



Civicorps Corpmember Academy –Frequently Asked Questions

August 6, 2020

1. Is Civicorps closing?

- No, Civicorps has been serving young adults of the East Bay through job training and education since 1983 and plans to continue doing so for years to come.

2. Is the Academy closing?

- First and foremost, no immediate action is being taken to change our Academy. With a continued decline in school enrollment over the years, we are currently engaged in exploratory discussions about potential changes to our academic program model. Among the options our Board and Leadership are discussing is forfeiture of our Charter. No decision has been made yet.
- As is the case with every Bay Area educational institution, the impact of COVID-19 has accelerated long-standing structural budget issues associated with running the Academy. Put simply, the crisis forced us to make decisions sooner than we would have preferred.

3. I heard you got a PPP loan. Shouldn't that allow Civicorps to keep the Academy running?

- We were fortunate to receive a \$1.1 million PPP loan. The funds from the loan were critical to the ongoing operations of the entire agency during these unprecedented times, but a short-term loan does not address the long-term financial instability of the Academy, which we cannot afford to continue to subsidize the current high cost per student.
- At its June 17, 2020 meeting, the Board of Directors approved a FY21 budget that assumes a \$400,000 annual deficit, which if not addressed would ultimately deplete our reserves within 3-4 years. In the interest of our Corpmembers, staff and faculty, we must pursue all of our options to sustain a program which serves the young people in our community for years to come, which may include forfeiture of our charter.

4. Why consider forfeiting the Charter?

- Despite our efforts to grow enrollment, daily attendance and enrollment at Civicorps Academy have steadily declined for the past 10 years as many other education options have moved into the community.
- Running a single-site charter school under the new charter regulations demands an incredible amount of time and resources to ensure Civicorps is meeting all regulatory requirements (such as Brown Act, Political Reform Act, teacher credentialing and LCAP) that did not exist years ago.

- Managing the day-to-day operations and reporting requirements of a single-site charter school demands an incredible amount of time and resources (such as ongoing CalPads reporting, CDE dashboard management, OUSD Charter outcomes, and WASC oversight).
- The staff to student ratio of approximately 3-1 has become unsustainable as additional supports have been added in an effort to increase enrollment by adding more services over the years.
- Civicorps' unique portfolio model has great benefits and is truly alternative, yet also has challenges that include the facts that students are unable to transfer credits to other programs or demonstrate course completion with apprenticeship programs and/or colleges, and all students are expected to complete the full portfolio regardless of where they were in their education prior to Civicorps which takes a minimum of 10 months.

5. What other priorities would be focused on if resources were to be shifted?

- Civicorps is serving a growing number of Conservation Interns (participants who have earned their diploma) and resources would be allocated to further expand the supports provided to this group while continuing to support students and participants throughout the organization.
- Counseling services would remain at their current levels and/or expand.
- College and Career services would increase with stronger commitment to AmeriCorps scholarship opportunities.
- Conservation Career Pathway training and networking would be expanded through already identified partnerships such as EBRPD, PG&E, Emerald Cities, Jewish Vocational Services, and Peralta Community College District.
- Internship opportunities would be developed and supported as pathways are built out.

6. What is the timeline and process to make the decision about our education model?

- The Board of Directors formed an Ad-Hoc Academy Transition Advisory Committee at its July 15, 2020 meeting.
- The committee will initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for qualified education partners and will be sharing that broadly while also participating in a collaborative community discussion with all stakeholders, including ongoing discussions with Civicorps United.
- If the Academy is closed, one likely timeline would be for an education partner to take over in July 2021 (e.g., as of the start of the 2021-22 academic year).
- Our priority will be supporting our students to maintain momentum in their studies and that classes, and graduations will continue as planned for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- Any and all decisions on whether to close the Academy and/or with whom to partner in the future will be made by the Board at public meetings.

7. What would the educational program look like if a partner ran it?

- The exact details of what the educational program would look like if Civicorps forfeits its charter and partners with an outside organization will be developed as we explore the option. Whatever partner Civicorps might select, however, it is our intent that classes would continue to take place at our Myrtle Street location.
- Civicorps would provide the office space and classroom space.
- Civicorps employees would continue to provide support services required to meet the needs of all students and program participants.

- Civicorps could also supplement staffing to work with students both one-on-one and in group tutoring formats in supporting students to learn the material assigned.

