

# OREGON CONSERVATION CORPS ANNUAL REPORT 2025 ORS 476.696



Photo Credit: Northwest Youth Corps



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Overview

SB 83 (2025) revised ORS 476.696 to **require annual, rather than biennial, reporting** for the Oregon Conservation Corps. The report continues to be required on the established timeline described in ORS 293.640, to an appropriate committee or interim committee of the Legislative Assembly, as described in ORS 192.245, and to the State Wildfire Programs Director and Wildfire Programs Advisory Council, regarding the expenditure of moneys deposited in the Oregon Conservation Corps Fund.

The previous biennial report, submitted in June 2025, was filed under prior statutory requirements. This report includes updated data and reflects the new annual reporting requirements.

The Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC) is codified in ORS 476.694-476.698. OCC is a youth-focused wildfire risk reduction and workforce development initiative that has concluded three and a half years of program operations between January 2022 and June 2025. It was originally funded with a one-time investment in 2021 (SB 762) and then again with one-time funding in the legislature's 2023 end of session bill (SB 5506). Partial one-time funding has been appropriated for the 2025-2027 biennium and was included in the 2025 end of session bill (HB 5006).

OCC engages youth, particularly those from underserved communities, in fire fuels mitigation efforts while also providing job training and certifications relevant to wildfire and natural resource careers. It is a program of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and is housed within its Office of Workforce Investments.

### Key Program Metrics (Cumulative)

- Total Grants Awarded: \$11,290,597
- Total Reimbursed/Spent 10,048,536
- Young Persons Served: 428
- Adult Personnel Served: 105
- Total Wages Paid: \$6,561,456
- Acres Treated: 1,719
- Sites Treated: 579
- ZIP Codes Served: 75
- Structures Impacted: 558

### Beyond acres treated and youth employed, OCC's broader value lies in:

- Building fire-adapted, resilient communities
- Empowering youth from diverse and underserved backgrounds
- Earning certifications and credentials
- Supporting career pathways into forestry, wildland firefighting, emergency management, and conservation
- Enhancing community trust and safety through visible mitigation work

OCC's success depends on recognizing the multifaceted impact: from economic mobility and job readiness for participants to reduced wildfire risk for vulnerable neighborhoods. Importantly, defensible space and mitigation treatments are not permanent fixes—they require ongoing maintenance, education, and resources to ensure sustained community resilience.

Considerations for this investment cannot be limited to only the number of youth participants served or the number of acres treated.

The impact of the program extends to the adult staff who are employed and supported by grant dollars, the residents who have their properties treated, the neighborhoods and infrastructure that is protected by completed fuels mitigation treatments, the evacuation routes that serve as both paths to safety and sometimes as buffers for advancing fire, the community members who feel seen and cared for, the fire responders who are able to make difficult decisions more easily because they know that an area has received treatment, and the sense of community resilience built by engaging in this work collaboratively.

Much of the work performed by OCC grantee partners focuses on creating defensible space, a process that is both logistically complex and labor intensive. Additionally, as a workforce development program, OCC participants are still learning and building their skills, which naturally affects efficiency. As they gain experience, participants are encouraged to pursue employment opportunities beyond the program, allowing OCC to support new young people interested in wildfire risk reduction. Many alumni have gone on to work for the Oregon Department of Forestry, the U.S. Forest Service, local governments, private companies, and some have even developed plans to start their own businesses.



# INTRODUCTION

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## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In 2021 the Oregon Legislature passed SB 762 which, among many things, included the establishment of the Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC). The program is codified in ORS 476.694-476.698.

OCC is a youth-focused wildfire risk reduction and workforce development initiative that engages youth in fire fuels mitigation while also providing job training and certifications relevant to wildfire and natural resource careers. OCC is a program of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and is housed within its Office of Workforce Investments. HECC grants funds to local partners across the state to complete the work on the ground in coordination with local fire districts.

Much of the work performed by OCC grantees focuses on creating defensible space, a process that is both logistically complex and labor intensive. Additionally, as a workforce development program, OCC participants are still learning and building their skills, which naturally affects efficiency. As they gain experience, participants are encouraged to pursue employment opportunities beyond the program, allowing OCC to support new young people interested in wildfire risk reduction. Many alumni have gone on to work for the Oregon Department of Forestry, the U.S. Forest Service, local governments, private companies, and some have even developed plans to start their own businesses.

