Dear Commonwealth Corps Community,

As we are starting a new year, we continue to support the Commonwealth Corps community as much as possible during these unprecedented times. This year continues to be full of challenges but also opportunities that have led us to rethink a service year opportunity. We have made some important changes to the program to support our members and to be flexible in the different ways they can continue to serve.

Looking ahead, we recently released the Request for Proposals (RFP) for 2022-2023 Commonwealth Corps host site partners. More details are available on our website. We hope that both new agencies and current/past partners will consider applying. We invite interested applicants to contact us with any questions.

As always, we appreciate our Commonwealth Corps members' dedication to strengthening communities in the Commonwealth and our host site partners for their continued support.
La Colaborativa is a non-profit organization that serves the Latinx immigrant populations in Chelsea, Revere, Malden, Everett, and East Boston. Through the Covid Employment Recovery Program, members will support students, who will learn soft-skills such as resume-building and interview preparation and ESOL classes, that will result in rapid (re)employment and economic stabilization. Our Commonwealth Corps member Ashley has been an excellent resource for the community, serving members through many one on one and group workshop settings. She first listens to members’ goals related to education and employment, then helps them formulate the most economically stabilizing strategy. This usually involves her reviewing their entire work experience to make their resume the most marketable to their target employers. Ashley has many follow up meetings with her members to help them submit job applications online, practice interview questions, or research new opportunities. We wanted to be a host site to both expand our capacity and provide an opportunity for service members to experience a high-need community during the pandemic.

"Ashley has become a mentor, coach, and friend to the community members of Chelsea. They trust her advice and look forward to their meetings. Ashley knows how to support, uplift, and motivate members when their circumstances may be otherwise discouraging."

- Philip White, Workforce Development Manager at La Colaborativa

Ashley manages the direct service component of the workforce development function, serving as the first triage point to members referred to the function. Others on the team expand on initiatives such as Child Tax Credit enrollment and worker Cooperatives, allowing the function to ensure delivery of economically stabilizing and mobilizing services. Ashley has excellent interpersonal skills when dealing with clients. Many of our members/clients are in very stressful personal or socioeconomic conditions. She has worked with members facing very difficult conditions, and one area of growth that has been exciting to watch is Ashley’s leadership translating into self-awareness when handling cases. Ashley takes the lead when a client needs urgent assistance but knows when a case is becoming too emotionally taxing on her. Ashley is self aware enough to take breaks, ask questions, and assess situations to ensure all parties are calm and clearly thinking when making decisions on services. Ashley’s impact to the community is significant, as many members are pursuing new skills or certifications, as well as working in new equitable jobs that will enable economic stability and mobility amongst those households and neighborhoods. La Colaborativa is forever grateful for Ashley’s efforts in workforce development tasks, but will be reminded of her calm demeanor and easy reliability to members that allow her to have a smooth workflow with the members’ priorities driving the economic stabilization. Ashley’s long term impact to the families she has helped could have generational benefits, she is a wonderful addition to our team as well as an excellent resource for the people and communities she serves.

- Philip White, Workforce Development Manager at La Colaborativa
Before Commonwealth Corps, I honestly did not know which direction life wanted to take me. At that time I was working at a clinic, but I had this itching urge knowing I could do more. I have always loved the city of Boston and the opportunities it had to offer, so I did some research and found this program. Instantly, I was convinced that this was my next step in this particular chapter of my life. I chose to serve with the Commonwealth Corps program because I knew that not only would I become a better person in the conclusion of my time serving, but also actively doing what I have always felt my passion was: building a community of individuals to become the best version of themselves. My time at my host site, La Colaborativa, has been eye-opening, humbling, and inspiring to say the least. To be able to help my Latinx community into becoming well-rounded members of our society has been extremely rewarding. While I do guide my clients and teach them about resume building, interviewing skills, and how to dress their best for interview day, their resilience makes them heroes of their own journey. One client and her story that will live with me until my own memory runs out is that of Claudia. We had an interview scheduled, and at the last minute, we were told that the interview would be in all English and that there would be no interpreter available. Did that stop her? No! She persisted with the little English that she knew, and successfully completed the interview. She was the pure definition of resilience! Her story inspired me to keep going and that where there is a willingness to succeed, there will always be a way to accomplish it. Serving with the Commonwealth Corps allowed me to experience this moment, a moment that I will undoubtedly be forever grateful for. Thank you Commonwealth Corps and La Colaborativa for choosing me to serve my community and my people!

