




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, M. Ed., CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: December 27, 2023

SUBJECT: **Staff update to Austin Civilian Conservation Corps Evaluation and Direction (Ordinance No. 20220817-004)**

We wanted to share an update to [Ordinance No. 20220817-004 Mayor Adler's Budget Rider 3 \(ACCC\) v3](#), which directs the City manager to explore whether and how the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC) mission and work plans:

- (1) Should include pathways to jobs specifically for people experiencing homelessness who otherwise would not have access to or would have difficulty accessing employment; or
- (2) Should otherwise support and be a part of our community's homelessness response system (for example, assisting with placemaking efforts associated with the HEAL initiative).

What about: The ordinance further says the exploration should include input from ACCC, Austin Public Health (APH), Economic Development Department (EDD), and Homeless Services Office (HSO) staff with a report back to Council no later than the first quarter of 2023. [This was completed on March 24, 2023.](#) Additionally, it directs the City Manager to prepare an evaluation of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps pilot that includes the number of individuals served, evaluates how the program has helped put people on pathways to employment, how it has helped advance conservation and sustainability goals, and how the ACCC has enhanced and can enhance the homeless response system. Finally, the City Manager shall detail and outline how he intends to build out the ACCC program over the next five years.

Pathways to Jobs for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

ACCC has successfully initiated a pathway to jobs specifically for people experiencing homelessness through a temporary contract with Hungry Hill Foundation (HHF). Currently, ACCC funds HHF's existing program which supports East Austin residents on their re-entry journey from unhoused to self-sufficient community members. Through a holistic multi-tiered work and apprenticeship program, HHF clients support park beautification, creek corridor restoration, and greenbelt restoration.

HHF and ACCC are collaboratively designing an expanded contract to educate, train, and support unhoused individuals with conservation knowledge, skills, and experience. In coordination with APH, HSO and EDD, this pathway to employment will be further developed.

ACCC Evaluation

The ACCC was previously housed within EDD. On May 7, 2020, Austin City Council [Resolution No. 20200507-061](#) created the ACCC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022, ACCC transitioned to the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC). Since then, ACCC has expanded its programmatic focus from beyond a pandemic response to address the overarching strategy of increasing green jobs through workforce development as outlined in the [Austin Climate Equity Plan adopted in September of 2021](#).

During the FY2023 Budget Approval Process, Council approved two full-time positions to further develop and execute the ACCC mission of equity prioritization in green workforce development and expansion of green vocations. These positions have been filled with the titles of Program Manager III and Conservation Program Coordinator.

ACCC Five Year Strategies

ACCC will continue to prioritize equity in green workforce development with communities who historically and currently bear the brunt of impacts as climate change accelerates, including low-income communities, those experiencing homelessness, and BIPOC communities. The following strategies will contribute to this priority:

- Evaluate pathways to jobs based on metrics and adapt and align to changing workforce needs (annually).
- Refine processes to reduce barriers in hiring and job placement by working collaboratively with Human Resources, partners, and members (annually).
- Strengthen workforce development networks of support for those most impacted by a changing climate and build relationships with other mission aligned networks.
- Develop a partnership assessment tool through the lens of racial equity and increase external pathways that support ACCC's mission and vision with leadership that represents the community.

Implement improved and applicable systems for metric collection, reporting, and transparency. The following strategies will contribute to this priority:

- Development of a quantitative quarterly dashboard for metrics to include number of pathways, number of people compensated/employed, demographics, percentage of BIPOC workforce and percentage of partnerships with BIPOC lead organizations, etc.
- Distribute quarterly newsletters to share qualitative data and updates.

Leverage funding opportunities for program sustainability. The following strategies will contribute to this priority:

- Research and secure ongoing grant funding opportunities to be in place by Fiscal Year 2025.
- During the budget review, annually explore opportunities to partner with City departments that have funding for projects with overarching strategies aligned with ACCC.
- Explore and implement a process for acceptance of donations and sponsorship.

