



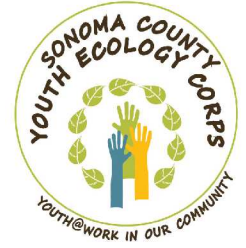
Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps

2024-25 Evaluation Report



Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps

2024-25 Evaluation Highlights



Program Participation:
42 Young Adults

Positive Impacts on Participating Young Adults



Working Together as a Crew:
100% Reported Growth



Among Those with Skill Gaps:
94% Showed Improvement



Relationship Building:
100% Enjoyed Being Part of a Crew



Mentorship:
92% Saw Crew Leader as a Mentor



Future Employment or Education:
96% Reported a Post-SCYEC Plan



Among Crew Members:
88% Satisfaction with SCYEC

Positive Impacts on the Environment & Community



100% of Project Hosts
Said They Would Participate Again



92% of Crew Members
Had Environmental Awareness



96% of Crew Members
Said They Think About How Their
Actions Affect the Environment



92% of Crew Members
Said They Try to Make a Positive
Difference in Their Community

"SCYEC helped me realize the **options I have for potential career paths.**"

– SCYEC Crew Member

"I have a lot more **hope.**"

– SCYEC Crew Member

"Removal of invasives **allow native plantings to thrive**, increasing water filtration and habitat for animals. These pockets of nature are **crucial to wildlife** in the urban zone."

– Michael Santarini, City of Santa Rosa



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With Gratitude To

Lilian Vieyra Torres
Pedro Guevara
Norine Doherty
And Our Partners at Conservation Corps North Bay





BACKGROUND

Overview

Since 2009, the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps (SCYEC) has offered **meaningful work experience opportunities to youth and young adults, along with environmental education and the opportunity to explore careers and develop work-readiness skills**. SCYEC crews, in close collaboration with public agencies and nonprofit organizations, also **support local environmental preservation efforts** and provide **valuable services to the community** by maintaining streams and parks, helping to prevent flooding and fires, and addressing safety issues on public lands and roadways.

SCYEC initially began as a summer jobs program for youth and young adults with support from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). SCYEC was expanded into a year-round youth program in 2012, giving out-of-school youth and young adults a chance to gain additional experience; extended SCYEC crews may complete projects with local agencies during the spring and autumn.

In 2024-25, the Sonoma County Human Services Department (HSD) administered an eight-week summer program and extended crews for **young adults ages 18 to 24** in partnership with **Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB)**. CCNB employed, trained, and supervised the SCYEC crew members and crew leaders, and provided the young adults with educational and career exploration support.

While SCYEC is open to all Sonoma County young people, **the program targets economically disadvantaged young adults and those who have been in foster care**. Funding source requirements and allocation amounts determine the number of participants served by SCYEC. In 2024-25, entry level crew members were paid **\$18.25 per hour** and senior crew members were paid **\$20.25 per hour**.

SCYEC continues to be a recognized, replicable, and sustainable model. SCYEC has been part of the Sonoma County Upstream Investments Portfolio since 2014, affirming the program's strong foundation in evidence. In addition, SCYEC received a Challenge Award for innovation in county government from the California State Association of Counties in 2014, was named a Bright Idea by the Harvard Kennedy School Innovations in Government Program in 2015 and received an Employer Best Practices award from the Sonoma County Mayors' Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities in 2019.

This evaluation report provides an **overview of SCYEC program outcomes for young adults, the environment, and the community, along with recommendations for future years**. The audience for this report includes the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, various departments within Sonoma County, youth program agencies, project host sites, and funders. The information included in this report will be used to inform business practices, program design for SCYEC, and future evaluation efforts. Specifically, the report seeks to address the following research questions:

- What are the current needs of youth and young adults in Sonoma County?
- To what degree did the 2024-25 SCYEC program achieve anticipated outcomes?
- What was the impact of the 2024-25 SCYEC program on participating young adults?
- What was the impact of the 2024-25 SCYEC program on the community and environment?
- What lessons can be applied to future program design?

The following objectives were **key indicators** of success in 2024-25:

- At least **80%** of participants performing below work readiness levels at the program start demonstrate improvement on one or more of those skills at the program end.
- At least **80%** of participants demonstrate following safety procedures at the program's end.
- At least **80%** of participants know how to report a safety hazard at the program's end.
- At least **80%** of participants report a post-program plan for education or work.
- At least **80%** of participants report program satisfaction at the program end.

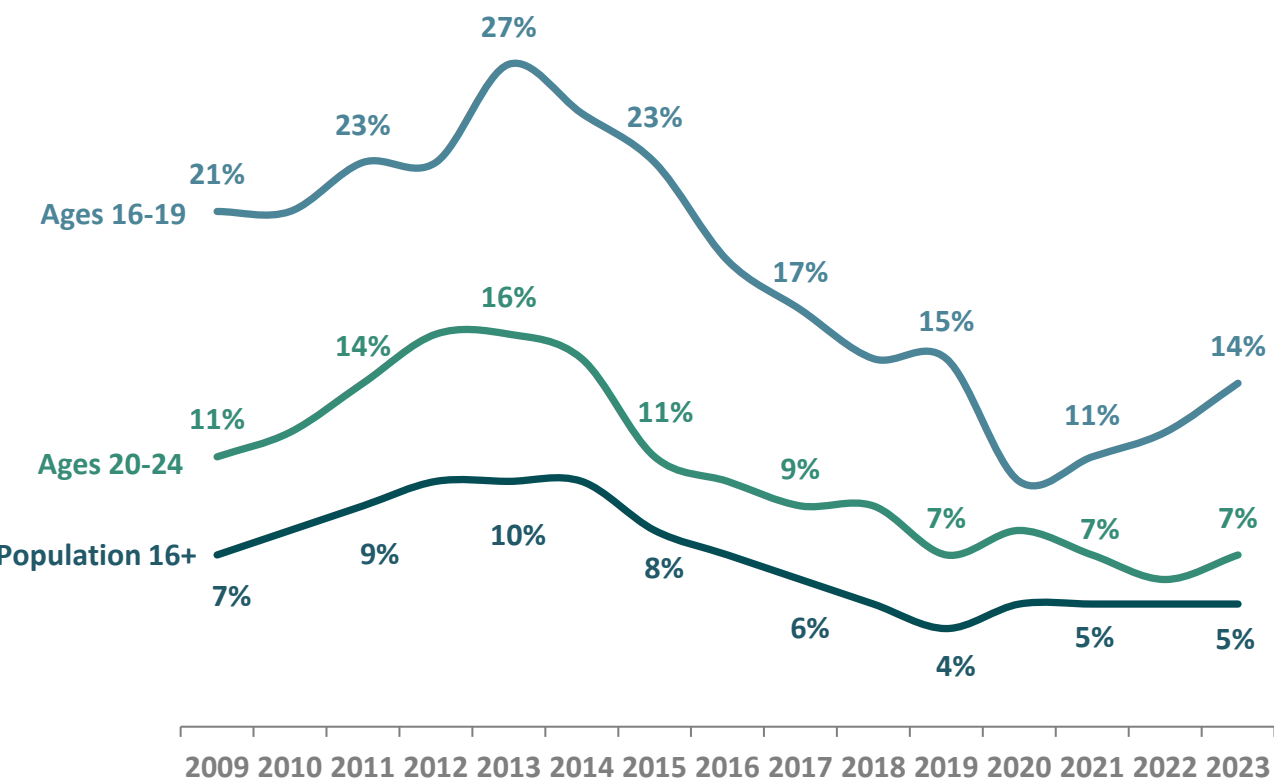
Both quantitative and qualitative data – from administrative forms, attendance records, quarterly performance evaluations, an in-person focus group, and online post program surveys – were analyzed to determine descriptive statistics and key themes.

Youth and Young Adult Needs

Youth Unemployment

While youth unemployment is notably lower than it was when SCYEC began in 2009, Sonoma County’s young people ages 16 to 24 continue to face higher unemployment rates¹ than Sonoma County’s overall working population ages 16 and up (Figure 1). According to the latest five-year estimates from the United States Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, about **5%** of work-age residents (ages 16 and over) in Sonoma County are unemployed, compared to roughly **7%** of young adults ages 20 to 24 and **14%** of youth and young adults ages 16 to 19.²

Figure 1: Sonoma County Young People Have Higher Unemployment Rates than the Population 16+



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for Sonoma County.

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau defines unemployed as follows: “All civilians 16 years old and over are classified as unemployed if they (1) were neither “at work” nor “with a job but not at work” during the reference week, and (2) were actively looking for work during the last 4 weeks, and (3) were available to start a job.” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 Subject Definitions).

