

Background

ReSOURCE's mission is to meet community and individual needs through (1) education and job skills training, (2) environmental stewardship, and (3) economic opportunities. Annually we enroll over 300 adult and youth trainees in either work experience or work development training leading directly to gainful employment. One of these work development programs is our YouthBuild program that serves young men and women who have dropped out of high school and need comprehensive development, education, and job training. Open to 16- to 24-year-olds, ReSOURCE YouthBuild serves 30 youth annually at our sites in Barre and Burlington. Students are trained in construction skills while building affordable housing, and learning energy efficiency skills through weatherization and solar installations. They earn industry-standard certifications to prepare them for employment in the construction field including, NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) construction certification; OSHA-10 workplace safety; EPA Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) certification, and CPR & Community First Aid.

Under the Vermont High School Completion Program, students pursue their high school diplomas with ReSOURCE. Together with our qualifying students, adult education providers, and local school districts, our instructors develop Graduation Education Plans aligned with both the YouthBuild educational competencies and the credit requirements of local high schools. Students develop their own community research projects, design-build construction projects, and are required to complete a "capstone" project in which they research, plan, and implement a community service project. Students are also encouraged to pursue higher education after graduation through developed dual-enrollment partnerships with the Community College of Vermont and Vermont Technical College.

ReSOURCE YouthBuild students are among the 6.7 million young adults ages 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor working. These are the students who fall through the cracks of the traditional education system and need a path to complete their education and build their future.

ReSOURCE YouthBuild gives young people who have left traditional high school the opportunity to build better futures for themselves; empowering them through service, job skills training, and

education. 100% of students are from low or extremely low-income backgrounds and face significant barriers to success.

Impact of Agency of Education Rule Changes Related to High School Completion Program

Despite a strong track record of success, two years ago, AOE made it more difficult for ReSOURCE to serve disadvantaged students. Consequently, fewer students are able to earn a high school diploma. While high schools are shifting away from standardized tests as measures of proficiency, AOE is requiring this for entry into HSCP. Without HSCP funding, ReSOURCE cannot provide academic training in an integrated and comprehensive manner that has proven effective in engaging students. Instead, there is now a disconnect between the academic and vocational training.

Two Requests of Vermont Legislature

1. Eliminate NRS 5 testing requirement for entry into HSCP. VAOE's refusal to approve students who test under NRS 5 for HSCP services is not consistent with the intent or letter of the law, limits student choice, and discriminates, and limits the options, of low-skilled students, in particular English Language Learners.
2. Restore funding
 - a. through the existing channel of HSCP,
 - b. an increase to adult basic education funding that would allow the adult education providers including VAL to contract for innovative services that can demonstrate strong results, or
 - c. through a new funding mechanism for high school age youth (16-24) who have dropped out of school and require academic support as part of a comprehensive learning environment that leads to secondary school completion and postsecondary readiness.

The intent of Act 77, the Flexible Pathways initiative, was to ensure that our educational system could accommodate the needs of non-traditional students and students with the lowest levels of academic skills. The legislature specifically defined Flexible Pathways to include both high-quality academic and experiential components. This is exactly what YouthBuild has been doing since 1996.

--Testimony by Tom Longstreth, Executive Director of ReSOURCE, February 28, 2019

Program Outcomes

In the last ten years, ReSOURCE YouthBuild in Burlington has enrolled 196 students, 174 of whom have completed the full program cycle. Of those 174, 106 (61%) have earned a diploma through the HSCP, earned a GED, or earned a diploma through the Vermont Adult Diploma Program. In central Vermont, ReSOURCE has enrolled 102 students 84 of whom have obtained their high school degree through HSCP.

Mission Area	Indicator	2017	2016	2015	10-Year Total	Annual Average	2018 Goals
Environmental	Solar Installations	-	1	5	74	7	3
	Weatherization Units	7	6	7	138	14	8
Poverty Relief	Affordable Housing Built or Rehabbed	1	3	10	27	3	1
	Weatherization Affordable Housing Units	5	6	7	125	13	6
Training	Enrollment	33	25	23	277	28	30
	Graduates	17	21	14	160	16	23
	Graduates Denominator (eligible to graduate within year)	23	32	23	264	26	30
	High School Degrees Earned	16	21	11	159	16	20
	College Placement	7	9	2	31	3	8
	Job Placement	14	20	11	145	15	16
	Average Starting Wage	\$ 11.50	\$ 11.22	\$ 10.80	\$ 10.63	\$ 10.63	\$ 12.00
	Successful placement in job or college	16	20	12	152	15	22
	NCCER Construction Certification	17	17	13	150	15	23
Rates	Graduation	74%	66%	61%	61%	61%	77%
	High School Degree Attainment	94%	100%	79%	99%	99%	87%
	Successful Placement	94%	95%	86%	95%	95%	96%