Civilian Conservation Corps

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a public work relief program that operated from 1933 to 1942 in the United States for unemployed, unmarried men. Originally for young men ages 18–25, it was eventually expanded to ages 17–28.

The CCC was a major part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal that provided unskilled manual labor jobs related to the conservation and development of natural resources in rural lands owned by federal, state, and local governments. The CCC was designed to provide jobs for young men and to relieve families who had difficulty finding jobs during the Great Depression in the United States.

The American public made the CCC the most popular of all the New Deal programs. The CCC also led to a greater public awareness and appreciation of the outdoors and the nation's natural resources.

Enrollees of the CCC planted nearly 3 billion trees to help reforest America; constructed trails, lodges, and related facilities in more than 800 parks nationwide; and upgraded most state parks, updated forest fire fighting methods, and built a network of service buildings and public roadways in remote areas.
The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

The FDIC, or Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, was an agency created in 1933 during the depths of the Great Depression to protect bank depositors and ensure a level of trust in the American banking system. After the stock market crash of 1929, anxious people withdrew their money from banks in cash, causing a devastating wave of bank failures across the country.

Its purpose was to inspect banks and insure depositor’s accounts. The government would provide deposit insurance up to $5,000 on checking and savings accounts in the event of a bank failure. Roosevelt now said it was safer to keep your money in a reopened bank than under the mattress.

Overwhelmingly, the public supported deposit insurance. Many hoped to recover some of the financial losses they had sustained through bank failures and closures.
Civil Works Administration

The CWA was a project created under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The CWA created construction jobs, mainly improving or constructing buildings and bridges.

Like other New Deal emergency employment programs, the CWA was designed to put jobless Americans back to work and to use them on beneficial public projects. More specifically, the CWA was designed to be a short-lived program to help jobless Americans get through the dire winter of 1933-34. It did just that: Two months after its start, the CWA had 4,263,644 formerly unemployed workers on its payroll.

The accomplishments of the CWA included 44,000 miles of new roads, 2,000 miles of levees, 1,000 miles of new water mains, 4,000 new or improved schools, and 1,000 new or improved airports [6]. More importantly, the CWA contributed to the morale and self-esteem of millions of homeless and displaced people by providing them with steady employment.
Federal Emergency Relief Administration

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) was the new name given by the Roosevelt Administration to the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA) which President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had created in 1933.

Prior to 1933, the federal government gave loans to the states to operate relief programs. One of these, the New York state program TERA (Temporary Emergency Relief Administration), was set up in 1931 and headed by Harry Hopkins, a close adviser to Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt asked Congress to set up FERA, which provided loans to the states to operate relief programs. Along with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) it was the first relief operation under the New Deal.

FERA's main goal was to eliminate household unemployment by creating new unskilled jobs in local and state government. Jobs were more expensive than direct cash payments, but jobs were psychologically more beneficial to the unemployed, who wanted any sort of job, for self-esteem. FERA provided work for over 20 million people and developed facilities on public lands across the country.
The Tennessee Valley Authority

The TVA, or Tennessee Valley Authority, was established in 1933 as one of President Roosevelt’s Depression-era New Deal programs, providing jobs and electricity to the rural Tennessee River Valley, an area that spans several states in the South. The TVA was envisioned as a federally-owned electric utility and regional economic development agency. It still exists today as the nation’s largest public power provider.

The New Deal program tasked the TVA with: improving the navigability of the Tennessee River; providing flood control through reforestation of marginal lands in the Tennessee Valley watershed; developing agriculture, commerce and industry in the valley; and operating the hydroelectric Wilson Dam. The TVA covered a seven state area, including parts of Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia.

Another goal of the TVA Act was to modernize and provide relief to one of the nation’s most poor and impoverished regions. Low energy rates would help to ensure affordable, reliable power for all. The TVA Act encouraged economic development and provided jobs by bringing electricity to rural areas for the first time.
Federal Communications Commission

Created in 1934, the FCC took over responsibilities for radio, telegraph, wire, and cable operations and, by extension, made it responsible for television and other forms of new communication as they appeared on the scene in ensuing decades. It also was given supervision of the National Emergency Broadcast system, a coordinated effort to use licensed communications services for national defense purposes.

