



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Dear friends and colleagues,

In recognition that afterschool and youth-serving programs are an integral part of COVID-19 recovery efforts, we expanded our team and doubled down on our efforts to meet the needs of the field. We've said "YES!" time and time again without knowing the exact course. We've dedicated time on managing and messaging massive statewide initiatives. Basically, we've done the organizational equivalent of backflips, human pyramids, and powerlifting. As a result, we've grown in unexpected and exciting ways.

It's been a big push for our small team and yet we've been waiting for this moment for so long. It is, without a doubt, extremely fulfilling to see some of our longstanding dreams—a youth council bill driven by youth advocates, dedicated funding for summer programs, and a policy group convening to address universal afterschool—become reality in 2021.

Another noteworthy piece of our work from the past year is the Vermont Youth Project (VYP) data release (read about VYP and the youth survey on p. 6). New for this year, the survey added questions on COVID and revealed startling data:

- 52% of 11/12th grade students in the VYP communities said that they are more lonely due to COVID-19

- 46% of high school students in the VYP communities said that COVID-19 has made their mental health worse
- 57% of high school students in the VYP communities said that COVID-19 has hurt their educational experience

Overall, you can see that COVID-19 has significantly impacted youth mental health and wellbeing. This data is a major factor driving our work. We're all in to ensure that Vermont youth have what they need to heal, connect, and thrive during the pandemic and beyond.

Finally, the real heroes deserve some recognition: they are the youth workers, afterschool professionals, summer camp counselors, sports coaches, parks and rec departments, teen centers, and everyone else who works in the third space to provide children and youth with a safe, engaging place to be when not at home or school. They have gone above and beyond to provide care during a very challenging time, and they have done so with humor, integrity, and compassion.

We see you, we appreciate you, we love you. Thank you for all that you do and we are proud to be in this field together working to bring opportunities to all.

With gratitude,

Holly Morehouse, Executive Director

## OUR MISSION:

**Vermont Afterschool is dedicated to strengthening programs, building partnerships, and transforming communities so that all Vermont youth are active, engaged, connected, and heard.**

## FY2021 IMPACT DATA

89%

of VT towns with afterschool and youth-serving organizations have been supported or impacted by Vermont Afterschool since FY19

17,000+

children and youth in VT have been supported and/or impacted by Vermont Afterschool since FY19

1,106

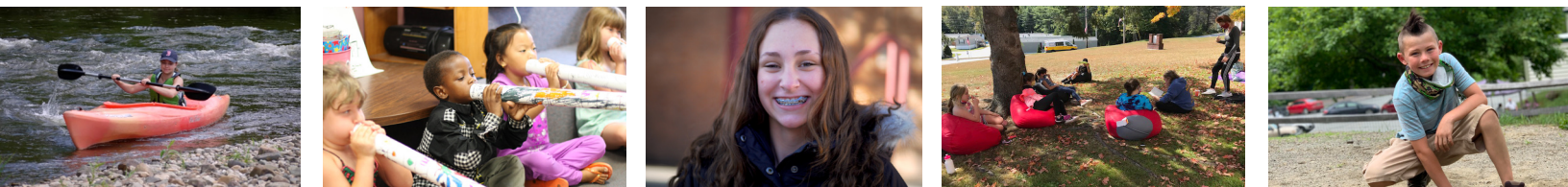
afterschool and youth-serving program staff participated in Vermont Afterschool trainings in FY21

242

afterschool and youth-serving programs in every county were involved with Vermont Afterschool in FY21

\$767,374

in grant funds we managed and distributed to programs, organizations, and people in FY21



# A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER:

Making a difference  
during challenging times

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, we continued to mobilize people, organizations, and communities to create positive youth outcomes and experiences. In fact, this year our work gained even more importance on account of the following statewide initiatives launched in response to COVID-19.

Our ability to respond quickly and pivot nimbly is not only a reflection of our leadership and staff, but also of our connections to the field, knowledge of the statewide landscape, and trust in our partnerships. This is the power of Vermont Afterschool.