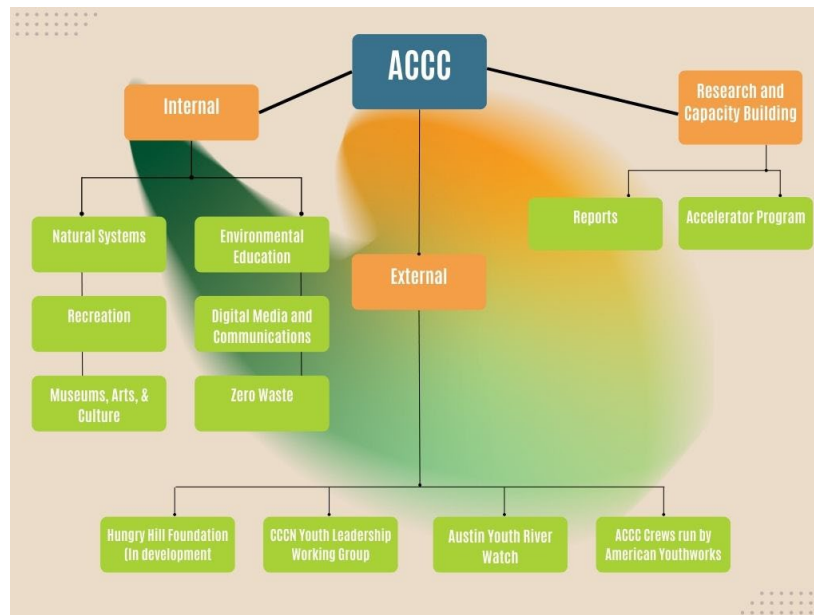
Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager

Austin Civilian Conservation Corp (ACCC) Program Overview – Expanded Fact Sheet

ACCC prioritizes working with communities that have been historically impacted the most by extreme weather and continue to bear the brunt of impacts as climate change accelerates. This includes low-income communities, those experiencing homelessness, and BIPOC (black indigenous, and people of color) communities.

The [ACCC program](#) consists of three programmatic areas: 1) internal City pathways; 2) external pathways and partnerships; and 3) research and capacity building. [See an overview video here.](#)



The following chart summarizes the number of individuals employed or compensated by the ACCC program to date:

	Total number of individuals employed/ compensated*	# of people offered a position upon program completion	ACCC Individuals who accepted full time City positions
Fiscal Year 2021	128	<i>did not collect</i>	0
Fiscal Year 2022	82	<i>did not collect</i>	2
Fiscal Year 2023	388	114**	10
Running Totals	598	114**	12

*The time that people were employed or compensated ranges from 1 day to 12 months depending on program & term

**Some programs have not tracked this measurement and others are still reporting results.

Internal Pathways

PARD created six internal pathways in a cross-departmental effort. ACCC members and specialists gain exposure to environmental careers through hands-on-experience, job shadowing, mentorship, career portfolio building and exposure to equity-based green workforce curriculum. The pathways opportunities include:

- **Natural Systems:** This is a collaboration between PARD, Watershed Protection Department (WPD), and Development Services Department (DSD). This team contributes to protecting critical ecosystem services and land while gaining experience in forestry, land management, and green stormwater infrastructure.
- **Environmental Education:** A partnership with PARD, WPD, and DSD that provides exposure to environmental education careers and provides nature focused programming in recreation centers, playgrounds, parks and other spaces.
- **Digital Media & Communications:** Employs members of the community in communications related to ACCC planning and networking.
- **Museum, Arts & Culture:** Provides internal PARD program support where members gain career exposure and professional development related to culture, museums, and arts sectors.
- **Recreation Outreach:** Provides internal PARD program support where members gain career exposure and professional development related to youth development.
- **Zero Waste:** Collaboration between PARD, Financial Services Department's Telecommunication and Regulatory Affairs division providing training in computer refurbishment.

