

## Serve.Learn.Earn

### Interim Report for Forest Parks and Recreation

#### Submitted by VT Youth Conservation Corps

On behalf of the Serve, Learn and Earn program including Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Vermont Works for Women, Audubon Vermont, and ReSOURCE.

1/31/22

### Introduction

The Serve Learn & Earn Program is off to a great start. In just seven months, we have offered paid training and service opportunities to 252 participants who have completed approximately 2,090 weeks of service. In addition to offering more positions than expected, we have increased compensation for participants, enhanced trainings, established a growing network of private and public partners, and seen strong interest and appreciation by Vermonters wanting to access meaningful career and educational pathways.



*VYCC Crews learn a wide range of skills as they tackle infrastructure projects for a wide range of partners, including Vermont state parks.*

Our impact is also measured by the geographic reach of our programs. We have expanded our footprint and are finding new ways to bring programs – and complete projects – in all corners of the state. The maps below convey where participants are from and where we've completed projects. These projects address some of Vermont's highest priority needs, from outdoor recreation and education to food security to weatherization of homes to infrastructure projects to healthy forest and waterways. See Appendix 1 below for a detailed progress report on specific outcomes and program priorities.

The Serve Learn & Earn Program would not be possible without a robust network of external partners. First among these is the Vermont Department of Forest Parks & Recreation (FPR) whose staff have worked collaboratively with VYCC, Audubon Vermont, ReSOURCE, and Vermont Works for Women. In addition to FPR, we have a growing number of employers who are hiring graduates, providing perspective on and

support of programs, and in some cases, offering financial support. We look to expand this network in the coming years as partnering with Vermont employers is one of the most effective ways we can provide clear pathways for program participants. We are finding employers eager to work with us as they themselves benefit from a pipeline of well-trained prospective employees.



*Trailblazer participants learn framing techniques and carpentry skills during class, at The Mint maker space In Rutland.*

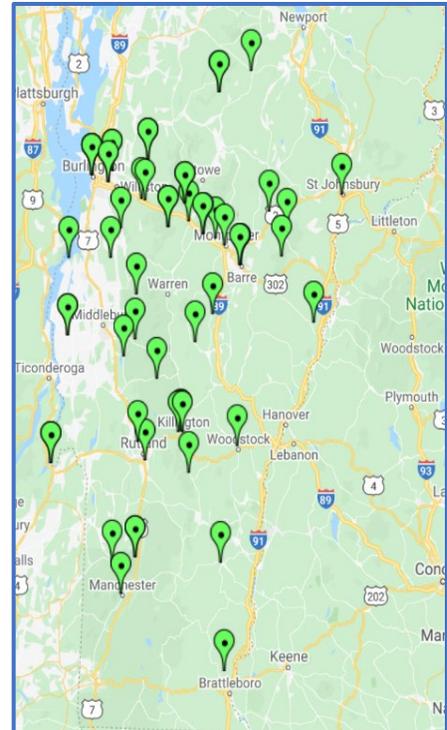
Though we are encouraged by our progress, workforce development remains – and will for the foreseeable future – a serious challenge for Vermont. We are heartened to see this challenge highlighted as a priority in Gov. Scott’s State of the State Address. From conversations with legislators, we know there is broad support for innovative solutions from organizations with proven track records. It is with this in mind that we have requested an increase to the amount and duration of state support for our partnership in the form of a three-year request of just over \$4M per year for both programmatic and capital expenses. The short-term intensive nature of our training programs allows us to have an impact now to address the dearth of skilled workers. Our hope is that this interim report conveys the impact that investing in this program has had, as well as the importance of sustained investment in this strategy over time.

### **High Level Accomplishments**

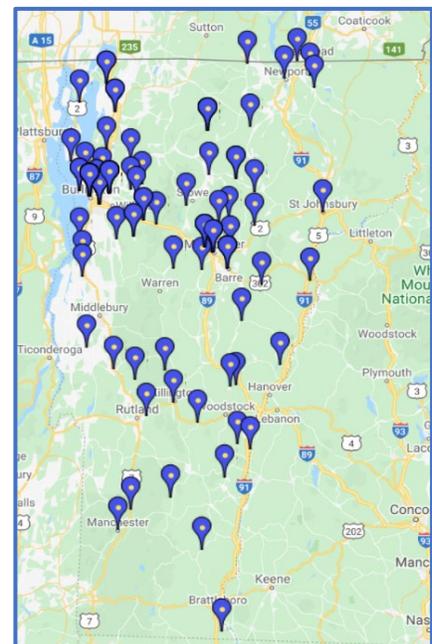
- In just 7 months, partners have offered paid training experiences to 252 participants who have completed approximately 2,090 service weeks. 101 of these participants are AmeriCorps Members, unlocking an additional Segal Education Award for each Member.
- Provided participants with approximately \$723K in wages and compensation. This is in addition to the value of training and certifications many participants obtain.

