

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS

2024 Annual Program Report







Youth Employment in Parks is a unique employment opportunity for Anchorage teens. It is made possible by cooperation between the Anchorage Park Foundation, a non-profit which advocates for urban parks and trails in Anchorage, the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, and the support of generous funders.



WHAT IS YEP?

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS IS A SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR ANCHORAGE YOUTH THAT ENGAGES A NEW GENERATION OF DIVERSE YOUNG LEADERS AS CONSERVATION STEWARDS OF PUBLIC LANDS AND THE ANCHORAGE COMMUNITY THROUGH MEANINGFUL JOB TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND EDUCATION.

Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) is a joint program of the Anchorage Park Foundation and the Municipality of Anchorage's Parks and Recreation Department.

Since 2007, YEP has hired over 505 Anchorage youth to complete park improvement projects during the summer. The teens learn valuable natural resource management job skills by building trails, restoring stream banks, and performing a variety of other park improvement projects. Additionally, as part of the YEP program, teens engage in relevant educational opportunities to increase their civic engagement, environmental awareness, recreational activity, and leadership skills. At the end of the program, Mentorship Week links their new skills to future careers.

Each year, about 26 teens are selected from the applicants from to be enrolled in the award-winning YEP program. The YEP summer program usually lasts for ten weeks and coincides with the Anchorage School District schedule to ensure opportunities are available to area youth without interfering with school calendars. For the duration of the summer, these teens work full-time on park and trail improvement projects.

Funding for the teens' wages and project overhead comes from a variety of grants and contributions, both public and private.

YEP IN ACTION

- **YEP creates** employment opportunities and highlights career paths for youth to work in natural resources fields.
- **YEP inspires** youth to embrace nature while encouraging healthy lifestyles.
- **YEP prepares** youth to become effective, contributing citizens and employees through character development and community action skills training.
- **YEP contributes** to the community by improving parks and recreation spaces.



Youth Employment in Parks

A program of the Anchorage Park Foundation and Anchorage Parks and Recreation

2024 YEP Crew Members

CREW LEADERS



Ryan



Zane



Seth



Logan



Abraham

CREW MEMBERS



Rohn



Marshall



Roux



Fayden



Jack



Gavin



Addison



Aliyah



Dartagnan



Theo



Ayla



Zaiden



Markus



Craig



Jeremiah



Charles



Ray



Elijah



Robert



Amelia



Liam

SKILL-BUILDING

YEP crew members participate in park improvement projects like streambank restoration and trail building.



PROGRAM STRUCTURE

PROGRAM DESIGN

Youth Employment in Parks is modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program of the 1930s. The YEP program is designed as a service learning program which balances the work product with job skills training, recreational activities, civic engagement, and environmental education.

The YEP program employs staff to design and implement relevant service learning activities that will help the youth realize the meaningfulness of their work and become engaged citizens.

