



VERMONT YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS



STRATEGIC PLAN

2016 - 2020

CONTEXT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ten years ago (2005), VYCC moved to the West Monitor Barn. It was a move that greatly increased our capacity. At the time of this move, we had one program: Conservation. The Conservation Program profoundly impacted the lives of hundreds of young people each year as Corps Members completed conservation projects on Vermont public lands.

Since that time, we have grown considerably. Today, VYCC continues to operate our original “Conservation Program” with the same values – and time-tested “VYCC Crew Model” – that have guided our work for three decades. We now offer more programs to greater numbers of young people, for longer periods of time, in more places. In addition to employment, we offer credit-bearing experiences. Crew projects range from sustainable agriculture to watershed protection, from invasive species removal to state park infrastructure. These additional programs enable us to meet community needs through a wider variety of learning and service experiences.

VYCC also serves as a model for new Youth Corps in other states, a strategy that can call attention to the importance of creating service opportunities for all young people. VYCC believes strongly in the value of national service as a means to teach essential skills through meaningful work that directly benefits communities.

In 2014, staff and trustees identified the need for a new strategic plan – the first in 13 years – in order to evaluate current programs, strengthen our foundation and plan for future opportunities. We are committed to ensuring that VYCC focuses its resources on the activities that have the most impact on the communities we serve and the young people who pass through our doors.

What follows is an exciting path – a trail! – forward for the organization that will enable us to deliver programs more effectively, more efficiently, and to more young people.

We wish to acknowledge and thank VYCC staff, fellow trustees, Cope and Associates, Inc., and the numerous external stakeholders and community leaders whose thoughtful insights informed our process. This strategic plan is a true reflection of all those committed to VYCC’s future. From the beginning, this organization has been a collective and community effort – of project sponsors, partners, donors, youth, parents, legislators, and more.

We are proud to be part of an organization that accomplishes so much for our communities today and for the next generation of leaders. Please consider this plan *your invitation* to deepen your involvement with VYCC.

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you.

Linda McGinnis, Immediate Past Board Chair
Jim Feinson, Current Board Chair

January 19, 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

Young people are our greatest resource. Over the past 30 years, thousands of Corps Members have learned invaluable lessons and skills through meaningful work with VYCC, while making tangible contributions to their communities. VYCC changes the lives of participants, and VYCC Corps Members make Vermont – and beyond – stronger, more resilient, and healthier.

To prepare more young people for future opportunities, and to make our communities stronger, VYCC will focus on the following initiatives over the next five years:

- 1. Make the VYCC experience possible for all Vermont youth**
 - a. Expand community-based programming throughout Vermont
 - b. Increase positions for traditionally underserved youth
 - c. Increase Corps Member positions through partnerships with other Corps and conservation organizations beyond Vermont's borders
 - d. Offer more learning experiences in fall, winter, and spring
- 2. Deepen the VYCC experience and improve learning outcomes**
 - a. Formalize and implement progressively challenging learning experiences for an increasingly diverse range of Corps Members
 - b. Design and launch services for alumni to enhance their lifelong connection to community and the land
- 3. Broaden the “conservation impact” beyond trails to build resiliency across all of Vermont's landscapes**
 - a. Become the primary youth labor source in Vermont for working lands conservation: forestry, watershed management, sustainable agriculture, and trails
 - b. Ensure continued innovation and responsiveness to conservation opportunities
 - c. Increase conservation projects that address watershed health
 - d. Expand learning at the intersection of conservation and agriculture
- 4. Build an enduring organization for future generations**
 - a. Implement new financial systems and strategies that better support growth and new strategic opportunities
 - b. Enhance VYCC's physical infrastructure to facilitate and sustain desired programmatic growth
 - c. Enhance VYCC's virtual and communications infrastructure to facilitate and sustain desired programmatic growth
 - d. Renew human resources processes and practices to attract and retain highly talented staff
 - e. Strengthen governance practices to determine and guide organizational priorities, fundraising and advocacy

These priorities build upon VYCC's strengths and reflect the needs of a maturing organization. They will require new ways of thinking, expanded partnerships, additional resources, and highly engaged staff and board members.