- Completed a broad array of high-priority Conservation, Carpentry, Food Security, and Outdoor Recreation and Education projects that all Vermonters benefit from.
- Brought our programs to the Vermont public – each organization has an effective marketing team that not only shares the importance of investing in job training, but invites Vermonters to be part of the conversation. We are finding overwhelming and broad support for this work and our partnership.
- Engaged in conversations with multiple Vermont philanthropists and philanthropic institutions to secure funding for expenses not covered by the FY'22 appropriation.
- Further strengthened partnership and collaboration with Forest Parks and Recreation leadership and staff. We recognize the unique nature of this investment by the legislature, as well as the four-organization structure we have created. The FPR team has been terrific in working to craft a replicable structure that both ensures accountability and allows for flexibility as partners design and implement program offerings.
- Submitting a winning Climate Action Solutions pitch to the Energy Action Network that proposed further investments in a Green Jobs workforce. We have since joined Energy Action Network's steering committee.

In addition to these broader accomplishments, a detailed snapshot of progress to date can be seen in Appendix A – Performance Metrics – SERVE.LEARN.EARN The accomplishments in Appendix A reflect the priorities of organizations that are always working to find new and innovative solutions to that support Vermonters. Each organization has made



*Serve.Learn.Earn Project Locations*



*Serve.Learn.Earn Participant Hometowns*

significant progress toward – and in some cases already exceeded – program goals. This can be seen in the following summaries of organizational accomplishments.

### **Vermont Youth Conservation Corps**

- VYCC provided a total of 144 paid positions to participants who completed 1,312 service weeks; 85 of these participants were AmeriCorps Members
- Provided training for 10 participants who completed 170 service weeks on state land and in state parks. Park infrastructure and trail projects in Molly’s Falls, Brighton, and Kettle Pond were completed, making these parks a more enjoyable experience for visitors
- Increased the number of initially budgeted paid positions by approximately 20%. 144 participants represents a 273% increase over 2020 numbers
- Increased compensation for Members; in 2022 we are increasing Member wages by ~25%.
- Launched a new “Pro Crew Model” in 2021 for Build and Water Quality Crews. This will expand in 2022 to also include Forestry and Trail Crews
- Worked with The Creative Discourse Group to offer equity trainings to staff, board, and Corps Members; completed Equity Audit that informed 2022 budget
- Continued to offer safe and effective programs in midst of pandemic
- Provided mental health support to each member and each crew
- Provided one-on-one career counseling to each member and crew
- Secured ~\$2.9M in additional revenues to complement state funding

*“Coming out of high school, I wanted to do something meaningful, but couldn’t afford to not work. VYCC was the perfect place to do outdoor work and also get paid. When I decided to not finish college, I came to VYCC.... As I move to more challenging future positions, I understand I that I won’t have all the answers or have all the skills. I know what it feels like to lead and how exciting it feels to teach someone something new. This gives me more excitement to learn and the freedom to not be perfect when trying something new.”*

*--Sable (They/Them) – VYCC  
Crew Member and Leader*

### **ReSOURCE**

- ReSOURCE provided paid service learning positions to 65 participants who completed 570 service weeks; 35 were co-enrolled AmeriCorps members
- 13 Full time AmeriCorps positions entered a year of service

- 35 Construction Intensive and YouthBuild trainees earned one or several professional development skill certifications.
- 38 of 52 Intensive and YouthBuild participants earned an industry recognized certification including OSHA-10 or NCCER. Most of remaining 14 are still working toward credentials. Some trainees earned more than one credential--67 credentials were awarded.
- 36 participants graduated while 25 remain active
- 22 of 26 graduates were employed within 3 months of completing the program with an average hourly wage of \$16.44.
- ReSOURCE has more than doubled the planned Industry Certified 101 Trainings to now include HVAC and Certified Logistics Associate Training in addition to continued expansion of Weatherization and Construction 101 offerings all around the State
- 19 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.

