

HOW DO I START an ESC PROGRAM?



Thank you for your interest in Episcopal Service Corps!

ESC is a network of unique and independent programs based in diverse Episcopal communities. The shape of the program you create reflects your community (parish, town, diocese, region) and the issues most important to you (racial, socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, political, environmental, etc.). Pastoral and educational goals, such as discernment for ordained ministry, community organizing leadership development, or environmental justice, will also impact the design of your program. A successful program design incorporates these factors as well as ESC's core values:

Episcopal Service Corps' Core Values:

- Intentional Christian Community
- Service of others in solidarity, promoting justice through community
- Deepening of spiritual awareness and vocational discernment
- Simple Living
- Relationship with an Episcopal entity (parish, diocese, charity, campus ministry, camp)

WHAT DOES A PROGRAM PROVIDE TO THE YOUNG ADULT CORPS MEMBERS?

There are eight main components that an ESC program provides to corps members. Although all programs include these components, the way each program provides or structures them varies based upon particular needs and resources available in each community.

Ministry broadly understood: ESC programs provide corps members with meaningful opportunities to work toward justice and service of others by matching them with a service placement. Service sites include a wide variety of non-profit settings such as schools, parishes, organic farms, homeless shelters, after-school programs, refugee resettlement organizations, hospitals, etc. The service sites largely depend upon your specific community context. The program director works in partnership with the service site staff to mentor and support the success of the corps members throughout his or her year of service.



Retreats and formation: ESC programs provide corps members with spiritual and leadership formation. Each program year includes at least four retreats (summer orientation, fall

HOW DO I START an ESC PROGRAM?



retreat, winter re-orientation, spring closing retreat) in addition to monthly house meetings,

weekly dinner meetings, diocesan trainings, field trips, workshops, and/or special offerings. Community rule of life, communal worship, and individual spiritual direction are also components of a program. In addition, it is helpful to connect with other young-adult, faith-based, service-learning programs in your area, as corps members often benefit from networking with their peers.

Housing: ESC programs provide fully furnished housing for corps members. This may be an apartment or house, a church-owned property or a rental. It is appropriate for ESC programs to ask corps members to share bedrooms if the space requires such an arrangement. Male and female corps members may live in the same residence.

Utilities: ESC programs provide utilities for the residence.



Individual stipend: ESC programs provide each corps members with a monthly stipend to cover personal expenses. The individual stipend amount varies by program, ranging from \$100 to \$400, depending on the cost of living. Each program must determine how much is enough to cover necessary expenses while encouraging simple living. The website www.bestplaces.net/col/ can help you calculate living costs in your community.

Grocery stipend: ESC programs provide a communal grocery stipend to corps members. The grocery stipend depends on the cost of living in a community, but tends to range between \$50-\$175 per person each month.

Health insurance: ESC programs offer each corps member optional health insurance. Programs may enroll corps members in a customized plan through Church Medical Trust, your diocesan plan or other provider. The customized plan through Church Medical Trust option costs \$50 to enroll each participant and costs between about \$250-\$350 per month per person, depending on the plan. About half of our corps members elect to remain on a parent's health insurance plan.

Transportation stipend: ESC programs provide each corps members with local transportation, in the form of a public transit pass (where available,) with shared cars, or with a monthly gas stipend. Programs may or may not allow corps members to bring their own cars. If so, policies should be in place regarding maintenance, insurance, sharing of vehicles, etc.

HOW DO I START an ESC PROGRAM?



HOW LONG IS A YEAR OF SERVICE?

ESC programs range between a minimum of nine months and a maximum of 12 months. Some transition time is needed to prepare the residence for the next group of corps members. Some programs chose to offer corps members the option of serving an additional year. In these cases, the program develops a specific 2nd year curriculum to address the different needs of more experienced corps members.

HOW MANY CORPS MEMBERS SERVE IN A PROGRAM?

A minimum of three corps members is needed to explore and experience ESC's core value of intentional Christian Community, and programs with six to eight corps members tend to be more stable. There is no maximum number of corps members. Larger ESC programs have as many as 25 corps members living in multiple residences across a city. In the case of larger programs, community formation occurs both within a single residence and across the entire program.

WHAT ARE THE STAFFING NEEDS OF A PROGRAM?

Leading a successful ESC program requires at least a paid half-time program director. Staffing varies across current ESC programs, between a half-time program director to two full-time directors. Staff salary and benefits are a significant cost for any program. Whether a program needs a full-time staff member largely depends on whether corps members serve 32 or 40 hours each week at their service sites.

A. If corps members serve 40 hours each week at their service sites a half-time (20 hours a week) program director may be adequate to plan and run retreats, lead monthly house meetings, recruit and interview corps members, recruit and manage service sites, offer support and guidance to corps members, and otherwise run a successful program.

