

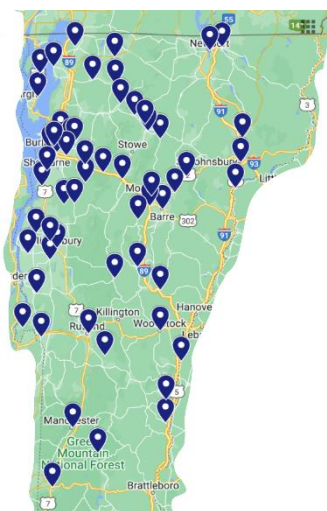
**Serve Learn Earn**  
**Final Report for Forest Parks and Recreation**  
**Submitted by VT Youth Conservation Corps**  
**Reporting period: 7/1/22-6/30/23**



## Introduction

Serve Learn Earn (SLE) was founded in 2021 by Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, ReSOURCE, Vermont Works for Women, and Audubon Vermont. Together, we are enhancing the quality and number of paid service and training opportunities for Vermonters. In the past two years over 1,000 youth, young adults, and adults have dedicated over 7,250 weeks to completing hundreds of hands-on projects that have strengthened and united our communities. These talented and dedicated participants have earned 307 credentials of value in the trades as well as over \$2.7 million dollars in wages and stipends.

We continue to see a demand for, and excitement about, our programs, and by working together we have been able to offer more positions than expected, increase compensation for participants, enhance trainings, and establish a growing network of private and public partners across the state. We would not be unable to do this work without the Vermont State Legislature's continued support of this collaborative, the valuable partnership the Agency of Natural Resources and Forest, Parks & Recreation provides in the administration of this grant, as well as the expertise from our employer and sector partners whose guidance increases the efficiency and impact of all our programs.



*Map of service project locations for SLE programs July 2022-June 2023*

Similarly, SLE partners have been effective in raising private funds to further strengthen this initiative. In the past two years, partners have raised an additional \$6 million in private philanthropy to support program operations. We have also dedicated private funds to hire a SLE Director, Kate Gluckman. Kate's role is to strengthen SLE's capacity, to expand the scope and reach of training programs and to garner additional resources for the collaborative.

In this report we will be sharing our collective impact for the second year of Serve Learn Earn. Since July of 2022, we have offered paid training and service opportunities to 531 participants who have completed 4,277 weeks of service and learning and who have collectively earned over \$1.65 million dollars in wages and stipends. These figures **represent an increase of over 44% in service-learning weeks compared to last year, a 12% increase in the number of participants, and a 52% increase in total compensation.**

Through paid service and training opportunities, our participants create pathways toward affordable education and quality jobs. With a focus on the construction trades, conservation, food security, education, and outdoor recreation, our programs are building a stronger workforce in high-need critical sectors. With the flooding this summer, it has never been more apparent how urgent this work is for the health and wellbeing of our communities and Vermont's future.

## High Level Accomplishments

- Since July 2022, partners have offered paid training experiences to 531 participants who have completed approximately 4,277 service weeks. 240 of these participants were AmeriCorps Members, unlocking an additional Segal Education Award for each member.
- SLE partners provided participants with over \$1.65 million in wages and compensation; an increase of \$566,000 compared to last year at this time.
- 206 credentials of value were earned in construction-related courses including OSHA-10 and NCCER credentials. Over 88 participants engaged with employers through internships, shadowing, or job placements.
- Participants completed a broad array of high-priority Conservation, Carpentry, Food Security, and Outdoor Recreation and Education projects that all Vermonters benefit from.

In addition to these broader accomplishments, a detailed snapshot of program outcomes can be seen in Appendix A.

The accomplishments in Appendix A reflect the priorities of organizations that are always working to find new and innovative solutions that support Vermonters. Each organization has made significant progress toward – and in some cases exceeded – program goals. This can be seen in the following summaries of organizational accomplishments.



*A VYCC farm crew with their fresh cut flower harvest. VYCC offered eggs and flowers for the first time this year in their Health Care Share program- providing fresh produce to over 500 families statewide.*

## VYCC

- VYCC provided a total of 232 paid positions; 211 of these participants were AmeriCorps Members. This is a 14% increase in paid positions compared with last year.
- Corp Members completed 1799 weeks of service on critical projects in water quality, forestry, carpentry, outdoor recreation, and diversified agriculture and food security.
- VYCC provided over \$1.2 million in compensation to Corps members. In addition, some corps members earned credentials of value while others earned college credit through the Community College of Vermont.
- Service projects included improvements on park infrastructure and trail projects in Stillwater State Park, Groton State Forest, and Molly's Falls.
- Over 566 families were provided fresh produce each week for over six months through the Health Care Share program- a partnership between VYCC and regional health care providers.
- To improve the corps experience, VYCC invested in residential infrastructure on campus with improved lean-tos, increased access to internet, new charging stations and water access in camping areas. A multi-year campaign to renovate the East Monitor Barn began this year and will lead to dramatically increased access to on-campus housing, improved program-specific facilities, as well as a brand-new construction-trades workshop.



