REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Comprehensive Program & Organizational Evaluation Services

18 Month Evaluation and Continuous Learning Initiative

ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS

OEC seeks an evaluation partner to help the organization learn, improve, demonstrate impact, and leave behind a stronger evaluation system.

PLEASE BE SURE TO READ ANSWERS PROVIDED IN OUR CONSOLIDATED QUESTIONS FROM PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS & CLARIFICATION DOCUMENT

Also note the deadline extension to November 20th at 5:00 pm

RFP Release Date	October 15, 2026
Questions Due	~~November 2~~ November 6th, 2026
Proposals Due	~~November 16~~ November 20th, 2026, 5:00 pm
Anticipated Award	December 1, 2026
Evaluation Period	18 Months - December 2026 - May 2028

1. Purpose of the RFP

Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) is seeking proposals from a qualified independent evaluator, evaluation consultant, or evaluation firm to design and implement a comprehensive 18-month evaluation of OEC's programs, outcomes, and program delivery processes.

The evaluation will integrate the following evaluations:

Process- documents current processes to recommend ongoing improvements

Outcome- measures program outcomes and deliverables

Summative-evaluates whether goals and objectives were met and informs decisions about future programming.

It will assess not only what OEC achieves but also how programs and internal processes are working, how data are collected and used, and how and where OEC can improve its programs, strengthen internal and external relationships, and increase its overall impact.

The selected evaluator will provide periodic findings and recommendations throughout the 18-month engagement so that OEC can make timely improvements to program design, implementation, data collection, analysis, reporting, and decision-making rather than waiting until the end of the project for a final report.

Overarching Evaluation Questions

1. Are we doing what we intended to do?
2. How well are our programs and processes working?
3. What difference are our programs making for participants and the community?
4. How effectively are OEC's current data and evaluation practices supporting learning and decision-making?
5. What should OEC strengthen, modify, expand, streamline, or discontinue to improve future impact?

2. About Onondaga Earth Corps

Onondaga Earth Corps is a Syracuse-based youth development and conservation corps organization. Founded in 2003 as a neighborhood initiative to employ youth, OEC has more than two decades of experience engaging youth and young adults in paid environmental stewardship, workforce development, community service, and personal and professional development.

OEC's Youth Conservation Corps programming serves youth ages 15-18 and young adults ages 19-25. Program activities include conservation, urban forestry, green infrastructure, landscaping, natural areas restoration, community service, job readiness, technical field skills, professional development, leadership, environmental education, certifications, and support services.

Existing Evaluation Infrastructure

OEC already collects a substantial amount of participant, program, and project information. The selected evaluator will begin by understanding and improving this existing system rather than assuming that a completely new system is required.

- Logic model and key performance indicators
- CorpsNet internal database (Licensed through Metamorphosis)
- Attendance, project task, outreach, volunteer, and environmental activity tracking
- Google Forms and pre/post participant surveys
- Performance evaluation matrices
- Individual development plans and goal tracking
- Workshop/training evaluations and participant check-ins

- Program exit forms, partner surveys, parent surveys
- Post-program follow-up at approximately 1, 6, and 12 months

3. Evaluation Purpose and Goals

The 18-month evaluation should support both accountability and learning. OEC expects the evaluation to provide credible evidence of program effectiveness while also strengthening day-to-day program and organizational practices.

A. Assess Program Effectiveness and Outcomes

Assess the extent to which OEC programs achieve intended outcomes, including:

- Personal development, confidence, self-efficacy, leadership, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving
- Job readiness, professionalism, workplace behaviors, career preparation, and transferable skills
- Technical environmental skills, safe tool use, and industry-recognized credentials
- Environmental literacy, stewardship, civic engagement, and connection to community
- Participant engagement, attendance, retention, completion, and satisfaction
- Employment, apprenticeship, internship, and education placement
- Progress toward participants' career and life goals
- Community and environmental outputs and benefits

B. Examine Program Implementation and Processes

Assess how OEC programs are delivered, which practices contribute to participant success, where implementation differs from the intended design, and where barriers or inefficiencies exist.

- Recruitment, selection, orientation, onboarding, and expectations
- Crew structure, supervision, mentoring, training, and participant support
- Accessibility, attendance, retention, referral, and exit processes
- Staff roles, coordination, communication, and workload related to program delivery and evaluation
- Partnerships, project implementation, and transitions between program experiences

C. Strengthen OEC's Evaluation Infrastructure

Review the usefulness, consistency, burden, quality, and sustainability of existing evaluation and data practices.