Vision, Mission, Values

VYCC began with a belief that teaching individuals to take personal responsibility for their actions can change the world. Once a small seasonal organization, VYCC is now a year-round nonprofit that changes lives and strengthens communities across and beyond Vermont. As we have grown, we remain faithful to our founding conviction that **“Today’s Youth are Tomorrow’s Leaders.”**

This belief is reflected in a **revised VYCC mission:**

Teaching young people personal responsibility through meaningful work that connects us to the land, community, and one another

This mission is inspired by this **vision for our shared future:**

Every generation committed to their community and the land

Both mission and vision are underscored by the following **Core Values:**

Personal Responsibility – This is a bedrock value of VYCC. If we all take personal responsibility for our actions, communities will be stronger, healthier, and more resilient.

Conservation – We must first instill deep and personal appreciation for the natural world in future generations of leaders. Be it in a working landscape, an urban center, or in the high wild spaces, immersive outdoor experiences are central to the VYCC experience.

Leadership – VYCC Corps Members work hard. Days are long, standards are high, and there is much work to do. These deliberate program elements are catalysts for personal growth. Time for reflection, clear structure, and personalized challenges reflect our belief that every Corps Member has leadership potential; when realized, lives are changed.

Education and Job Training – Young adults yearn for independence and a chance to enter the “real world.” Job training, pre-employment skills, preparing young Vermonters for jobs in Vermont, and enabling alumni to build careers in Vermont are results for which we strive. A focus on technical skills, critical thinking, and environmental literacy are at the heart of VYCC experiences.

Teamwork – Everyone’s contributions matter. Completing high quality projects requires Corps Members to draw on skills and experiences greater than any one individual. Working alongside and living with diverse crewmates sparks collaboration, appreciation, and a great deal of fun.

External Landscape: Education, Workforce Development, and Conservation

VYCC as a Positive Force for Youth

VYCC has an abiding faith in young people. Every day, we revel in their creativity, *esprit de corps*, and determination. Young people want experiences that challenge them, broaden their horizons, and allow them to contribute to something larger than themselves.

Yet, we also recognize that this generation faces critical challenges. Young people today feel more isolated than in the past: **only 50% of Vermont youth report feeling valued by their community**. Studies show that they are also less active, spend far less time outdoors, and are more obese than earlier generations. Other troubling findings include record levels of unemployment, an increase in mental health concerns such as suicidal thoughts and depression, and rising levels of drug abuse.¹

VYCC provides young people with a unique opportunity to have a work experience that makes them feel valued *and* that links them to what makes Vermont exceptional – from preserving parks to protecting wetlands to using sustainable agriculture practices to feed food insecure families. VYCC Corps Members become an integral part of a team, obtaining real on-the-job skills and a true appreciation of the outdoors, all in service of their community. VYCC has demonstrated time and again the transformative nature of this experience.

Since joining the Corps, I have learned that there is much more to life than pixels on a screen. I have changed from a lazy, out of shape kid to a hard-working member of a team benefiting the community and the world. I have learned respect, patience and leadership, three qualities I had lacked previously.

- Jacob. VYCC Alum 2015

While VYCC makes no claim to cure all youth problems, we are convinced that structured, well-led, nature-based, meaningful employment is a powerful strategy to nurture youth, and prepare them to lead our communities in the future.

Further, Vermont is facing a shortage of youth and an aging workforce. In 2014, VPR reported, “The flight of 25-54 year olds from the labor force has puzzled economists, but the most widely held belief is that they’ve become discouraged and given up on finding work due to the lack of robust job creation since the recession.”²

A news report from WCAX in 2013 concurs, and elaborates:

Vermont is the second-oldest in the country, only behind Maine in people’s median age....More needs to be done to create a jobs pipeline for students from Vermont colleges to companies here and [business and labor leaders] think internships are the solution.... “Getting them some real world experience is the critical piece,” VT Commerce Secretary Lawrence Miller said.

¹ Vermont Department of Health. (2013) *The 2013 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey*.