*A VYCC conservation crew working on a stone staircase on Black Mountain in Dummerston, VT during June 2023. VYCC partnered with the Nature Conservancy on this project.*

## ReSOURCE

- ReSOURCE provided paid service-learning positions to 153 participants who completed 1,934 service weeks.
- 29 Full-time AmeriCorps positions entered a year of service helping coordinate ReSOURCE's workforce development and pre-professional programs.
- Through 13 programs held across the state, 88 Weatherization and Construction Intensive trainees earned one or more professional development skill certifications.
- Intensive and YouthBuild participants earned 160 industry-recognized certifications including OSHA-10 or NCCER.
- 42 Intensive graduates were employed within 3 months of completing the program with an average hourly wage of \$19.37.
- 10 YouthBuild graduates were employed within 3 months of completing the program with an average hourly wage of \$18.11. Many others are continuing their education or remain active in the program.
- 28 Service Projects completed ranging in size from a unit of affordable housing rehabilitated by YouthBuild team, several public facility infrastructure projects, to construction of outdoor furniture for nonprofit agencies.



*Construction 101 group from ReSOURCE completing an overhead structure for Champlain Housing Trust where trash and recycling cans will now be stored*

## Vermont Works for Women

- Four Trailblazer cohorts completed the program in South Burlington (2 cohorts), Rutland, and Barre in FY23. We also held our first LIFT cohort for high school students in Essex.
- 54 women participated in Trailblazers, completing 223 weeks of service and four service projects with community partners.
- 28 completed work intern experiences, with 36 employers across VT and 1802.5 hours of services to employers.
- 10 Trailblazer graduates were offered full or part-time employment with their internship hosts.
- As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, VWW has trained 117 Trailblazers and of those, 49 (or 42%) have gone on to work in nontraditional jobs.
- VWW held the first LIFT cohort for 12 high school-aged participants who spent a week learning hands on about carpentry, electrical, welding, and other trades professions. Over half the students who participated in LIFT are either enrolled in a tech center or considering enrolling.



*Twelve high school girls and gender-expansive individuals attended LIFT at the Center for Technology Essex for a week of trades exploration and hands-on learning in construction and welding.*

## Audubon Vermont

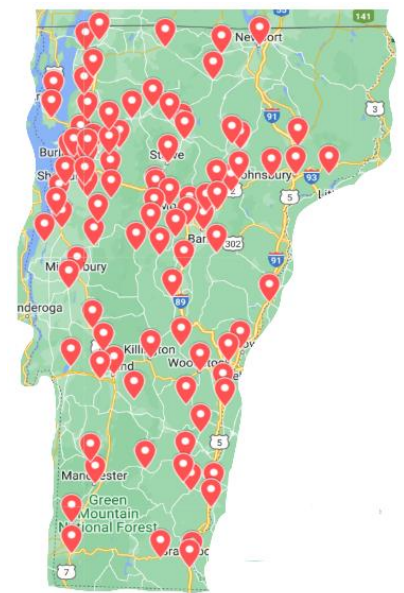
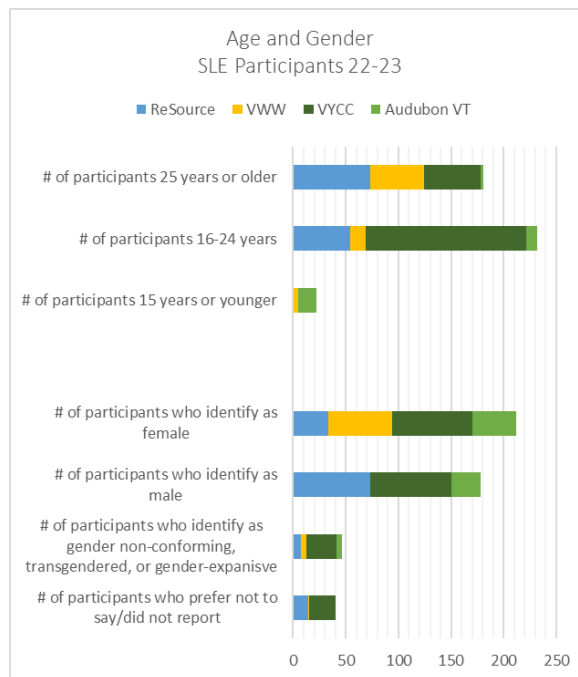
- Increased wages for all participants by 16%. Paid service-learning opportunities for teens and young adults wages started at \$15/hour; last year’s wages were \$12.55/hour.
- Audubon Vermont offered 76 paid service-learning opportunities for teens and adults. Those opportunities included positions as Junior Conservation Technicians, Summer Camp Educators, Summer Counselors-in-Training, AmeriCorps Members, and Interns. Combined, these youth worked 10,795 hours for Audubon VT.
- Offered Junior Conservation Technician program for the second year in a row.
  - Increased Junior Conservation Technician positions from 9 to 12 this year, a 25% increase.
  - More female and gender expansive youth in conservation on this year’s crew – they made up 44% of the crew last year and 75% of the crew this year.
- Counselors-in-Training positions increased from 11 to 12 this year.
  - Increased diversity on CIT staff: 1/3 of CITs identify as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and two or more races.
- The Junior Conservation Technicians helped to lead 32 Ecology Day Campers ages 8-12 in conservation actions at the Green Mountain Audubon Center during “Junior Conservation Crew.” JCTs used knowledge built throughout their 4-months at Audubon Vermont to teach elementary-aged students how to identify invasive species, why native plants are best for the landscape and wildlife, and how to pull invasive woody species. There are now have 35 plants in the ground at the site of our new Plants for Birds Garden.