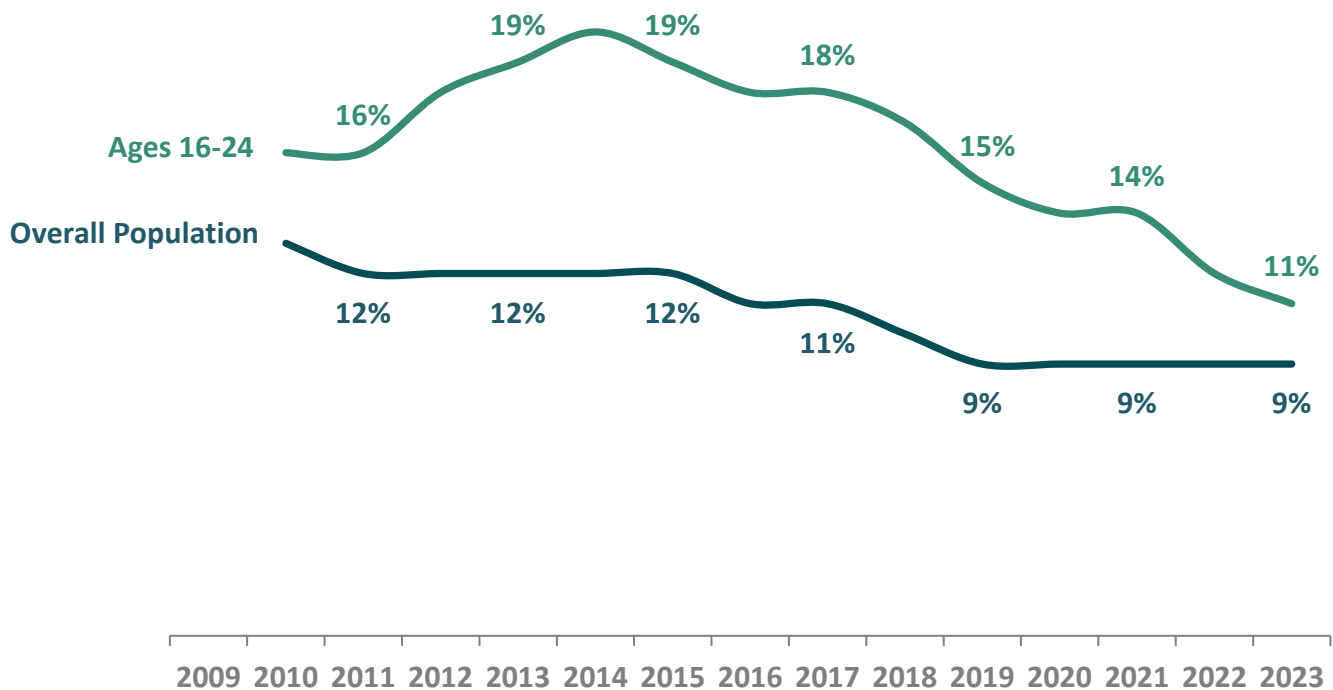
² U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey. Employment Status (S2301) 5-Year Estimates, 2009-2023.

Youth Poverty Levels

An estimated **11%** of Sonoma County young people ages 16 to 24 live in poverty, compared to **9%** overall (Figure 2). Among young women in Sonoma County, the rate was slightly higher; an estimated **12%** of young women ages 16 to 24 live in poverty, compared to **10%** of young men.³

Research shows that youth in poverty are at risk for adverse outcomes later in life. Compared to youth from affluent families, youth who grow up in poverty are less likely to complete high school, earn a high school diploma versus a GED, and enter or complete post-secondary education.⁴

Figure 2: Youth and Young Adults in Sonoma County Experience Higher Poverty Rates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for Sonoma County.

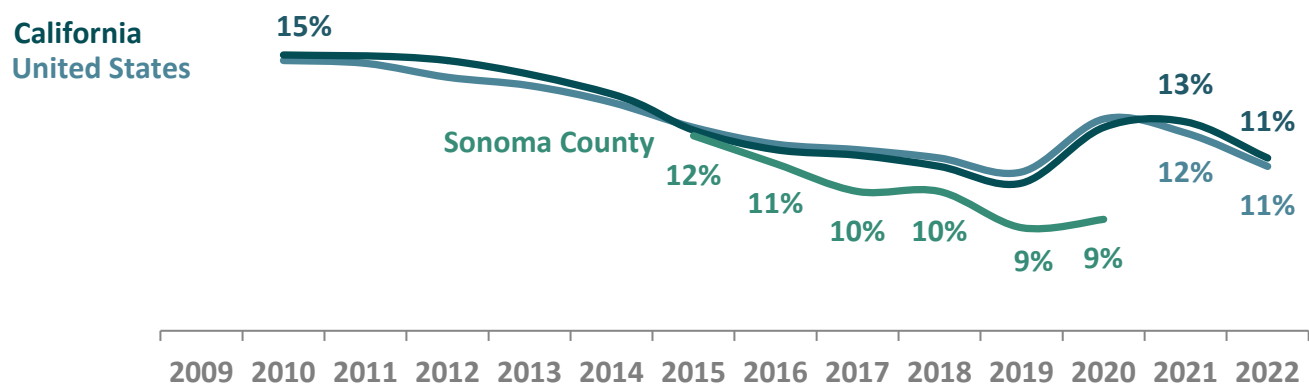
³ U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey. Poverty Status in the Past Twelve Months by Sex by Age (B17001) 5-Year Estimates, 2010-2023.

⁴ Elman, C., Wray, L.A., and Xi, J. (2014). Fundamental resource dis/advantages, youth health, and adult educational outcomes. *Social Science Research*, Volume 43, 108-126.

Opportunity Youth

Opportunity youth – also known as disconnected youth – are young people ages 16 to 24 who are not enrolled in school nor employed (full- or part-time). Sonoma County’s youth disconnection rate has decreased steadily since the end of the Great Recession (Figure 3), similar to state and national rates. In 2020 and 2021, statewide and national youth disconnection rates increased to as high as 13% as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, then decreased to around 11% in 2022. Measure of America has not published youth disconnection data at the county level for recent years, however available estimates for 2016-2020 suggest that about 9% or 4,600 Sonoma County youth were disconnected – lower than the rate in neighboring Marin County (11%) and slightly higher than the rates in neighboring Napa County (8%), San Mateo County (8%), Santa Clara County (7%), and Santa Cruz County (6%).⁵

Figure 3: Statewide/National Youth Disconnection Increased Due to the Pandemic, Then Decreased



Source: Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council, 2010-2022.

Research suggests that opportunity youth are at risk for adverse outcomes and are less likely to transition to adulthood successfully. Young people who are involved in the criminal justice system, the child welfare system, in low-income households, and/or in special education are at an increased risk of becoming disconnected.⁶ Youth disconnection rates also tend to vary by race, ethnicity, place, and gender: Native American, Black, and Latino youth tend to have higher rates of disconnection than White and Asian youth; rural areas and urban opportunity deserts often have higher rates of youth disconnection than opportunity-rich urban or suburban areas; and boys and young men are slightly more likely to be disconnected than girls and young women. Offering paid work opportunities, career preparation, sought-after skills, and addressing barriers remain important reengagement strategies.⁷

⁵ Lewis, K & Powers, A (2024). Broad Recovery, Persistent Inequity: Youth Disconnection in America. Measure of America, Social Science Research Council. [For more info, click here to visit the Measure of America interactive data tool.](#)

⁶ Hair, E. C., et al. (2009). Youth who are “disconnected” and those who then reconnect: Assessing the influence of family, programs, peers and communities. Child Trends Research Brief No. 2009-37.

⁷ Lewis, K. (2019). Making the Connection: Transportation and Youth Disconnection. Measure of America, Social Science Research Council. [For more info, click here to visit the Measure of America interactive data tool.](#)



Environmental and Community Needs

Each year in Sonoma County, there is seasonal demand for fire abatement, flood mitigation, stream and wetlands restoration, removal of invasive species, recovery of native species, and the maintenance of open spaces. SCYEC is designed to help meet these environmental needs and provide the next generation with a chance to explore various environmental careers.

SCYEC helps meet the needs of our local community through post-wildfire recovery efforts, trail maintenance, and the upkeep of recreational areas. SCYEC crews also help to promote public safety through vegetation maintenance along local roadways. Furthermore, our community needs a job-ready prospective workforce; SCYEC equips youth and young adults with the practical work experience and skills desired by employers in Sonoma County.

Resources

Funding

The estimated funding for the 2024-25 SCYEC summer program was about **\$578,900**, and estimated funding for the 2024-25 fall/winter crews was about **\$254,000**. The following federal, state, and local funding sources provided this financial support:

State/Federal Funding

- Services for Transitional Age Youth (STAY)
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Local Funding

- Sonoma County Agriculture Preservation and Open Space
- Sonoma Public Infrastructure (formerly Transportation and Public Works)
- Sonoma Water
- Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods



Crew members met specific eligibility requirements for enrollment through Services for Transitional Age Youth (STAY) funding. To qualify for STAY, youth and young adults had to either be active in the foster care system or have been in foster care previously and aged out of the system.

