



Legislation Text

File #: 17-226, **Version:** 1

ACTION REQUESTED:

Communication from the City Manager, Director of Public Works and Chief Innovation Officer with a Request to AUTHORIZE the City Manager to EXECUTE a GRANT AGREEMENT with the Serve Illinois Commission for AMERICORPS Funding for the PEORACORPS Program, in the Amount of \$138,285.00.

BACKGROUND:

Best Practices

In 2015, City staff from the Public Works Department and Innovation Team traveled to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to learn about their best practices around green infrastructure installation and maintenance. A key component of their maintenance regime is a program called PowerCorpsPHL, an AmeriCorps program which provides opportunity youth with the training and skill development necessary to pursue careers in related industries. City staff were inspired by the model and returned to Peoria with the intention of scoping the potential for a similar program locally. Following extensive engagement with the IDEAS Committee, One Water Committee, and other outreach through neighborhood associations and community groups, this model was deemed a high priority for the Innovation Team's slated list of initiatives.

Feasibility Study

A feasibility study of organizations that could potentially house and operate a corps program was undertaken by a non-profit organization representing corps across the U.S. called The Corps Network (TCN). TCN determined through this process that no organization had the existing capacity to develop and implement a corps program in Peoria. An alternative was outlined that suggested the City of Peoria consider housing the program internally by adding capacity through dedicated program staff. This option would allow the City's Public Works Department to have responsibility over fieldwork completed by program participants. In addition to the feasibility study, TCN provided the City with a framework for designing an effective corps program. The City used this framework, and the recommended Advisory Committee approach, to design a corps model for Peoria.

Advisory Committee

After opting to explore the option of housing a program internal to the City, an Advisory Committee comprised of non-profits, potential fee-for-service organizations, the local workforce investment board, and other relevant stakeholders convened to develop the pillars of a PeoriaCorps model. The Advisory Committee was responsible for crafting PeoriaCorps' mission:

PeoriaCorps is empowering opportunity youth by providing a pathway to connect them to meaningful service experience, education and skill development, all while improving the community in which they live.

The Advisory Committee was also responsible for creating the program design including service focus, participant focus, terms of service, participant development and support, as well as assisting City staff in drafting plans for the recruitment, training, education, and support services offered to participants. Additional detail about these components is included in the attached grant application.

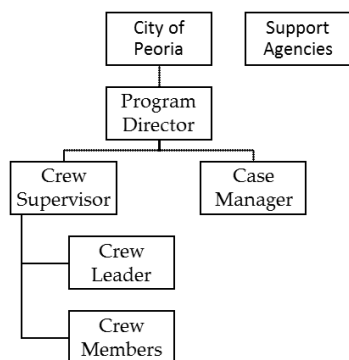
Participants

The program is intended for opportunity youth, those ages 18 to 24 who have been out of school and

unemployed for six months, to gain both the employability skills necessary to become productive members of Peoria's community as well as the technical skills for designated career pathways. Two crews of ten participants each will serve consecutive terms of six-months. Participants will spend 20% of their time in a classroom setting to gain the necessary knowledge to maintain green infrastructure as well as life skills such as financial literacy. The remaining 80% of participants' time will be spent in the field conducting green infrastructure maintenance. Participants will earn a stipend of \$6,500 which will be dispersed throughout their term of service. Participants will receive support to reduce barriers that would inhibit successful completion of the program. Once a participant graduates from PeoriaCorps, he or she will then receive placement support for an additional educational opportunity or fulltime placement in a job.

Staffing

PeoriaCorps is designed with three staff positions: a Program Director, Case Manager and Crew Supervisor. All three positions are necessary for PeoriaCorps to operate. The Program Director will report to the Director of Public Works and will be responsible for managing both PeoriaCorps and the Mayor's Summer Youth Program. The Program Director's responsibilities will include supervision and staff development, program management, project development, grant compliance, and program sustainability including fundraising and identifying fee-for-service partners. The Case Manager will report to the Program Director. The Case Manager will develop and implement the recruitment process, assist with participant onboarding, connect participants with services to address barriers to participating in the program, conduct assessments, assist with grant reporting, work with participants on career pathways, develop and implement mentoring components, and serve as back up to the Crew Supervisor. The Crew Supervisor will report to the Program Director and will assist with participant onboarding, serve as the lead instructor during both classroom and fieldwork training, develop the fieldwork schedule in conjunction with Public Works staff, and schedule professional development and speakers to promote participants' understanding of career opportunities and civic responsibility.



Grant Applications

City Staff took the culmination of the Advisory Committee's input, research around best practices, and lessons learned from similar programs to design applications for two grant opportunities. The first grant opportunity is through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) for AmeriCorps funding. The City was recently notified that it has been selected for funding in the amount of \$138,285 plus additional educational awards for participants after program completion. The second grant opportunity is through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for the Apprenticeship Plus Youth Program. The City has executed an agreement with DCEO in the amount of \$205,000.

Funding Source	Amount
CNCS AmeriCorps	\$138,285
DCEO Apprenticeship Plus Youth	\$205,000
In-Kind - Program Partners	\$20,400

City of Peoria - Public Works Department	\$101,547
Total Program	\$465,232
<i>CNCS Education Awards for Completers</i>	<i>\$58,150</i>

The AmeriCorps grant award is for one year with extensions available for year 2 and year 3. The Program Director will be responsible for identifying additional funding for out-years of the program including, but not limited to, foundations, grants and fee-for-service contracts.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: The City will receive \$138,285.00 from the Corporation for National and Community Service AmeriCorps program to assist in funding the PeoriaCorps program for 2017. The grant funds may also be renewed for year 2 and year 3.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS: Neighborhoods that have been engaged about PeoriaCorps have been excited not only about the additional capacity to maintain the City's existing green infrastructure installations, but also about the opportunity for paid service-learning for people from within the community.

IMPACT IF APPROVED: When combined with the DCEO funding, the AmeriCorps funds will help complete the funding for a 2017 launch of the PeoriaCorps program.

IMPACT IF DENIED: If denied, the City will not be able to launch the PeoriaCorps program in 2017. The City will also have to deny the additional \$58,150.00 in education awards for program completers as well as the DCEO funds in the amount of \$205,000.00.

ALTERNATIVES: No alternative funding sources exist to launch the PeoriaCorps program in 2017. Should Council choose to deny this grant opportunity, staff could evaluate the opportunity to fund the program through other sources in 2018.

EEO CERTIFICATION NUMBER: N/A

WHICH OF THE GOALS IDENTIFIED IN THE COUNCIL'S 2014 - 2029 STRATEGIC PLAN DOES THIS RECOMMENDATION ADVANCE?

1. Financially Sound City Government, Effective City Organization
2. Vibrant Downtown: Riverfront/ Central Business District/ Warehouse District
3. Attractive Neighborhoods with Character: Safe and Livable

WHICH CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR(S) FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DOES THIS RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENT?

1. Support sustainability.
2. Invest in our infrastructure and transportation.
3. Reinvest in neighborhoods.

DEPARTMENT: Public Works and Innovation Team