² *Where Have the Prime-Age Workers Gone? VPR News*. Vermont Public Radio. WVPS, Burlington. September 11, 2014. Radio.

*...But jobs aren't the only factor in keeping young people here. "There's something to be said for kids who grow up here to spend some time away. We are part of a global community," Miller said. "We can't believe that maintaining an insular society and making sure our kids don't go away will lead to success."*³

VYCC offers two concrete solutions to this issue. First, Corps Members' interactions with professionals including wildlife refuge managers, forestry technicians, biologists, health care professionals, and farmers expose them to a variety of career options in Vermont and enable them to begin building professional networks. Second, out-of-state partnerships create exactly the opportunity Lawrence Miller promotes; VYCC is helping youth broaden their perspectives through summer employment in another part of the country.

Education for a Rising Workforce – What Employers Need

Education is changing rapidly and significantly. Evidence of change is widespread and can be seen in the content of what is taught, how students are learning, and the growing role of technology, among other factors. Much of this change is driven by the needs of a 21st century workplace.

Experiential learning is one growing trend. An increase in the number of schools offering co-operative education, internship placements, self-exploratory majors, and mentorship opportunities are evidence that students want real world experience and employers recognize the value of this type of education.⁴ VYCC programs provide natural platforms to meet student needs in this changing educational landscape. We offer real work for the real world.

The top three skills that today's employers seek are *communication, leadership, and the ability to work in teams*.⁵ Our alumni consistently cite these three skills as central to the learning they experienced:

Going into VYCC I had a decent amount of trail crew experience. I had a bit of an ego about these skills and was more than eager to show them off. However, I'm learning that the knowledge itself isn't as important as how it's presented or communicated to others. With VYCC I'm learning the "soft skills" of communication and facilitation. I guess in a sense I'm learning to break down my ego and stepping back to let others lead and grow.

- Brogan, 2015

Further, the VYCC experience has real bearing on how Corps Members view their own education:

This summer has given me a taste for learning outside of the classroom, you know, in the real world. This has shown me the value of knowledge at my school. I am now eager to return and dedicate my full attention.

- Calvin, 2012

³ Vermont Sees Progress in Stopping the "Brain Drain." Evening News. CBS. WCAX, Burlington. October 10, 2013. Television.

⁴The National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2014) *The College Class of 2014*.

⁵The National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2015) *2015 Job Outlook Survey*.

Conservation and Working Lands – Expanding our impact

Vermonters cherish the land. A working landscape drives our economy, and it shapes our culture. From tourism to food production to forest management, millions of people enjoy our natural resources in myriad ways.

Despite this deep appreciation for our natural world, Vermont faces serious challenges. Unsustainable land-use practices are catching up to us. Water quality has deteriorated across the state and solutions are at the nexus of sustainable agriculture and conservation practices. Climate change is causing more extreme and more frequent weather events that have serious consequences for our landscape, our economy and our communities. Rising temperatures and storms continue to bring invasive species to our forests and watersheds. Vermont must continue to build resiliency throughout our communities and working lands.

VYCC programs have always offered concrete solutions and skills to tackle these problems head on. Today, however, VYCC is more than “just trails.” Our portfolio of work and expertise has grown significantly in recent years, and we offer training and work crews at the crossroads of Vermont traditions and environmental know-how. Crews are improving the health of Vermont’s watersheds through erosion mitigation on class IV roads, riparian plantings, stream restoration, green stormwater infrastructure, and wetland rehabilitation. They are building new infrastructure in parks such as composting toilets, lean-tos, and storage buildings. They are engaged in sustainable agriculture on VYCC’s campus and farms across the state. Finally, traditional trail building has expanded to include the construction of ADA universally accessible trails, and 4-season and multi-use trails.

VYCC crews stand ready to assist regional planning commissions and farmers as they adopt new agricultural practices to adhere to new water quality regulations. Corps Members will work alongside road crews to build resilience in preparation for coming high energy storms, and to help Vermont villages and towns improve alternative transportation infrastructure. They will work with communities that identify critical needs for building resilience against future climate events across our natural infrastructure.

