

Serve Learn Earn

Annual 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.

7/31/22

Introduction

Serve Learn & Earn is a statewide workforce development effort led by four nonprofit organizations: The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), ReSOURCE, Vermont Works for Women (VWW), and Audubon Vermont. Together, partners are enhancing the quality and number of paid service and training opportunities for Vermonters. In FY '21, the Vermont state legislature realized the potential of this initiative and made an initial investment of \$1.85M. This report captures the outcomes of this first year (from June of 2021 – June, 2022), and we are pleased to report that Serve Learn & Earn first year exceeded goals and expectations on nearly every measure.

Over the course of 13 months, partners have offered paid training and service opportunities to 404 participants who have completed approximately 3,103 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.

Our impact is also measured by the geographic reach of our programs. We have expanded our footprint and each partner is finding new ways to bring programs – and complete projects – to 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



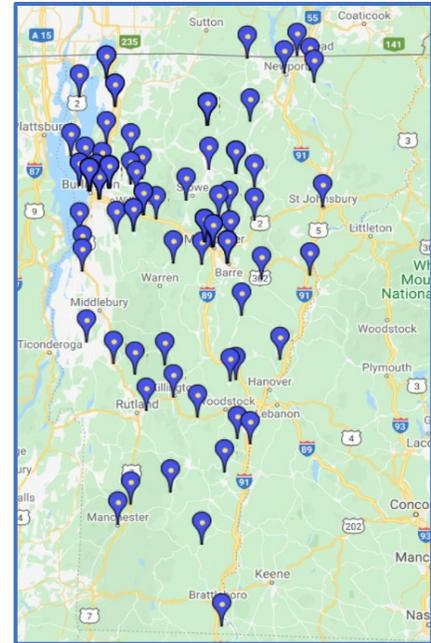
A Serve Learn & Earn participant in a ReSOURCE Weatherization 101 course sprays high-efficiency insulation.

waterways. See Appendix 1 below for a detailed progress report on specific outcomes and program priorities.

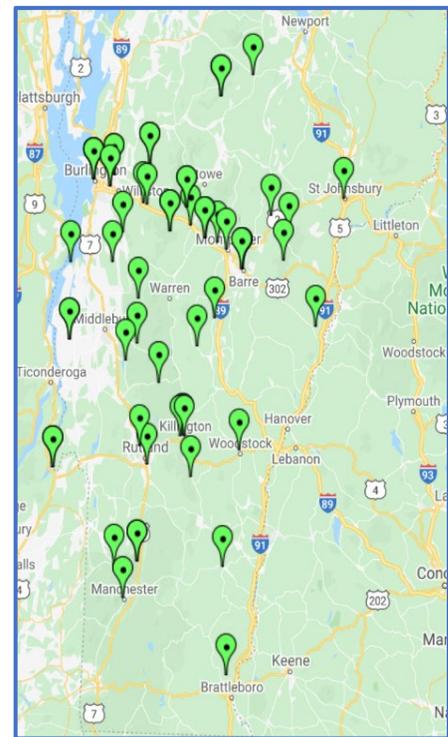
The Serve Learn & Earn Program would not be possible without a robust network of external partners. First among these is the Vermont Department of Forest Parks & Recreation (FPR) whose staff have worked collaboratively with VYCC, Audubon Vermont, ReSOURCE, and Vermont Works for Women. In addition to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

Though we are proud of our accomplishments in year one, workforce development remains – and will for the foreseeable future – a serious challenge for Vermont. We are encouraged to see Gov. Scott and legislators on both sides of the aisle recognize the importance of investing in innovative solutions from organizations with proven track records. We are grateful to the legislature for renewing support of Serve Learn & Earn in the FY '23 state budget.

The accomplishments and successes detailed below stem from four organizations' ability to respond quickly to meet the needs of Vermonters in a rapidly changing world. Recruitment of participants, hiring trainers, identifying and completing high-priority projects, ensuring safe working and learning conditions, establishing partnerships with additional learning institutions, and creating pathways to meaningful work for program participants are all essential to program success.



