

SERVE LEARN EARN

Annual Report to Forest, Parks & Recreation

July 1st, 2023- June 30th, 2024

Since 2021 Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), ReSOURCE, Vermont Works for Women (VWW), and Audubon Vermont have partnered together through the Serve Learn Earn collaborative to enhance the quality and number of paid service and training opportunities for Vermonters. Over the last three years, **SLE partners have supported 1,445 participants, moving over 240 adults into quality jobs, and providing career exploration and work experiences for 350 students during their secondary and post-secondary schooling.** In over 11,000 weeks of training and service, SLE participants have **earned 552 credentials of value and over \$3.25 million dollars in wages and stipends.** In every county in the state, SLE community-based projects have helped strengthen communities and connect participants with each other, their neighbors, and local employers.



ReSOURCE's YouthBuild Program in Barre rebuilt their own classroom facility after the July 2023 floods. Students and staff also completed numerous muck-outs and flood rebuilding projects throughout the year in Barre and surrounding communities.

It would be impossible to do to this work without the partnership of the Vermont State Legislature and the Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation. We are grateful for the investment and innovative structure of our grant that allows SLE partners to be nimble and responsive to the needs of Vermont's workforce. In addition, we are in deep collaboration with SerVermont, our state service commission, who has supported **565 AmeriCorps members co-enrolled in SLE programs** during the last three years.

Like many in Vermont, this past year saw Serve Learn Earn partners and participants focused on recovering from climate-related flooding that impacted nearly every part of our state. Though climate-related disasters bring very real hardship, they also present opportunities to activate our service-based programs to aid communities in recovery and further train participants in climate-related skills. We have been doing just that in Barre since last summer in partnership with the long-term recovery groups and the Vermont Community Foundation. Since April, trainees from the YouthBuild programs and the 101 training intensives at ReSOURCE have worked on over 12 flood rebuilding projects in central Vermont. Crews at VYCC and students in Audubon Vermont's Junior Conservation Tech program have worked on public infrastructure to build resiliency against increased rain fall, including installing rain gardens and erosion-reducing structures along trails. VYCC will partner with ReSOURCE to complete a renovation project for a low-income home owner in Barre this fall.

In addition to having a programmatic and training focus on climate mitigation and resiliency, Serve Learn Earn has been working with state agencies and other non-profits to build stronger pathways into climate-related jobs. Through the Energy Action Network, SLE partners have worked to build resources for students to learn about climate careers and assisted Advance Vermont on building a climate-focused page on myfuturevt.org. Additionally, SLE has helped our partners at ReSOURCE pull together a coalition of state-wide partners, including Vermont Works for Women, to apply for the Weatherization Training Center grant through the Office of Economic Opportunity. While our first priority is providing high-quality, accessible training to

Vermonters, we also see SLE's advocacy promoting climate-related workforce development initiatives as an integral element of our success and critical for Vermont's healthy and thriving future.

Through the remainder of this report, we are excited to share Serve Learn Earn's collective impact for the third year of the collaboration. Since July 1st of 2023, **615 participants engaged in over 4,234 weeks of service and training** across Vermont. This represents **a 16% growth** in the number of participants served across the collaborative compared with last year. We are proud of the following high-level accomplishments:



Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Members pack the Heath Care Share with vegetables grown on VYCC's farm.