Combine these areas of expertise with an organization that is innovative, entrepreneurial, and responsive to community needs and we see tremendous opportunities to put young people on the front lines.

Expanding into new programmatic areas does not mean that traditional programs will disappear. In fact, by increasing the number young people who enroll in VYCC programs overall, we intend to both increase the number conservation projects completed, and to broaden the impact of all our programs. We now look to build upon all we’ve learned to help federal, state, and municipal partners address chronic and new needs. Through this programmatic growth, our goal is to inspire young people – leaders of future generations – to develop a deeply held conservation ethic in an era of profound climactic change.

Let us deploy a generation of young people to complete tangible work for the greater good. We seek a world in which every generation is committed to their community and the land.

INITIATIVE 1:

Make the VYCC experience possible for all Vermont youth

VYCC programs have a profound positive impact on Corps Members. We are proud to serve nearly 400 young people a year, representing almost 6,000 individuals over the past 30 years. Through their work, they have helped dozens of communities and thousands of citizens across the state and beyond.

Yet, these individuals represent only a fraction (<0.5%) of young people between the ages of 16-24 in Vermont. VYCC wants to expand that number to reach as many young people as possible.

To do this, we will expand the number of community-based crews across the state, build new partnerships with project sponsors seeking youth development outcomes, launch an exchange program with corps in other states, and increase capacity for fall, winter, and spring programming on VYCC's campus.

When successful, more Vermont youth will experience VYCC. 50% of Corps Members will be young people who face socioeconomic challenges and/or disabilities. Young women will continue to access VYCC programming at an equal rate to young men. Learning, personal growth, and service will take place in all seasons of the year on VYCC's campus, in Vermont communities, and outside of Vermont: by 2020 at least 25% of Corps Members will participate in fall, winter, and/or spring.



STRATEGIES

Expand community-based programming throughout Vermont

TACTICS

Identify communities throughout Vermont with the greatest need and opportunity for youth development and conservation, working lands, and agriculture projects

Grow the community-based crew model – in which Vermont youth work in their own communities – to serve identified areas

Enhance recruitment strategies targeting Vermont youth, and underserved Vermont youth

Establish and enhance relationships with municipal officials, select boards, regional planning commissions, conservation commissions, school districts, and institutions of higher education

Increase regionally-based partnerships and local philanthropy to support community crews

Increase positions for traditionally underserved youth

TACTICS

Enhance partnerships with service providers and academic institutions serving youth challenged by learning disabilities, poverty, and assimilation into a new culture

Expand internship, job, and professional development training experiences for underserved youth

Increase Corps Member positions through partnerships with other corps and conservation organizations

TACTICS

Establish an exchange program – **VYCC Outbound** – to create additional positions for Vermonters by accessing projects and funding beyond Vermont

Deploy Vermont crews on more out-of-state projects to complement their experiences in Vermont, and create more fee-for-service work

Offer more learning experiences in fall, winter, and spring

TACTICS

Through “VYCC Outbound,” Corps Members will be able to complete conservation projects in early spring and late fall

Increase VYCC’s offering of local opportunities in fall, winter, and spring by expanding credit-bearing and gap year opportunities



INITIATIVE 2:

Deepen the VYCC experience and improve learning outcomes

VYCC will establish measurable education outcomes for all Corps Members. Evaluation will inform program design and a more consistent “VYCC experience.”

Structured learning opportunities for distinct age/skill cohorts will allow specialty crews to develop additional skills that complement universal VYCC outcomes. All programs will be deliberately designed to support participants in fulfilling educational and personal development goals.

After time spent in the field, an active and supportive alumni network will ensure continued access to learning, professional development, and service opportunities.

When successful, VYCC will be able to qualify and quantify educational outcomes. Corps Members in all programs will share a skill and values set that demonstrates fulfillment of VYCC’s mission. The VYCC experience will include a lasting and ongoing connection to VYCC.