*Serve Learn & Earn
Participant Hometowns*



*Serve Learn & Earn Project
Locations*

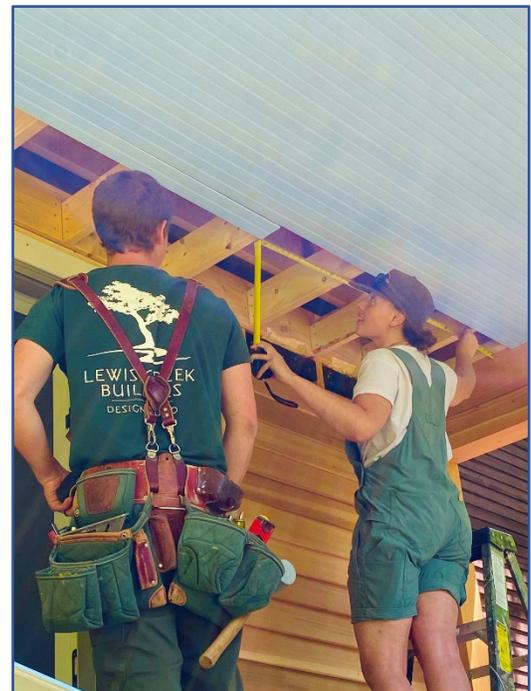
Together, Serve Learn & Earn partners have more than 150 years of operational experience, allowing us to have an impact now that measurably addresses the dearth of skilled workers. Our hope is that this report on Year One conveys the impact that investing in this program has had, as well as the importance of sustained investment in this strategy over time.

High Level Accomplishments

- In just 13 months, partners have offered paid training experiences to 404 participants who have completed approximately 3,103 service weeks. 166 of these participants are AmeriCorps Members, unlocking an additional Segal Education Award for each Member.
- Provided participants with approximately \$1,090,140 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.
- Further strengthened partnership and collaboration with Forest Parks and Recreation leadership and staff. We recognize the unique nature of this



VYCC's new "Pro Build" crew is building a 4-season hut in the Green Mountain National Forest. Once footers are installed, they are responsible for all construction, from the floor joists up to the roof.



Participants in Vermont Works For Women's Trailblazers course learn on-the-job trades skills employers are looking for.

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 are excited to be part of the 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

These accomplishments reflect the priorities of organizations that are always working to find new and innovative solutions to support Vermonters. Furthermore, each organization is working on initiatives that complement program goals. These can be seen in the following summaries of organizational accomplishments.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

- VYCC provided a total of 204 paid positions to participants who completed 1,582 service weeks; 113 of these participants were AmeriCorps Members
- Provided \$697,176 in wages to program participants.
- Provided training for 14 participants who completed 294 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.
- In 2021, funding allowed VYCC to increase the number of initially budgeted paid positions by approximately 20%. The total number of paid participants during year one of funding – 204 – represents a 245% increase over the previous year/time period.
- Increased compensation for Members; in 2022 we have increased Member wages by ~26%.
- Launched a new “Pro Crew Model” in 2021 for Build and Water Quality Crews. This has expanded in 2022 to also include Forestry and Trail Crews.
- Restarted a Corps exchange partnership with the Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC), allowing 11 LACC Members to work in Vermont this

We're building what is called a hut but it's very much like a modern house - fully insulated, four seasons. It's going to have some solar power running to it and green building. We're learning how to frame it from the ground up more so than we would learn from a lean-to.

*Pat – Pro Build Project Crew Member,
2022*

summer/fall. All members receive career counseling and introductions to Vermont employers and universities/colleges.