B. If corps members serve 32 hours each week at their service sites a program will need more staffing in the form of at least one full-time (40 hours a week) program director. ESC programs that follow this model reserve one full weekday each week for programming, community, and worship. Being present for and planning the weekly formation day takes a lot of work in addition to the responsibilities listed above, yet it also provides time and space for additional formation. Staff needs are smaller when a program does not have a weekly programming day.



HOW DO I START an ESC PROGRAM?



C. If the program is a ministry of a parish, chaplaincy, or other Episcopal entity a full-time staff member of that organization may have the program as half of his/her areas of responsibility (20 hours a week).

HOW IS AN ESC PROGRAM FUNDED?

Many ESC programs rely on a “service site model” for funding. Corps members serve 32-40 hours a week at non-profit service sites, which are charged a fee by the program. Service site fees of existing programs range from \$10K (subsidized by the diocese) to \$25K. The amount of the service site fee depends upon your local economy and what other young adult service programs in your area such as Lutheran Volunteer Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps charge. It is helpful to



reach out as early as possible during a program’s ‘start-up’ phase to potential service sites to gauge their interest and financial ability. Often a service site will be interested in receiving a full-time young adult corps members, but needs to include the service site fee into the subsequent year’s budget.

Ideally, service site fees cover close to 100% of the program's costs. In general, a sustainable staff-to-corps members ratio is 1:15.

Example: An ESC program charges \$13K to each service site for a corps member serving 32 hours a week. This program needs about 16 corps members per full-time staff member to be financially sustainable.

However, many ESC programs need to fundraise each year to fill the gap between income from the service site fees and costs of staff and corps members. Some sources include the diocesan budget, parish budget, outside grants, individual donors, and fundraising events. It is important for new programs to have a fundraising plan in place and be realistic about sources of additional income.

The service site model is not required by ESC and some programs employ very different funding structures. ESC is concerned that programs have a plan for financial sustainability and work toward that goal, using whatever funding sources are appropriate in each context.

HOW MUCH MONEY DOES IT TAKE TO BEGIN A NEW PROGRAM?

\$20K-\$30K “seed money” from a parish, diocese, chaplaincy, Episcopal charity, or other entity is often needed to begin. A half-time staff person (20 hours a week) before start-up is strongly encouraged.

HOW DO I START an ESC PROGRAM?



ARE AMERICORPS BENEFITS AVAILABLE?

Some ESC programs elect to affiliate with AmeriCorps. The benefits include forbearance of student loans during the year of service and a grant (“educational award”) that can be applied to past or future educational expenses for the corps member upon completion of the program. AmeriCorps requires a lot of paperwork and limits the type of service and service sites at which corps members may serve (religious-based service does not qualify.) Currently, ESC is a member of Catholic Volunteer Network, a much larger organization that applies directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service (the federal agency administering AmeriCorps.)

WHY JOIN ESC?

Membership provides many benefits:

Publicity: ESC educates Episcopalians about our member programs at gatherings such as the House of Bishops, Episcopal Youth Event, and General Convention. Participating in this larger movement within the Episcopal Church provides greater exposure of a program than would otherwise be possible individually.



Recruitment: One of the greatest membership benefits is the common online application. All admissions to any ESC program are organized through the ESC website, consequently, applicants to any program become aware of and can learn about all the other ESC programs.

Applicants can easily choose to apply to multiple ESC programs at one time using one application. The common application also streamlines the application process for all programs and increases web visibility by linking with AmeriCorps, Catholic Volunteer Network, Idealist.org, and other high-trafficked websites. Other benefits include combined recruiting efforts of ESC staff, program directors, board members, and alumni at conferences, colleges, and universities across the US on behalf of all programs.

Program Development & Support: The ESC network provides a community of program director colleagues that share knowledge, best practices, new tools, and advice. The ESC Executive Director organizes continuing education for program directors through monthly conference calls, biannual national meetings, and regional events. ESC also organizes intern retreats at the national and regional level. Resources for program development and financial sustainability are developed through the ESC office as well.

HOW DO I START an ESC PROGRAM?



WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ESC MEMBERSHIP?

Once the board approves a new program for membership in Episcopal Service Corps, the program director is expected to fully participate in all ESC conference calls and meetings. Membership also includes the following dues to ESC:

- Joining Fee of \$500 payable to ESC once the ESC board approves membership
- Annual membership dues, prorated on the number of corps members in your program, are calculated each August and invoiced to all ESC programs. For example, a program with 8 corps members would pay \$3,000 in the spring of the 2013-2014 year of service.

For more helpful information, please visit the Episcopal Service Corps website:
www.EpiscopalServiceCorps.org

**We look forward to continuing this conversation
with you...**

Faithfully,
The Rev. Amity Carrubba
ESC Executive Director