### **Vermont Works for Women**

- Two completed training cohorts of 20 women (18 graduates) in Trailblazers; receiving 1,190 hours of hands-on

*"Before I came to YouthBuild I was enrolled in high school at U-32...but I struggled in the structure of public schools learning through lectures in a classroom. I wanted to find training that was hands-on, and structured like a professional job. At YouthBuild, we work on actual job sites, making a difference to real people in the community while getting a feel for what the trades are going to be like in the professional world, which is exactly what I needed. Since joining YouthBuild, I'm most proud of the high quality of the finished work, and the work we complete in general. Everything we do is to the highest possible standard and the instructors and staff are helpful and supportive. We're taught to never compromise our work just because something is hard or challenging. I love looking at before and after pictures of our projects, and thinking 'Wow, we did that!'"*

*--Shane (He/Him) – Age 17 – Enrolled in ReSOURCE's Barre YouthBuild*

*"The VWW Trailblazers program was an impactful experience. Hands on collaboration with instructors was monumental to gaining insight and empowerment in the trades. The ability to attain OSHA 10 and NCCER Core Curriculum accreditation not only was informative but bolstered my awareness about work safety. The instructors accounted for various learning styles, prior trade experience, and participant comfort. Not only was this experience occupationally safe but fostered a safe social space for networking and developmental growth. While I may not pursue a career directly in the trades, I can use the knowledge gained to be of service to the community and those in need."*

instruction and NCCER and OSHA-10 certifications.

- 13 completed work intern experiences, with 13 employers across VT and 1,248 hours of services to employers.
- 21 employers completing Gender Equity training with VWW staff.
- 17 Trailblazer graduates currently employed
- Developing a new Trailblazer's program around Clean Energy trainings and jobs in Vermont.

### **Audubon Vermont**

- Audubon Vermont offered 23 paid service learning opportunities for teens and young adults. Those opportunities included positions as Counselors-In Training (CIT), Summer Camp Instructors, AmeriCorps Members, a Conservation Fellow and Internships. Combined, these positions worked a total of 5,045 hours or 144 weeks. Young adults in these roles directly engaged 1,146 children in outdoor education.
- Audubon restarted our summer day camp program and hired four fabulous summer Camp Instructors to work alongside our professional education team to lead those camps. Camp Instructors engaged 306 campers ages 3 to 11.
- For the first time, we were able to offer nine teenager Counselors-In-Training (CITs) pay to work alongside our professional education staff and our Camp Instructors at our summer day camps. For most of these teens, being a CIT was their first paid job experience.
- Three AmeriCorps members participated in our program and directly engaged 755 people through education programs, (not including the summer campers). They also engaged 2 community volunteers through our Adopt-A-Trail Program at the Audubon Center.
- Audubon hired a full-time Conservation Fellow, (a joint fellowship with the Lake Champlain Sea Grant) to work with our conservation team. This new, two-year fellowship will focus on improving watershed resiliency across the Lake Champlain watershed, connecting Audubon's work to protect birds and the



*Newly hired, full-time Conservation Fellow, (a joint fellowship with the Lake Champlain Sea Grant), Cassie Wolfanger*

places birds need to thrive with UVM Extension's support for sustainable farming and forestry as keys to watershed health.

- Audubon hired a total of six interns, one Education Intern, four Conservation Interns, and our first ever Forest Conservation Intern. Our interns worked closely with an Audubon staff person who served as their mentor. Our Education Intern led programs for 85 children visiting the Audubon Center on field trips from other local summer programs in addition to working with campers throughout the summer. Conservation Interns helped to monitor Common Tern chicks on Poppasquash Island on Lake Champlain, learned to band birds and helped present the bird banding process to the public, and visited farms to learn from Audubon's Conservation Biologists about how farming practices can be improved to provide healthy pollinator and bird habitat.
- Audubon Vermont is working with an evaluation consultant, PEER Associates in Richmond, Vermont. PEER is helping us to build the evaluation tools we need to learn about the impact Serve Learn and Earn is having on program participants. Tools developed include an exit interview and post program surveys. All of our Serve Learn and Earn program participants participated in exit interviews where they were asked about skills learned, behavior change and how the Audubon work experience has influenced their views on conservation.