OCC was originally funded with a one-time investment in 2021 (SB 762) and then again with one-time funding in the legislature’s 2023 end of session bill (SB 5506). Partial one-time funding has been appropriated for the 2025-2027 biennium and was included in the 2025 end of session bill (HB 5006). Funding for OCC is not a part of HECC’s Current Service Level budget, therefore, funding for the 2027-2029 biennium and beyond is currently uncertain.

Oregon Conservation Corps reporting occurs twice each year, for a total of four reports per biennium. This report summarizes activities conducted between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. Its purpose is to provide the most current data and insights for grantee partners, agency representatives, policymakers, and interagency collaborators.

## CORE METRICS

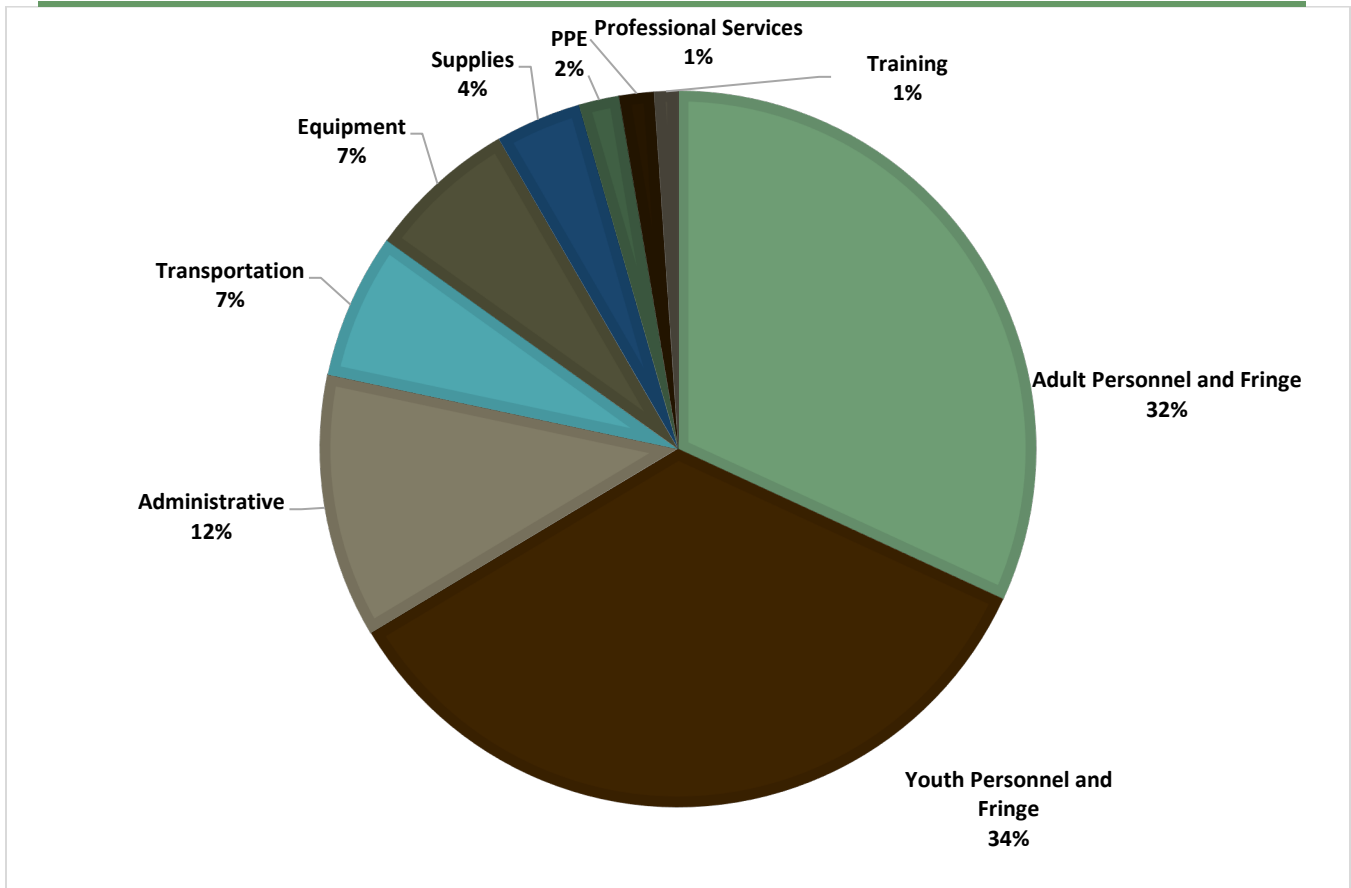
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- ZIP Codes Served: 75
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Photo Credit: Lomakatsi Restoration Project