- 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 and one-on-one career counseling to each member
- Secured ~\$4.7M in additional revenues to complement state funding

ReSOURCE

- ReSOURCE provided paid service learning positions to 117 trainees who completed 1,104 service weeks; 50 were co-enrolled AmeriCorps members
- 21 Full time AmeriCorps positions entered a year of service
- 67 Construction Intensive and YouthBuild trainees earned one or several professional development skill certifications. A total of 140 certifications were earned.
- 68 of 96 Intensive and YouthBuild participants earned an industry recognized certification including OSHA-10 or NCCER. 25 trainees remain active and thus the number earning certifications will rise.
- 65 of 78 participants graduated or 83%. Another 39 remain active.
- 87 % of Intensive Trainees (34 of 39) were successfully placed with an employer after graduation. 23 remain active and five were excluded from this measure because employment was not their goal (most of these used training to become self-employed). The average wage rate of Intensive Trainees placed with an employer was \$17.62 per hour.
- 79 % of YouthBuild Trainees (11 of 14) were successfully placed with an employer after graduation. Another 11 remain active and 1 was excluded from this measure because employment was not their goal (college/further training).

This course basically gives you confidence that you can do something you can really love. You have to be open to learn and if you can have an open mind, you'll figure it out. You can figure it out your way. Every person has their own opinion, you're not wrong, you're just different. If you have the basics, you will be able to figure out how to do anything, I'm confident I will get there. I was so scared of how to use different tools, now I can look at the shop and say that's easy, that's easy, that's easy, okay I know this. It's overwhelming trying to learn at home. Here we take it step by step.

– Summer 2022 Construction 101 Graduate

The average wage rate of YouthBuildTrainees placed with an employer was \$15.06 per hour.

- 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
- ReSOURCE completed 30 Service Projects including 9 units of affordable housing rehabilitation, 19 public service projects, and 8 other community projects

Vermont Works for Women

- Two completed training cohorts of 29 women in Trailblazers; receiving 1,540 hours of hands-on instruction and NCCER and OSHA-10 certifications.
- 19 completed work intern experiences, with 18 employers across VT and 1,648 hours of services to employers.
- 17 new employers completing Gender Equity training with VWW staff.
- 24 Trailblazer graduates are currently employed in new, higher wage fields.
- Trailblazers Green- focused on clean energy training and job skills development, coming September 2022!

This program has been amazing for my personal development, career development and just overall fun. It was awesome to meet other strong women looking to make a career change.... I'm a huge supporter of this program. I've had friends around the US ask me about it. They are envious there isn't a program like this in their state... We need more programs like this. I wish it was longer. ... This program is critical for the direction the trades is going in and I loved that it was all females. So much less intimidating and fun!!!!

– 2021 Trailblazer's Graduate

Audubon Vermont

- Audubon Vermont offered 54 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, Internships and Junior Conservation Technicians (JCTs). Combined, these positions worked a total of 11,251 hours or 321 weeks. Young adults in these roles directly engaged 3,149 children in outdoor education programs and 70

volunteers in community science projects, special events and service learning (volunteer numbers fewer than projected due to COVID-19 related challenges).

- Audubon's summer day camp program is more popular than ever. Audubon hired 10 summer Camp Instructors to work alongside our professional education team to lead those camps. Camp Instructors engaged 393 campers ages 3 to 12.
- We were able to offer 17 teenaged 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 1,978 people through education programs, (not including the summer campers). They also engaged 70 community volunteers through our Adopt-A-Trail Program, special events, work parties and service learning opportunities.
- Audubon piloted a brand-new Junior Conservation Technician (JCT) program for teens ages 14-18 and it was a tremendous success! We hired 9 teens to work on conservation projects, alongside Audubon staff. They set up forest monitoring plots, tapped maple trees, did riparian plantings, and removed invasive species. They also helped with several trail projects at the Audubon Center.
- Audubon's Conservation Fellow worked on projects with landowners who are interested in sustainable land management practices that support ecosystem resiliency and biodiversity by both enhancing watershed health and bird habitat. She has focused on further developing the [Bird and Bee Friendly Farming Program](#) and has been researching scientific literature and other resources to assist with grant proposal writing, improve recommendations for conservation practices in agricultural settings and in riparian areas especially, and writing articles and presenting findings in public webinars and workshops.

"My experience as an Audubon intern made me feel like a real professional in the environmental science field. It gave me the opportunity to collect data, think about its implications, and summarize my findings in a way that will be useful to others. This empowered me to feel like I can address real-world conservation questions and contribute to local decision-making. Being able to do fieldwork at the Green Mountain Audubon Center connected me with the landscape and was really inspiring. I learned a lot from being out in the woods that benefited my skill development as well as the final output from my internship."