Rowan Dienz del Rio, a Junior Conservation Technician, is all smiles while releasing a juvenile Eastern Phoebe after recording data at the Green Mountain Audubon Center’s banding station.

## Participants

In our effort to strengthen our programs and understand our collective impact, we organized a more robust data collection and analysis for this report including greater insight into the demographics and location of our participants. We are using this data to drive our decision-making into how and where we may want to grow, how we engage with workforce and educational partners, and what additional resources we need to meet the needs of Vermonters. With this quantitative data, as well as with the feedback from our



Map of participant hometowns in VT. July 2022-June 2023

participants, we know that we will make well-informed decisions about the future of this work and will have a broader and more complete story to tell about our shared impact.

### **Collaborative Investments**

We are excited to report big steps in the development of the Serve Learn Earn collaborative. The first SLE director, Kate Gluckman, was hired in March of 2023. Responsible for building the capacity of the group, Kate is leading the steering committee in strategic planning conversations with a focus on expanding opportunities for joint programming and expansion. In May we received a grant from the McClure Foundation and the Vermont Community Foundation to support our branding and marketing efforts. Our goal is to promote SLE and our programs to a state-wide audience of potential participants, community partners, legislators, and funders.

### **Challenges**

While SLE partners bring decades of operational excellence to this collaboration, there are several limiting factors and challenging factors. Collaboration helps us mitigate and address these challenges, real as they are. Here are four:

- **Climate Change** – For our programs operating outdoors, we saw significant challenges this spring and early summer with poor air quality due to wildfire smoke, above-average rain fall, high rates of tick bites and severe heat. We anticipate these challenges to be the “new normal” and have adapted safety policies to ensure the wellbeing of our participants.
- **Recruitment** – In some of our longer-engagement programs, we saw increased challenges regarding recruitment, retention and a decrease in program completion. With a competitive job market, many young people are choosing higher paying work over training and service opportunities. While SLE has increased wages to participants across the board in the last year, we continue to evaluate and adjust how we are marketing our opportunities, and the benefits we are able to provide participants.
- **Instructors** – We are eager to continue expanding our programs but are reaching limits due to the lack of qualified instructors across the state. We need folks who are knowledgeable in the trades, are excellent teachers, and who have the flexibility to travel or work part-time. We are seeking creative solutions by working together to identify candidates, train new hires, and piece together more full-time work.
- **Funding** – Sustainable and predictable funding is also an on-going challenge that limits our ability to make deeper investments into our programs. Without having a multi-year commitment of public funding, we can not hire and retain talented staff, invest in transportation and equipment infrastructure, and are unable to invite new partners into the collaborative. With these goals in mind, we are advocating for base budget funding. SLE is a smart investment with multiple impacts, not only on workforce development but on critical projects that address the state’s climate and housing challenges.