- Of the 615 participants, almost 70% were young adults ranging from 15-24 years old. Our highest participant age range was 19-24-year-olds at 35%. Service-based training programs are critical for young adults to gain work-based experience, earn entry-level credentials of value, earn college credit, as well as develop durable skills for professional success. Additionally, 226 of these young adults were co-enrolled in AmeriCorps and will earn the Segal Education Award upon completion of their term, helping reduce student loan debt and making future education more affordable.
- Participants earned over **\$1.59 million dollars in wages and stipends** through SLE programs in the past year.
- Of the 177 participants that were seeking employment, **93 participants (53%) landed quality jobs** in the first quarter after program completion. An additional 12 were offered jobs but decided not to accept.
- 96 participants enrolled or returned to schooling after program completion, **25 of which earned college credit** for their participation through the Community College of Vermont or University of Vermont.
- Participants earned **245 industry recognized credentials** in OSHA-10, NCCER, EPA 608, First Aid, Wilderness First Aid, Game of Logging, and VT Herbicide Application. This represents **a 19% increase** in attainment compared to last year.
- SLE participants completed 182 service projects in conservation, outdoor recreation, environmental education, food access, sustainable agriculture, low-income housing, and flood resiliency and rebuilding.
- SLE partners continue a deep commitment to collaboration and have taken steps to further that practice through sharing resources, training facilities, staff expertise, and partnering on both training and service projects. The collaborative launched a new website (www.servelearnearn.org) during the spring and continues to build interest in programs through joint marketing efforts online and at in-person networking events. This promotional work is supported by the J. Warren & Lois McClure Foundation and the Vermont Community Foundation.

In addition to the broader accomplishments listed below from each SLE partner, a detailed snapshot of program outcomes can be seen in Appendix A.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

- **VYCC engaged 116 corps members in their Food & Farm Program for 765 weeks of service.** Throughout the spring and summer crews grew organic crops and raised animals for the Health Care Share (HCS)

program; providing fresh vegetables, chicken, and eggs to 591 low-income families for 21 weeks through a partnership with a state-wide network of health care providers.

- **VYCC engaged 176 corps members in their Conservation Program for 900**

weeks of service completing projects in outdoor recreation, water quality, forestry, and carpentry. Throughout this season, VYCC crews built climate resiliency through erosion mitigation, native shrub and tree planting, invasive removal, and wetlands restoration.

- **VYCC corps members earned over \$942,000 dollars in stipends** for their service and training. Much of this support came through AmeriCorps programs with SerVermont and The Corps Network. **In total, VYCC supported 156 AmeriCorps members this past year.**

- In response to participant feedback, VYCC changed programming structures this year to now offer greater flexibility and time off. Participants can enroll in the immersive program while still having the option to leave on weekends. Previously, members camped with their crews for multiple weeks without breaks. VYCC has seen increased recruitment success and credits the change to the new policy. This new schedule is also providing space for increased career counseling for corps members. Bo Malcolm, VYCC's Community Engagement Coordinator meets 1:1 with members to help with resumes and interview prep, initiates connection with employers, as well as helps members enroll in continued service and training opportunities across SLE.



A proud VYCC crew poses with their completed timber stairs at Stillwater State Park campground.

My service felt very meaningful. I built structures that will last for years such as a composting toilet and a boardwalk. I also feel like I have developed better people skills and will continue to improve on these in the future. – Peter Ford, VYCC corps member and future carpenter.

- This year VYCC piloted long-term conservation crews focused on specific project types, such as recreation/trails, carpentry, and forestry. These programs are designed to attract participants who already have foundational skills and want to continue growing their expertise. The program's goal is to bridge the gap between our introductory experiences and professional careers.

- To improve and expand corps member opportunity, VYCC is in the midst of a multi-year campus investment plan including the renovation of the historic East Monitor Barn. This summer the Advanced Build crew is raising a timber-framed barn that will be used to increase farm efficiency and production. They have been working with Building Heritage, a Huntington-based construction and preservation company, to learn timber framing technique.