## School-Age Child Care Hubs

When Governor Phil Scott announced that he wanted to direct over \$12 million in federal coronavirus relief funding to increase the capacity of the school-age child care system in Vermont in Fall 2020, we jumped in to help immediately. Thanks to our existing relationships with providers in the field, we were able to coordinate the creation of **102 remote learning sites** (or “Hubs”) for school-age youth in a very short turnaround. This expansion supported over **6,000** children and youth in grades K-6 who needed a safe place to be during remote school learning days, not to mention peace of mind for working families who needed the care. For over four months, our team dedicated a tremendous amount of time and energy to supporting and sustaining the Hubs across the state along with our partners at the VT Department for Children and Families. The Hubs program closed at the end of December 2020 when federal coronavirus relief funds concluded.

## Summer Matters Campaign

After a hard year for kids and families due to the pandemic, we knew that Summer 2021 would be a key time for Vermont youth to re-engage, connect, and learn. In partnership with the Office of Governor Phil Scott, Senator Bernie Sanders, Vermont Agency of Education, Vermont Department of Health, and numerous partners at diverse state agencies, we launched the Summer Matters campaign in April 2021 as a statewide effort to support youth and connect families to programs. The campaign incorporated an outreach and family engagement plan, expanded website content, a searchable summer program map, professional development, program curricula, data collection, guidebooks, alternative learning options for teens, and staff recruitment. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of the state’s recovery efforts and we knew we had to show up.

## Summer Matters for All Grant Program

One of the noteworthy aspects of the Summer Matters campaign was the federal funding secured by Senator Bernie Sanders in the American Rescue Plan Act that helped to create the new Summer Matters for All Grant Program. We worked closely with Gov. Phil Scott and his administration to get this new grant program ready to go in a very tight timeline with the goal of expanding access for K-12 youth statewide during Summer 2021. Funding was prioritized for the creation of new summer learning programs in areas where few or no services currently exist; expansion of existing summer learning programs in order to increase affordability; increased access for children and youth with disabilities and other traditionally marginalized populations; and elimination of barriers to summer program access based on geography, socio-economic factors, and demographics.

As administrators of the grant program, our team managed the outreach, grant review process, agreements, training, documentation, and finances for grantees (grant period of June 14, 2021 - August 31, 2021). The grant competition closed in May 2021 with 188 eligible applications received and requests totaling over \$7.4 million. A nationwide panel of 50 reviewers selected **93 projects** to receive **\$3 million** in funding.

Through it all, we are in this together. It’s about building a stronger support system and working together to expand opportunities for youth to thrive.





# INVESTING IN QUALITY

How we strengthen programs & the field

We act on the simple belief that an investment in youth workers is an investment in young people. This is why we choose to dedicate significant time and resources into strengthening programs through our trainings, career pathways, quality initiatives, grant opportunities, and best practices resources.

## Professional Development

Thanks to our funders, we offered virtual workshops and trainings this past year at no cost to meet the needs of programs and staff during the pandemic. Of particular interest was our “Big Thought Speaker Series” with nationally recognized keynote speakers on inspirational and equity topics; our “Equity and Racism” six-part series with Rebecca EunMi Haslam; and the “Boot Camp Basics” workshops offered in the fall and spring for new afterschool and summer program staff. Remarkably, thanks to the wonders of Zoom and a commitment to regular field forums and facilitated roundtable discussions, we’ve never felt more connected to the staff and programs we serve. We focused on relevant topics like health and safety guidance updates; resources for virtual and in-person programming; social emotional learning; strategies for self-care; grant opportunities; and provided a place to share collective knowledge with each other.

