

# Maker Corps

## 2015 EVALUATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EVALUATION

Since 2012, the Maker Education Initiative (Maker Ed) has worked with over 72 organizations to host their Maker Corps program. In 2015, 39 organizations participated with 72 Maker Corps Members.

The goals of the program are:

1. Support and train partner organizations to establish and develop making programs.
2. Diversify and expand the network and community of maker educators.

To evaluate these experiences for Sites and Members, all were invited to complete a pre and a post survey. This report describes survey results from both Maker Corps Members and site staff, taken at the beginning of (June 2015) and the end of their service (August 2015).

### MAKER CORPS COMMUNITY

#### Maker Corps Members contribute a diversity of skills and experiences to their organizations

A small majority of respondents identify as female and many are current or recent students, most often undergraduates. 40% of them have completed at least some college, 43% have finished college or pursued a graduate degree. Their academic backgrounds include a healthy representation across the disciplines; roughly two-thirds describe their field of study as either “Arts” or “Education” while 39% have some experience in the STEM disciplines. Twenty percent of respondents said they were a K-12 teacher or were pursuing a teaching degree.

The racial makeup of the Maker Corps Members closely aligns to the most recent U.S. Census data, which is to say it mirrors the diversity of the national population in terms of race and ethnicity. This is notable given ongoing criticisms that makers are largely male or white and is a testament to Maker Ed’s commitment to the diversification of the maker movement.

#### Partner Sites represent an exciting mix of organizations

Partner sites include museums, libraries, community-based organizations, and schools. In 2015, nearly half have hosted a Maker Corps Members in the past and most host two Maker Corps Members, with a maximum of five at two relatively large museums. While some institutions opted to recruit and hire Maker Corps Members from within the organization, others welcomed entirely new staff. The majority, however, hired some combination of existing and new staff.

#### Everyone has opportunities to learn and contribute to a growing community of Makers

Building community among Maker Corps Members and partner sites remains an important piece of the Maker Corps program model. This year Maker Ed hosted a new online community space for Maker Corps Members and partner sites. While many said they visited the site, far fewer contributed. However, it is clear that Maker Corps Members feel supported by their supervisors, and partner sites feel supported by Maker Ed, suggesting there is a sufficient amount of communication and community for each group.

## GOALS AND IMPACT

**“I had a blast working with circuits and kids. Seeing the kids faces light up when their bristle bots careened across the table was awesome. They didn't know they could build something like that, and we helped them!”**

### Maker Corps Members had numerous opportunities to meet personal and professional goals

Although Maker Corps Members join for many different reasons, many share similar personal and professional goals. Most of them look forward to developing and facilitating making experiences for youth and families as well as adding new making skills to their repertoire. In addition to reporting great success in reaching these goals, nearly all gained invaluable experience working with youth.

### Partner Sites met goals important to their organizations

While each site is different, all found alignment between their organizational mission and the goals of the Maker Corps program. Hosting a Maker Corps Member allowed them to offer innovative or expanded programming to new or underserved audiences. Each had an opportunity to infuse new energy into their summer programming by testing new activities and program models. Finally, each Maker Corps member contributed their own unique knowledge, skills, and abilities to build the capacity of the organization.

“Our Maker Corps Members developed an entire series of workshops devoted to middle school students. **This brought in an entire new audience for us.** We have never developed weekly programming specifically targeted at middle school students. Not only were they well attended each week, but we also developed ‘regulars’ who signed up for every week after attending one workshop.”

### Audiences were inspired and engaged by Maker programming

Maker Corps Members found numerous opportunities to have a lasting impact on audiences by inspiring them to explore and enjoy making activities. In some cases they were challenged to help a young maker persist through initial frustration or failure, emphasizing the exploratory and persistent nature of making.

Partner Sites broadened their reach into their respective communities by partnering with other organizations to expand their program offerings and serve new audiences. Partner Sites report

audience sizes between 35 and 65,000, a testament to the diversity of organizations and program offerings.

## MOVING FORWARD

### Maker Corps Members are excited to stay involved and capitalize on their experiences

Most Maker Corps Members were able to articulate at least one way in which they plan to apply what they've learned in their experience to their life, school, or career. For those in education or training to become teachers, the connection was obvious. While others are less specific about how and when they will apply their learning, they are no less passionate about staying involved in the maker movement.

Nearly half report they will continue to be involved at their site after Maker Corps service ends and many are also interested in staying involved with the maker movement more broadly by volunteering for local organizations or mentoring future Maker Corps Members and partner sites.

"I had a blast working with circuits and kids. Seeing the kids faces light up when their bristle bots careened across the table was awesome. They didn't know they could build something like that, and we helped them!"

Finally, most Maker Corps Members would be highly likely to recommend Maker Corps to a friend who asks about it, suggesting an exceptionally positive overall satisfaction with their participation in the program.

### Partner Sites remain committed to the program and helping it grow

Slightly less than half of partner sites have hired or have plans to hire one or more of their Maker Corps Members, the vast majority on a part-time basis, because of their skills and experience as makers, educators, and facilitators. Nearly all sites, however, intend to remain in contact with their members and several have already identified future opportunities to collaborate again, suggesting they greatly valued the knowledge and skills Maker Corps Members contributed to the organization.

Most are interested in returning for another year and nearly all would be willing to recommend the program to a colleague at another organization.

## RECCOMENDATIONS

As noted in the full report, interesting differences are beginning to emerge between returning and new partner sites, specifically in their organizational goals for their participation. Should this trend continue, Maker Ed might consider tailoring the training and resources they provide to these evolving goals. Maker Ed will need to present a considerable value, above ideas for activities or simple staffing, to these otherwise experienced organizations.

New sites making their first foray into making activities can, of course, learn from the experiences of these returning sites, assuming those program models are well documented and public. Whether it is through a shared online community or organizational blogs, sites should begin to carefully document

the activities they undertake, the tools and resources they use, and the response of their respective audiences. Maker Ed may wish to foster collaboration by creating space for organizations, especially those with similar missions or audiences, to share ideas, resources, and models.

Many partner sites are hiring Maker Corps Members from within their organization, leveraging the Maker Corps program as a professional development program to grow staff and organizational capacity. While this deemphasizes the need and appeal of national recruitment, it presents an opportunity for Maker Ed to shape year-round activities at each site by growing a cohort of experienced makers with insider knowledge of their organizations' audiences and current programming. These internal hires likely require less onboarding and adjustment and may be able to immediately absorb training and resources within the first few weeks of the program. As with new and returning organization, Maker Ed should seek to better understand the needs goals of internal and external Maker Corps Members and plan their training accordingly.