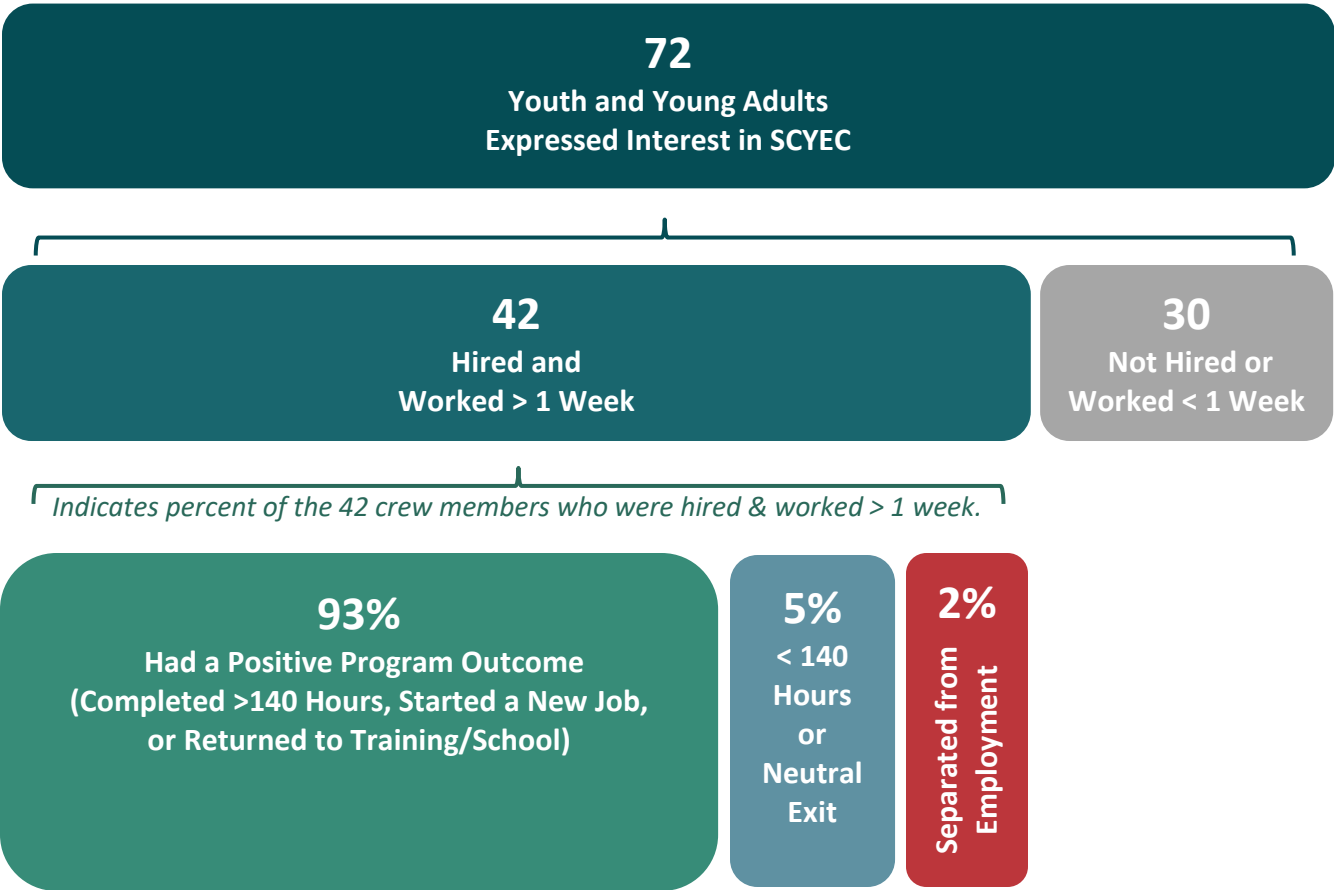
Project Hosts

In 2024-25, there were **5** public agency and nonprofit project hosts who provided young adults with work opportunities throughout Sonoma County. Project hosts staff were responsible for orienting young people and crew leaders to the job assignments, worksite, and relevant safety procedures (e.g., supplying water, a shaded area, and safety gear). Some project hosts also provided training and support in identifying relevant skill development. Project hosts in 2024-25 included:

- City of Santa Rosa
- Sonoma County Agriculture Preservation and Open Space
- Sonoma Public Infrastructure (formerly Transportation and Public Works)
- Sonoma Water
- Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Crew Members

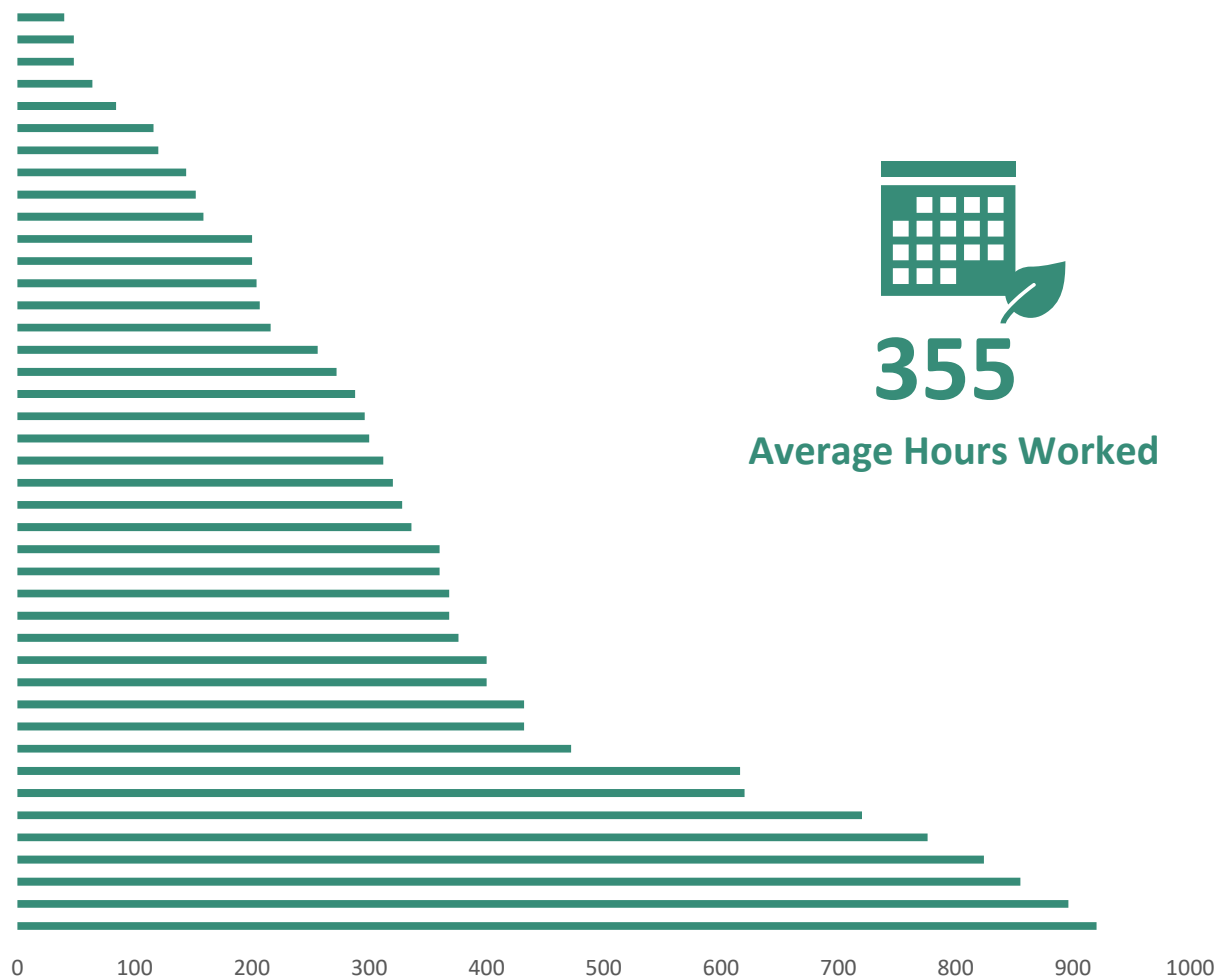
A total of **72** young people expressed interest in SCYEC in 2024-25. Some young adults were recruited by CCNB, while others applied based on word-of-mouth, previous SCYEC experience, or referrals from HSD or other organizations. A total of **42** young adults were hired and worked at least one work week, and about **93%** of participating young adults⁸ had a positive program outcome – defined as completing at least 140 paid program hours or leaving the program early to start a new job or return to training/school. This was notably higher than the percentage with a positive program outcome during 2023 (64%), 2022 (62%), and 2021 (70%). About 5% of crew members did not complete 140 paid program hours or exited for a neutral reason, such as illness. Around 2% of crew members did not complete the SCYEC program in 2024-25 because they were separated from employment.



⁸ Only the 42 hired young adults with attendance recorded for at least one work week and complete outcome data (from Required Youth Information form) were included in the analysis. Hours of service total (p. 25) includes *all* crew members.

This evaluation includes crew members from the eight-week SCYEC summer program in 2024 and the SCYEC year-round crews that worked through the fall, winter, and spring (until April 2025). A total of **35** young adults worked the minimum number of work hours for ecology corps programs, which is typically 140 hours. The average number of paid program hours worked by participating young people was **355 hours**. Crew member hours ranged from a low of 40 hours to a high of 920 hours (Figure 4).