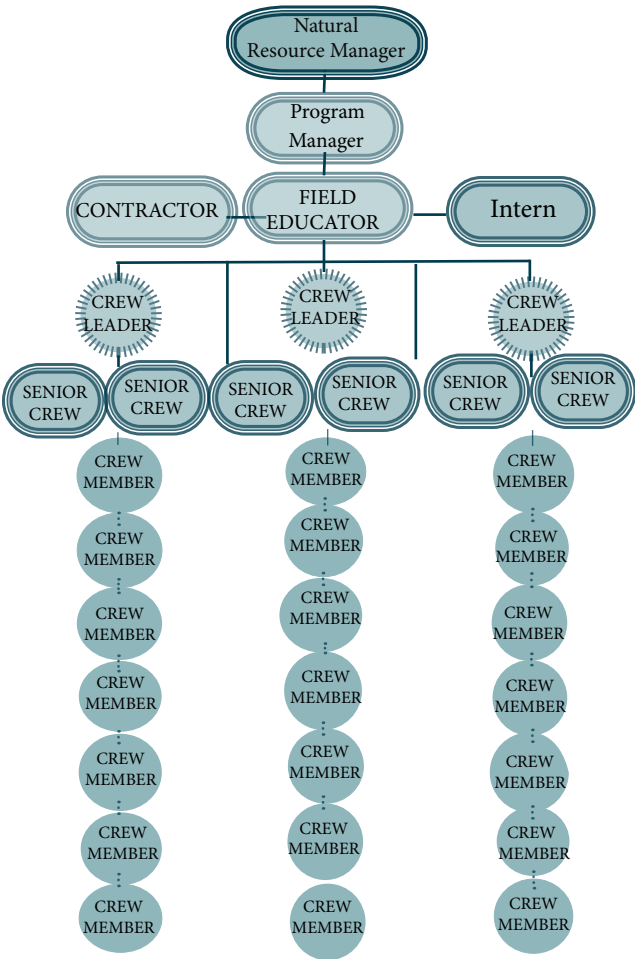
YEP PROGRAM GOALS

- 1. Create a meaningful first employment experience and career pathway for diverse youth to work in outdoors and natural resources fields.
- 2. Expose youth employees to the outdoors and connect them with nature to support a healthy lifestyle.
- 3. Provide youth employees with community action skills and character development so they may become effective citizens.
- 4. Build community through enhanced recreation opportunities, parks, and public spaces.

STAFF STRUCTURE

Youth Employment in Parks requires a variety of skills and a high degree of organization in order to accomplish its goals. Administrative duties are assigned to a handful of staff members, while project supervision and execution are carried out by the structured crews.

In 2024, the YEP staff divided into three field crews consisting of seven youth crew members, two youth senior crew member, and an adult crew leader. The field educator planned and implemented the service learning and educational components for the program, while the on-site professional trail building contractor managed the projects and ensured professional quality work. Both the natural resource manager and the program manager work year round coordinating projects, writing grants, and planning for the upcoming YEP program.