STRATEGIES

Formalize and implement progressively challenging learning experiences for an increasingly diverse range of Corps Members

TACTICS

Enhance the structure, design, and implementation of the education we provide

Establish and measure quantifiable outcomes as a means to strengthen programs

Develop and formalize a continuum of experiences within each program to ensure Corps Members of varying skill and maturity levels can find meaningful and challenging opportunities

Establish more Leadership Development Crews and crews dedicated for returning or otherwise more experienced participants

Design and launch services for alumni to enhance their lifelong connection to community and the land

TACTICS

Strengthen Corps Members’ connection with – and affinity for – VYCC through program design, trainings, and traditions

Formalize the "exit process" for all participants to include exploration of future pursuits

Identify effective activities to engage and support alumni in areas including education, career, community service, and environmental stewardship

Establish avenues for career and education recommendations and placements



INITIATIVE 3:

Broaden the “conservation impact” beyond trails to build resiliency across all of Vermont’s landscapes

Teaching young people how to address complex and overlapping challenges will improve the health of Vermont’s natural resources, and is central to realizing VYCC’s vision. We will expand and develop a diverse portfolio of projects, from simple to highly technical, that contribute to resilient and robust recreational areas, vibrant agricultural operations, healthy watersheds, and healthy communities.

VYCC seeks to be the primary youth labor source for watershed improvement projects in the state of Vermont, while bringing equal focus to sustainable trails, forestry, and agriculture.

When successful, all Corps Members will develop a deep appreciation for Vermont’s landscape – protected spaces and our working lands. Corps Members will understand the connections between responsible conservation, agriculture, and the economic and public health of communities.



STRATEGIES

Become the primary youth labor source in Vermont for working lands conservation: forestry, watershed management, sustainable agriculture, and trails

TACTICS

Evaluate and refine VYCC’s business model to reduce crew costs and become ever more competitive

Increase in-house technical expertise in watershed, agriculture, forestry, recreational trail design, and design-build

Collaborate and build partnerships to secure additional financial resources to complete high-priority projects

Ensure continued innovation and responsiveness to conservation opportunities

TACTICS

Partner with federal, state, and municipal partners to address new needs and opportunities including meeting water quality regulations, preparation and response to major storm events, alternative transportation infrastructure, universal accessibility, and infrastructure for ecotourism.

Increase conservation projects that address watershed health

TACTICS

A new staff position, Watershed Partnership Manager, will support various dedicated watershed groups already working on this issue to identify and secure project funding, and deploy VYCC crews to complete projects

Corps Members in the Farm Program will provide labor for Vermont farms, assisting in adherence to stricter water regulations and enhancing understanding of the relationship between agriculture and watersheds

Expand learning at the intersection of conservation and agriculture.

TACTICS

Build an interpretative trail network throughout VYCCs campus to teach and demonstrate sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and sustainable trails

Incorporate lessons utilizing this outdoor classroom into all VYCC programming

Develop new opportunities for community groups and individuals to learn on VYCC's campus. Expand Health Care Shares, the primary vehicle for learning and service on the Farm at VYCC, to multiple communities beyond Chittenden and Washington Counties



INITIATIVE 4:

Build an enduring organization for future generations

VYCC has grown from a seasonal organization with one program to a year-round organization with replication sites within and beyond Vermont. Program growth has not been accompanied by comparable administrative capacity building. A high functioning and well-supported administrative team, effective marketing, and a robust recruitment strategy are essential to ensure the organization can sustain growth and maintain impeccable program quality. By 2020, VYCC's foundation will guarantee its ability to continue toward realizing its vision.

When successful, VYCC will have the financial resources required to sustain current programs and future growth. VYCC's campus will be an integrated indoor and outdoor classroom for teaching best practices in agriculture, sustainable trails, and forestry. Technology will support effective and efficient operations. VYCC trustees will provide a high level of governance, strategy, and fundraising support.