Figure 4: SCYEC Attendance Hours in 2024-25



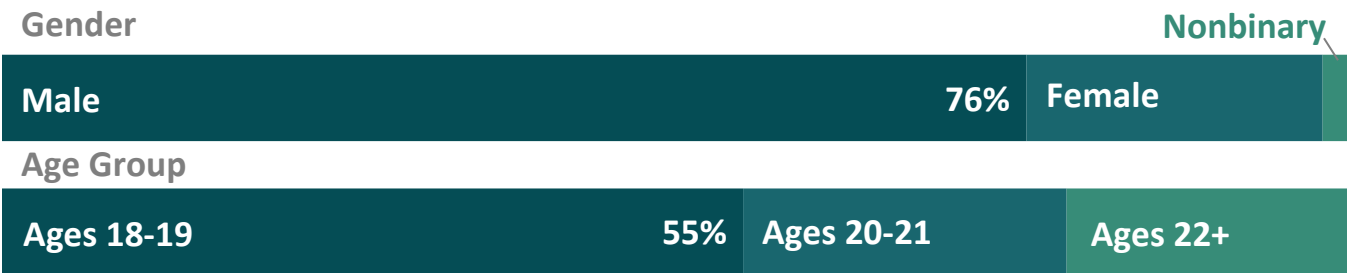
Source: 2024-25 SCYEC Attendance Spreadsheets.

Characteristics of Hired Young Adults

Similar to previous years, about **76%** of crew members participating in SCYEC in 2024-25 identified as male, while the remaining **24%** identified as female or nonbinary.⁹ Over half of crew members in 2024-25 – **55%** – were ages 18 to 19, and the remaining **45%** were ages 20 to 21 or 22 and older (Figure 5).

⁹ Exact percentages not included for certain data elements, to protect young adults’ confidentiality (where n < 11).

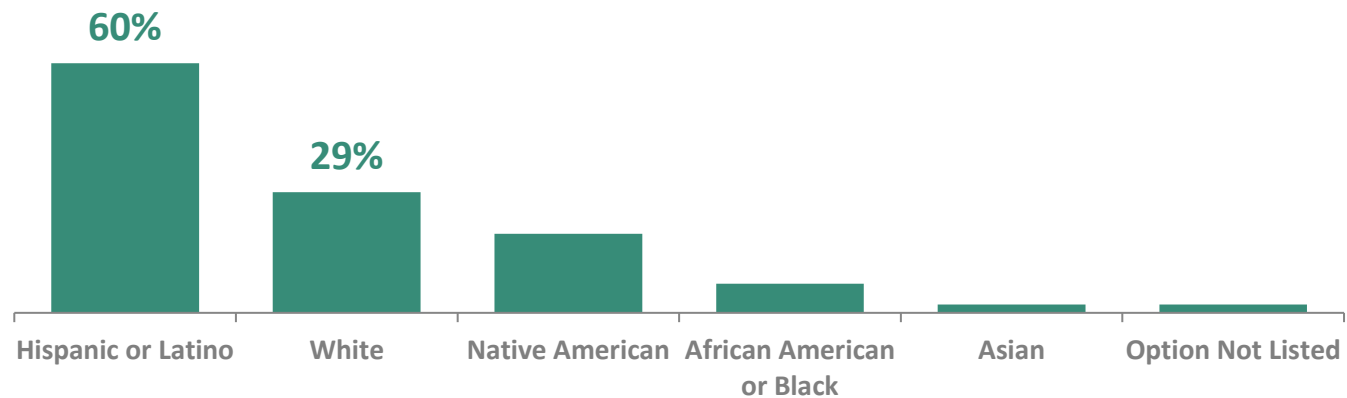
Figure 5: Most SCYEC Crew Members were Male, Ages 18-19



Source: 2024-25 SCYEC Interest Forms.

In 2024-25, **60%** of young adults participating in SCYEC identified as Hispanic or Latino and about **29%** of participating young adults identified as White. The remaining young adults identified as either Native American, African American or Black, or Asian, or wrote down an option not listed.¹⁰ Around **21%** of participating young adults identified more than one race or ethnicity (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Racial and Ethnic Identities of Participating Young Adults



Source: 2024-25 SCYEC Interest Forms. Respondents could select multiple racial or ethnic groups.

Past Work and School Experience

SCYEC was the first job for **21%** of crew members in 2024-25 (just slightly higher than in 2023-24, when SCYEC was a first job for 19% of crew members). Previously, when crews included 16- and 17-year-olds, this percentage was higher (CCNB serves young adults ages 18+).

Before participating in SCYEC, an estimated **50%** of 2024-25 crew members were in school in either a high school, GED, or college program (compared to 56% in 2023-24) and **58%** were working either part-time or full-time (compared with 59% in 2023-24).

¹⁰ Exact percentages not included for certain data elements, to protect young adults’ confidentiality (where n < 11).

Barriers

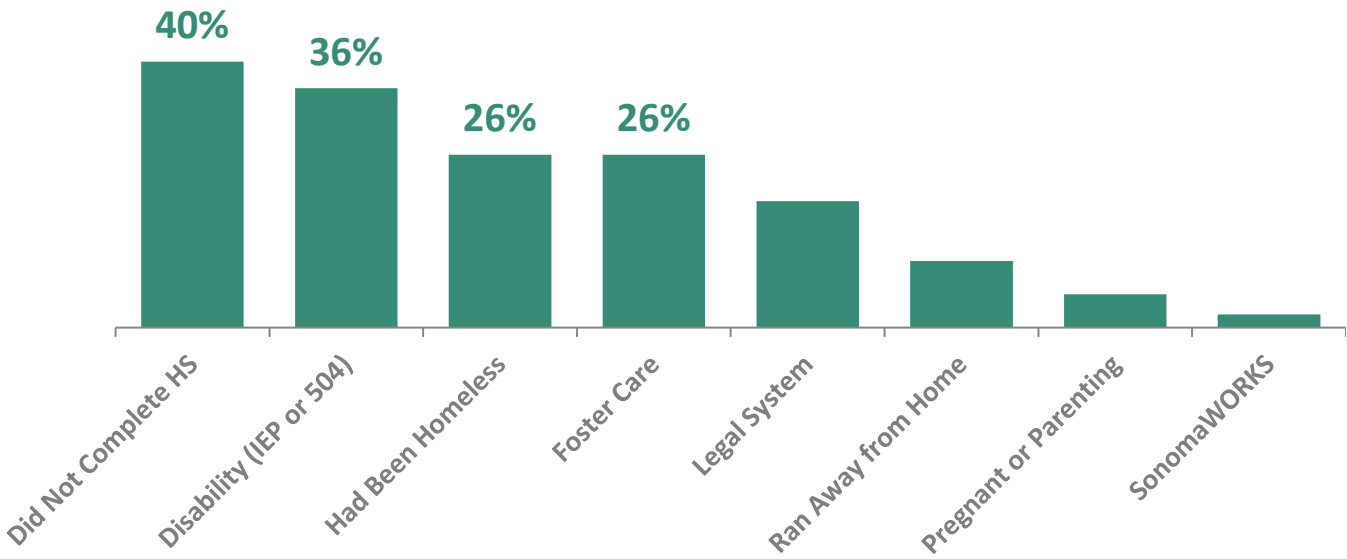
About **71%** of 2024-25 crew members identified **at least one barrier** and **40%** identified **more than one barrier** at program entry, compared with 74% and 54% respectively in 2023-24. This information helped staff determine young adults’ eligibility for funding, but does not necessarily include all presenting barriers. Individualized and ongoing case management support provided by CCNB helps crew members address these and other barriers to education or employment.

The most common barrier identified by crew members in 2024-25 was not completing high school; **40%** of participating young adults reported not completing high school in 2024-25 (compared to 31% in 2023-24). The next most common barrier was having special education needs; **36%** of crew members in 2024-25 reported that they had an IEP or 504 Plan (compared to 39% in 2023-24).¹¹

About **26%** of crew members in 2024-25 reported that they had been homeless (compared to 39% in 2023-24). About **26%** of crew members in 2024-25 also reported that they had been in foster care – a notable increase from 15% of crew members in 2023-24 and just 6% in 2022-23.

Other common barriers: some crew members also reported a history with the legal system, having run away from home, having been pregnant or parenting, or that they or their family were experiencing poverty (currently receiving SonomaWORKS/CalWORKs/TANF benefits) (Figure 7).¹²

Figure 7: Crew Members Faced a Variety of Barriers



Source: 2024-25 SCYEC Interest Forms. Respondents could select all barriers that applied.

¹¹ Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written plan for a student eligible for special education. A 504 Plan involves special education accommodations, specifically the measures taken for a student to participate freely in public school.

¹² Exact percentages not included for certain data elements, to protect young adults’ confidentiality (where n < 11).