Audubon Vermont

- This year, Audubon provided paid service and training programming to **5 AmeriCorps Members, 10 Conservation Youth Leadership, and Education Interns, 12 Junior Conservation Techs, 17 Counselors-In-Training, and 11 Seasonal Educators.** Over the course of **325 weeks of training and service**, participants earned over **\$95,000 in wages and stipends.**

My time at Audubon has truly introduced me to a whole new world. I spent just as much time outdoors before, but I wasn't sure how I could possibly make a career I loved out of it. Audubon was able to not only give me hands on learning opportunities, but options for the future that I'm not sure I would've found on my own. – Kaitlyn, High School Junior, JCT'24



JCTs bird banding with Conservation Biologist, Mark LaBarr and his Priority Bird Species Intern, Devan Kajah. Photo: Sarah Hooghuis

- Audubon staff and leadership worked to enhanced the professional development opportunities for Youth Conservation Leadership Program participants across the board and provided trainings and experiences that allowed for cross-pollination between programs. Staff welcomed a Project Wild trainer from Vermont Fish and Wildlife to train the Seasonal Educators, Counselors-In-Training (CITs), Junior Conservation Technicians (JCTs), and year-round staff. Project Wild is an environmental curriculum focused on how we can teach wildlife population, biological carrying capacity, migration, and more through age-appropriate activities and games. At the end of the training, participants received a

curriculum book to use in the future and a certification in teaching the curriculum.

- While Audubon’s conservation programs have always been an integral part of the JCT program curriculum, this was the first year that JCTs were able to work alongside a Conservation Biologists in the field, at off-site locations, away from the Audubon Center. In June, the JCTs took two field trips, the first to monitor a nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons and the second to help assess the sugarbush of a local Bird-Friendly Maple producer. Having the opportunity to be hands-on in the field and gather meaningful data had a huge impact on the JCTs; many shared that the off-site field days were their favorite part of the program.
- This year, Audubon piloted a new academic-year, 6-month Education Internship. This longer service-term allows the intern to have a more in-depth understanding of Audubon’s work and teaching philosophy, while also taking larger initiatives from start to finish, including establishing a free Audubon program at the Winooski Library.
- Audubon hired their first Youth Conservation Leadership Intern in January 2024. This position was created to support the large Youth Conservation Leadership Program, especially the 6-month long JCT program. Having two adults working together to run the JCT program gave JCTs the opportunity to work in smaller more intimate groups and get more work done.
- Through a partnership with Hireability Vermont, Audubon was able to hire two teens for our JCT and CIT programs. Hireability is an organization of employment specialists and counselors who are dedicated to breaking down barriers that have traditionally kept good jobs out of reach of Vermonters with disabilities. This partnership has been a wonderful way to expand our reach to new audiences.

ReSOURCE

- Across all SLE programs, ReSOURCE provided paid service-learning positions to **150 participants who completed 1,752 service weeks. Participants earned over \$499,000** in wages and stipends.
- **65 Full-time AmeriCorps** positions entered a year of service helping coordinate ReSOURCE’s

YouthBuild saved Jacob’s life. He was so disengaged after COVID and so traumatized by his school experience that I never thought he would go back to school. At YouthBuild, he wanted to show up every day. His life is moving in a new direction. -Jacob’s grandma at his YouthBuild Graduation

workforce development and pre-professional programs.

- Through the 101 Trades Intensives (HVAC, Construction, Weatherization) **ReSOURCE served 80 participants across 349 weeks of paid service and training.** Participants **earned 95 industry recognized credentials** including OSHA-10, NCCER, and EPA 608. 29 participants began jobs in the first quarter after the program with a **starting wage of \$20.49.**
- YouthBuild programs continue to grow through the co-enrollment model with area schools, ensuring Vermont youth don't lose access to vital wrap-around services by remaining in high school. Alongside their academic commitments, YB students completed numerous service projects developing their carpentry and weatherization skills. This AmeriCorps program **served 43 young adults this year, an increase of 19% from last year.**
- ReSOURCE's Construction 101 Intensive and YouthBuild programs have incorporated flood relief as a focus of their community-based service learning. Both YouthBuild programs (Barre and Burlington) have been deploying youth AmeriCorps crews to communities affected by last summer's flooding since March. In addition, in March, ReSOURCE also ran a cohort of Construction 101 in Barre, teaming up with ReSOURCE's SLE Graduate crew to complete flood relief projects in Barre. **Finally, ReSOURCE placed 3 graduates (1 YB, 2 C-101) on that SLE graduate crew in full-time employment.** This crew is partially funded through a Vermont Community Foundation grant focused on partnering with long-term recovery groups to help low-income Vermonters rebuild their home after flooding.