8. Who are possible partners? How/why would they be considered?

- We will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) and ask education partners to engage with us in order to learn what they have to offer. These will be public conversations and include all stakeholders.
- One possible partner that has been mentioned is the Alameda County Office of Education's Opportunity Academy Charter School, which offers an independent study model for students over 16 years of age. Opportunity Academy is an obvious option to explore because:
 - i. Opportunity Academy is local (housed out of Alameda County Office of Education) and they currently run at four sites in the East Bay so are familiar with the community and our students.
 - ii. Opportunity Academy runs an independent study program housed within community based organizations and welcomes partnership to provide additional supports which meet the needs of the students being served.
 - iii. The independent study model is known to meet the needs of many young adults by allowing substantial flexibility which mitigates barriers such as childcare, work schedules and transportation costs.
 - iv. Opportunity Academy would have staff onsite at Civicorps (number of staff depends on number of students, 1:28 ratio) to manage the independent study program.
 - v. Opportunity would work with each student and form an individualized plan towards graduation based on how many credits they currently have.
 - vi. Civicorps staff, having our participants' best interest in mind, have previously referred a number of potential Civicorps students who were a few credits shy of graduation to Opportunity Academy. This was so the students would avoid the need to complete Civicorps entire portfolio requirement regardless of the HS credits they had attained prior to entering our school.
- More broadly, Civicorps will consider all proposals made by any organization in response to the RFP process. Specific other education programs which are likely to be considered include:
 - i. John Muir Charter Schools
 - ii. 5 Keys Charter School
 - iii. Urban Corps Charter School (San Diego)
 - iv. Alternatives in Action
 - v. Many others yet to be identified

9. What will happen to our current classes and teaching staff under a transition?

- No matter what decisions are ultimately made, classes and graduations will continue as planned for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- If a decision is made to forfeit our charter as of July 2021, there may be changes as we enter the transitional period. In that scenario it is likely that some members of the teaching staff will change early next year.
- Corpsmembers' success is our number one priority. We will be laser focused on making sure our Corpsmembers achieve their academic goals.

10. What would the feel of Myrtle Street be and what about the culture of Civicorps?

- We have an unwavering commitment to provide every young person who walks through our doors with job training, high quality education and wrap-around trauma-informed services. All steps would be taken to preserve the community and culture of Civicorps.
- Relationships with participants would continue to be of utmost importance as they are integral to youth development.
- Even if we shift to an Independent Study type program partner, education would still take place at Myrtle Street with one-on-one check-ins, tutoring and small group instruction scheduled throughout the week.
- Valuable components of the program could still take place, such as: Community Meetings, seminars focused on college and career, Health Fair, College and Career Fair. Outdoor adventure, driver's education, CPR/1st Aid would all remain key components of the Civicorps experience.

11. How would closing the Academy impact grant funding potential?

- Closing the Academy would likely have little impact on our ability to obtain grant funding.
- Funding has traditionally been secured to pay for support services and not for instructional staff.
- Deliverables have already shifted over the years to reflect more around counseling, job training achievements, and job placements.
- Even if the Academy closes another education program will still be run at Civicorps, and we will still be able to speak to the fact that we are providing space for academic achievement and supporting young people in earning their high school diploma.

12. What would the impact be on Civicorps governance?

- Civicorps would continue to be run as a 501c(3) non-profit, by a volunteer Board of Directors.
- Without a charter to manage we would no longer be required to follow the Brown Act.
- Without a charter to manage we would no longer be under the requirements of the Political Reform Act and the Form 700 process.

13. Isn't the staff unionized? What would happen to Civicorps United?

- Civicorps United currently represents two units of Civicorps employees (the "Certificated Unit" and the "Classified Unit")
- We are pleased to have recently reached tentative agreements on all elements of initial Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) for both Units.
- The tentative agreements are currently before the unit members for ratification votes, and if they are ratified they will then be presented to the Civicorps Board for approval.
- The CBAs cover some issues relevant to any potential closure of the Academy (for example, procedures and timelines for any resulting reduction in force), and Civicorps will comply with those provisions. More broadly, we will continue to work in good faith with Civicorps United to share information, answer questions, listen to feedback, and fulfill all applicable bargaining obligations as we make and potentially implement this difficult decision.
- Should we decide to bring on a new education partner, one of our goals will be to identify one who has a standing labor agreement for their own employees, or is willing to participate in a discussion with us about ours.

- We intend to engage in a transparent and collaborative public process, initiating a Request for Proposal (RFP) for qualified education partners to share their qualifications.
- We look forward to participating in a collaborative community discussion with all stakeholders – including, as discussed above, continuing conversations with Civicorps United.
- Staff within other departments would not be impacted by a change in educational partners and their representation would not be affected by closure of the Academy. Moreover, even if the Academy does close Civicorps will continue to employ some workers in the Certificated Unit represented by Civicorps United.

14. How would Civicorps finances be impacted by a charter forfeiture?

- Civicorps would no longer receive State education funds (ADA, LCFF, ESSA)
- The identified education partner would receive such funds directly under their charter and depending on the partner Civicorps would not need to pay anything additional to them.
- Civicorps would shift budget expenses to support other priorities in the agency.

15. How does a school forfeit its charter, and can that decision later be reversed?

- Civicorps would inform OUSD and CDE that the school is being closed and the charter would essentially end.
- If Civicorps had a change of heart after the charter was already forfeited, it could not simply open back up under the same charter. Civicorps could, however, petition OUSD for a new charter; if it did so, the fact that Civicorps held a charter for 20 years with continuous and unanimous renewals would surely be part of the conversation.