- What information is currently collected, by whom, when, and for what purpose?
- Which data are actually used for program improvement, reporting, fundraising, or decision-making?
- Where are there gaps, duplication, inconsistent definitions, or unnecessary burden?
- Do current indicators adequately reflect intended short-, intermediate-, and longer-term outcomes?
- How can data collection be simplified while improving quality and usefulness?

4. Evaluation Framework

Process Evaluation

Examine how programs and organizational processes are actually implemented, including recruitment, onboarding, supervision, training, mentoring, support services, retention, staff coordination, partnerships, and participant experience.

Outcome Evaluation

Measure short- and intermediate-term participant and program outcomes and, where feasible, longer-term outcomes such as employment, education, career progression, civic engagement, and continued environmental stewardship.

Summative Evaluation

At the end of one program year, integrate findings across the evaluation to assess overall effectiveness, lessons learned, persistent challenges, strengths of the OEC model, organizational evaluation capacity, and priorities for the next phase.

5. Scope of Work

Phase I - Discovery, Assessment, and Evaluation Design

- Conduct an evaluation kickoff with OEC leadership and staff.
- Review relevant strategic, program, grant, and evaluation documents.
- Review the current logic model, theory of change, key performance indicators, and reporting requirements.
- Inventory existing data sources, instruments, databases, definitions, and reporting cycles.
- Review historical data, where useful and available, to identify trends and baseline information.
- Engage selected staff, participants, alumni, Board members, community partners, and/or employers through interviews, focus groups, or listening sessions.
- Assess data quality, completeness, consistency, burden, privacy practices, and usability.
- Clarify priority evaluation questions and intended users of evaluation findings.
- Develop a detailed 18-month evaluation plan.

Phase II - Tool and Data-System Refinement

The evaluator should retain effective tools, refine existing tools as needed, and create new instruments only when existing data cannot address gaps. OEC's goal is better and more usable information - not simply more data.

- Pre- and post-program surveys
- Participant performance evaluations and skill assessments
- Individual development plans and goal tracking
- Training/workshop evaluations and participant check-ins
- Exit forms, parent/family feedback, partner feedback, and alumni follow-up
- Program implementation and fidelity measures
- Data definitions, coding conventions, and data-entry procedures

Phase III - Implementation and Process Evaluation

Implement the evaluation using an appropriate mixed-methods design. Methods may include quantitative analysis, surveys, interviews, focus groups, observation, case studies, administrative data review, partner feedback, and longitudinal participant follow-up.

Phase IV - Outcome Analysis

Analyze participant, program, community, and environmental outcomes. Where appropriate and responsible, disaggregate findings to understand whether participation and outcomes vary across program type, season, length of participation, returning versus first-time participants, and other relevant characteristics.

Phase V - Continuous Quality Improvement and Learning

The evaluator will establish a regular learning cycle with OEC. At least quarterly, or on another mutually agreed schedule, the evaluator should review emerging findings with staff, identify implementation and data-quality issues, recommend improvements, and help OEC determine practical responses.

Collect -> Analyze -> Interpret -> Learn -> Adjust -> Reassess

Deliver major recommendations when they can improve practice. They should not be deferred until the final report.

6. Expected Deliverables

At minimum, OEC anticipates the following deliverables:

#	Deliverable
1.	Evaluation Discovery and Baseline Assessment
2.	Updated theory of change and/or logic model, if warranted
3.	Comprehensive 18-month evaluation plan
4.	Evaluation tool and data-source inventory
5.	Revised or new data collection instruments, as appropriate
6.	Data collection, quality assurance, privacy, and management protocol
7.	Staff training
9.	Quarterly or seasonal evaluation/data learning reviews
10.	Periodic continuous-improvement recommendations
11.	9-month interim evaluation report and 18-month outcome findings
13.	Final summative and outcome evaluation report, and present findings to leadership and the Board, including an evaluation plan

OEC is particularly interested in deliverables that are practical, visual, accessible, and usable. The evaluator should be able to translate technical analysis into clear implications and actions for nontechnical audiences.

7. Reporting and Learning Expectations

The evaluator should propose a reporting schedule aligned with OEC's program seasons and decision-making needs. At the minimum, OEC anticipates:

- Quarterly or seasonal learning briefs/data reviews that identify emerging findings, data-quality issues, implementation concerns, and recommended actions.
- A nine-month interim report synthesizing early implementation and outcome findings and recommending next phase refinements.
- A final report integrating formative, process, outcome, and summative findings.