Vermont Works for Women

- This year, Vermont Works for Women provided paid service and training programming to **94 women, young women, and gender expansive individuals.** **Across 394 weeks of training and service, participants earned over \$42,000 in stipends or wages.**
- This year we saw continued growth in the Trailblazer trades training program. With sessions held in South Burlington, Newport, Hartford and Rutland 80 women and gender expansive individuals received training, **earned 59 OSHA-10 and EPA 608**



Hartford Trailblazers building an accessibility ramp for a community member.

- **credentials** and completed employer-based work experiences. Additionally, these cohorts completed **8 build-related service projects across the state**, including home accessibility projects with Cover Home Repair and low-income housing builds with the North Country Career Center.
- VWW's career exploration and readiness offerings have expanded along with the internship segment of the Trailblazer program. Over 100 active employer partners across Vermont host interns, visit classes to talk about employment opportunities, and attend our regular job fairs to connect with graduating participants; the list continues to grow.
- The LIFT (Launching Inclusive Futures in the Trades) program is proving to be both solid and flexible. **Our 14-participant session in Essex was over-enrolled this past June.** Our combination of

[Trailblazers] gave me confidence to be an active member of a construction site and consider a career in construction management. I have used my new skills at my current job as well, where more carpentry related tasks have been delegated to me as a result. I feel accomplished. - Emily, Hartford

Power Skills activities and hands-on training components creates rich learning content inside of a daily schedule that we know works well. Between the 2023 and 2024 program sessions, we've been able to offer new and different training content, largely based on what we think will interest high school participants and which instructors are available to teach. In 2024 we offered introductory sessions in both auto mechanics and beekeeping, two industries where women are underrepresented and that met the interests of our participants. In future years, LIFT can be easily adapted to offer training in a whole variety of nontraditional fields.

- During this year's carpentry session, participants made both an individual project and worked together on a group service project – building two full-size picnic tables for local organizations. The group project model was extremely successful – developmentally appropriate for high school youth and enriching because of the service element.

New Pilot Partnership with Northwoods Stewardship Center

Through our relationship with Forest, Parks & Recreation, we were able to pilot a new partnership with the Northwoods Stewardship Center (NWSC) to engage young adults in critical work on state lands. Located in the Northeast Kingdom, NWSC has engaged youth and young adults in conservation and environmental education programs since 1989. Four program areas support their mission to “connect people and place, through science, education and action.” The synergy of these programs provides unique conservation training experiences across environmental education, conservation science, conservation corps, and forest stewardship. Their programs provide paid service and training with opportunities to earn industry recognized credentials, high school credit, and professional and personal development, all while completing urgent conservation projects across northern Vermont. This year, Serve Learn Earn is supporting 10 weeks of training and service on state lands through the end of 2024. Their project and participant outcomes are included in the totals for the Serve Learn Earn coalition.



NWSC advanced crews move rocks for a stone staircase on Mtn. Pisgah.

- Since early spring 2024, NWSC has provided paid service and training to **24 participants on their youth crews and adult conservation service crews**. Across **96 weeks of service**, participants earned over **\$12,300 in wages**.
- The Conservation Services Crew is NWSC's first 9-month (long season) crew that works across all of the NorthWoods conservation program areas. The intent is to provide a professional conservation experience that is well-rounded, designed for young professionals to gain field and professional experience across various aspects of conservation. The longer season allows for more training and networking, and the cross-department collaboration means that these crew members benefit from the unique skill set, connections, leadership and opportunities associated with the distinct programs.
- NWSC participants **earned 9 credentials of value** including Game of Logging and Wilderness First Aid while completing service projects including 7 miles of trail improvements, the collection of over 51,000 balsam and poplar seeds, and the installation of 37 erosion-control structures.