The importance of radio during the Depression helped lead to quick passage of the legislation establishing the FCC. Soon after taking office, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established a committee to study communication issues.

The FCC came into existence when Congress passed the Communications Act on May 31, 1934, and Roosevelt signed it into law on June 19. The commission was directed to take into account public convenience, interest, and necessity. For millions of Americans living in rural areas, with little to no access to printed material such as newspapers, radio broadcasts were the primary source of information regarding relief efforts throughout the Great Depression.
Federal Housing Authority

During the Great Depression many banks failed, causing a drastic decrease in home loans and ownership. The banking crisis of the 1930s forced all lenders to require repayment of home loans. Refinancing loans was not available, and many borrowers, now unemployed, were unable to make mortgage payments. Consequently, many homes were foreclosed, causing the housing market to plummet.

The National Housing Act of 1934 created the Federal Housing Administration. Its intention was to reform lending practices and regulate the rate of interest and the terms of mortgages that it insured. These reforms increased the number of people who could afford a down payment on a house and monthly payments on a mortgage.

The creation of the Federal Housing Administration successfully increased the size of the housing market. By 1938 only four years after the beginning of the Federal Housing Association, a house could be purchased for a down payment of only ten percent of the purchase price. The remaining ninety percent was financed by 25-year, FHA-insured mortgage loans. After World War II, the FHA helped finance homes for returning veterans and families of soldiers.
Securities & Exchange Commission

The Securities & Exchange Commission was a permanent agency set up to monitor the stock market and ensure that no fraud or insider trading was taking place. It was created in the wake of the stock market crash of 1929 and was designed so that such a crash would not happen again.

After the October 29, 1929 Stock Market Crash, Americans called for reform. Many complained that the lack of control allowed for any number of frauds and other schemes that led to the crash.

To bring order out of chaos, Congress passed three major acts creating the Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, and defining its responsibilities. The Securities Act of 1933 required public corporations to register their stock sales and distribution and make regular financial disclosures. In other words, the SEC put rules in place that required companies to make public their sales of stock and to report how much money they were earning or losing on a regular basis.

Further, the act authorized the SEC to break up any large utility combinations into smaller, geographically-based companies and to set up federal commissions to regulate utility rates and financial practices. For example, instead of one giant electric company, smaller ones like Commonwealth Edison, were set up across the country.
National Labor Relations Act

One of the pillars of the New Deal, the National Labor Relations Act (aka the Wagner Act) gave American workers relief and the right to organize (form a union to speak on its behalf) in most workplaces. Prior to 1935 companies and business owners could do what they wanted to prevent workers from forming unions. Bitterly opposed by the Republican Party and Big Business, the new law set off an explosion of unionization in the 1930s and 40s that, in turn, formed the basis for the postwar prosperity of working families—also known as the Great American Middle Class.

Under the NLRA, it became illegal for an employer to punish organizers and workers for trying to form a union (though they often did). In unionized workplaces, the law required employers and unions to bargain in good faith (honesty and truthfully).

Under the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, the NLRA supervised elections for labor union representation and investigated and unfair labor practices. Unfair labor practices may involve union-related situations or instances of protected concerted activity.
Rural Electrification Administration

The Rural Electrification Act of 1936, enacted on May 20, 1936, provided federal loans for the installation of electrical distribution systems to serve isolated rural areas of the United States and provide relief to Americans living outside cities and suburban areas.