## Quality and Leadership

An essential factor in increasing program quality is determining how a program is implementing best practices. We use the Weikart Center’s Program Quality Assessment (PQA) tool, nationally recognized as the leading tool to promote high-quality out-of-school time programs. We provide targeted support and technical assistance to all **23** 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs in Vermont on how to use the PQA tool in addition to convening 21st CCLC directors to build best practices. New for FY21: setting up trainings and TA for programs already using the PQA tool to start using the new Social Emotional Learning (SEL) PQA process designed to boost the quality of SEL instructional practices and students’ SEL skills.

## Career Pathways

Our goal is to create a system that clearly articulates the path from entry-level work up through core leadership positions in the field. This system will both enhance the quality of programs and help trained workers build careers in afterschool and related fields. As such, **30** professionals completed their Afterschool Foundations Certificate; **1** completed the Afterschool Professional Credential; and **8** completed the Afterschool Essentials course. New for FY21: the Afterschool and Youth Work Certificate offered by the Community College of Vermont (CCV) as a way to help youth work professionals advance in their careers. We partnered with CCV to develop this certificate, which can be completed fully online for a total of 24 credits and includes free course options.

## Afterschool for All Grants

The Afterschool for All Grant Program wrapped up this year, with **10 programs** across the state concluding their multi-year awards earmarked to increase access. In 2019 we worked with Vermont’s Agency of Human Services to set up the grant program with one-time state funds and we currently manage and evaluate the grantees. New for FY21: the grant program received a \$50,000 contribution from the Vermont Community Foundation to expand a second round of grants. **Nine new programs** were funded in December 2020, resulting in even more exciting and valuable program options for youth like build-a-bike camps and apprenticeships for teens.



## Linking Engineering to Life

Breaking down STEM barriers

We created the new Linking Engineering to Life (LEL) afterschool program as a way for girls and non-binary middle school youth to learn about the engineering design process and the value of an engineering mindset. LEL launched in Fall 2020 at 12 different afterschool programs as both virtual and in-person options, with curriculum and activity kits we developed for participating programs as well as unique training opportunities for staff.

A noteworthy part of LEL is that we connected each program with female or non-binary college student mentors from the UVM College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences. These mentors worked with the youth, helped to engage with activities, and showed youth different options for pursuing STEM studies in higher education. LEL is funded through the STEM Next Opportunity Fund and the Million Girls Moonshot, a national initiative aiming to engage more girls in STEM learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs over the next five years.

- **108 youth participating in grades 4-8**
- **24 afterschool staff participating**
- **12 LEL program sites**
- **10+ weeks of programming**
- **22 college mentors**
- **130 activity kits distributed to youth and mentors**







## Youth Council Grants

Letting youth lead the way

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As we navigate the world amid a global pandemic, climate change, and racial justice movements happening simultaneously, youth empowerment and instilling hope among youth can't be an afterthought. Youth voice and their perspectives must be considered when discussing projects and activities to improve the lives of youth in their respective communities. Given the importance of youth engagement and leadership in promoting communities' wellbeing, we funded and supported nine youth councils for the 2020-2021 school year.

Middle and high school youth participating in the youth councils had the opportunity to connect with their peers; learn about events and challenges in their community that impact youth; develop skills in leadership, participatory budgeting, idea development, and more; and drive change in their community. In addition to the financial support to operate the council (including stipends for youth council members), we also provided technical support and professional development opportunities for the youth and adult staff. Each youth council was provided with \$5,000 to support youth-led initiatives in their local communities. The youth councils members were tasked to design and oversee the participatory budget process, which meant that peers voted on the projects to receive funding.

In total, 54 youth project proposals were submitted with 710 votes cast by peers voting, resulting in 34 youth-led projects being funded across the nine youth councils.

