



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Deputy City Manager 
Daniel Culotta, Innovation Office Portfolio Manager

DATE: February 3, 2021

SUBJECT: Update #2 on Resolution No. 20200507-061 Austin Civilian Conservation Corps

This memorandum provides a progress update on implementing the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC), a new program established by Austin City Council [Resolution 20200507-061](#). This initiative is intended to “employ Austinites who have lost jobs and/or faced a significant economic impact as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, or persons who need to leave their current job for health reasons.” The program helps Austinites who have been economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic earn income through work that improves our community, while also receiving training, certifications, and experience that will help them establish careers in conservation- and sustainability-related job fields.

SNAPSHOT OF PROGRESS TO-DATE

- 96 jobs created
- 9 projects completed or underway
- \$2.6M funding implemented

NONPROFIT COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- American YouthWorks
- Build with Humanity
- Creative Action
- GAVA (Go Austin/Vamos Austin)
- Gulf Coast Carpenters and Millwrights Training Trust Fund
- MEASURE
- Mobile Loaves & Fishes Community First! Village
- Raasin in the Sun
- The Other Ones Foundation
- University of Texas

BENEFITS ACHIEVED

- Economic relief for individuals impacted by COVID-19
- Jobs skill training and job placement
- Climate resilience & preparedness
- Wildfire risk mitigation
- Parks and landscape maintenance and improvements

- Litter abatement
- Urban forest tree care
- Wheelchair access ramps for formerly homeless residents

With the City Manager’s Office as the executive sponsor, we have tasked Daniel Culotta of the Office of Innovation to serve as project lead, alongside the Office of Sustainability and a core project team that includes the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), the Economic Development Department (EDD), Watershed Protection Department (WPD), Austin Resource Recovery (ARR), and Communication Public Information Office (CPIO). This program was launched using existing staff resources. The core team conducted an inventory of existing and potential new projects that could help meet the goals of the initiative and identified existing nonprofit community partners to deliver training and projects. The program launched in 2020 using Council-authorized funding of \$500,000 of General Fund Reserves, and up to \$2.2M of existing Departmental funds.

The core team, in collaboration with departments, selected projects for the initial launch, and continues to solicit additional projects using the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to the spirit of the Council Resolution
- Benefits to people economically impacted by COVID-19
- Leverages existing workforce development service providers and nonprofit partners, particularly those with a focus on conservation-related projects
- Helps to develop new workforce skills and job readiness in order to provide a ladder of opportunities and entry into a skilled workforce pipeline
- Advances strategic goals and best practices of the City of Austin, such as wildfire preparedness, access to parks and open space, maintaining or expanding urban tree canopy, minimizing flooding and improving water quality, reducing invasive species, increasing urban agriculture, beautifying public places, etc.
- Ability to be performed while observing social distancing
- Will have a lasting positive impact, inspire hope, and build community

The first group of projects is underway. Additional projects are planned for the future, pending the identification and coordination of funding sources and partnerships. Budget details for the initial projects are listed in the table below.

First Project Cohort (FY20 and FY21):

Project	Partners (external partners in BOLD)	Funding Source(s)	Number of Participants
Parks & Preserves Crew <i>Trail building & maintenance, Invasive species removal, Environmental monitoring</i>	PARC, WPD, American YouthWorks	\$340,000 from General Fund Reserves \$130,000 from PARC and WPD	8-person crew full- time for 8 months, began December 2020

Onion Creek Crew <i>Landscape maintenance, Invasive species removal, Trail building & maintenance in lower Onion Creek watershed</i>	PARD, WPD, DSD American YouthWorks, GAVA, additional external partners TBD	\$450,000 FY21 from WPD, PARD, DSD \$450,000 FY22 from WPD, PARD	8-person crew full-time for 8 months, began December 2020. 8 new crew members will be hired in 2022.
Creeks & Green Spaces Crew <i>Landscape maintenance, Invasive species removal, and litter abatement along creeks and green spaces</i>	WPD, The Other Ones Foundation	\$223,000 from WPD	6-person crew for one year, beginning spring 2021
Green Building and Solar Installation Training <i>Job skills training program</i>	Office of Innovation, Office of Sustainability, Gulf Coast Carpenters and Millwrights Training Trust Fund, Mobile Loaves & Fishes Community First! Village	\$28,000 from General Fund Reserves \$11,200 from Office of Sustainability	9 participants, completed December 2020
Wildfire Mitigation Crew <i>Fuel mitigation, Firewise data collection & mapping</i>	Austin Fire Department, Austin Water Department, American YouthWorks	\$450,000 FY21 from AFD and AWD \$300,000 FY22 from AFD	8-person crew full-time for 6-8 months, beginning late spring 2021. 8 new crew members will be hired in 2022.
BeWellATX public art program <i>Artists hired to install murals with public health and hope themes at 5th St. and Lamar Blvd.</i>	EDD Cultural Arts Division, Raasin in the Sun	\$60,000 from EDD	8 paid artists, 7 local culture leaders paid to advise and select artists. Completed December 2020
Austin Safely Creates <i>Artists of all media hired to inspire hope and cultivate community across the city</i>	EDD Cultural Arts Division, Creative Action	\$60,000 from EDD	15 paid artists between September and December 2020