The following chart summarizes the **internal pathways** for FY23 programs:

FY23 Internal Pathways	Total number of individuals employed/ compensated*	# of people offered a position after term	Individuals transitioned from ACCC to full time City positions
Natural Systems	7	7	2
Environmental Education	10	7	0
The Museums, Arts, and Culture	66	22	0
Recreation	65	38	0
Digital Media & Communications	5	4	0
Zero Waste	4	program not complete	program not complete
TOTALS	157	78	2

*The time that people were employed or compensated ranges from 1-9 months depending on program & term

The ACCC Internal Pathways have advanced conservation and sustainability goals in FY23 as follows:

- 5,000 hours of natural systems management on parkland. Projects include planting, restoration and maintenance, forest health analysis, invasive species mapping and control, design, and installation and maintenance of green stormwater infrastructure.
- Over 1,300 hours of environmental programming with 3700 participants.
- 1,390 hours from Austin Youth River Watch participants of conservation work on parkland, water quality monitoring, and riparian restoration projects.
- 12,000 hours of natural systems management for Fiscal Year 2023 have been provided by ACCC crews run by American YouthWorks. Projects include vegetation control, general forest health maintenance, invasive removal, trail and fence building, fuel reduction on public lands, and wildfire mitigation on public land.

External Pathways and Partnerships

ACCC partners with nonprofits and other organizations' existing programs to support its mission. These partners employ, train, mentor, and support participants with job placement. PARD tasks partners with centering equity in program design and examining areas to improve their own culture. ACCC partners with:

- [American Youthworks](#): American Youthworks performs jobs for multiple City Departments to complete land management projects utilizing green workforce development employees through the American Youthworks external pathway.
- [Austin Youth River Watch \(AYRW\)](#) provides multi-year after school and summer programs for high school students. AYRW combines peer mentoring with intensive environmental education while engaging youth through nature-based and experiential service-learning programs in environmental science.
- The [Hungry Hill Foundation](#) supports east Austin residents on their re-entry journey from unhoused to self-sufficient citizens through a holistic multi-tiered-work apprenticeship program in park beautification.

The following charts summarizes the **external pathways** for FY23 programs:

FY23 External Pathways	Total number of individuals employed/ compensated*	# of people offered a position after term	Individuals transitioned from ACCC to full time City positions
Hungry Hill Foundation	80	20	0
Austin Youth River Watch	112 (High school students in the River Watch program = 107 Young adults in the AEL intern program = 5)	Not reported	0

American YouthWorks	39 *17 completed term, 22 are currently employed	16	8
TOTALS	229	34	8

*The time that people were employed or compensated ranges from 1-9 months

The ACCC External Pathways have advanced conservation and sustainability goals in FY23 as follows:

- 1,390 hours from AYRW participants of conservation work on parkland, water quality monitoring, and riparian restoration projects.
- 12,000 hours of natural systems management for Fiscal Year 2023 have been provided by ACCC crews run by American YouthWorks. Projects include vegetation control, general forest health maintenance, invasive removal, trail and fence building, fuel reduction on public lands, and wildfire mitigation on public land.

Research and Capacity Building

Build with Humanity and MEASURE are two organizations owned and operated by people of color and have strong ties within communities of color as well as other underserved groups. Each researched and provided reports to help build an understanding of the program's potential users, current and future needs, training and career goals, and potential barriers to participation in the ACCC program. ACCC also collaborated with the University of Texas' School of Architecture's Community and Regional Planning Program to provide a framework for defining green jobs within the local context and to provide an outline of current and future green job growth. These reports shape the long-term potential pathways of growth for future ACCC investment. In addition to reports, the department continues to gain input and feedback from ACCC participants to inform and shape its program.

- [What Works in Works Programs: Building Equity in the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps \[PDF\]](#)
- [Lived Experience & the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps \[PDF\]](#)
- [Expanding Pathways to Quality Jobs in Austin's Growing Green Economy \[PDF\]](#)

Additionally, to build organizational capacity ACCC focuses on relationships and supporting networks that are vision and mission aligned. ACCC supports and is involved with:

- City of Austin Equity Office
- Equity Network.
- Cities Connecting Children to Nature - Youth Leadership Working Group is a network of City and nonprofit youth and organization leaders who imagine an Austin where young people can easily access careers in outdoors, nature, and the environment.
- Green Workforce Accelerator is an example of the City of Austin's Office of Innovation and ACCC supporting organizations and businesses that want to expand their current capacity or build new programs for employment, develop their career opportunities, and advance positive equity, sustainability, and resilience outcomes. The third Green Workforce Accelerator program will launch fall 2023.