*"As Audubon Vermont's summer 2021 Forest Conservation Intern, I've learned a lot about how forests and birds support each other. I've also learned a lot about how people play an instrumental role in the health of both forests and birds in Vermont. My internship is what you'd expect a forestry internship to be: lots of time in the woods at the Green Mountain Audubon Center measuring trees and taking down habitat data. It's also not what you'd expect: I've contemplated economics, met forest landowners, done forest assessments for sugarbushes, and had long conversations with maple syrup producers. These experiences have solidified my belief that collaboration is the future of conservation."*

*– Asha DiMatteo-LePape, Forest Conservation Intern*

## Challenges

We are proud of the accomplishments above and grateful for the one-year appropriation that launched this partnership last year; this has clearly set the stage for growth and enhanced impact. There are, however, many challenges and obstacles that make program implementation and growth difficult. The greatest of these funding. More specifically, predictable funding over several-year to help organizations invest in programs with confidence, and recruit and retain talented staff. We are hopeful that the

State of Vermont will fund our three-year request, as this will ensure progress over the longer term.

We are also seeing possibilities that we could reach with more robust coordination between organizations. Our organizations are already working more closely: recruitment, programming, and joint fundraising efforts are proving successful. We now want to explore more integrated programming, administrative efficiencies, fundraising, and marketing. We are hoping to secure private funds that will allow partners to hire a Serve.Learn.Earn Director.



*ReSOURCE participants taking part in Weatherization 101 training, as well as outdoor skill application work.*

Recruitment remains an in-going challenge. It is no small thing to hire over 250 participants in under seven months. Strong and inspiring organizational cultures, relevant missions, creativity, organized teams, and financial resources are all paramount.

We are also finding limited support services for trainees wanting to accept job offers and enter the workforce. Many applicants still struggle with childcare, school closures and transportation challenges, making it difficult to fully accept job offers.

### **Future Needs and Goals**

Looking forward, we are fully confident that increased and sustained funding will lead to program expansion. In the meantime, are working hard to enroll additional participants over next six months. We expect we will exceed targets identified in scope of work agreement. Already, ReSOURCE has expanded its 6-week Intensives in Weatherization and Carpentry from six courses to 11, with potentially three more. VYCC is also projecting more participants receiving more varied trainings; sustained program excellence. VT Works for Women has expanded to include additional certification training programs in renewable energy and launched in new regions to support participant demand and employer needs.

In short, we are off to a great start and appreciate the excellent support we have received from FPR. We are on track to meet or exceed all of the specific goals set in our agreement with the State of Vermont. Importantly, if less tangible, we are building the internal relationship among our organizations necessary to sustain this partnership as we seek to put in place a system to sustain the synergies created by our collaboration. Finally, and central to our work, we are extending our reach to meet the needs of the people we serve, changing the lives of our participants, meeting public needs, transitioning disadvantaged side-lined workers to gainful employment, and serving Vermont's shared prosperity.

Please let us know if we can provide additional information. We would also welcome feedback on the format and content of this report to help inform future reporting and to ensure we are meeting your needs.



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

|  | <b>Target Metric</b>  | <b>Progress to Date: 6/1/21 - 12/31/21</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>VYCC Work on Public Lands</b>                 |   |   |
|  | Perform construction activity under the direction of State onsite construction work supervisor        | Total Parks Restoration Crew participants and work weeks in 2021:<br>10 paid positions<br>17 work weeks |
|  | Campsite and Lean-to Improvements - Ricker Pond, Stillwater, Molly's Falls, and Maidstone State Parks | 5 paid positions working for 4 weeks on this project  |
|  | Fencing Replacement at Crystal Lake and Brighton State Parks  | 5 paid positions working for 6 weeks on these projects  |
|  | Owls Head Trail Improvements in Groton State Forest   | 5 paid positions working for 2 weeks on this project  |
| <b>Additional Project Performance Measures</b>   | <b>Target Metric</b>  | <b>Progress to Date: 6/1/21 - 12/31/21</b>  |
| <b>Diversified Agriculture and Food Security</b> |   |   |
|  | <b>VYCC</b>   |   |
|  | 73 paid positions completing 616 service weeks  | 50 paid members completed 639 service weeks   |
|  | 400 Health Care Share Members receive 15-18 weeks of food deliveries                                  | 410 Health Care Share Member Families received 12-17 weeks of food deliveries; 945 individuals benefit  |
|  | 90% of Health Care Share Members report increased health/nutritional knowledge                        | 86% of Health Care Share Members report increased health/nutritional knowledge                          |
| <b>Outdoor Recreation</b>                        |   |   |
|  | <b>VYCC</b>   |   |
|  | 32 paid positions completing 42 service weeks   | 32 paid positions, 42 Service weeks   |
|  | 27 miles of trails improved   | 23.5 miles of trail improved  |
|  | 106 new drains to be added to trail tread   | 185 new drains installed  |
|  | 292 existing drains maintained in trail tread   | 320 drains maintained   |
|  |   |   |
| <b>Water Quality</b>                             | <b>VYCC</b>   |   |
|  | 17 paid positions completing 25 service weeks   | 21 paid positions, 25 service weeks   |