## GRANT EXPENDITURES



## GRANTEE PARTNERS/AWARD AMOUNTS

Grantee	Award
AntFarm	\$1,000,000.00
Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council	\$1,705,000.00
Community Servies Consortium	\$1,025,000.00
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs	\$973,018.20
Eastern Oregon Workforce Board	\$578,047.60
Integral Youth Services	\$1,000,000.00
Lomakatsi Restoration Project	\$1,669,579.35
Northwest Youth Corps	\$1,669,579.35
Phoenix School of Roseburg	\$1,670,000.00

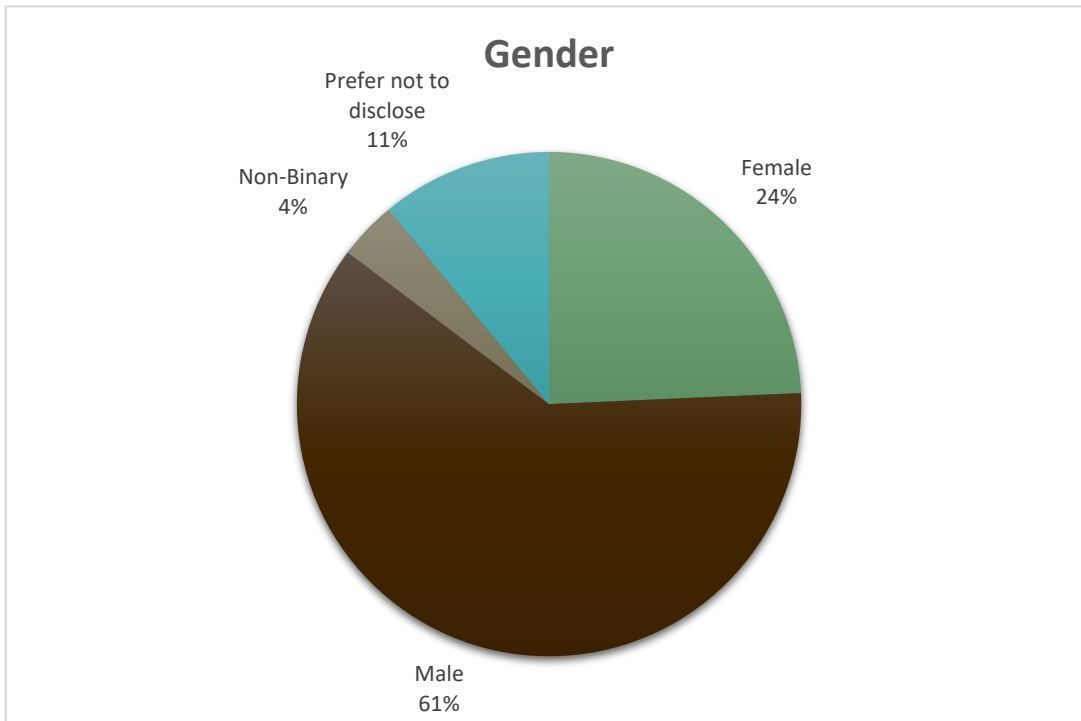
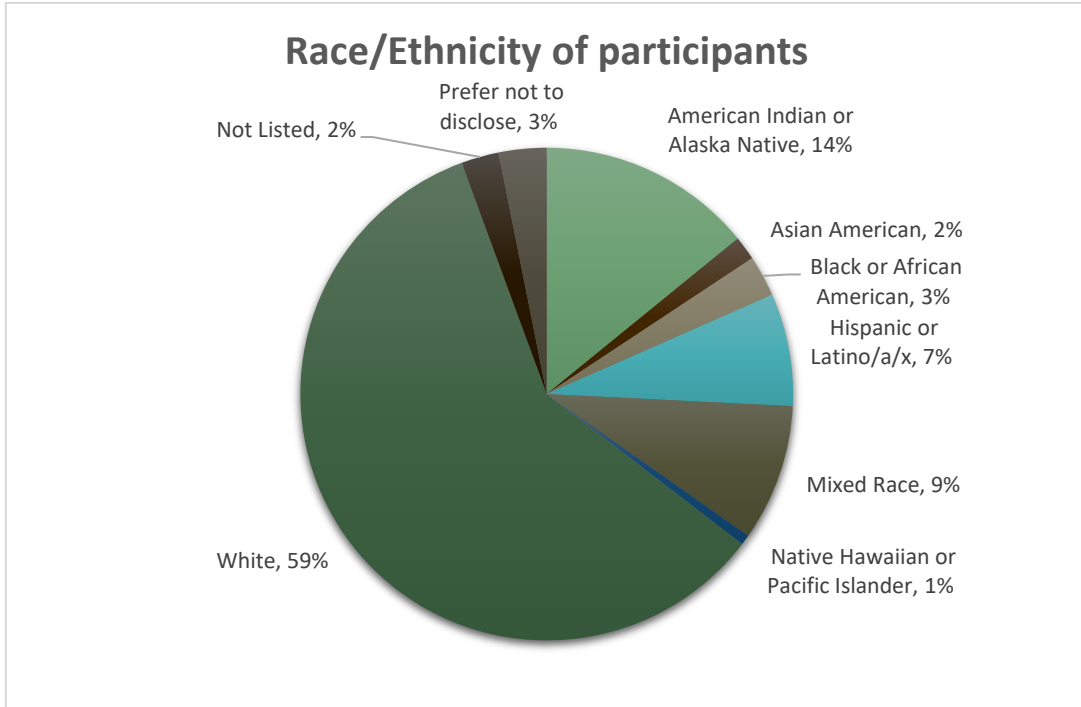
## TYPES OF CERTIFICATIONS EARNED