ArtResponders <i>Commission artists to train in Social Practice and organize public participation in art actions</i>	PARD Museums and Cultural Programs Division, University of Texas' Performance as Public Practice	\$20,000 from PARD	11 paid artists between September and December 2020
Community engagement and co-creation <i>Participants co-create elements of the ACCC program's design and structure</i>	Office of Innovation, MEASURE, Build with Humanity	\$40,000 from General Fund Reserves	20+ residents will participate in co-creation and feedback activities
TOTALS		<u>\$2,562,200</u> \$408K – GF Reserves \$598K – WPD \$525K – PARD \$525K – AFD \$225K – AWD \$150K – DSD \$120K – EDD \$11.2K – OOS	96* *Does not include user research participants since these are not long-term or training positions

Additional Projects:

Additional projects are being scoped and evaluated for funding sources at this time. Multiple conversations with internal and external partners are ongoing regarding potential future projects and funding sources, such as:

- Individual Placement Program that builds pathways to positions within COA departments for ACCC participants (multiple departments)
- Downtown clean-ups (multiple departments and potential partners such as the Downtown Austin Alliance)
- Door hanger distribution (multiple departments)
- Green infrastructure maintenance and installation (WPD, PWD, PARD)
- COVID-19 + Vision Zero combined arts programming (ATD/Corridor Office)
- Public Art installation (PWD NPP program)

Staff will also look to bring forward more community partners and staff to identify and expand on projects based on factors such as:

- The project addresses an urgent need, equity concern, or time constraint
- The project aligns with an existing initiative or City Council resolution
- Staff and community partner capacity to commence, hire, onboard and/or oversee the project within the next 3-6 months
- Availability and type of funding resources

The ACCC working group will create recommendations and lay the foundation for the program's long-term sustainability, which will include considerations for staffing, programmatic budget, and organizational leadership. The goal is to learn from the first cohort of projects, community partners, internal team to establish a permanent program with a dedicated budget and staff resources rooted in equity that prioritizes projects based on a set of economic, social, and risk reduction criteria. Ongoing ACCC design and programming will be informed by data and analysis from our ongoing user research component.

Budget History and Outlook

After consultation with the Budget Office and the Intergovernmental Relations Office, staff determined that CARES funding was not the best fit for this initiative due to ACCC work primarily taking place on public property, and because relying on COVID relief funding may have made it difficult to extend the program past the end of calendar year 2020. Staff worked to the greatest extent possible to identify existing departmental budget to support and align with this effort. For the future, we anticipate needing to establish an ACCC budget to support a full program roll-out, help establish new work programs that do not yet have departmental owners, and to maximize the reach of the ACCC. We will also actively seek funding and partnership opportunities that align with the Biden administration's recent announcement of the [Civilian Climate Corps initiative](#).

Now that the FY21 budget has been approved, staff will continue to collaborate with departments to leverage their budgets to create ACCC-aligned programs to the maximum extent possible, including identifying existing proposed and budgeted projects that could be brought into alignment. For example, the City works with external service providers on an ongoing basis to plant trees. These contracts could be aligned with the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps by modifying the delivery model with regards to who carries out the work and how they are recruited and trained, which will create a value-add related to existing initiatives. Staff will also identify funding gaps to meet new project needs and will explore additional funding sources and partnerships that may bridge future gaps or ability to broaden the work. Future updates will identify any potential partners and funds.

Additional Program Development & Next Steps

Marketing

We have created a dedicated [ACCC webpage](#) on the City of Austin website in partnership with CPIO. CPIO created an ACCC communications team to promote the ACCC and its opportunities in partnership with community organizations and service providers. Promotional materials will be shared with Mayor and Council and with multiple community partners.

Recruitment

The core team is establishing recruitment needs based on those impacted by the pandemic. Recruitment for participants in the ACCC programs is primarily carried out by partner organizations and/or departments that follow guidelines provided by the ACCC.

Data Collection

The core team created a consistent set of data that all program partners collect. This data, which was reviewed by the Equity Office, will inform a set of reporting metrics shared across all ACCC-affiliated programs.

User Research

The Innovation Office is leading a user research initiative to better understand community members' needs, desires, and barriers related to COVID-related economic hardships and career goals. Understanding potential program participants will allow us to structure desirable work and training programs, shape and target outreach efforts to the most affected communities, and create feedback loops to adapt the ACCC over time.

The proposed work will contain data and trend analysis, community surveys, interviews and focus groups, and ongoing assessments with partners and participants. These activities are being carried out in partnership with community members and residents.

We will continue to send Mayor and Council periodic progress updates on the ACCC. If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Culotta at daniel.culotta@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
CMO Executive Team