDE FOR PROGRAM STAFF

Overview

Providing opportunities for corps members to develop and enhance skills throughout their service year allows them to better articulate the skills they have learned and the skills they'd like to further grow. As an organization that has been developing a skilled talent pipeline, you may be wondering, what now? How can you help corps members at the end of their service connect to job opportunities in their communities? How do you build partnerships with employers to not only support corps members, but also to strengthen your own programming?

This tool is designed to help program staff connect with employers who are looking for candidates with the skills your corps members now possess. Connecting directly to employers to create natural partnerships based on mutual goals – your program is building a talent pipeline and employers need and want talent – may be easier than you may think. This tool provides a guide to get started.

Why Connect to Employers?

As a staff member at a service year program, your to-do list is already long, but connecting to employers should be a high priority as it has the potential to boost recruitment, strengthen programming, and open doors to future giving and engagement.

- By mapping your program's skills, you are already doing the deep and detailed work of identifying the skills corps members are going to be developing during their year of service. Being able to articulate that during your recruitment efforts makes your program a more attractive option for potential corps members. Extending that selling point to include connections to established employer partners can further enhance your recruitment efforts, allowing them to see a clear picture of the finish line and what they can accomplish and achieve by completing a service year with your program. Potential corps members want to learn and grow, but they also want to know that they have options for future work opportunities. Developing strong employer connections can help your program stand out among other options that do not offer these post-service connections.

- Connecting to local employers can also strengthen your own programming and operations. You may be looking for board members or advisory council members, and employees in the area may want the experience of being part of a mission-driven organization. It's a win-win opportunity.
- Finally, there may be opportunities for employers to include your program in their giving portfolio. You could be included in employee giving, volunteer days, or even event sponsorship opportunities – but your program has to be on their radar for them to consider those options. Connecting to potential employers opens doors that may not have previously been open.

BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS

The [Engaging Individuals After High School in Service Years Toolkit](#) describes the value and importance of skills development and attainment on corps members' service year experience. But the benefits of connecting with employers extends to the employers themselves as well. Service year programs have the potential to provide employers with a skilled, young, and diverse talent pipeline of prospective employees who understand their abilities and skills.

- Employers are eager to fill roles with workers who are poised for success. Corps members have been building their skills in a sustained role and – thanks to the Skills Mapping work of your service year program – they can identify their skills, assets, and value. That transparency helps employers fill jobs with the right talent.
- According to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), employers are concerned about voluntary turnover in the aftermath of the pandemic. They are losing talent and are identifying the ways to keep talent. Employees who believe their employers make effective use of their talents and abilities are overwhelmingly more committed to staying on the job. Being aware of their skills and the careers available to them puts corps members at a great advantage and makes them more attractive to employers.
- Finally, employers are looking to build and extend the diversity of their employees, including hiring younger workers to develop a multigenerational workforce. Your corps members are their future!

GETTING STARTED WITH EMPLOYER CONNECTIONS

Building these initial relationships and doing the outreach is the most challenging part of forming employer connections. The following steps help focus the outreach process and allow your program to build a strong foundation of employer relationships in your local community.

STEP 1

To get started, examine the top skills that corps members are developing in your program that were identified in the Skills Mapping and Development Tool. Reflect on any discussions you had with corps members about the additional skills they identified throughout their service year and consider various post-service jobs that may align with those types of skills. The following chart can help capture your thinking:

SKILL CORPS MEMBER DEVELOPS	POTENTIAL ENTRY- OR MID-LEVEL JOBS
Tutoring, project management, tech coordination and management, meeting planning and note-taking, and reporting	Office Assistant Administrative Assistant Program Associate Afterschool Teacher Customer Service Representative Help Desk Support
Construction industry awareness, basic math for construction, tool awareness and usage, construction health and safety, and blueprint reading	Facilities Management Painter Project Management Carpenter Apprentice Assembly Technician

STEP 2

Search for employers in your community that are hiring for positions like the ones you've identified and consider the following questions:

1. Are there major employers in your area that have entry- to mid-level roles and potential for career growth?
2. Are there any employers that might be easy to partner with or with whom you have connections already?
3. Are there employers in your area that have expressed interest in workforce development (e.g., being present at local job fairs, using language in their postings that show a commitment to building a talent pipeline, etc.)?
4. Are there employers in your area that corps members have expressed interest in learning more about?

STEP 3

Once you have narrowed down your focus to a list of potential employers, consider the following actions:

1. Reach out to HR departments and introduce your organization and service year program. Explain the way your program supports corps members in skills development and attainment. Ask them what job requirements, skills, and competencies they require for entry-level and mid-level jobs.
2. If there is alignment, express interest in partnering. Of course corps members can search through their list of job openings, but ask if there might be other opportunities such as:
 - a. Do they plan to do recruitment fairs in the area?
 - b. Would they be interested in being a guest speaker or participating in a career exposure activity (e.g., a day in the life presentation) at your program? This is particularly useful if you have a group of corps members who are serving at the same time to make an employer visit worthwhile.
 - c. Would they be interested in participating in a site visit to see your corps members in action?
3. If your organization utilizes volunteers to support programming, connect to area employers to support your volunteer recruitment efforts. This approach allows employers to get to know your program better while you get needed volunteers.
4. Create an advisory council made up of area employers to focus on industry and hiring trends and to support refining the skills developed during a service year. This is a great way to learn what employers are looking for as you continue to refine and identify skills.

Below is a sample chart you can use to help keep track of your inquiries:

EMPLOYER	SIZE	CURRENT AVAILABLE JOBS	SKILLS IDENTIFIED	CONTACT NOTES

CONNECTING TO WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARIES

As program staff in a mission driven organization, you are not expected to be job placement specialists. There are many organizations, career centers, workforce investment boards, etc. in your area that are dedicated to workforce development and can be utilized to help build strong employer connections for your service year program.

Workforce intermediaries connect workers to jobs and are experts on the latest job quality standards and wage standards with employer partners. The following video explains what a workforce development board is and provides a better understanding of their role in helping you and corps members connect to employers.

Video: [What is a Workforce Development Board?](#)

Intermediaries consistently engage in partnership development with their employers by providing workers with personalized support and strategies that help strengthen networking and other skills required for reaching individual professional goals. In other words, they are best equipped to support corps members in finding jobs after their service year. Below are two links to help you learn more about workforce development intermediaries and connect with them in your region.

1. [National Association of Workforce Boards](#): Learn about labor trends and best practices from the National Association of Workforce Boards – you don't have to become a member to access information and learn more..
2. [Workforce Development Board Finder](#): Visit the CareerOneStop site to search by zip code for workforce development boards in your area.

REFERENCES

This guide provides some helpful tips to get your service year program started in building employer connections. To learn more about building workforce partnerships, the following resources from industry experts in the workforce development sector can provide additional information:

- [Workforce Partnership Guidance Tool | Jobs for the Future](#)
- [The Goals and Dimensions of Employer Engagement in Workforce Development Programs | Urban Institute](#)
- [Society of Human Resource Management \(SHRM\)](#)

Service Year Alliance is working to make a year of paid, full-time service – a service year – a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans. We envision a future in which national service is part of growing up in America. As we enter a new era for national service fueled by recent investments in AmeriCorps, we are focused on ensuring these expansions are successful and set the stage for future growth of the field. We identify opportunities for shared recruitment and data systems to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing our sector. Finally, we foster collaborative approaches to demonstrate the impact of service years as an experience that transforms lives, strengthens communities, and fuels civic renewal at scale. Learn more about our work at ServiceYearAlliance.org.

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