STRATEGIES

Refine and implement financial strategies that guarantee VYCC's ability to serve generations of youth

TACTICS

Follow new budgeting and program development processes that draw on expertise of program directors

Implement a new program development process to ensure the organization is able to quickly and entrepreneurially pursue new opportunities

Ensure maximum program efficiency to reduce cost per participant without compromising service quality

Complete a feasibility study for a capital campaign that realizes priorities identified in VYCC's Strategic Campus Plan

Enhance VYCC's physical infrastructure to facilitate and sustain desired programmatic growth

TACTICS

Expand residential facilities on VYCC property to support longer duration of programs. Special consideration will be paid to historic structures and existing easements

Expand indoor and outdoor educational space to allow for multiple groups, large and small, in all seasons

Build an interpretive trail network that demonstrates best practices in sustainable trails, forestry, and agriculture

Develop a master plan for the campus

Enhance VYCC's virtual and communications infrastructure to facilitate and sustain desired programmatic growth

TACTICS

Evaluate IT infrastructure and risk management. Identify immediate and pending risks

Update hardware, software, and web-based tools; evaluate hosting system for flexibility and cost management

Develop and implement a fully integrated marketing plan. Dedicate adequate resources to support marketing efforts

Renew human resources processes and practices to attract and retain highly qualified staff

TACTICS

Develop in-house or contracted expertise in human resources

Develop HR policies and practices that reflect, support, and align with the culture and values of the organization

Develop comprehensive recruitment, selection, and onboarding plans, professional development plan, and performance assessment program

Develop a succession plan for staff to ensure a continuous flow of talent

Strengthen governance

TACTICS

Increase Board participation and effectiveness in setting organizational strategy, fundraising, and advocacy

Recruit additional members, increase geographic reach of trustees, provide training for trustees, form active committees



Strategic Planning Process

Purpose & Methodology

This plan is informed by two studies completed by VYCC staff and trustees. First, a robust Organization Assessment reviewed internal performance of the organization; we identified many strengths, as well as several areas that need improvement. Second, an outwardly focused Environmental Scan analyzed forces and trends affecting VYCC. This second review – both local and national in scope – identified social and environmental challenges that align directly with VYCC’s mission and model.

Environmental scanning helps to ground the strategic planning process by taking a comprehensive look at both its internal and external environment from multiple angles and perspectives. Staff and leadership gained a better understanding of these factors by gathering information from a variety of sources that created a realistic snapshot of its environment. With an informed picture of this landscape, VYCC was well positioned to develop relevant goals and strategies that addressed identified environmental needs.

While there are various approaches and models for completing a strategic plan, VYCC selected a process that supported team building and collaboration among staff and the board. Specifically, principles and methodologies of the Applied Strategic Planning Model⁶ were adapted. The Applied Strategic Planning Model follows a process by which the members and key stakeholders create their own vision for the future and develop the necessary goals and strategies to achieve that future.

A Steering Committee comprised of staff and board members provided project oversight and guidance throughout the process. Cope & Associates, Inc. (Williston, VT) also provided facilitation support, expertise, and project management to the Steering Committee, Board, and staff.

Data Collection

To support team building and collaboration, while also ensuring the process was thorough and comprehensive, four work groups researched and discussed key topics. Work group activities included reviewing internal data, reviewing external data and reports, and speaking with subject matter experts (e.g., other Corps, partners, funders, regional experts). Each work group completed a SWOT and report of key findings and recommendations. The work groups were comprised of approximately four to six staff members with one board member playing an advisory role. In addition, an organization assessment was completed by Cope & Associates, Inc. to further explore the organization’s internal capacity and business processes. Areas of discovery for each work group and the organization assessment included the following:

Data Collection		Areas of Discovery
WORK GROUPS	Industry - Competitor	Industry trends; programs (specialized Youth and Leadership Development); local and regional competition; recruitment, benchmarking
	Societal	Demographic trends and needs; technological trends; occupational trends; local impacts and trends; educational trends

⁶ Goodstein, L. D., Nolan, T. M., & Pfeiffer, J. W. (1992). *Applied Strategic Planning: An Overview*. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer and Company.