Reports should include, as appropriate:

- Executive summary and evaluation questions
- Methods and limitations
- Findings and data visualizations
- Participant and stakeholder perspectives
- Outcome analysis and interpretation
- Equity considerations and meaningful subgroup patterns
- Program and organizational implications
- Actionable recommendations and priorities for future evaluation

8. Organizational Capacity Building

OEC does not intend for evaluation knowledge to reside exclusively with the external evaluator. The engagement should strengthen appropriate OEC staff's ability to administer instruments, maintain quality data, conduct basic analysis, interpret findings, communicate results, and facilitate data-informed program improvement.

The selected evaluator will support developing an internal evaluation team.

9. Desired Qualifications

OEC seeks an individual or firm with demonstrated experience in several of the following areas:

- Program, initiative, and/or organizational evaluation
- Youth and young adult development
- Workforce development and career pathways
- Environmental, conservation, community development, or service-learning programs
- Mixed-method evaluation and qualitative/quantitative analysis
- Longitudinal evaluation and post-program follow-up
- Culturally responsive and equity-centered evaluation
- Evaluation capacity building, facilitation, and continuous quality improvement
- Data visualization and communication of findings to nontechnical audiences
- Evaluation of nonprofit and community-based organizations

Experience evaluating conservation corps programs or closely related youth workforce/environmental programs is preferred but not required.

10. Proposal Requirements

Consultant/Firm Background: Brief description of the applicant and relevant experience.

Proposed Evaluation Approach: Explain how you would integrate process, outcome, and summative evaluation.

Methods: Describe anticipated quantitative and qualitative methods and how methods would be selected or adapted.

Continuous Learning Approach: Describe how interim findings will be communicated and translated into program or process improvements.

Capacity-Building Approach: Explain how OEC staff will gain practical evaluation capability during the engagement.

Work Plan and Timeline: Provide an 18-month work plan identifying major phases, activities, milestones, and deliverables.

Project Team: Identify key personnel, roles, availability, and relevant qualifications (if applicable).

Relevant Experience and Work Samples: Provide examples of comparable work and up to three evaluation reports, dashboards, briefs, or similar products.

References: Provide 2-3 references.

Budget: Provide a detailed 18-month budget, including professional fees, estimated hours or level of effort, travel, materials, and other anticipated expenses.

12. Proposal Review and Selection Criteria

OEC anticipates using a 100-point review framework. OEC may invite one or more finalists to an interview or clarification meeting.

Criterion	Points

Understanding of OEC and evaluation goals	15
Proposed evaluation methodology and design	25
Approach to continuous improvement and organizational learning	15
Relevant evaluation experience and qualifications	15
Equity-centered and participant-engaged approach	10
Capacity-building approach	10
Work plan, feasibility, and project management	5
Budget and cost-effectiveness	5
TOTAL	**100**

13. Project Period and Work Schedule

The anticipated evaluation contract period is December 1, 2026 through May 31, 2028. Applicants should propose a detailed schedule that aligns evaluation activities with OEC's seasonal programming and allows sufficient time to:

- Establish a baseline and assess the current evaluation system
- Refine and test tools and data processes
- Implement and monitor the evaluation
- Analyze and discuss findings with OEC
- Make midcourse improvements
- Assess whether those improvements strengthen implementation and outcomes
- Synthesize findings and leave OEC with a sustainable evaluation system
- All work should be completed by May 31, 2028.

14. Budget

Applicants should propose an allocation of resources across the 18-month contract period and explain any anticipated variation in effort by phase.

OEC recognizes that the first 9 months may require greater investment in discovery, system design, instrument refinement, staff training, and baseline analysis. Later phases may emphasize implementation, outcome analysis, learning, and synthesis.

15. RFP Schedule

Activity	Date
RFP Released	October 15, 2026
Deadline for Written Questions	November 2, 2026
Responses to Questions Posted	November 3, 2026
Proposals Due	November 16, 2026
Finalist Interviews, if applicable	November 30, 2026
Consultant Selected	December 1, 2026
Contract Begins	December 1, 2026

16. Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted electronically in PDF format to:

Onondaga Earth Corps
Attn: RFP Review Committee
Email: info@onondagaearthcorps.org

Phone: 315-565-3797

Proposals must be received by 5:00 pm on November 16th. OEC reserves the right to request clarification, negotiate scope and budget, reject any or all proposals, or cancel this solicitation if doing so is in the organization's best interest.

Onondaga Earth Corps Logic Model

Needs

- Youth development in underserved communities (leadership, healthy lifestyles, preparedness for self sufficiency)
- Youth unemployment
- Environmental justice and equity
- Community disinvestment
- Workforce (urban forestry, landscaping, etc.)

