

Serve Learn Earn
Testimony for House Commerce & Economic Development Committee
February 21st, 2025

FIRST SLIDE:

Good afternoon Chair Marcotte 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 the four executive directors of our partner organizations. After I speak you'll have the opportunity to hear from each of them about the specifics of their programs.

We were grateful for the opportunity to testify with this committee during the first few weeks of the session. That may feel like an eternity ago, and you've heard hundreds of hours of testimony since then, and quite frankly, the world seems very different now than it did then, so our goal for our time today is to remind you about our work to build a trained workforce in Vermont through paid training and service programs. I'll lay out why we are a strong investment for the legislature and provide some new context with how the changes at the federal level are impacting our work with Vermonters.

SECOND SLIDE:

To give a reminder about the structure and purpose of Serve Learn Earn. Founded in 2020, 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.

THIRD SLIDE:

A reminder 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.
- 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. Investment in SLE is not only an investment in WFD, but also an investment in the sustainability, affordability and vitality of our communities.

FOURTH SLIDE:

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.

FIFTH SLIDE

What's changed since we saw you last?

Bad stuff first! Federal Funding implications: Like most programs in Vermont, we have been negatively impacted by the federal funding freezes. My colleagues will details this for each of their programs, but we know that the administration's anti-DEI, anti-climate initiatives will hurt our progress in Vermont to build a robust workforce able to address our current housing and flood resilience challenges. Cuts to funding that promotes women's training in the trades, training in clean energy or climate resilience, and supporting young adults in service are all threats to our programs.

What's changed for the better?

- We are encouraged and energized by our meeting with Sabina Haskell in the new office of Workforce Strategy and Development. As she builds her vision and work, we look forward to collaborating with her and building a comprehensive networking of training opportunities across the state.
- We are also excited to be working with Jay Ramsey at DOL as he represents Vermont in the National Governor's Association Policy Academy on Service-to Career Pathways. Through discussions with SerVermont and SLE- Jay is helping formalize how DOL can work, and share data, with training organizations like ours.
- Lastly, we just got the green light to submit our application to DOL for our timber framing pre-apprenticeship program at VYCC. This is the first pre-apprenticeship program that is applying for recognition from the state and will enable our participants to connect with companies focused on building sustainable housing. One such company, VT Frames is working to build a modular TF home that can be built within weeks and for a price feasible for middle-income homeowners.

Should I take questions now???? And now I'll pass this along to my colleagues beginning with Rhoni Basden from VWW.