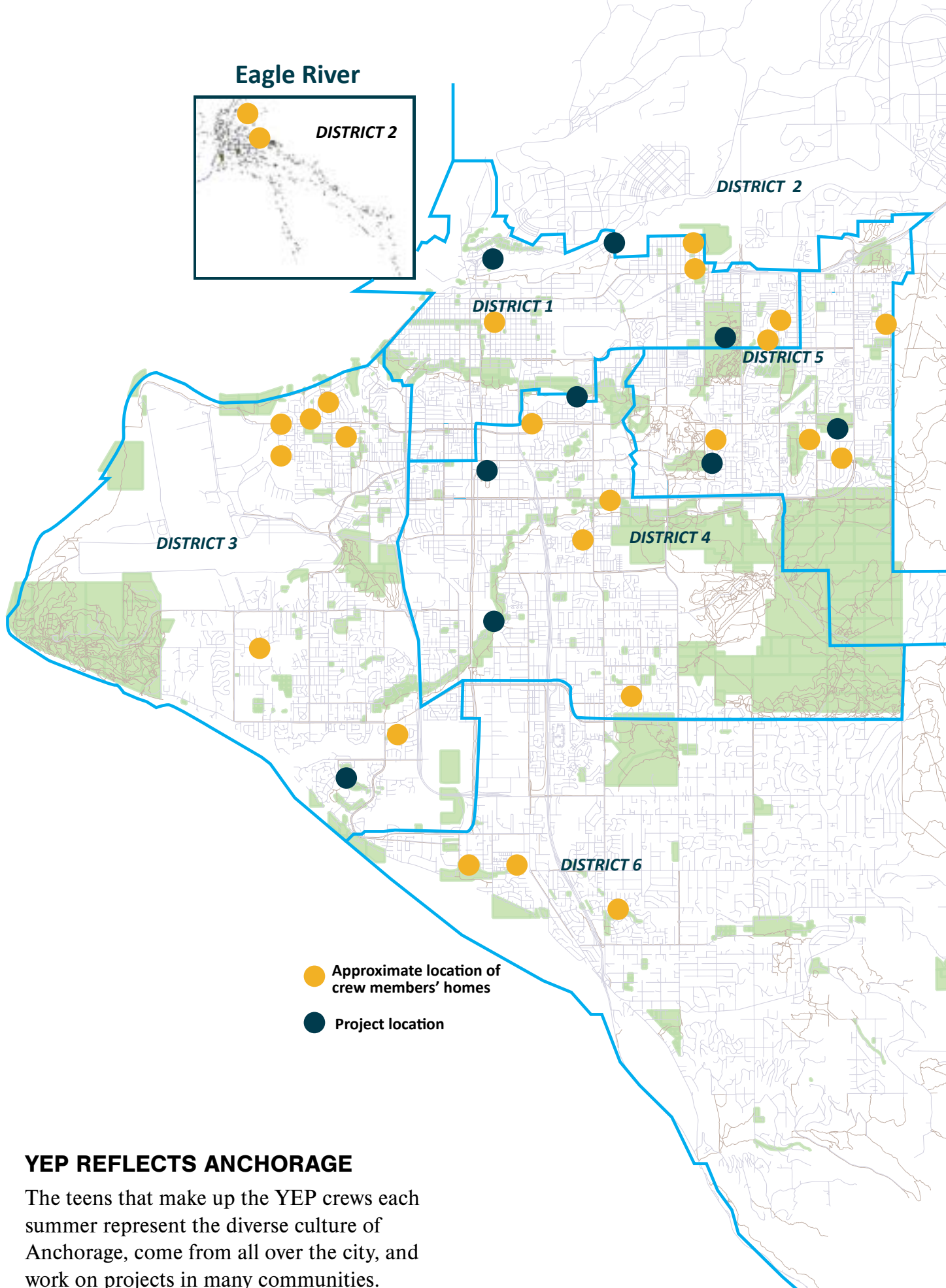


ANCHORAGE FEATURES A DIVERSE ETHNIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC POPULATION. THE TEENS EMPLOYED THROUGH THE YEP PROGRAM REFLECT THAT DIVERSITY.

The YEP program coordinates with local recreation centers, hiring centers, and the Anchorage School District to attract applicants. Because Anchorage features such a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population, YEP participants have a wide range of backgrounds.

Nearly all YEP teens report a very positive, and sometimes life-changing, experience as a YEP crew member. Youth Employment in Parks aims to set teens on a path toward success in future careers, which many of our past crew members have accomplished. In addition to work and social skills, friendships are formed among YEP crew members that last for years.

YEP MEMBERS SPEND TIME VOLUNTEERING



YEP REFLECTS ANCHORAGE

The teens that make up the YEP crews each summer represent the diverse culture of Anchorage, come from all over the city, and work on projects in many communities.





EDUCATION

THE YEP PROGRAM IS NOT JUST ABOUT BUILDING TRAILS AND PLANTING TREES. YEP TEENS HAVE A WEEKLY EDUCATION AND RECREATION DAY THAT TEACHES A VARIETY OF SKILLS TO HELP THEM HAVE SUCCESSFUL CAREERS, BECOME COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND HAVE FUN!



While park improvement work is a major aspect of the YEP program, the program also incorporates a strong education and recreation element.

Youth Employment in Parks gives crew members the tools and stamina to stand out amongst their peers as skilled and reliable employees, stewards of their community, and future leaders.

On weekly education and recreation days, and sometimes during daily breaks, YEP crew members engage in group activities and discussions that are tied directly to the projects on which they are working. These sessions cover a variety of topics which emphasize civic engagement, job skills, environmental awareness, and healthy recreation. Crew members have hands-on opportunities to serve the community, apply new skills, and learn about a variety of different occupations, all while having fun! Youth Employment in Parks encourages teens to become leaders and create positive impacts wherever they go.



Top: Crews volunteer at the musk ox farm.

Above: Crews participate in team building with the Bureau of Land Management

Right: YEP at the Anchorage Assembly

VALUABLE SKILLS

The YEP program not only teaches the value of hard work, but equips teens with the skills to stand out from the crowd as dependable employees and contributing community members.



EDUCATION & RECREATION



Education and recreation opportunities were paid for by the US Forest Service and National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. Thank you!

"I learned to be a responsible citizen and take care and help out my community and inform others of the importance of nature preserving." – Addison Eldridge



"The most important lesson I learned this summer was teamwork." – Seth Pleasant



"I learned about hard work and how it can be used to better myself and the community." – Ayla Jones



YEP PROJECTS: 2024

YEP CREWS COMPLETED 6 PARK IMPROVEMENT
PROJECTS OVER THE COURSE OF 10 WEEKS.