### 2020-2021 Youth Council Sites:

**BHS Expanded Learning | Burlington High School**

**Bridges & ONWARDS! | CVSU Afterschool**

**City of Winooski**

**Enosburg | Enosburg Falls High School**

**Fair Haven Youth Council | Slate Valley Unified School District**

**Outright VT**

**Richford | Richford Jr. and Sr. High School**

**Rutland City | Rutland Middle School**

**Swanton | Swanton Recreation Department with Missisquoi Valley High School**



# PRIORITIZING YOUTH VOICE

How we empower youth and youth workers

All projects at Vermont Afterschool that address youth voice feed into the goal that young Vermonters deserve to be active, connected, engaged, and heard. We have a Youth Empowerment Team dedicated to furthering our organizational goals around youth voice. Why do we dedicate time and resources to this topic? According to the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, promoting youth voice in afterschool programming can: build youth motivation, promote learning and self-direction, and improve programs and communities.

## Vermont Youth Project

As the state developer and manager of the Vermont Youth Project (VYP), we help participating communities to create an environment that embraces positive youth development. Currently, there are **five communities** (Enosburg, Fair Haven, Richford, Rutland City, and Swanton) implementing the model at the fullest level. In these communities, local youth take a survey in the fall and communities receive the data findings eight weeks later so they know what's going on with their youth right now and can design their action plans accordingly. The project uses the Planet Youth data tool, designed and analyzed by researchers at the Icelandic Center for Social Research and Analysis, to understand what are the current risk and protective factors in addition to perceptions of substance use. New for FY21: the Vermont Youth Project survey added questions around COVID-19 and mental health. Taken by middle and high school students in the five VYP communities, this new data is striking. Overall findings show that COVID-19 has significantly impacted youth mental health and wellbeing, and the global pandemic has prompted a rise in mental health concerns for youth.

## Workshops

Our trainings help youth workers to build a better understanding of what youth voice is and can be, and to show programs how they can authentically partner with youth to build their leadership skills. Since January 2021, the Youth Empowerment Team has facilitated **eight online workshops** for the youth councils (see p. 5) and VYP communities. We also offered trainings on mental health and resiliency, including the in-depth "Youth Mental Health First Aid" course designed to teach adults how to help an adolescent who is experiencing a mental health/addictions challenge or is in crisis. New for FY21: we created a workshop called "Coaching Beyond Winning: SEL in Action" that was offered three

times this spring. Designed for sports coaches, this workshop included an accompanying guidebook and touched on SEL, resilience, adolescent development, and youth mental health topics.

## Partnerships and Outreach

We offer youth voice consultations for staff who are interested in learning how to implement youth voice strategies specific to their programs. This type of training is all about building relationships and trust, as well as tuning in to the unique needs of youth workers and their programs. In FY21, we delivered **48** hours of youth voice consultations to **24** programs across Vermont.

## Building Flourishing Communities

We are the statewide coordinator for Building Flourishing Communities, an initiative that educates and supports communities in promoting positive health and social outcomes using a collective impact approach based on N.E.A.R. research. New for FY21: Building Flourishing Communities distributed **\$25,432** in grants to support **10** local organizations and projects focused on trauma and resilience building. Grants were awarded in December 2020 through Vermont Afterschool.

## Vermont Youth Center Alliance

The Vermont Youth Center Alliance (VYCA) functions to connect and promote youth centers of all shapes and sizes. We host and facilitate the monthly meetings to create a space where program leaders and staff can come together to build community and share resources. New for FY21: in collaboration with the Vermont Community Foundation and YYCA, we offered **\$110,000** in COVID Relief Grants to support the continued operation of **14** teen centers currently providing programming (virtual or in person) to youth and young adults.





# REIMAGINING TOGETHER

How we advocate for policy change

As Vermont's leading voice for afterschool, we advocate for state and federal policies that promote access, affordability, and quality of afterschool, summer, third space, and other out-of-school programs. And what a year it has been with remarkable policy and advocacy activities ranging from high-level federal decisions to local-level impacts. We worked extremely hard to have COVID response and recovery efforts include afterschool and summer programs, and consider this year a major milestone for the field in terms of federal funding opportunities.