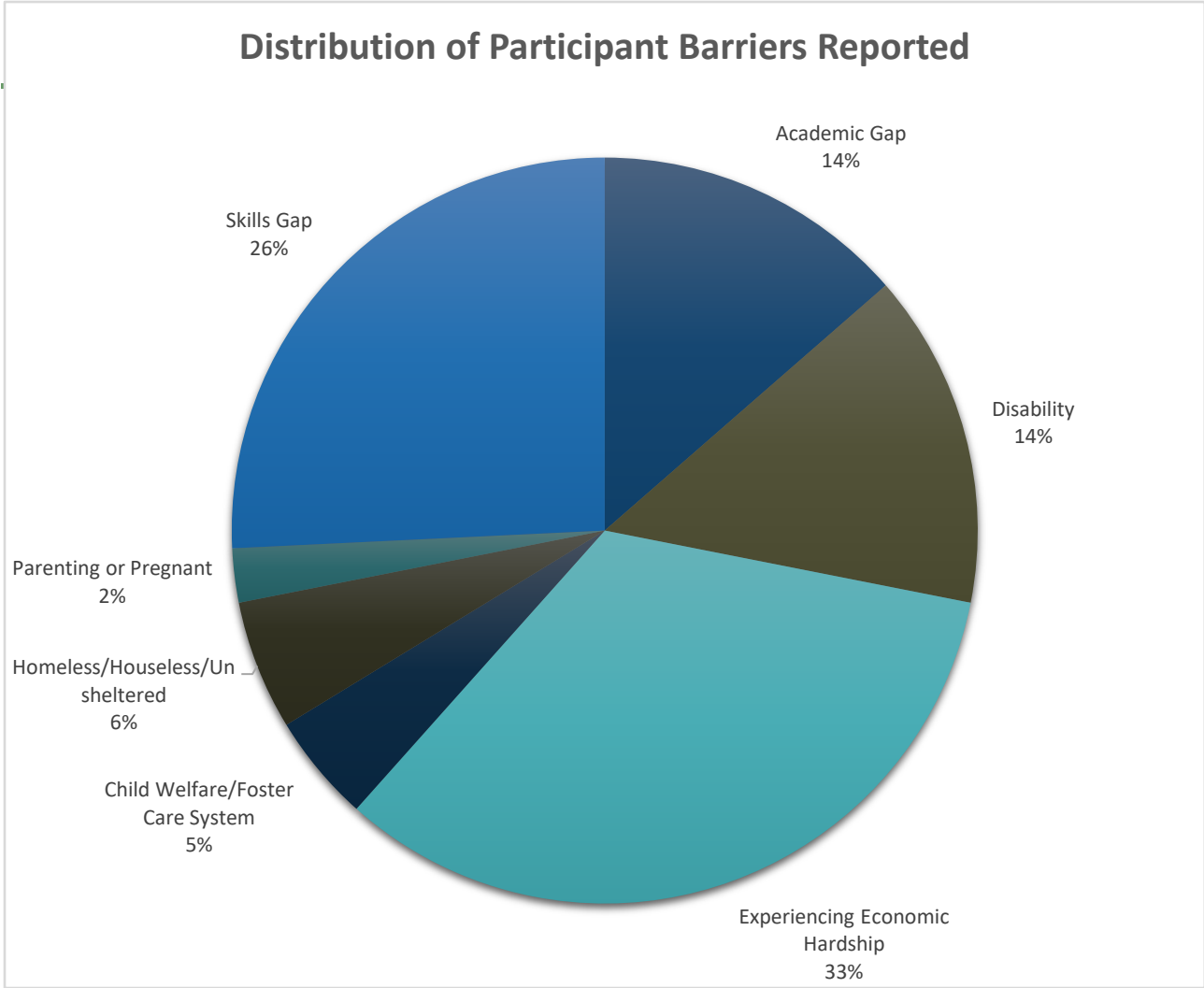
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- CPR
- Crosscut Saw Training
- Cultural Monitoring Certification
- FFT2 Certification
- First Aid
- HPE 120 - First Aid and CPR (2 credits)
- IS-100: Introduction to the Incident Command System
- IS-700.B: An Introduction to the National Incident Management System
- L-180: Human Factors in The Wildland Fire Service
- NATR 101 - Intro to Wildland Fire (3 credits)
- NATR 202 - Wildland Fire Chain Saws (3 credits)
- NFPA Certified Wildfire Mitigation Specialist (CWMS)
- OSHA-10
- P-101: Fire Prevention Education 1
- Red card
- RT-130: Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR)
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- RX-301: Prescribed Fire Implementation
- RX-310: Introduction to Fire Effects
- S-110: Basic Wildland Fire Orientation
- S-130: Firefighter Training
- S-131: Firefighter Type 1 Training
- S-190: Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior
- S-212: Wildland Fire Chainsaws
- Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician (WEMT)
- Wilderness First Aid (WFA)
- Wilderness First Responder (WRF)