### **Looking Forward**

As with so much of Vermont, SLE was impacted by the July 2023 flooding event. ReSOURCE’s store and training facility in Barre sustained extensive flooding. The flooding dislocated the YouthBuild participants and destroyed their carpentry workshop and educational classrooms. It will likely take more than a year to get that program back to full capacity. SLE partners have been volunteering with the clean-up and are planning programmatic shifts to include flood recovery and resilience service projects. We are working with other non-profit partners as well as state agencies to better understand how we fit into this work and see true mission-alignment with promoting workforce development in the trades, and making state-wide investments in conservation actions that promote resiliency and flood mitigation.

While we face significant challenges this upcoming year as a state, Serve Learn Earn is ready and able to deepen our investment in paid service-learning opportunities by increasing the number of our positions, enhancing our trainings and support services, building new joint programs and pathways, deepening our connection to employers, and completing meaningful and impactful service projects.

To achieve these goals, we are also building more intentional relationships with state and community entities. SLE organizations bring the strongest experience in program design and operations. We see this as a tremendous asset that can be of service to help agencies achieve their priorities. Our nimbleness, relationships, ability to secure private funds, innovation, entrepreneurship, and ability to work closely and 1:1 with people makes partnership with agencies all the more effective. In this sense, we feel like we have only just begun to imagine and achieve what's possible, and we welcome the partnership with public officials – as thought partners and experts in the work and mission of Serve Learn Earn.



*The ReSOURCE weatherization training intensive participants suited up for spray foam training. This course occurred in Bennington, VT.*

**APPENDIX A – PERFORMANCE METRICS – SERVE LEARN EARN**

	<b>Target Metric</b>	<b>Progress to Date: 7/1/22-6/30/23</b>
<b>VYCC Work on Public Lands</b>		
	Perform construction activity under the direction of State onsite construction work supervisor	19 paid positions completed 24 weeks of work. in spring of 2023 some hazard tree removal work was prioritized. These trees, if left standing threatened the surrounding structures/facilities in VT State Park campgrounds. The VYCC removed hazard trees from Waterbury Reservoir and Molly's Fall's State Park before the busy summer season at our state parks.
	Campsite and Lean-to Improvements – Stillwater, Brighton, Little River, Maidstone State Parks, Kettle Pond	At Stillwater State Park a VYCC AmeriCorps crew resurfaced 2000 square feet at a waterfront pavilion and installed a charcoal grill.
	Kettle Pond Universal Accessible Trail- boardwalk replacement and ADA upgrades	A VYCC crew returned to Kettle Pond State Park to complete the construction of the accessible boardwalk started in 2021. Another 88' of boardwalk was deconstructed and rebuilt by the VYCC AmeriCorps Crew at 5' wide.
	Trail Improvements in Groton State Forest (Owls Head Trail) and Brighton State Park (Boreal Nature Trail)	Trail improvements are underway at Brighton State Park. The Owls Head Trail project will not be completed this year.
	Remote Site Development at Molly's Fall's, Green River Reservoir and Waterbury Reservoir	A VYCC AmeriCorps crew spent much of their season working on the remote campsites around the newly established Molly's Falls Pond State Park. There they cut and constructed 3 composting toilets to add to the remote campsite infrastructure. Composting toilets concentrate and contain waste and keep from contaminating the pond and campsites.
	Cabin Renovation and moldering toilet repair at Coldwater Brook	Coldwater Brook Cabin Restoration: a VYCC AmeriCorps crew had the amazing opportunity to work on the historic Coldwater Brook cabin in Groton State Forest. 2022 was the first year of three phases of restoration on the cabin. This year's work included jacking up the cabin, replacing sill logs and footings, repairing the stone wall enclosing the cabin's crawlspace, and splicing in new logs in a wall damaged by fire.
	Install food lockers at remote sites at Green River Reservoir	Food lockers are currently being installed at the Green River Reservoir and will be completed this fall season.
	Tree management project with VT State Parks	A small VYCC Pro Forest crew removed hazard trees in campgrounds within Groton State Forest. The crew worked closely with FPR staff to fell 58 Hazard Trees before, limbing, and bucking to firewood size.