Challenges & Future Goals

While we continue to see sustained growth and positive evolution of programming across SLE, we are also working to strategically address challenges facing our participants and staff, as well as the broader challenges facing Vermont employers and communities.

The repeated episodes of extreme flooding add complexity to our field-based training. From concerns around participant safety to having to pivot or redevelop projects now feels like an on-going element of this work rather than a rare occurrence. Building in flexible projects with trusting partners is critical, as is establishing clear safety protocols for participants and staff. SLE partners are also now being asked to do more disaster-relief work and we are finding that we need more capacity to help local communities. As we look towards FY25, we are identifying program, partner, and funding opportunities that can help create new capacity for crisis-response training and service.

Similar to wider trends across the Vermont workforce, SLE partners have found it difficult to recruit talented staff. From leadership roles, such as Audubon's executive director position, to direct service roles such as trainers and crew leaders, partners have faced limited applicant pools and difficulty for hired staff to find housing within a reasonable commute. Because of SLE's state-wide reach, sometimes the rural nature of our training sites can limit staffing options. To address some of these challenges, SLE partners are



Participants in ReSOURCE's Weatherization 101 Intensive training program learn hand and power tool skills as well as entry level credentials in construction and building science.



LIFT participants building a picnic table at the Essex Technical Center.

aligning training programs geographically in order to utilize staff for more than one program. This is especially the case for the trades training programs at VWW and ReSOURCE. Additionally, VYCC is investing in on-campus housing in order to provide low-cost options for corps members while they serve.

Lastly, sustained funding for SLE continues to be of top priority. With the reduction of COVID-recovery funds in the state budget, the funding outlook for our programs remains unclear. While we know legislators value our programs and the ROI established across the three years of funding, we also know they are juggling many priorities all requiring support. This past session we were grateful to be able to secure \$500,000 in base funding within the FPR budget. We continue to see the full inclusion of our funding in FPR as an important step in providing SLE partners the assurance to invest in program evolution and to grow new capacity in the future. We are also pursuing multi-year private and federal grants to leverage our state funds for additional impact and see diverse revenue streams as a positive strategy towards sustainability.

Appendix A: Program Outcomes

APPENDIX A – PERFORMANCE METRICS – SERVE LEARN EARN		
Partner	Target Metric	Progress to Date: 7/1/23-6/30/24
Diversified Agriculture and Food Security		
VYCC	110 positions in Diversified Agriculture and Food Security completing 775 service weeks	116 positions in Diversified Ag and Food Security completing 767 service weeks.
VYCC	26 weeks of Health Care Share for 550 families	21 weeks of Health Care Share delivery for 591 families.
VYCC	60% of Health Care Share Members report increased health/nutritional knowledge	85% of Health Care Share Members reported increased health/nutritional knowledge.
Conservation		
VYCC	# of VYCC corps members who earned college credit for their service	25 corps members earned college credit for their service.
VYCC	175 positions in Conservation Programs completing 1,251 weeks of service.	176 positions in Conservation Programs completed 900 weeks of service.
VYCC	15 Wilderness First Aid Certificates	34 Wilderness First Aid Certificates
Audubon	12 Junior Conservation Tech positions	12 Junior Conservation Tech positions were filled
Audubon	200 Community Science Volunteers Engaged	171 Community Science Volunteers were engaged
Audubon	1 Conservation Field Specialist AmeriCorps Member retained for 6 months	2 Conservation Field Specialist AC members retained 6 months
Outdoor Recreation		
VYCC	15 miles of trails improved	7.14 miles of trail improved (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	80 new drains added to trail tread	72 new drains added (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	100 existing drains maintained in trail tread	70 drains maintained (current Summer '24 projects not included)
Water Quality		