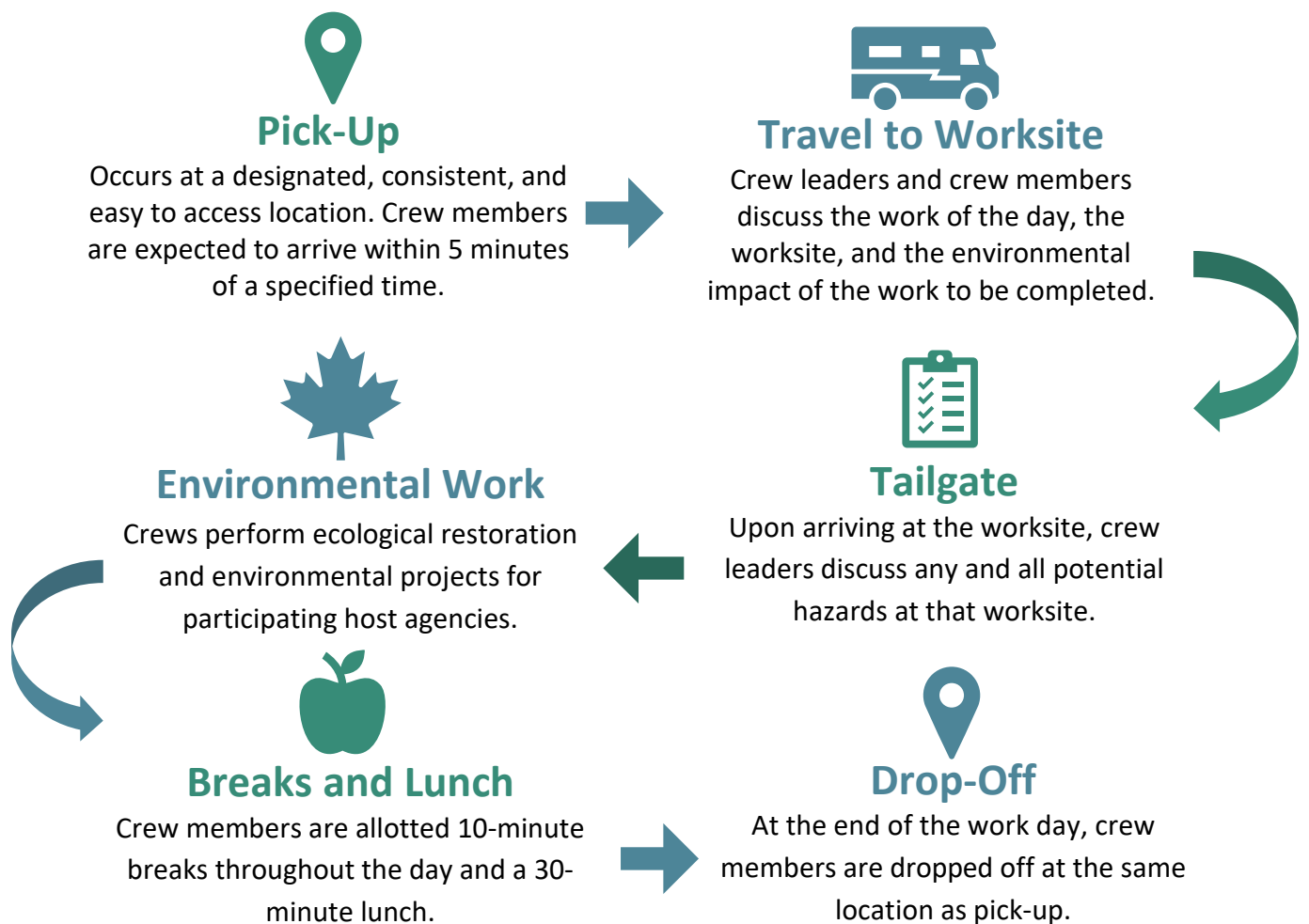
Strategies

Workplace Exposure

SCYEC is designed to provide youth and young adults with **work experience** so they can develop the necessary competencies for future employment. Youth and young adults receive training before starting the program and continue to receive training on the job throughout their work placement. Crews are typically made up of **six to eight youth and young adults** who are supervised by trained crew leaders. Generally, youth and young adults work **8 hours per day**.

Crew leaders provide **encouragement, mentoring, and guidance** to youth and young adults, serve as **role models** for proper workplace behavior, and evaluate crew members on their work readiness skills after their first week on the job and again at the end of the program.

A Day in the Life of a SCYEC Crew Member



Safety and Training

Crew leaders receive training from CCNB, HSD, and Sonoma Water to learn about their position's responsibilities and the scheduled projects. They also receive training on topics such as **outdoor hazards, tools**, and **wildlife**, which give them the knowledge to facilitate crew member learning. In addition, crew leaders learn how to administer crew member surveys and complete performance evaluations to ensure that evaluation tools are completed accurately.

Crew leaders, project hosts, and worksite supervisors are responsible for:

- Ensuring the **safety** of the youth and young adults.
- Guaranteeing that each work project was **completed successfully**.
- Upholding high standards for **workplace behavior** and modeling **values and ethics**.
- Creating a **positive and fun** experience for youth and young adults.

Crew members receive training on **tool safety, tool usage, hazard identification**, and **job skills** before and during work. Then crew leaders and worksite supervisors provide an orientation to each worksite and familiarize youth with the project goals, job duties, and expectations.

Education and Career Exploration Support

CCNB offers education and career development support in a variety of ways, including weekly education days. Some examples of these group and one-on-one supports have included **career preparation** workshops, **guest speakers, employer tours, career interest assessments, research** projects, and **conservation-related field trips**. At the end of the summer program, there is also an **SCYEC Opportunity Fair** which typically features guest speakers, mock-interviews, and a chance to meet with representatives from local employers and schools.

Life Skills Curriculum

Participating young adults also develop life skills through SCYEC to prepare for success in work and life. Activities are typically interactive and include topics such as **financial literacy, attitude, responsibility, communication** skills, creative **problem-solving**, and preparing for the **workplace**. The financial literacy activity in 2024-25 was [Bite of Reality](#), offered in partnership with Redwood Credit Union.

Environmental Education

Crew members receive periodic environmental education lessons on ecology topics. The core environmental education curriculum is developed and delivered by educators at Sonoma Water. Youth and young adults also gain additional environmental education through informal relationships with crew leaders and various project hosts. Environmental education topics often include **nature awareness, riparian habitat, ecosystem cycles, water**, and **watersheds**.

RESULTS

Impact on Participating Young Adults

This section describes the impacts on crew members, including: *Improved Work Skills, Proper Use of Safety Procedures and Knowledge of Safety, Relationship Building, Income for Families, Planning for the Future, Attitudes on the Environment, and Participant Satisfaction.*

Improved Work Skills¹³

Participating young adults received supportive supervision and work experience designed to help them develop work-readiness skills throughout the program. Feedback on job performance was provided informally and via performance evaluations. Crew leaders evaluated participating young adults on work-readiness skills either prior to their participation in SCYEC (for existing CCNB corps members) or at the start of the placement, and then quarterly using the following scale: *0 - No Exposure, 1 - Trainee, 2 – Emerging Professional, 3 – Job Ready, and 4 - Advanced.* Young adults were evaluated on seventeen key skills: attendance, punctuality, performance, effort and productivity, compliance and safety, responsibility, initiative, skill development, critical thinking, attire, communication and attitude with peers, communication and attitude with supervisors, communication and attitude with public/customers, teamwork and cooperation, conflict mitigation, positivity, and motivation. Performance below work readiness was indicated by a rating lower than 3 - *Job Ready* on any one skill.

Objective: At least 80% of participants performing below work readiness at the start of the program will demonstrate improvement on one or more of those skills at program end.

94% Of SCYEC crew members with skill gaps at the program start showed improvement in at least one area at the program's end.

