

Serve Learn Earn

Testimony for House Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

February 25th

**SLIDE 1:**

Good afternoon Chair Durfee and committee members

My name is Kate Gluckman and I am the director of the Serve Learn Earn workforce development collaborative. I'm joined today by Breck Knauft, executive director of Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. We are grateful for your time today and your consideration of our funding request.

Since 2020 Serve Learn Earn has been on the mission to create high quality, paid, training and service opportunities across the state. Working together, our partners take a networked approach to serving Vermonters and the communities in which they live. Approaching workforce development as a system, rather than a single program or organization, has allowed SLE to provide deeper opportunities for training, longer engagement with participants, new program development in rural communities, and bridge-building between our educational and employment partners. As the needs of Vermonters and VT employers have changed, we've nimbly adapted and evolved our programs, enabling deep partnership with the state over the last couple years.

**SLIDE 2:**

SLE provides a continuum of programming, serving Vermonters ages 14 years and older. With career exploration, early professional training, and sector-specific training programs, SLE serves Vermonters in every stage of their career development. Often our participants come from marginalized communities and through our paid, cohort-based training and service programs are able to build technical ability, develop leadership and transferrable skills, build community and connect with high-quality employment. We are partner to our K12 institutions, our CTE centers, our higher ed institutions, the VT department of labor, Hireability, and many other organizations working to strengthen Vermont's workforce. When the legislature invests in SLE, it helps strengthen a coalition and networked-approach to WFD in the state.

**SLIDE 3:** Jr. Conservation Tech Program

**SLIDE 4:** VYCC, Northwoods

**SLIDE 5:** ReSOURCE 101: Highlight weatherization- connection to WAP's across state.

**SLIDE 6:**

A high level review of some of our outcomes:

- We serve over 600 hundred Vermonters each year across the state providing training in the building trades, conservation, agriculture, and education.
- Our programs provide trainees the opportunity to earn industry recognized credentials, college credit, gain on-the-job training, and when desired, direct connection with ready-to-hire employers. In 2024, we saw 105 of work-ready participants land a job offer at the end of programming, with many more becoming employed shortly thereafter.

**SLIDE 7:**

- Sustained public funding has enabled our programs to grow each year in terms of the number of people served, the length of training and service, and the number of industry-recognized credentials and college credit earned by participants.

**SLIDE 8:**

- We also completed over 180 projects in 2024 in the areas of flood recovery, affordable and accessible housing, working and natural land assessment and restoration, sustainable agriculture, and community education projects. These projects provide our participants hands-on training and the opportunity to give back.
- Our total impact includes:
  - o 24 homes rebuilt after flooding
  - o 3000 children served in educational programs
  - o 8 accessible housing projects completed
  - o 14 miles of trails repaired
  - o 591 Families receiving weekly vegetable, chicken, and egg deliveries
- Investment in SLE is not only an investment in WFD, but also an investment in the sustainability, affordability and vitality of our communities.

**SLIDE 9:**

- Some of the 300+ employers that we've worked with over the last four years, many of whom have hired our graduates.

**SLIDE 10:**

Our ask this fiscal year is to increase our \$500,000 in the base FPR budget to \$2.5M dollars. Our programs cost annually almost \$10.5M and public funding has helped us leverage over 8 M in additional resources each year. When funders see we are part of the state's WFD strategy, they are eager to invest in Vermonters.

In closing, we are asking for your committee to include us as a priority in your budget letter. We are grateful for your past support and your belief that SLE can be part of the solution to our workforce, housing, and climate challenges facing our state. Now, Breck will share more about VYCC's programs and that work we are doing specifically in forestry, sustainable ag, and conservation.