NAME: ASHLEY
HOMETOWN: BRIDGETON, NEW JERSEY
CURRENT HOME: EAST BOSTON, MA

'I chose to serve with the Commonwealth Corps program because I knew that not only would I become a better person in the conclusion of my time serving, but also actively doing what I have always felt my passion was: building a community of individuals to become the best version of themselves'
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT
KRISTINA GURUNG

In the Greater Boston area, I have been passionately involved in the pipeline work of deconstructing racial projects through my language justice work. Upon finishing my Language Justice Fellowship at Matahari Women Workers’ Center (MWWC), I gained experiences as an interpreter aiming to create a multilingual space. However, I wanted to deeply engage with the community organizing aspects as well to further my fight for the inclusion of our marginalized population. Right then, Matahari announced their year of service with Commonwealth Corps for Language Justice Organizing Fellow. As a Language Justice Organizing Fellow with Massachusetts Service Alliance and Matahari, I have been able to further take upon the intersectional role of an interpreter and an organizer. I have been able to build relationships with our Nepalese member-leaders at Matahari and connect with them in a new dynamic as language justice organizer. Understanding that the role of an interpreter is an intimate one, the community organizing models has offered me a better understanding about our efforts towards ending gender violence and exploitation at Matahari. In the future, I hope to contribute towards organizing campaigns at Matahari where I will use my skills, experiences, and knowledges from my Language Justice Organizing models and principles. Given that Matahari is an organization of women of color, immigrant women and families, I truly appreciate such an empowering and safe space. Recently, I attended our in-person retreat, and at the table, we were all organizing as sisters, workers, and survivors to bring forth changes for social justice and equity.

ABOUT MATAHARI

Matahari Women Workers’ Center seeks to end gender-based violence and exploitation by developing the leadership of immigrant women workers of color. Matahari members will help achieve its language justice goals by translating materials, interpreting internal meetings, and facilitating evaluation sessions and professional development workshops between organizers and interpreters.

NAME: KRISTINA
HOMETOWN: SOMERVILLE, MA
CURRENT HOME: SOMERVILLE, MA
HOST SITE: MATAHARI

‘Because of the Commonwealth Corps, I am fulfilling a year of service. A long-term commitment of building relationships, fostering growth and nurturing community engagement.’
2022-2023 Host Site Partner RFP

The Massachusetts Service Alliance is excited to announce that the 2022-2023 Commonwealth Corps Host Site Partner Request for Proposals (RFP) is now available. Applications are due February 3rd. Each year, MSA partners with nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and public entities that serve as host sites for Commonwealth Corps members throughout the service term in our designated focus areas:

- Economic opportunity.
- Education (early or K-12).
- Health/Nutrition.
- Veterans’ Support, or
- Youth Development/Youth Violence Prevention.

Commonwealth Corps members would serve at your organization in a full-time or half-time position from late-August 2022 to late June 2023.

Learn more at: [www.mass-service.org/grants-and-funding/cc](http://www.mass-service.org/grants-and-funding/cc)

Community Advisory Committee

We are excited to share that the CC program is establishing a new Commonwealth Corps Community Advisory Committee (CAC) that will be comprised of members, host site staff, alumni, and community members.

The committee aims to work towards the following goals:

- To support and advise the Commonwealth Corps (CC) program in becoming a more equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist program for service members and the communities we serve – before, during, and after each term of service.
- To move CC into a more participatory leadership model that shares power and makes decisions based on the input and needs of those being impacted by these decisions.
- To create a space for honest and critical feedback and conversations, with the goal of supporting each other in changing and growing as individuals and as a community.

You can read about the committee and the responsibilities of committee members here.

If you’re interested in joining, we invite you to complete this application by January 22nd and reach out with any questions.
Commonwealth Corps MLK Day of Service

Learn more about In-Person and Remote Volunteer Opportunities Available for MLK day! All events count towards member service hours. Register to the events and learn more here!

- Virtual: Since 2006, Boston Cares (a Commonwealth Corps host site) has organized A Day ON, Not a Day OFF projects for MLK Day that have collectively engaged nearly 7,000 individuals of all ages from Boston’s neighborhoods and surrounding communities. To continue our tradition of honoring Dr. King’s legacy through service in 2022, Boston Cares will host a Community Weekend of virtual opportunities focused on ways to serve and improve our community through educational opportunities, discussions about community issues, volunteer trainings, and remote service. Learn more and sign up here.

- In-Person: Quincy Salvation Army – Food Pantry set-up help, 9am-11:30AM (Limited 5 People) Please email Francesca (CC Alum) at jeudyfrancesca@yahoo.com to register.

- Virtual: Commonwealth Corps’ MLK Day of Service Alumni and Member Event, Jan 17, 2022, 4-5 PM. Come together to connect and reflect with CC alums and members! Food provided via DoorDash or reimbursement. Register for the event here.

Stay Connected

Whether you’re a current member, alum, host site partner, or supporter, we invite you to stay connected with the Commonwealth Corps on social media.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn

If you want to know more about the work that our host sites partners do, connect with them on their social platforms.

We’re always happy to share photos, stories, and updates from members, alumni, and supporters. Please send them to Marlene at mrojas@mass-service.org.