# DEMOGRAPHICS

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## CONCLUSION

Considerations for this investment cannot be limited to only the number of youth participants served or the number of acres treated.

The impact of the program extends to the adult staff who are employed and supported by grant dollars, the residents who have their properties treated, the neighborhoods and infrastructure that is protected by completed fuels mitigation treatments, the evacuation routes that serve as both paths to safety and sometimes as buffers for advancing fire, the community members who feel seen and cared for, the fire responders who are able to make difficult decisions more easily because they know that an area has received treatment, and the sense of community resilience built by engaging in this work collaboratively.

Youth participants in the Oregon Conservation Corps come from diverse backgrounds. Most have completed high school or earned a GED and have prior work experience. What unites them is a shared interest in working outdoors and engaging in hands-on, physical projects. They are motivated by a desire to serve their communities, find purpose through meaningful work, and build camaraderie within a trusted crew and

organization—while gaining a stronger sense of agency in their own lives.

It should also be noted that fuels mitigation treatments do not equal guaranteed safety in the event of a fire. Fuels mitigation efforts strengthen the resiliency of a home and access to safe evacuation and response routes. These treatments are also not a one-and-done solution. For many residents, receiving assistance from a crew helps them to see what their property should look like. However, defensible space and fuels mitigation for larger areas require maintenance and it is only one piece of a larger puzzle for fire-adapted communities. Some people can afford, either physically or financially, to continue that maintenance on their own. However, many people cannot. This work will be on-going to continue to serve Oregon's neighbors most in-need.

HECC would like to give special thanks to staff at the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon State Fire Marshal for their support and coordination efforts at both the state and local levels. As the old saying goes, *it takes a community!*