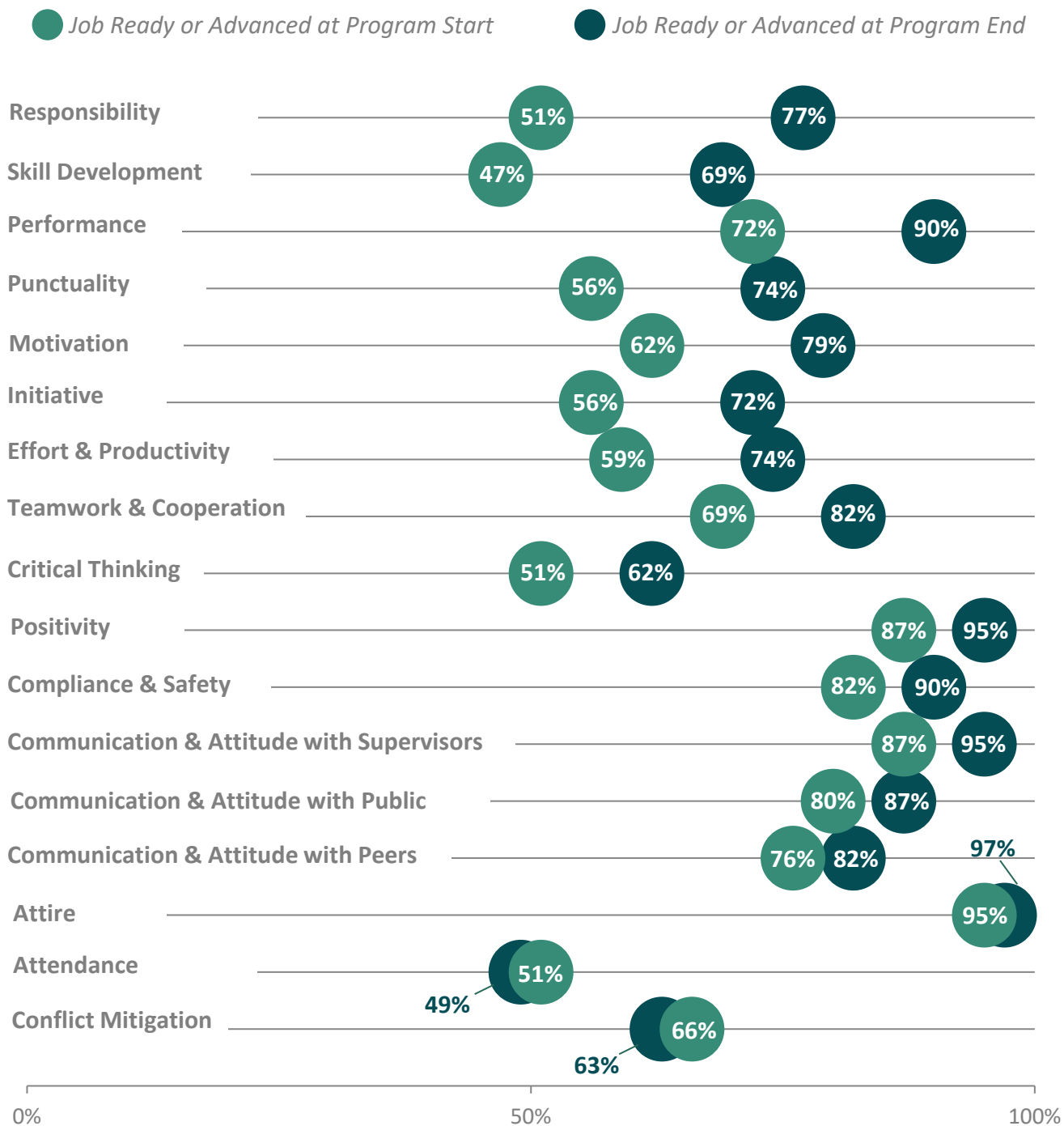
This objective was met. Figure 8 illustrates the percentage of crew members at 3 - *Job Ready* or above for each skill at the start and at the end. Crew members demonstrated **increases in nearly every area.**

The skill area with the most significant growth among crew members was *Responsibility* – the percentage of crew members at 3 - *Job Ready* or above increased by **26** percentage points. The next largest increase was for *Skill Development*, an increase of **22** percentage points. The skill areas of *Performance* and *Punctuality* both had an increase of **18** percentage points. *Motivation* increased by **17** percentage points, *Initiative* increased by **16** percentage points, and *Effort & Productivity* increased by **15** percentage points. *Teamwork & Cooperation* increased by **13** percentage points and *Critical Thinking* increased by **11** percentage points. There were increases of 8 percentage points for the skill areas of *Positivity, Compliance & Safety, and Communication & Attitude with Supervisors*, an increase

¹³ Only young adults who a) completed minimum hours (at least one work week), and b) had both start and end performance evaluations are included in this analysis. This included 39 SCYEC crew members in 2024-25.

of 7 percentage points for *Communication & Attitude with Public*, and an increase of 6 percentage points for *Communication & Attitude with Peers*. There was also a slight increase of 2 percentage points for *Attire*. Two areas where there was a decrease in the percentage of crew members at 3 - *Job Ready* or above was *Attendance* (-2 percentage points) and *Conflict Mitigation* (-3 percentage points).

Figure 8: Crew Members Skill Level at the Start and the End of SCYEC

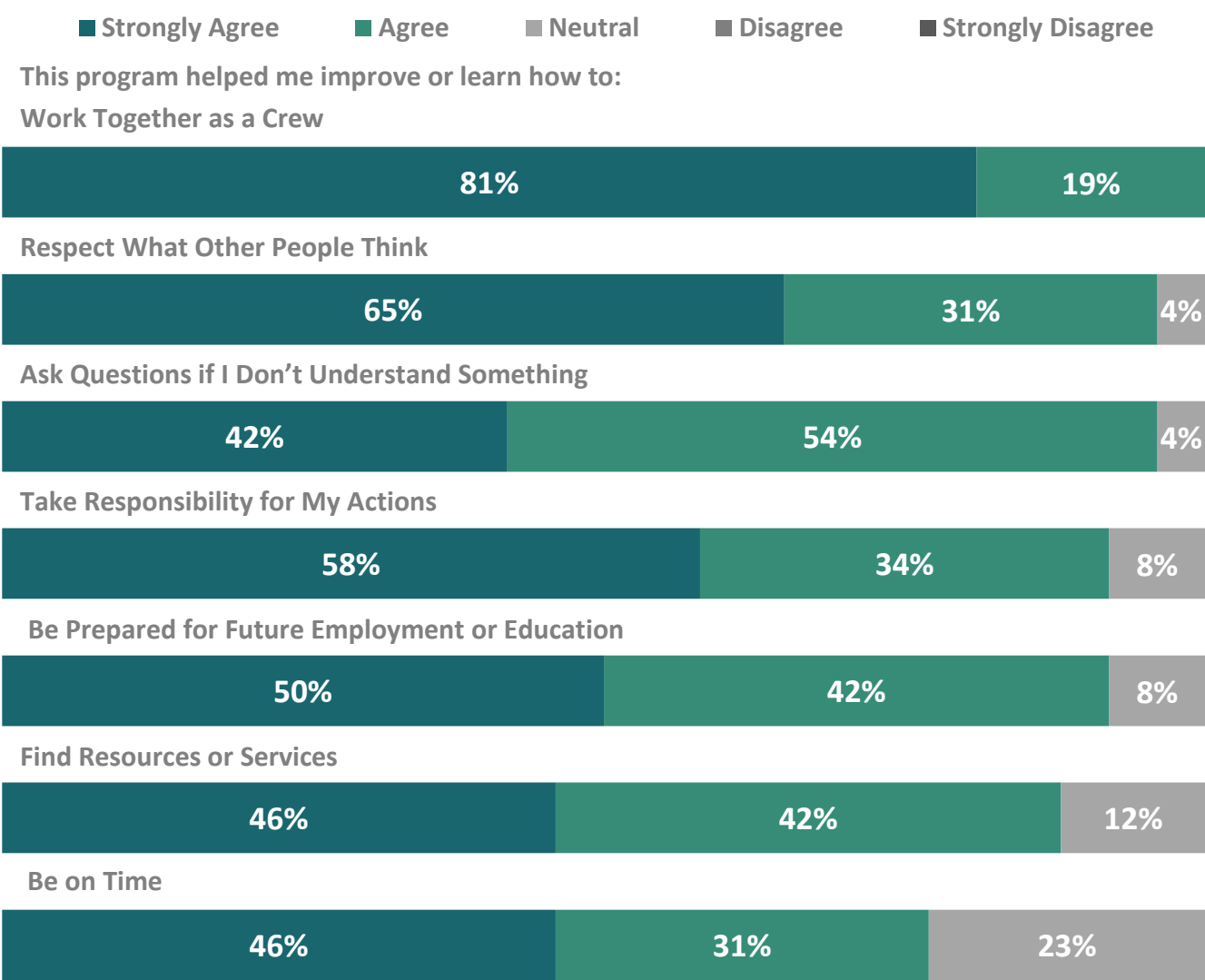


Source: 2024-25 Start and End Performance Evaluations, n = 39.

Additional Skills Gained from SCYEC

At the end of the program, participating young adults were asked to share whether or not SCYEC helped them improve or learn certain skills. As Figure 9 shows, 100% of crew members *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that SCYEC helped them work together as a crew. Around 96% of crew members *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that SCYEC helped them learn to respect what other people think and ask questions if they did not understand. Around 92% said that SCYEC helped them take responsibility for their actions and be prepared for future employment or education. About 88% of crew members *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that the program helped them find resources or services (like help with banking or job search). About 77% of crew members reported that SCYEC helped them be on time.

Figure 9: Crew Members Largely Agreed that SCYEC Helped Them Gain Additional Skills



Source: 2024-25 SCYEC Post Program Surveys.



Proper Use of Safety Procedures and Knowledge of Safety

When working with tools and working outside in the heat, it is vital for SCYEC crew members to understand safety procedures and potential hazards.

Objective: At least 80% of participants will demonstrate following safety procedures at program end.

90% Of crew members demonstrated consistently following safety procedures (at *Job Ready* level or above) at program end.

This objective was met. Around **11%** of SCYEC crew members in 2024-25 reported being worried about their safety during the program. However, no major concerns about safety were shared during the focus group or in the post program survey, crew members shared observations about safety such as:

“It’s number one priority.”

“Be aware of your surroundings.”

“Due to my participation in SCYEC I have further increased my understanding of safe behaviors when operating in the field.”

“...everyone is pretty responsible, and we remind each other when they are not upholding safety standards.”