– Audubon Conservation Intern

- Audubon hired a total of 14 interns, 3 Education Interns, 6 Conservation Interns, 2 Forest Conservation Interns and 3 policy interns. Our interns worked closely with an Audubon staff person who served as their mentor. Our Education Interns led education programs, started a new urban birding club and worked with summer camp. Conservation Interns helped to monitor Common Tern chicks on Poppasquash Island on Lake Champlain, learned to band birds and visited farms to learn from Audubon's Conservation



Mark LaBarr working with conservation interns to count Common Terns on Lake Champlain. Participants' work in the field teaches skills that are immediately applicable in the conservation workplace.

Biologists about how farming practices can be improved to provide healthy pollinator and bird habitat. Our forestry interns worked to assess maple sugarbushes for breeding bird habitat and policy interns kept busy tracking hearings, researching issues, preparing testimony, writing articles, and participating in discussions with other environmental advocates.

- Audubon Vermont continues to work with PEER Associates, an evaluation consultant based in Richmond, Vermont. PEER recently helped Audubon to put together an interim Summary of Processes and Findings. They found that despite the limitations and complications imposed by the pandemic, Serve Learn Earn programming is off to a promising start and has already made progress in expanding meaningful conservation opportunities for diverse youth participants. Findings from the Internship program in particular suggest that participants were increasing their interest in conservation careers, their concerns about environmental issues, and growing their naturalist skills. They were also building community, taking more conservation action, and most importantly, further developing professional competencies within their focus areas.

Challenges

We are proud of the accomplishments above and grateful for the first-year appropriation that launched this partnership; 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 years to help organizations invest in programs with confidence, and recruit and retain talented staff. We are grateful that the State of Vermont has renewed support of this essential program; we have every intent of spending funds wisely and in ways that directly support job creation and job training.

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 have secured a three-year \$150,000 philanthropic commitment (\$50K/year) and are working to secure additional funds to hire a Serve Learn Earn Director. We expect to fill this position later this fall.

Recruitment remains an in-going challenge. It is no small thing to hire over 400 participants in one year. Strong and inspiring organizational cultures, relevant missions, creativity, organized teams, and financial resources are all paramount. Legislative support has allowed us to increase compensation for participants, which not only helps our recruitment efforts, it ensures that our programs are accessible to all Vermonters.

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 for some to accept job offers.

Future Needs and Goals

Looking forward, we are confident that increased and sustained funding will lead to program expansion. In the meantime, we are working hard to enroll even more participants in the coming program year. We expect we will exceed targets identified in scope of work agreement. ReSOURCE has expanded its 6-week Intensives from 6 courses to 14 courses per year run across the state and added HVAC and Logistics to complement the Weatherization and Carpentry courses. VYCC is also projecting that more participants will receive more varied trainings. 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, our training and service work is allowing low-income and disadvantaged individuals to gain skills and become gainfully employed; we are providing Vermont

employers with new pipelines to entry level workers; and we are getting important construction and conservation work completed that benefits all Vermonters.

We appreciate the excellent support we have received from FPR. Importantly, if less tangible, we are building the internal relationship among our organizations necessary to sustain this partnership. 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