## Youth Advocacy & Youth Council Bill

One way we advocate for policy change is to involve youth. In Summer 2020 we started a Youth Advocacy Group as a space for youth to advocate for change and develop leadership skills. We were extremely honored to facilitate and coordinate this group of **50** young people (ages 11-19) from across Vermont who had the goal of passing the Vermont Youth Council bill in the 2021 legislative session. After working together to develop recommendations, they got to see their efforts pay off when the Youth Council Bill was introduced as H.293. Despite the hard work of the youth advocates and bill sponsors, the Youth Council Bill never made it out of the House Appropriations Committee and will be revisited for further action in the next session.

## Universal Afterschool Task Force

Another way we advocate for policy change is to engage in the legislative process. Late in the 2020 session, the Vermont General Assembly passed two pieces of legislation that directly involved afterschool. In October 2020, Vermont legalized adult-use cannabis with S.54. While the law may not be fully implemented until 2022, retail sales will be taxed at a rate of **six percent**, which will fund a grant program to start or expand afterschool and summer learning programs in recognition that third space programs are a proven form of primary prevention. Language in the budget bill passed in Fall 2020 also created a Universal Afterschool Task Force charged with writing a report on how to ensure universal afterschool access in Vermont. The Task Force, chaired by Rep. Kelly Pajala and Sen. Andrew Perchlik, issued the official report in May

2021. Our Executive Director Holly Morehouse served on the Task Force and played a key role in pulling together data and research for the report. Along with recommendations on what a state grant program should look like using the cannabis tax revenue, the report also recommends the formation of an Afterschool and Summer Oversight Committee to develop and manage all aspects of a potential state grant program for expanding access to afterschool and summer programs.

## American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

We advocate for policy change by partnering with policymakers. Signed into law on March 11, 2021 by President Biden, the historic ARPA package included \$30.35 billion for afterschool and summer learning programs nationwide with over **\$50 million** for Vermont dedicated to learning recovery (including afterschool and summer) through 2023. We worked closely with Senator Bernie Sanders and Governor Phil Scott to ensure these funds would and could be used for afterschool and summer programs. In turn, funds from ARPA have thus far been used to establish Summer Matters for All Grant Program and we will continue to advise state leaders on how to invest ARPA funds to have the greatest impact for programs and youth.

## Top 10 in Afterschool

We continue to use data to drive policy recommendations. A national report ranked Vermont in the **Top Ten** for quality of our afterschool programming and high rates of parent satisfaction. The *America After 3PM* report is the nation's most comprehensive look at how children spend their time during the hours after school and during the summer. The 2020 survey findings show that while Vermont continues to have high afterschool program participation in relation to the national average, the state's unmet demand for afterschool has consistently risen since 2009, with now more than **26,000** children (39%) who would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them. Having this data drives our advocacy work to bring the power of afterschool to every youth in every community.



## Virtual Youth Summit

Hosted with Gov. Phil Scott

In an effort to provide an outlet for Vermont youth to share about their current life experiences and spotlight youth voices, **23** youth had the chance to tell their stories at the Virtual Youth Summit hosted by Governor Phil Scott, the Vermont Department of Mental Health, and Vermont Afterschool on March 25, 2021.

Along with our partners, we designed the Virtual Youth Summit as an opportunity for young people (ages 12-18) from across the state to share about their experiences during the COVID-19 crisis, and provide insights on what youth need to feel connected and healthy. Each young person had two minutes to share their personal, pre-written testimony. We had the pleasure of facilitating the prep session with the youth to help them shape their stories, practice public speaking on Zoom, and get feedback from other youth participants. Their testimony provided the Governor and his team with the chance to learn more about their needs and concerns as the state moves forward on its COVID recovery efforts.