VYCC	100 acres impacted/mitigated	139.62 acres impacted (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	80 erosion control structures installed	81 erosion structures installed (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	5000 trees & native plants maintained/planted	3771 trees and native plants planted (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	55,000 water chestnuts removed from Lake Champlain and tributaries	52,052 water chestnuts removed from Lake Champlain (current Summer '24 projects not included)
Forestry & Forest Health		
VYCC	35 acres of timber stand improvement	35.49 acres of timber stand improved (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	10 acres of invasive plant removal	13 acres of invasive plant removal (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	8 Game of Logging Credential Earned	18 Game of Logging credentials earned
VYCC	1 Licensed Herbicide Applicator Credential	1 credentials earned
Audubon	2 Forest Conservation Interns, 1 Priority Bird Species Intern	2 Forest Conservation Interns, 2 Priority Bird Species Interns
Audubon	2 Bird Friendly Maple Interns	2 Bird Friendly Maple Interns
Environmental Policy		
Audubon	3 Policy Intern positions offered	1 Policy Intern position filled
Environmental Education		
Audubon	2 Education AmeriCorps Members retained for 6 months (Education and Outreach, Community Science and Chapter Engagement)	5 AmeriCorps Members retained for 23 months.
Audubon	24 Counselor in Training	17 Counselors in Training were enrolled
Audubon	3 Environmental Education Interns	2 Environmental Education Interns (for a longer service terms than projected)
Audubon	1 Youth Leadership Internship offered	1 Youth Leadership position offered
Audubon	6 Summer Camp Educators	11 Summer Camp Educators were engaged.

Audubon	3000 Children ages 2-13 engaged by participants in environmental education programs	3,643 Children were engaged in environmental education programs.
Building Trades		
VYCC	12 structures built including privies, bath houses, lean-tos	3 structures were built (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	800 feet of boardwalk installed	754 ft of boardwalk were installed (current Summer '24 projects not included)
VYCC	5 OSHA-10 Credential	5 OSHA-10 credentials were completed.
ReSOURCE	20 AmeriCorps trainees completing 600 weeks of service, 20,000 hours of service	22 AmeriCorps members complete 537 weeks of service, 17,127 hours of service
ReSOURCE	10 community service construction projects completed	12 community service projects completed by AmeriCorps members.
ReSOURCE	80 101 Trade Intensive Trainees enrolled/retained for 360 weeks, completing 10,000 hours of service & 8 public structures built	85 101 Trade Intensive trainees enrolled/retained for 349 weeks, completing 11,486 hours of service & 17 public structures built.
ReSOURCE	150 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved	95 certifications achieved (55 OSHA-10, 31 NCCER, 9 EPA 608 Credentials)
ReSOURCE	50 Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit	29 Employer placements after 1 st quarter (some not yet completed)
ReSOURCE	\$19/hourly wage of trainees placed in employment	\$20.49/hour wage for trainees.
ReSOURCE	30 Trainees YouthBuild enrolled/retained for 720 weeks, completing 13,500 hours of service & 10 public structures built	43 YB trainees enrolled/retained for 866 weeks, completing 20,370 hours of service & 35 service projects (including flood recovery).
ReSOURCE	15 NCCER, OSHA-10, or First Aid Certifications achieved in Youth Build	11 credentials of value were earned by YB trainees.
ReSOURCE	10 Youth Build Employer placements in 1st quarter after exit	3 employer placements after the first quarter

ReSOURCE	\$18/hourly wage of YB trainees placed in employment	Information not available
VWW	61 Trailblazer Trainees enrolled/retained for 359 weeks, completing 4 service projects in partnership with community partners	80 Trailblazers were enrolled and retained for 380 weeks, completing 8 service projects.
VWW	61 Osha-10 Certifications achieved through Trailblazers	44 OSHA-10 certifications were completed.
VWW	32-36 internships provided	48 paid work experiences completed by Trailblazers.
VWW	10 job positions offered to participants at the conclusion of Trailblazers	12 job offers were presented at the conclusion of Trailblazers.
VWW	14 LIFT (Launching Inclusive Futures in the Trades) Participants Enrolled/retained for 14 weeks	14 LIFT participants were engaged for 14 weeks, completing 2 service projects.