The goal of the REA was to bring electricity to America’s rural areas. While cities had enjoyed electric power for many years, in 1935 “fewer than 11 of every 100 U.S. farms were receiving electric service.” The main problem was that the power companies were unwilling and/or unable to string wires over long distances, across farmland and back country, at an affordable price. The Rural Electrification Act was also an attempt made by FDR's New Deal to provide relief for the millions of unemployed.
President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law on August 14, 1935. The law was wide-ranging. While most Americans know Social Security for its old-age pension system, the act also addressed unemployment benefits, aid to dependent children, maternal and child welfare, public health services, and aid to the blind. These wide-ranging relief efforts launched what would be called ‘the welfare state’ or ‘the social safety net’ of the postwar era.

The social security idea was not a new idea around the world and many countries had introduced old age benefits before the United States. Social security in America had some existed somewhat in veterans’ benefits and state welfare payments, but there were no consistent rules or guidelines for retirement, unemployment or disability. As a result, the poverty rate among senior citizens was extremely high and a huge burden on state welfare funds. President Roosevelt created the Committee on Economic Security in 1934 to study these problems and make recommendations.

The SSA set up a form of insurance where employers and workers would pay a tax to cover unemployment benefits, old age pensions, programs for the blind, and for children of workers who had died. This provided a pension for retired workers and their spouses and helped people with disabilities.
Works Progress Administration

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was an American New Deal agency, employing millions of people (mostly unskilled men) to carry out public works projects, including the construction of public buildings and roads. The goal of the WPA was to employ most of the unemployed people on relief until the economy recovered. In 1935 there were 20 million people on relief in the United States. Millions were put to work in construction projects such as schools, libraries, hospitals, roads, sewer systems, and airports. Musicians were hired to give lessons, writers and artists and actors were hired.

At its peak in 1938, it provided economic relief and paid jobs for three million unemployed men and women, as well as youth in a separate division, the National Youth Administration. Almost every community in the United States had a new park, bridge, or school that was constructed by the agency. Chicago Midway Airport and Starved Rock State Park in Ottawa are examples of WPA projects in Illinois.
Fair Labor Standards Act

President Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Standards Act (popularly known as the Wages and Hours Bill) on June 25, 1938. The law established a minimum wage (25 cents per hour, soon to rise to between 30 and 40 cents per hour), a standardized 44-hour work week (which would later drop to 40 hours), a requirement to pay extra for overtime work, and a prohibition on certain types of child labor.

The day before he signed the law, Roosevelt told the American people: “Except perhaps for the Social Security Act, [this] is the most far-reaching, far-sighted program for the benefit of workers ever adopted here or in any other country. Without question it starts us toward a better standard of living and increases purchasing power…”

The Fair Labor Standards Act is one of the New Deal’s shining achievements. Some business leaders complained as Roosevelt had predicted in one of his Fireside Chats. But the law helped dramatically improve the working conditions and average standard of living of Americans during the Great Depression and the following decades.

The Minimum Wage increased through the 1960s, but stayed relatively the same thereafter, falling in real terms (adjusted for inflation) by almost half by the year 2000. It was raised again in 2007 but remains effectively lower than during most of its history, which is why there has been a nationwide movement in recent years to raise state and local minimum and “living wage” levels to $10-15 per hour.
Farm Security Administration

The Farm Security Administration (FSA) was a New Deal agency created in 1937 to combat rural poverty during the Great Depression in the United States.

The FSA stressed "rural rehabilitation" efforts to improve the lifestyle of very poor landowning farmers, and a program to purchase worthless land owned by poor farmers and resettle them in group farms on land more suitable for efficient farming.

One of the activities performed by the FSA was the buying out of small farms that were not economically viable (not making money), and the setting up of 34 farming “communities,” in which groups of farmers would live together under the guidance of government experts and work a common area. They were not allowed to purchase their farms for fear that they would fall back into the habits that created the original problems.

The relief efforts of the FSA also took on the problems of the Dust Bowl. The years-long drought in the Great Plains displaced thousands of tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and laborers, many of whom (known as "Okies" (from Oklahoma) or "Arkies" (from Arkansas) moved on to California. The FSA operated camps for them, such as Weedpatch Camp as depicted in John Steinbeck’s novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. 