Inputs

- Funding
- Staff
- Partners
- Infrastructure (office, trucks, trailers, tool storage, tools, etc.)
- Meaningful fee-based work

Theory of Change (Outputs)

Activities

What we do

- Youth Program
- Young Adult Program
  - Advanced Young Adult Program
  - AmeriCorps Program
- All program elements: hiring process, pre-hire training, orientation, exposure to outdoors, personal development training, mentorship, skills training, community events, community collaboration, etc.

Participation

Who we reach

- Underserved
  - Youth (15-18 y/o)
  - Young Adults (19-25 y/o)
- Service-minded
  - Young Adults (19-25 y/o)
  - Interns
  - Volunteers

Outcomes

Short Term

- Employment with OEC
- Improved self-esteem
- Knowledge attainment
- Skills attainment
- Increased environmental awareness
- Leadership opportunity
- Civic engagement

Middle Term

- Employment in line with career and life goals
- Education in line with career and life goals
- Motivated youth applying themselves in life and in community

Long Term

- Self-sufficiency and gainful long term employment (careers)
- Successful adults (mentors)
- Healthy and safe community
- Civically engaged community
- Environmental, social, racial Justice
- Clean environment
- Beautified community

Key Performance Indicators

Youth

- # Applicants
- # Youth trained
- # Youth employed
- % Attendance
- % Graduation
- Life success skills
- Civic engagement
- Self confidence
- Environmental awareness

Young Adults

In addition to youth KPI

- Individual development plan
- % Goals achieved
- # Referrals
- % Job placement
- Wages of job placement
- % Apprenticeship placement
- % Education placement
- % Internship placement
- Service hours
- Industry recognized credential

Community

- # Volunteers
- # Service projects
- # Partners

Environment

- # Trees planted
- # Trees maintained (prune, mulch, watered, etc.)
- # Sites maintained
- # Lbs of litter collected
- # Weeds/leaves removed
- # Miles of trail improved
- # Miles of waterway improved
- # Acres of public lands improved

www.onondagaearthcorps.org | 315-565-3797 | info@onondagaearthcorps.org

Onondaga Earth Corps Evaluation
Data Collection Tools and Schedule

Evaluation Tools by Participant Type	Timing
All participants	
1. New hire forms:	Time of hire
2. Program onboarding forms: (demographics, highest level of education, personal development interests)	
Youth	**Youth**
1. Pre Program Survey	Pre hire
2. Performance Evaluation Matrix (CLS)	Mid summer
3. Workshop/Training Evaluation (Project)	@ training
4. Post Program Survey (Coordinators)	Last day
5. Parent Survey (Coordinators/support)	Last week
6. Program Exit Form (Coordinators/support)	
Young Adults	**Young Adults**
1. Pre Program Survey	Pre hire
2. Performance Evaluation Matrix	Mid season
3. Personal Development (YA)	
a) Individual Development Plan	First week
b) Goal tracking (personal, education, career)	Every other week
c) Referrals to other community resources	
4. Quick Check-in, written or verbal, individual or group	As needed
a) Smiley face evaluation	
b) Roses and thorns	
5. Workshop/Training Evaluation	@ training
6. Post Program Survey	Last day
7. Program Exit Form	Last week
Advanced Young Adults	**Young Adults**
1. Pre Program Survey	Pre hire
2. Performance Evaluation Matrix	Mid season
3. Personal Development (YA)	
a) Individual Development Plan	First week
b) Goal tracking (personal, education, career)	Every other week
c) Referrals to other community resources	
4. Quick Check-in, written or verbal, individual or group	As needed
a) Smiley face evaluation	
b) Roses and thorns	
5. Workshop/Training Evaluation	@ training
6. Post Program Survey	Last day
7. Program Exit Form	Last week
AmeriCorps Young Adults	**Young Adults**
1. Pre Program Survey	Pre hire
2. Performance Evaluation Matrix	Mid season
3. Personal Development (YA)	
a) Individual Development Plan	First week
b) Goal tracking (personal, education, career)	Every other week
c) Referrals to other community resources	
4. Quick Check-in, written or verbal, individual or group	As needed

Onondaga Earth Corps Evaluation
Data Collection Tools and Schedule

a) Smiley face evaluation b) Roses and thorns 5. Workshop/Training Evaluation 6. Post Program Survey 7. Program Exit Form 8. AmeriCorps Evaluation 9. AmeriCorps Survey	 @ training Last day Last week
All Participants 1. Post Program Interview #1 2. Post Program Interview #2 3. Post Program Interview #3 4. Alumni engagement	 1 month 6 months 12 months ongoing
Project Partners 1. Project Partner Survey 2. AmeriCorps Project Partner Survey	 Upon project completion or seasonally if long term project