Crew members were also asked to indicate whether they know how to report a safety hazard if they see one, on a scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

Objective: At least 80% of participants will agree they know how to report a safety hazard at program end.

96%

Of crew members agreed that they knew how to report a safety hazard at the end of their participation in SCYEC.

This objective was met. Crew members also reported that they knew how to properly use tools and personal safety gear/personal protective equipment (PPE) at program end:

- **93%** of crew members said they knew how to properly use personal safety gear.
- **93%** of crew members said they knew how to properly use handheld landscaping tools.
- **89%** of crew members said they received training on the proper use of equipment.

While a need for higher quality safety gear was identified in 2023-24, participants in 2024-25 reported no serious issues and observed that there was a “whole bunch of new equipment.”

Relationship Building

Another important element of SCYEC is that the program helps young adults build positive relationships with fellow crew members, as well as crew leaders, project hosts, and program staff:

- **100%** of crew members said they enjoyed being part of a crew.
- **92%** of crew members said that their crew leader/crew supervisor was a mentor.
- **81%** of crew members said that they had an adult in the SCYEC program whom they could talk to about important decisions in their lives.

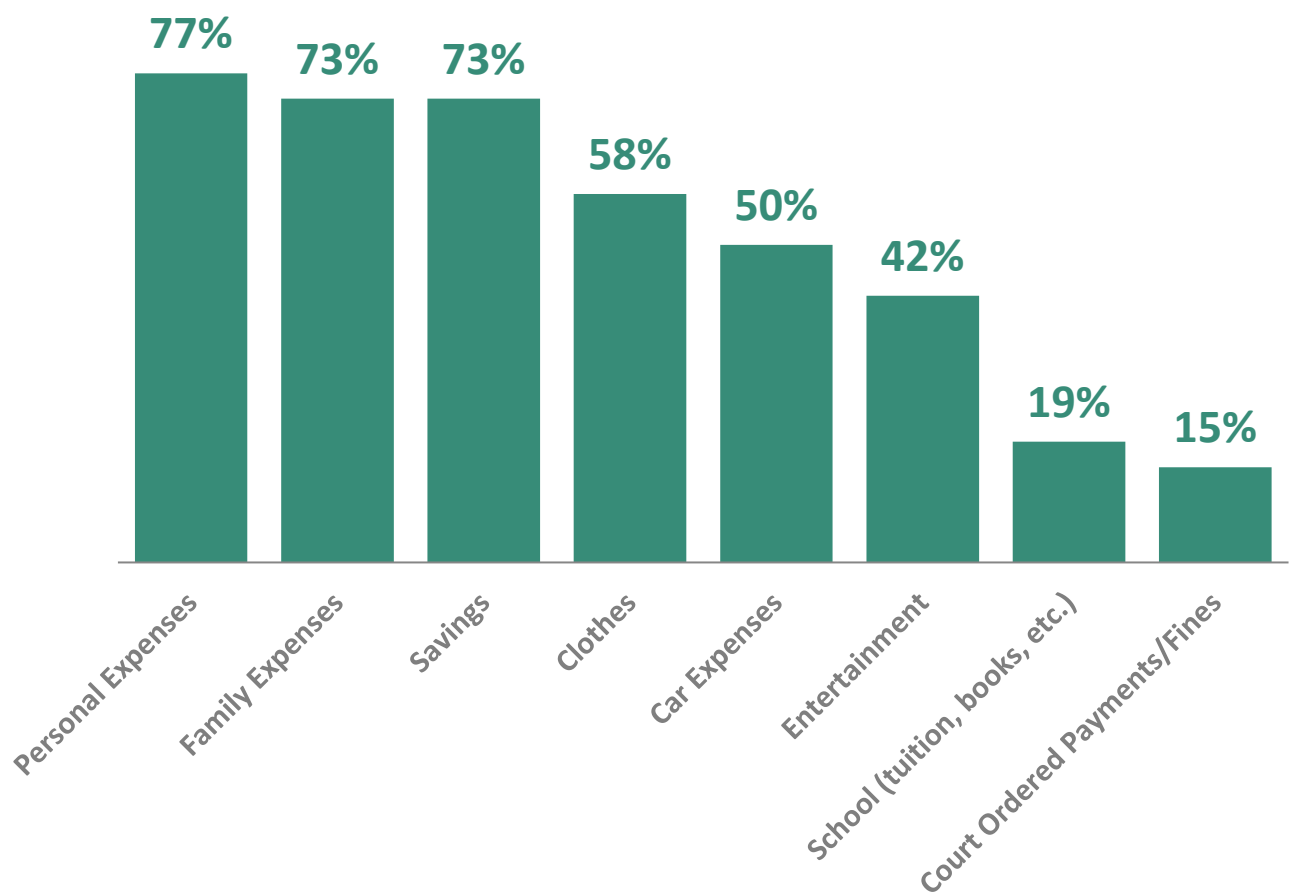


Income for Families

Earnings Among Crew Members

SCYEC wages help crew members support themselves, support their families, and save for the future. In 2024-25, household expenses (such as food, bills, phone, or rent) and savings were the most common use of earnings; **77%** of crew members used earnings to pay personal household expenses, **73%** used earnings to pay for household expenses for their family, and **73%** reported saving their earnings. At **58%**, clothing was the next most common use. About **50%** of crew members used earnings to pay for car expenses (like car payments, gas, license, insurance, or repairs), **42%** used earnings to pay for personal entertainment, **19%** used earnings to pay for school expenses such as tuition and books, and **15%** of crew members used earnings to pay court-ordered payments or fines (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Around Three Quarters of Young Adults Used Earnings for Household Expenses & Savings



Source: 2024-25 SCYEC Post Program Surveys.

Planning for the Future

Through work experience, education, career exploration, and mentoring, SCYEC strives to inspire young adults and help them make plans for the future.

Objective: At least 80% of participants report a post-program plan for education or work.

96% Of crew members said they planned to either attend school or work following SCYEC. The average self-reported wage for post-SCYEC jobs was \$23.08/hour.

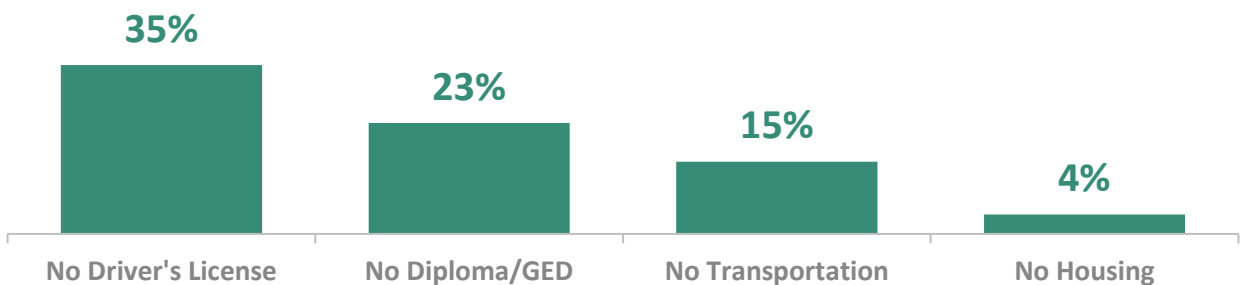
This objective was met. About **88%** of SCYEC crew members planned to work – **61%** full-time and **27%** part-time. About **72%** of SCYEC crew members planned to attend school; **28%** reported that they would be going to high school or a GED program and **44%** reported that they would attend college.

About **93%** of crew members continued employment with CCNB after completing SCYEC, earning an average hourly wage of \$18.93/hour. Please note that in some cases, wages earned by crew members during SCYEC were higher than the wage rate reimbursed by HSD; CCNB provides raises as crew members gain skills and experience.

In addition, **42%** of SCYEC crew members in 2024-25 reported that they received assistance with barriers that made it hard to find a job, such as help getting a driver’s license, help finding childcare, or help locating housing. However, about **65%** of crew members were interested in additional assistance with their future plans at the end of SCYEC, such as one-on-one assistance or job/school resources.

At the end of the program, crew members also identified barriers *currently* making it hard to find a job. About **35%** of crew members reported needing a driver’s license, **23%** of crew members reported needing a diploma or GED, and **15%** of crew members reported a lack of transportation. Around **4%** of crew members indicated that not having stable housing was a barrier to finding a job. Overall, about 58% of crew members indicated a single barrier, 12% of crew members reported multiple barriers, and the remaining 42% of crew members did not indicate any employment barriers at the end of SCYEC.

Figure 11: Over a Third of Crew Members Reported Not Having a Driver’s License



Source: 2024-25 SCYEC Post Program Surveys. Crew members could select all that apply.



About **35%** of crew members in 2024-25 reported that SCYEC had an impact on their plans:

“I have a lot more hope.”

“SCYEC helped me realize the options I have for potential career paths.”

“Yes definitely, it is helping me become a better person and definitely inspiring me to keep doing better and get stuff done.”

“Made me realize this is the path I want to take for my future.”

“It made me more interested in working for parks and other wildlife type jobs.”

“I am confident I would enjoy a career related to natural resources!”