VYCC Work on State Lands	Target Metric	Pilot Year Accomplishments: 6/1/21 - 6/30/22
	Perform construction activity under the direction of State onsite construction work supervisor	Total Parks Restoration Crew participants and work weeks: 14 positions 21 work weeks
	Campsite and Lean-to Improvements - Ricker Pond, Stillwater, Molly's Falls, and Maidstone State Parks	<p>A VYCC crew constructed most of a mobile contact station for Molly's Falls Pond State Park so park visitors could check-in to the park with lower contact exposure to staff and other visitors. The crew completed the roofing and all walls of the structure.</p> <p>Stillwater: A VYCC crew replaced the roofing on 2 lean-tos, replaced rotting boards, levelled the supports, and repainted the structures. They also rebuilt the rock stairs leading to the lentos and re-surfaced the area surrounding both lean-tos.</p>
	Fencing Replacement at Crystal Lake and Brighton State Parks	<p>In 2021 a VYCC crew renovated Brighton State Park staff housing, adding a vent fan, reconstructing walls, and painting the two apartments. The crew also constructed a mobile contact station and four wooden recycling receptacles to be placed around the campground.</p> <p>Ricker Pond: A VYCC crew replaced the roofing on 3 lean-tos. They also replaced rotting boards and repainted the structures.</p>
	Owls Head Trail Improvements in Groton State Forest	A VYCC crew built 40' of boardwalk was constructed to meet universal accessibility standards In Kettle Pond State Park (within Groton State Forest).

Additional Project Performance Measures	Target Metric	Pilot Year Accomplishments: 6/1/21 - 6/30/22
Diversified Agriculture and Food Security		
	VYCC	
	73 paid positions completing 616 service weeks	106 paid members completed 911 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
Outdoor Recreation		
	VYCC	
	32 paid positions completing 42 service weeks	84 paid positions, 178 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
Water Quality		
	VYCC	
	17 paid positions completing 25 service weeks	32 paid positions, 58 service weeks
	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

Additional Project Performance Measures	Target Metric	Pilot Year Accomplishments: 6/1/21 - 6/30/22
Forestry		
	VYCC	
	10 paid positions completing 20 service weeks	11 paid positions, 25 service weeks
	60 acres of forest treatments	103 acres of forest treatments (Timber stand improvements, crop tree release, apple tree release). Additional projects included invasive removal and patch cuts.
	75 acres of invasive plant removal	22.5 acres of invasives removed
Carpentry		
	VYCC	
	36 paid positions completing 36 service weeks	35 paid positions, 103 service weeks
	11 distinct projects, including privies, bridges, sheds, etc.	19 distinct projects; privies, contact stations, sheds, firewood shelter, bridges, timber stairs, lean-to re-roofing
	800 feet of boardwalk installed	939 feet of boardwalk installed
	ReSOURCE AmeriCorps	
	10 Trainees enrolled/retained for 538 weeks, completing 20,400 hours of service & 10 community service projects	21 Trainees enrolled/retained for 461 service weeks completing 15,052 hours of service.
	ReSOURCE Construction and Weatherization Intensives	
	40 Trainees enrolled/retained for 151 weeks, completing 1,680 hours of service & 6 public structures built	67 Trainees enrolled/retained for 266 service weeks completing 7,589 hours of service and 14 public service projects.

Additional Project Performance Measures	Target Metric	Pilot Year Accomplishments: 6/1/21 - 6/30/22
	40 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved	52 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved
	36 Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit	34 with more placements expected upon current program completion later this summer
	\$16/hour wage of trainees placed in employment	Average wage of \$17.62 for trainees placed in employment
ReSOURCE YouthBuild		
	18 Trainees enrolled/retained for 862 weeks, completing 10,080 hours of service & 35 public structures built	29 Trainees enrolled/retained for 377 service weeks completing 12,192 hours of service, 9 units of affordable housing rehab, 5 public service projects, and 8 other construction projects.
	18 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved	29 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved
	18 Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit	11 successful placements. 11 trainees remain active, and are expected to secure placements upon program completion
	\$13/hour wage of trainees placed in employment	Average wage of \$15.06 for trainees placed in employment
Vermont Works for Women - Trailblazers		
	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)

	Vermont Works for Women - Youth@Work	
	20 Participants Enrolled/retained	This program was cancelled due to the pandemic.
Environmental Conservation & Education		
	Audubon Vermont	
	46 paid positions providing 265 weeks of service	54 paid positions for 321 weeks
	3,000 Children ages 2-13 served through education programs	Our youth leaders directly engaged 3,149 children in outdoor education
	250 volunteers engaged in community science projects and special events	70 Volunteers engaged in Audubon Vermont's Adopt-A-Trail Program and Bird and Barn event at the Audubon Center