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|                  | <b>Target Metric</b>  | <b>Progress to Date: 6/1/21 - 12/31/21</b>   |
|------------------|---|--|
|                  | 123 acres impacted/mitigated  | 138 acres impacted/mitigated   |
|                  | 65 erosion control structures installed   | 69 erosion control structures installed  |
|                  | 2,600 riparian trees maintained/planted   | 1,000 trees planted, 9,333 trees maintained  |
|                  | 1,200 water chestnuts removed from Lake Champlain and tributaries   | 30,952 water chestnut rosettes removed   |
| <b>Forestry</b>  |   |  |
|                  | <b>VYCC</b>   |  |
|                  | 10 paid positions completing 20 service weeks   | 7 paid positions, 14 service weeks   |
|                  | 60 acres of forest treatments   | 103 acres of forest treatments (Timber stand improvements, crop tree release, apple tree release)          |
|                  | 75 acres of invasive plant removal  | 22.5 acres of invasives removed  |
| <b>Carpentry</b> |   |  |
|                  | <b>VYCC</b>   |  |
|                  | 36 paid positions completing 36 service weeks   | 18 paid positions, 30 service weeks  |
|                  | 11 distinct projects, including privies, bridges, sheds, etc.   | 17 distinct projects; privies, contact stations, sheds, firewood shelter, bridges, timber stairs           |
|                  | 800 feet of boardwalk installed   | 939 feet of boardwalk installed  |
|                  |   |  |
|                  | <b>ReSOURCE AmeriCorps</b>  |  |
|                  | 10 Trainees enrolled/retained for 538 weeks, completing 20,400 hours of service & 10 community service projects | 13 Trainees enrolled/retained for 181 service weeks completing 20,400 hours of service.                    |
|                  | <b>ReSOURCE Construction and Weatherization Intensives</b>  |  |
|                  | 40 Trainees enrolled/retained for 151 weeks, completing 1,680 hours of service & 6 public structures built      | 30 Trainees enrolled/retained for 123 service weeks completing 1,680 hours of service.                     |
|                  | 40 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved   | 47   |
|                  | 36 Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit  | 16   |
|                  | \$16/hour wage of trainees placed in employment   | Average wage of \$17.17 for trainees placed in employment  |
|                  | <b>ReSOURCE YouthBuild</b>  |  |
|                  | 18 Trainees enrolled/retained for 862 weeks, completing 10,080 hours of service & 35 public structures built    | 22 Trainees enrolled/retained for 266 weeks, completing 6,538 hours of service & 9 public structures built |

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|   | <b>Target Metric</b>  | <b>Progress to Date: 6/1/21 - 12/31/21</b>   |
|---|---|--|
|   |   | structures built and 1 unit of affordable housing.   |
|   | 18 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved   | 20   |
|   | 18 Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit  | 6  |
|   | \$13/hour wage of trainees placed in employment   | Average wage of \$14.40 for trainees placed in employment  |
|   |   |  |
|   | <b>Vermont Works for Women - Trailblazers</b>   |  |
|   | 30 Trainees enrolled/retained for 120 weeks, completing 3 service projects in partnership with community partners | 20 trainees graduated; 230 instructional hours   |
|   | 30 NCCER Certifications achieved  | 20 NCCER and OSHA-10 certs completed   |
|   | 20 Employer partners  | 17 graduates currently employed in trades industries; 22 employer hosted work experiences (1 graduated completed 2 work experiences) |
|   | <b>Vermont Works for Women - Youth@Work</b>   |  |
|   | 20 Participants Enrolled/retained   | Program start has been delayed by COVID. Expected start in February, 2022.   |
| <b>Environmental Conservation &amp; Education</b> |   |  |
|   | <b>Audubon Vermont</b>  |  |
|   | 46 paid positions providing 265 weeks of service  | 23 paid positions for 144 weeks  |
|   | 3,000 Children ages 2-13 served through education programs  | Our youth leaders directly engaged 1,146 children in outdoor education   |
|   | 250 volunteers engaged in community science projects and special events   | 24 Volunteers engaged in Audubon Vermont's Adopt-A-Trail Program and Bird and Barn event at the Audubon Center                       |