



Colorado Youth Corps Association

Fleming, M. L. 2001. Colorado Youth Corps Final Evaluation Report. CYCA.

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Program Profile	
Program Description:	The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) is a partnership among several youth corps, foundations, Colorado State Parks, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. CYCA represents nine local and regional youth conservation corps throughout Colorado. CYCA provided young adults with seasonal full-time employment in conservation and stewardship projects, such as habitat restoration or trail construction. Each corp program also dedicated up to four hours per week for the implementation of environmental education activities from The Colorado Outdoor Odyssey: A Tool Kit for Environmental Work and Learning.
Program Goals:	The overall goal of the Colorado Youth Corps program is to enhance Colorado's environment and to build stronger environmental stewardship and work experience opportunities for youth.
Program Funding:	This program is primarily funded through a combination of grants from state and federal agencies, private foundations, local businesses, and individual donors.
Program Links:	Colorado Youth Corps Association: www.cyca.org
Evaluation Profile	
Evaluation Goals & Questions:	The purposes of the evaluation were to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the participants and their experiences in the CYCA programs funded by Colorado State Parks and Division of Wildlife, • Judge the statewide environmental education efforts facilitated through these programs, and • Make recommendations to guide decision-making about where future education efforts should be directed.
Evaluation Methods:	A survey was administered to participating youth before the start of the program and again when participants finished the program. These surveys were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from program participants. The pre-survey included questions investigating participants': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in completing high school/college; • Interest in and knowledge about the environment; • Interest in and knowledge about careers related to natural resources; • Perceptions of how CYCA helped Colorado; • Knowledge of environmental issues important to Colorado; • What they hoped to gain and learn from their participation in the program.
Evaluation Instruments:	A complete set of evaluation instruments is available in the report.
How were results	Evaluation results were used to develop conclusions about participants in the CYC programs

used?	and the associated environmental education efforts facilitated through these programs. Recommendations were made to crew leaders, CYCA, State Parks, Division of Wildlife, and to other agencies and organizations that benefit from the work of participating youth. Results were used to revise policies, corps leader training, environmental education activities and their delivery in years following this evaluation.
Evaluation Cost:	Approximately \$10,000 for evaluation design; development of instruments, pilot testing, revision; training; data entry and analysis; report writing, revision and presentation. In kind contributions included reviewing instruments, printing entry and exit questionnaires, and administering questionnaires.
Evaluation Insights:	<p>What worked well? Instruments and their administration worked well. Instruments development included reviews by stakeholders in funding and participating agencies, and a small pilot test. The type of findings satisfied all stakeholders. Most appreciated the 7-page summary report.</p> <p>What were the important evaluation “lessons learned”? One open-ended exit survey item (List the natural resources agencies involved in your CYC experiences.) barely survived the pilot testing and review process but yielded results that were used to change training, curriculum, and practices in the field. Lessons learned and reinforced: trust your hunches and a good open-ended question can provide extremely useful information. A lesson also reinforced: it is worth the effort to reduce reading level. Our questionnaires were about 7th grade reading level and most items were completed coherently by high school and college age respondents.</p> <p>What could have been done differently? Return rates were disappointing (only 51% of entry questionnaires could be matched to exit questionnaires.) In subsequent years the primary funding agency tied final funding payment to questionnaire return.</p>
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