

RCW 43.41.470 Washington climate corps network. (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington climate corps network is established to support and grow climate-related service opportunities for young adults and veterans with the objective of building low-carbon and climate-resilient communities, ecosystems, and economies while providing education, workforce development, and career pathways to service members, with a focus on overburdened communities as defined in RCW 70A.02.010. The Washington climate corps network shall be administered by Serve Washington, an entity created in Executive Order 16-08, signed August 24, 2016. The office shall provide the administrative support to serve Washington to facilitate the establishment and operation of the Washington climate corps network.

(2) Serve Washington has the following duties:

(a) Connect, amplify, and grow climate-related service opportunities to mobilize and train young adults and veterans to build clean energy and climate-resilient communities, economies, and ecosystems, with priority on doing so in overburdened communities as defined in RCW 70A.02.010. In growing new, climate-related service opportunities, serve Washington shall consider the findings and recommendations from the clean energy technology workforce advisory committee established under RCW 28C.18.210 and the needs and recommendations developed under RCW 76.04.521 for forest sector workforce development;

(b) Establish common requirements for participating service programs including, but not limited to, a focus on climate-related activities, service member participation in events, and service member participation in the service-learning program established in (c) of this subsection;

(c) Develop and administer a service-learning program that provides training to climate corps network service members during their tenure of service. The service-learning program must provide training and learning opportunities to develop leadership skills, foster environmental stewardship and civic engagement, and expose members to an array of climate-related professional and educational opportunities. Training shall not supplant or replace state registered apprenticeship programs approved under chapter 49.04 RCW. Serve Washington shall leverage opportunities to align the service-learning program with training offered by career connect Washington under chapter 28C.30 RCW and by the department of natural resources under RCW 76.04.521. Serve Washington shall coordinate with the following entities in the design and administration of the service-learning program: Service programs; tribes; environmental justice organizations; labor organizations; institutions that provide career and technical education; the workforce training and education coordinating board created in chapter 28C.18 RCW; career connect Washington authorized under chapter 28C.30 RCW; and the department of natural resources; and

(d) Administer grants to support and broaden access to climate-related service programs, with priority to supporting service in, for, or by members of overburdened communities as defined in RCW 70A.02.010. Serve Washington shall establish a transparent process for establishing priorities and selection criteria. Serve Washington may provide grants to:

(i) Support equitable access to participation in the Washington climate corps network and reduce financial barriers for service members. This includes, but is not limited to, augmenting a service

member's living allowance with the intent to achieve or exceed the living wage established in the county of service, if a living wage is in place;

(ii) Reduce the cost of climate corps network service programs to host service members; and

(iii) Support the development of new service programs in geographic and topical areas that currently lack robust climate-related service programs. [2023 c 231 s 2.]

Findings—2023 c 231: "(1) The legislature recognizes that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the state and the world today, and that we must mobilize Washington's young adults, veterans, and workforce to create the clean energy economy and strengthen our communities and ecosystems in the face of climate impacts.

(2) The legislature finds that service provides a unique opportunity to mobilize young adults and veterans to build clean energy and climate-resilient communities, economies, and ecosystems. Growing equity-centered, climate-related service programs and addressing critical gaps in service opportunities will broaden access to service, ensuring that young adults and veterans of all backgrounds, especially from overburdened communities and vulnerable populations, can serve. Doing so will also ensure that service programs address the needs of communities across the state, especially those communities disproportionately impacted by environmental and health burdens.

(3) The legislature further finds as our state transitions away from a fossil fuel-based economy, we must do so in a way that fosters innovation, investment, and growth in clean energy technology sectors and jobs so our businesses, workforce, and communities can thrive. As state, federal, local, and tribal governments implement policies to mitigate the destructive forces of climate change, there will be consequences for Washington's businesses, workers, and communities. Accomplishing an equitable transition will require identification of future industry occupations and skill needs, the existing workforce's transferrable skills to meet those needs, and the gaps that need to be addressed through training and education. The state must also provide support in the transition for workers and communities experiencing declining jobs and revenues associated with high-emissions technologies.

(4) Therefore, to create pathways for workers, young adults, and veterans to help build our clean energy, climate-resilient future, the legislature intends to create the Washington climate corps network and to direct the Washington state workforce training and education coordinating board to establish a clean energy technology advisory committee and to evaluate clean energy technology workforce needs and make recommendations to the governor and legislature.

(5) The legislature recognizes that the creation of the Washington climate corps network is necessary to create pathways for young adults and veterans to help build our clean energy, climate-resilient future and to increase equitable access to these programs. Therefore, the legislature intends for serve Washington to launch the network and conduct initial recruitment in the 2023-25 [2023-2025] fiscal biennium, and to grow the network in future biennia." [2023 c 231 s 1.]