



VISION – Serve. Learn. Earn. Every young person should have a viable pathway to employment and affordable education in exchange for serving their state.

NEED – Belief in the power of this proposition has inspired four organizations – the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, ReSOURCE, Vermont Works for Women, and Audubon Vermont – to create meaningful paid service and learning opportunities for young adults. With support from the Vermont state legislature, we are poised to offer jobs to hundreds of young adults this year through our new **Vermont Serve, Learn, & Earn** program. To ensure success, we are requesting \$1,850,000.

We propose to enter into a compact among our organizations, the State of Vermont, and participating youth and young adults to provide a pathway to jobs, while providing important public services in the areas of housing, outdoor recreation, food security, conservation, weatherization and renewable energy.

Young people in Vermont and across the country face unprecedented obstacles at the precise moment when they are ready to take on big challenges and pursue their aspirations. A global pandemic and significant economic recession, layered onto an acute and pre-existing opportunity gap, have eroded the educational and career prospects for young adults. We need to act, and we need to act now.

School and unemployment are not the only challenges young adults face. Racial injustice and our climate crisis weigh heavy on young adults, and contribute to a sharp decline in community connection and mental health. We must provide young adults what they need most: consistent and equal access to professional and personal growth opportunities that inspire and prepare them to enter the workforce – a sense of belonging and an active community are of paramount importance. And, in providing these opportunities, we need to draw on different perspectives and allow new voices to be heard. We see paid service and training experiences as a powerful strategy.

STRATEGY – Service – as a value and as an action – has deep resonance with Vermonters. It is a unifying force in a highly divided time, and when we incorporate workforce development trainings into our efforts, the strategy becomes all the more effective. For young adults who see a world in turmoil and yearn to make a tangible difference, training and service offer seminal experiences at a formative time in their lives. To ensure equitable access to all Vermonters, partners are committed to providing wages and/or stipends – to achieve this, we are requesting COVID Relief Funds.

Young adults will complete the following types of projects that benefit and strengthen Vermont's economy and communities:

- Forestry – Logging and sustainable silviculture across a minimum of 15 project sites on 200 acres of federal, state, municipal, and privately conserved land, resulting in improved forest health and a new generation of trained foresters
- Carpentry/Trades – Constructing and rehabilitating affordable housing, weatherizing and installing renewable energy systems, including at least one unit of new housing, a dozen or more affordable housing renovation projects, a new backcountry hut, and ~90 other projects ranging from new and repaired state park structures, garden sheds for community gardens, access modifications, and solar energy installations
- Food Security – Growing fresh, local, organic produce and poultry delivered weekly to over 400 Vermont families
- Outdoor Recreation – Building and maintaining infrastructure essential to Vermont's outdoor recreation economy, including an estimated minimum of 25 miles of new and improved trail

- Water Quality – Improving the health of our lakes and rivers through projects that reduce polluted runoff from farms, parking lots and roads
- Wildlife Habitat – Restoring and managing open land and waterways for the benefit of wildlife through planting trees and shrubs, and removing invasive species
- Outdoor Education – Teaching children how to experience and understand the importance of nature

IMPACT – Collectively, we are confident in our ability to offer hundreds of young adults – ages 15-26 – paid service and training positions this year.

In total, we expect to:

- Create 418 jobs for youth and young adults in Vermont this year
- Complete an anticipated 3,400 participant weeks of service
- Provide \$1,224,412 in earned wages and/or stipends
- Offer 147 AmeriCorps positions that lead to Segal Education awards totaling \$354,730

Our organizations are equally committed to supporting members after their time working and learning in our respective programs. We are not just building pathways between our organizations, but drawing on our extensive networks of employers and educators to directly link participants with post-program opportunities. Support from the Vermont State Legislature will accomplish three goals: put young adults to work, complete a wide range of high-priority projects, and launch young adults toward future opportunities with skills and confidence.

As stated above, we are requesting \$1.85 million in funding. This figure is based on simple math: we expect to offer 3,400 participant weeks of paid service and training programs, and are requesting \$575 per participant week.

Rhoni Basden, Executive Director
Vermont Works for Women

Breck Knauft, Executive Director
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Tom Longstreth, Executive Director
ReSOURCE

David Mears, Executive Director
Audubon Vermont