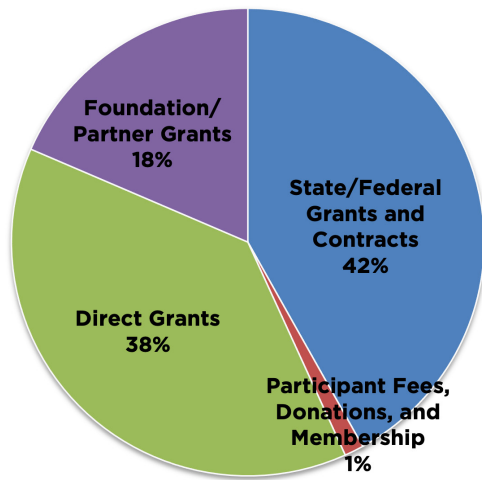
**“Overall, I hope that the qualitative psychosocial wellbeing of young adults will be prioritized as much as quantitative educational outcomes when it comes to governmental policy in the following months.”**

**- Ben Park, Age 18  
Dorset, VT**

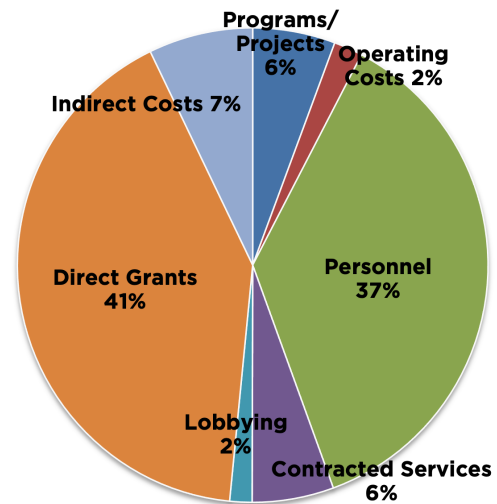


# IN TOTAL

FY2021 Total Income:  
**\$1,795,091**



FY2021 Total Expenses:  
**\$1,859,645**



## WHO WE ARE

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Raquel Aronhime  
  
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Tracy Truzansky  
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### FUNDERS

Afterschool Alliance  
  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
  
National Conference of State Legislatures  
  
Northfield Savings Bank Foundation  
  
Overdeck Family Foundation  
  
STEM Education Coalition  
  
Vermont Agency of Education  
  
Vermont Child Development Division (CDD), Department of Children and Families, Agency of Human Services  
  
Vermont Community Foundation  
  
Vermont Department of Health  
  
Vermont Department of Mental Health  
  
Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)



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Robin Katrick  
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Brianna Smith  
Tracy Truzansky  
Alex Shevrin Venet  
Rebecca Webb  
Matt Wolf

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Sarah Kurtz McKinnon  
Pedro Noguera  
Ainissa Ramirez  
Dena Simmons

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Nancy Bird  
Kiley Boyd  
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\*As of June 30, 2021

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report.



# We believe that all youth deserve opportunities to succeed.

Here's how we are creating a stronger statewide system of afterschool, summer, and third space programs in order to increase access and strengthen communities:

## STATEWIDE COVID INITIATIVES (P. 2)

- Setting up and supporting 102 school-age child care Hubs locations for remote learning days
- Launching the Summer Matters for All Grant Program
- Coordinating with the Governor's office to launch the Summer Matters campaign



## INVESTING IN QUALITY (P. 3-4)

- Targeted supports, training, and technical assistance to the field
- Keeping the field connected, informed, and inspired
- Breaking down STEM barriers
- Afterschool for All Grant Program

## PRIORITIZING YOUTH VOICE (P. 5-6)

- Leading VYP to create healthy communities for youth
- Youth Council Grants to fund youth-led projects
- Helping staff to elevate youth voice via trainings and consultation
- Managing the Vermont Youth Center Alliance to promote connection and sustainability



## REIMAGINING TOGETHER (P. 7-8)

- Convening and facilitating youth advocates to advance legislation and leadership relating to young Vermonters
- Partnering with Governor Phil Scott and Vermont Dept. of Mental Health to host the Virtual Youth Summit
- Advocating for policies and practices that support Gov. Scott's vision for universal afterschool
- Helping to bring federal funds to afterschool, summer, and third space programs in Vermont



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