		The felling of snags is a highly technical project, and this was a great opportunity for this crew to take the tree felling skills they developed throughout the 2022 field season
	Boardwalk repair at Green River Reservoir	Boardwalk repairs are underway at the Green River Reservoir and will be completed this season.
	Bathroom Roof install at Big Deer	The Bathroom Roof installation has begun at Big Deer and will be completed this season.
	Kiosk Construction and Install at Zack Woods	Kiosk Construction is underway at Zack Woods and will be completed this season.
<b>Additional Project Performance Measures</b>	<b>Target Metric</b>	<b>Progress to Date: 7/1/22-6/30/23</b>
<b>Diversified Agriculture and Food Security</b>		
	<b>VYCC</b>	
	73 positions completing 616 service weeks	119 paid positions completing 779 weeks of service
	24 weeks of Health Care Share for 400 families	566 Health Care Share Member Families 26 weeks of food deliveries; 1264 individuals benefit
	90% of Health Care Share Members report increased health/nutritional knowledge	50% of Health Care Share Members report increased health/nutritional knowledge (Gaps in data collection from HCS partners post-season surveys to examine pre/post impact)
<b>Outdoor Recreation</b>		
	<b>VYCC</b>	
	32 paid positions completing 42 service weeks	62 paid positions completing 64 service weeks.
	27 miles of trails improved	16 miles of trails improved, 56 wooden stairs installed, 73 rock stairs constructed, 76 stepping-stones set.
	106 new drains to be added to trail tread	79 drains new drains installed
	292 existing drains maintained in trail tread	93 drains maintained
<b>Water Quality</b>		
	<b>VYCC</b>	
	17 paid positions completing 25 service weeks	11 paid positions completing 22 service weeks
	123 acres impacted/mitigated	1108 acres impacted/mitigated
	65 erosion control structures installed	86 erosion control structures installed
	2,600 riparian trees maintained/planted	1260 trees planted, 532 native plants planted, 3395 trees maintained.



	1,200 water chestnuts removed from Lake Champlain and tributaries	54355 water chestnuts removed
<b>Forestry</b>		
	<b>VYCC</b>	
	10 paid positions completing 20 service weeks	10 paid positions completing 30 service weeks
	60 acres of forest treatments	35 acres of forest treatments
	10 acres of invasive plant removal	11.5 acres of invasive plant control
<b>Carpentry</b>		
	<b>VYCC</b>	
	36 paid positions completing 36 service weeks	11 paid positions completing 46 weeks of service
	11 distinct projects, including privies, bridges, sheds, etc.	12 building projects completed
	800 feet of boardwalk installed	1789 ft. of boardwalk installed
	<b>ReSOURCE AmeriCorps</b>	
	12 trainees completing 552 weeks of service, 22,080 hours of service	29 trainees completing 649 weeks of service, 24,981 hours of service.
	13 community service construction projects completed	11 community service construction projects completed.
	<b>ReSOURCE Construction and Weatherization Intensives</b>	
	78 Trainees enrolled/retained for 312 weeks, completing 9750 hours of service & 30 public structures built	88 trainees enrolled for 413 weeks of service, completed 10,728 hours of service and built 6 public structures.
	150 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved	144 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved
	70 Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit	42 Employer placements
	\$17.25/hour wage of trainees placed in employment	\$19.37 hourly wage of trainees placed in employment.
	30 public facility construction projects completed	6 public facility construction projects completed-
	13 Intensive Cohorts	13 intensives
	<b>ReSOURCE YouthBuild</b>	
	25 Trainees enrolled/retained for 1150 weeks, completing 18,400 hours of service & 35 public structures built	36 trainees enrolled and retained for 872 weeks, completing 17,549 hours of service. Completed 11 large scale new housing construction projects.
	38 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved	16 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved
	18 Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit	10 Employer placements in 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter after exit

	\$15/hour wage of trainees placed in employment	\$18.11 hourly wage of trainees placed in employment
	<b>Vermont Works for Women - Trailblazers</b>	
	40 Trainees enrolled/retained for 220 weeks, completing 3 service projects in partnership with community partners	58 Trainees enrolled/retained for 223 weeks, completing 4 service projects with community partners.
	35 Osha-10 Certifications achieved	46 certifications achieved
	25 Employer partners	36 Employer partners
	<b>Vermont Works for Women – LIFT (Launching Inclusive Futures in the Trades)</b>	
	10 Participants Enrolled/retained	12 participants enrolled/retained for 12 weeks of service.
<b>Environmental Conservation &amp; Education</b>		
	<b>Audubon Vermont</b>	
	74 paid positions providing 356 weeks of service	76 paid positions providing 309 weeks of service.
	3,000 Children ages 2-13 served through education programs	3,475 Children serves through education programs
	200 volunteers engaged in community science projects and special events	202 volunteers engaged.