	Stakeholders	Participant satisfaction; donor satisfaction and priorities; partner relationships and priorities; community relationships and priorities; funder/sponsor relationships and priorities; external communications; board satisfaction and priorities; prospective employees
	Internal	Core values; work climate; human resources & policies; space utilization and work environment; internal communications
ORGANIZATION ASSESSMENT		Employee satisfaction (via survey and staff focus groups); board satisfaction (board survey); evaluation of key business processes; comparison of VYCC's programs to current mission; internal document review

Retreat

Board members, senior leadership, and work group leaders participated in a Strategic Planning retreat on June 22 and 23, 2015. The purpose of the retreat was to take new knowledge gained through research and identify innovative strategies that empower young people, align with VYCC's values and mission, and address environmental needs. The Retreat was an essential step in charting VYCC's future. The retreat also provided an opportunity to draft a new mission statement that was recently adopted by the board.

Integrated Functional Work Plans

Following the retreat, VYCC staff, with consistent feedback from board members, worked collaboratively to finalize the goals articulated at the retreat. Functional work plans were designed to identify how to implement the goals. The work plans included strategies, action steps, resource allocation, and key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success.

Next Steps

VYCC has taken great pride in its partnership with the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Together, we have expanded opportunities for youth who are blind or visually impaired with outcomes that have far exceeded expectations. The programs within this partnership – LEAP and BEP – will be moving to a new home in 2016, ReSOURCE. VYCC will continue to be a strategic and active partner in program delivery. We look forward to continuing to play a role in supporting youth as they overcome tremendous challenges to pursue their personal and professional goals.

The future of the High School Leadership Program requires further exploration and resolution. Conversations are ongoing to determine the program's long term sustainability.

2016 Key Performance Indicators

INITIATIVE 1: Make the VYCC experience possible for all Vermont youth

1. Enroll 325 youth and young adults in VYCC programs and field 39 crews.
2. Offer 13 community crews: three within the Farm Program and ten within Conservation Program for a total of 92 Corps Member positions in Barre, Bennington, Brattleboro, Richmond, Rutland, Saint Albans, South Burlington, and Woodstock. (29 Corps Members were served on 2015 community crews.)
3. Serve 35 youth who qualify for services through the Vermont Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (up from 16 in 2015).
4. Renew MOU with the Conservation Trust of North Carolina.
5. Deliver summer and Fall 2016 Venture Semester sessions in partnership with Vermont Technical College to 16 participants.

INITIATIVE 2: Deepen the VYCC experience and improve learning outcomes

1. Establish and measure educational outcomes for all programs through engagement with the SEARCH Institute; rework materials and trainings as needed to ensure consistent learning outcomes for all Corps Members.
2. Complete strategy for alumni engagement and build infrastructure to track data. Increase the number of engaged alumni as evidenced by: 100 alumni contribute to 2016 Annual Fund; 300 additional alumni engaged online through social media and/or e-newsletter; 300 respond to a data collection request.

INITIATIVE 3: Broaden the “conservation impact” beyond trails to build resiliency across all of Vermont’s landscapes

1. Be an integral partner on at least four of the VT Department of Conservation’s five regional implementation teams for watershed improvement projects.
2. Expand and improve the interpretive trail network on VYCC’s campus by installing navigation and informational signs to educate visitors about best practices in sustainable trails, forestry, and agriculture.
3. Offer Health Care Shares at four sites; expand into one new Medical Center. Increase off-farm food procurement by establishing “work-for-produce” trade agreements with local farms.

INITIATIVE 4: Build an enduring organization for future generations

1. Meet 1% target contingency / budget surplus; achieve consistent cash flow.
2. Meet Annual Fund Goal of \$1,028,700.
3. Enhance marketing activities and brand presence to include a 60% increase in e-mail list with 20% open rate; 100% increase in social media followers and activity; execute 2016 plan to brand vehicles, install signage, rebuild website, and develop new print collateral.
4. Achieve efficiencies of time, resources and cost through upgrades and improvements to financial software, data storage, and technological infrastructure.

5. Improve human resource services to VYCC employees and Corps Members. All staff will report ease of access to HR materials, forms, and handbooks. HR consultant will confirm compliance with federal and state HR rules and regulations.
6. Grow VYCC Board of Trustees to 12 trustees. Enhance effectiveness and engagement of board of trustees as measured by improved recruitment, attendance, fundraising, and committee participation.