Many young adults also reported awareness and interest in jobs related to the environment or ecology, and knew what career they want to pursue in the future:

- **88%** of crew members said they were aware of environmental or ecological jobs.
- **54%** of crew members knew what career they wanted in the future – such as a fire fighter, naturalist, natural resources, fish and game, childcare, dental hygienist, mechanic, electrician.
- **50%** of crew members were interested in a career they learned about during SCYEC.

Attitudes on the Environment

Almost all young adults participating in SCYEC in 2024-25 reported that they enjoyed being outdoors, were aware of environmental issues, and thought about how their actions affect the environment:

- **92%** of crew members enjoyed being outdoors.
- **92%** of crew members reported awareness of environmental issues.
- **96%** of crew members said they thought about how their actions affect the environment.

Participant Satisfaction

Young adults reported high levels of satisfaction with SCYEC in 2024-25 and most crew members said they would recommend SCYEC to a friend. While crew members' favorite parts of SCYEC varied, common themes included: the **people and experience of being part of a crew, feeling supported, learning, the work itself – being outside and helping nature, the Opportunity Fair, and having different education and career exploration opportunities to choose from.**

Examples of quotes from 2024-25 crew members are as follows:

"My favorite part of the program ... was the satisfaction of riding in the van back home, tired but happy with how the day was spent."

"I really liked going to the job opportunity [fair], doing a one-on-one [mock] interview was really helpful... talking to someone who is skilled in giving amazing feedback."

"Got to learn how to use power tools I never used before."

"My favorite part of this program is all the good people!"

"Working with nature and helping nature."

"Meeting likeminded people and having supportive supervisors."

"Meeting new project hosts as well as learning from them."

"Being a part of a group and learning new experiences."

Objective: At least 80% of participants will report program satisfaction at program end.

88% Of SCYEC crew members reported satisfaction with the program.

This objective was met. In addition, the majority of participating young adults would recommend SCYEC to a friend and indicated that they benefited from the weekly education days:

- **81%** of crew members would recommend SCYEC to a friend.
- **81%** of crew members said that they benefitted from the weekly education days.

Crew members also provided a variety of specific suggestions for improvement on their post-program surveys and during an in-person focus group:

- Recruit young adults by visiting high schools/colleges and via social media (TikTok, Instagram).
- Offer higher pay to improve recruitment and retention.
- Include more snacks or food, as a show of appreciation or recognition.
- Offer additional support for crew members navigating STAY and WIOA programs.
- Provide more opportunities to learn skills in the field (on-the-job training) and educational trips.
- Have more of a common curriculum for crew leaders/crew supervisors, so that there is a set standard and everyone is learning the same thing (experiences varied somewhat by crew).
- Most crew members said the 8-week summer program is a good amount of time, not too short or long, “soaked up enough information.” Others would like it to be longer (10 weeks).
- Crew members liked the variety of job opportunities featured at the Opportunity Fair and would love to see even more types of environment-related jobs. Crew members also suggested having the option for small groups to cycle through and talk to exhibitors together (instead of a free for all), since not everyone feels comfortable walking up to a table on their own.
- Would be good to provide “more education on the state of our planet” such as an event to help people see the importance of helping the environment. Crew members suggested sharing not just “doom and gloom,” but also showing young people how to make a difference.



Impact on the Environment

The following section describes SCYEC's *Environmental Benefits and Impacts*.

Environmental Benefits and Impacts

The common types of projects identified by the project hosts included invasive plant and tree removal, park and public land maintenance, stream/waterway maintenance, trail construction and maintenance, trash and debris removal, and wildfire fuel reduction. Environmental benefits included:

- Removing invasive species and allowing native species to reclaim territory.
- Improving water quality, reducing erosion, and improving water flow capacity.
- Aiding in post-fire recovery and increasing resiliency through fuel load reduction.
- Removal of trash and debris from public lands.

Quotes from project hosts describe the valuable environmental impact of SCYEC in 2024-25:

“Approximately 600 feet of new trail has been constructed to departmental standards, replacing an older trail which has severe erosion and was contributing sediment to a nearby stream. The new trail will reduce sediment deposition, and help restore the ecosystem in this part of the park.”

– Justin Lindenberg,
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

“Removal of invasives allow native plantings to thrive, increasing water filtration and habitat for animals. These pockets of nature are crucial to wildlife in the urban zone.”

– Michael Santarini,
City of Santa Rosa

“Reduced invasive species presence, grassland health and native habitat enhancement and protection.”

– Leslie Lew,
Sonoma County Ag and Open Space

Impact on the Community

This final results section describes *Exposure to Community Service* and *Community Benefits and Impact*.

Exposure to Community Service

According to the attendance records kept by crew leaders throughout the summer, fall, and winter, SCYEC crew members provided **around 15,700** hours of service to the community in 2024-25. Almost all participating young adults also reported an interest in community service:

- **92%** of crew members said they try to make a positive difference in their community.

Community Benefits and Impacts

All reporting project hosts in 2024-25 reported satisfaction with their experience and indicated they would participate again. Impacts on the community included decreased flood and wildfire risks, improved safety on trails, enhanced recreation spaces, and increased preservation of plants with important cultural significance. Project hosts also noted that SCYEC crews in 2024-25 improved the accessibility of public spaces by completing projects that hosts would otherwise not have had the resources to complete. Quotes from project hosts illustrate this valuable community impact:

"The community will have improved access to public lands, and will be able to safely access a part of [Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve and Austin Creek State Recreation Area] that was closed due to lack of staff and funding."

– Justin Lindenberg,
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

"Improved accessibility to the creek trail system, improved aesthetics for recreationalists, reduced fire risk, reduced flood risk... SCYEC allows us to complete projects and provide services that we do not have the staffing to achieve on our own."

– Michael Santarini,
City of Santa Rosa

"Ecological health and functionality of public lands supported. Ultimately the Indigenous users of dogbane will be supported by enhanced native plant health."

– Leslie Lew, Sonoma County Ag and Open Space

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for 2025-26

The following recommendations were developed based on observations from key stakeholders:



Diversify **recruitment strategies** for SCYEC crew members in the 2025-26 program year and continue outreach to young adults with no previous job experience.



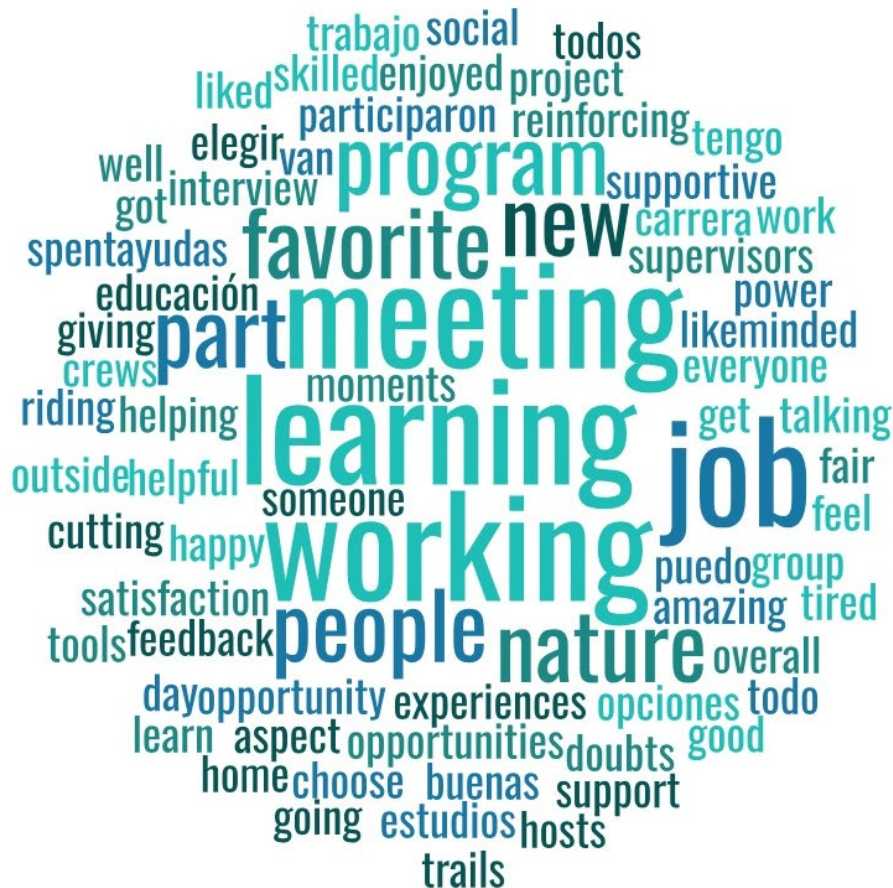
Include more conversations around the **environmental impact** of the work the crews do and incorporate more education on how youth can **make a difference** in helping the environment.



Continue to provide supportive services to crew members to help them **address barriers to employment or education** and explore options for helping young adults get a **driver's license**.



Consider ways to help SCYEC crew members increase their **conflict mitigation skills** throughout the program, to enable them be prepared for future endeavors.



The word cloud above shows words crew members used to describe their favorite part of SCYEC.