

From: Kesha Ram <kram@leg.state.vt.us>
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 9:13 PM
To: Jane Kitchel <JKitchel@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: Becca Balint <bbalint@leg.state.vt.us>; Philip Baruth <PBaruth@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: Seeking 150K add to VYCC/service compact for Vermont Climate Corps Planning

Hi Jane,

I hope this email finds you exceptionally well given the pressure you and your committee are under at this moment. I do not want to add greatly to that burden, so I am trying to fit a big idea into a small appropriation request. As the national vision grows for a Civilian Climate Corps, some of our statewide service and conservation organizations are trying to collaboratively lay the groundwork for a **Vermont Climate Corps**. This includes **VYCC, SerVermont, VHCB, ReSource, Audubon Vermont**, and others.

We were attempting to draft some inspiring language to plant the seed for this vision and to ensure we had our ducks in a row, and the product of that work is below. However, we ran out of time to really give it the needed nuance to fit well into policy committee discussions and/or the budget on its own. So, alternatively, **I am requesting a 150K add to the \$1.85 million requested by VYCC and the service compact** they are building - for a total of \$2 million - to do the planning work to come back with a more robust proposal.

Why planning money? Many would agree **our state is primed to grow its youth service opportunities, particularly to reach into low-income and BIPOC communities and build critical relationships that help create pathways to the climate jobs of the future**. These organizations want to be that vehicle, but are stretched thin, particularly in the transition out of COVID when managing logistics and safety is an ongoing primary challenge. They need to bring on **capacity to track the big picture thinking and critical details it would take to give life to a Climate Corps, as well as to monitor new federal dollars and partnerships that could help fund this effort**.

I believe this small investment would give us something hopeful and inspiring to talk to our constituents about when the dust settles on this legislative session. I hope you agree, and I would be happy to answer any questions or bring additional thinking to the table.

Thanks for your consideration,

Kesha

P.S. Please find the legislative language for the larger VCC vision below, though I would not want you to get too focused on any numbers or details because the concept would benefit from planning time and capacity, hence the smaller and more incisive request.

Sec. 3. 10 V.S.A. § 598 is added to read:

§ 598. VERMONT CLIMATE CORPS

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “Corps member” means an individual who is at least 18 years of age and who has committed to not more than 12 months of full-time, part-time, or flex-time service in the Vermont Climate Corps.

(2) “Program host” means a State entity, municipality, or nonprofit organization located or with a physical presence in Vermont that has committed to hosting Program fellows through the Vermont Climate Corps.

(3) “SerVermont “ means the Vermont State Service Commission, as required under section 201 of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, as amended, and established in Executive Order No. 33-18.

(b) Corps established. There is established the Vermont Climate Corps to be developed and administered by SerVermont. The purposes of the Vermont Climate Corps are to:

(1) increase the opportunities for Vermonters to devote up to a year of service to Vermont communities;

(2) mobilize the service sector as an innovative solution to clear and pressing environmental problems that negatively impact Vermont communities;

(3) provide rural and underserved communities in Vermont with volunteer resources to help address critical health, human, public safety, educational, and environmental needs; and

(4) strengthen civic engagement of participants and in communities through volunteer service.

(c) The following conditions shall apply to the Vermont Climate Corps:

(1) SerVermont may provide funding to eligible Program hosts that have experience administering national service grants and engaging Vermonters in formal service programs in order to enable those hosts to support corps members and undertake eligible projects.

(2) Program hosts that receive funding from SerVermont through the Vermont Climate Corps shall use the funding received to meet costs incurred by hosting and supporting corps members in their service who are participating in eligible projects.

(3) Corps members shall be the responsibility of their Program hosts and shall not be employees, or considered to be employees, of the State of Vermont for any purpose throughout the duration of their service.

(4) SerVermont and Program hosts shall, to the extent practicable, ensure that corps members are placed in projects that match their interests, geographic constraints, skills, and abilities.

(5) Program hosts shall seek to enroll as corps members individuals who reflect the diversity of gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, social, and disability status of Vermonters.

(6) Project eligibility shall be determined by SerVermont and may include weatherization, environmental restoration, and other climate-related projects. Innovative strategies and partnerships are encouraged.

(d) In administering the Vermont Climate Corps, SerVermont shall coordinate with appropriate organizations in the served communities, shall explore service-based solutions that build community capacity to combat climate change, and may engage with existing national service programs.

(e) On or before April 1 annually, SerVermont shall report to the General Assembly on the Vermont Climate Corps.

Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION

The sum of \$5,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to SerVermont in fiscal year 2023 for the purpose of administering the Vermont Climate Corps established in 10 V.S.A. § 598.

Within 180 days of passage of this act, SerVermont shall seek to establish in 2022 the first class of corps members.