Weslyan Connector Trail

Trail Maintenance



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$5,000

Project Scope:

YEP teens spent their first week learning about tools, safety, team building, and trail building. The teens did a one day project improving on a 200 ft connector trail between Weslyan Dr. and the Chester Creek Trail. They hauled gravel and shaped the trail to create a more sustainable tread for improved drainage. The teens added 28 tons of gravel to the existing tread. Neighbors were so pleased with the trail improvements that they hosted an impromptu BBQ.

The project consisted of:

- Vegetation management
- Laying down landscape fabric
- Wheelbarrowing 28 tons of gravel
- Compacting gravel

Project Dates:

May 31st

KFQD

Bike Skills Loop Construction



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$25,000

Project Scope:

The teens worked alongside ProTrails (MOA Contractor) to help with phase one of the KFQD Park Improvement Plan. Teens constructed a bike skills loop by grubbing to remove vegetative mat, hauling, shaping, and compacting gravel, and learned how to build different pump track features with gravel. They also put in multiple French drains for added drainage. Additional drainage and landscaping improvements are planned for 2025.

The project consisted of:

- Constructing approximately 200+ ft of new trail
- Veg mat removal
- Wheelbarrowing 28 tons of gravel
- Compacting gravel
- Digging holes and adding cobbles for French Drains
- Laying vegetative mat and grass seed to revegetate the area

Project Dates:

June 3rd - 6th

Cuddy Family Midtown Park

Park Water Quality Improvement



Funding:

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Grant: \$169,000

Project Scope:

The teens spent three weeks working in Cuddy Family Midtown Park doing multiple different water quality improvement projects. Many areas within the park have degraded and eroded over time from overuse, waterfowl, and water runoff issues. All these projects were a part of a greater MOA Cuddy Park water quality improvement plan. The teens learned many different aspects of restoration efforts alongside a contractor and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

During their three weeks spent at the park, they learned to build a rain garden with a gabion wall, planted hundreds of native plants plus 2,266 native trees to revegetate a hillside next to the parking lot, and did a bank restoration project along the small holding pond.

The project consisted of:

- Constructing a rain garden with a gabion wall
- Filling, regrading, and revegetating outflow near existing culverts
- Revegetating a hillside with hundreds of native plants and 2,226 native trees
- Bank restoration along a small holding pond

Project Dates:

June 10th - 27th

Hillstrand Pond

Bank Restoration



Funding:

Alaska Geographic (AK Geo): \$13,000

MOA Funds \$ 15,300

Project Scope:

This project was a part of a Alaska Geographic grant. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game put on a Streambank Restoration Workshop for YEP so this project was used as field training and a chance for them to demonstrate those learned skills. Hillstrand Pond, along Chester Creek, is a popular sitting area for viewing waterfowl and overtime has degraded from overuse and erosion. Chester Creek is an anadromous stream and this project was necessary to restore the bank and vegetation to provide fish and wildlife habitat. This restoration project repaired the streambank while still allowing for public access and recreation. This grant also allowed for a permanent elevated light penetrating platform (ELP) to be installed over the restoration site.

The project consisted of:

- Installing a silt fence and digging a trench above ordinary high water
- Restoring a 55ft section of eroded bank along Chester Creek at Hillstrand Pond by establishing a new tow using a coir log and building up the bank with brush layers, willow trenching, and vegetative mat
- Planting 2,000 willows utilizing trenching
- Installed semi-permanent fencing along worksite for further restoration efforts
- Contractor installed a 25ft permanent ELP

Project Dates:

June 25th - 27th

Greenbelt Tree Planting

Reforestation Efforts



Funding:

United States Forest Service Community Forestry Grant: \$58,958

MOA Funds \$ 51,000

Project Scope:

The Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage Park Foundation were awarded a five year grant from the USDA Forest Service. The funding will aid in community reforestation projects that will address social and environmental injustices in Anchorage, greening historically disadvantaged neighborhoods, which have a lower tree canopy and are disconnected from green spaces. Over the five years, YEP will be responsible for several weeks each summer planting and watering trees, harvesting seedlings, removing invasive European Bird Cherry, and revegetating streambanks along forested greenbelts and parks across the city. In 2024 teens worked Russian Jack Spring Park, Arnold Muldoon Park, Eastchester Park, Valley of the Moon Park, and multiple other locations. Teens planted approximately 1,500 spruce and larch saplings, as well as hundreds of woody shrubs. They also helped care for hundreds of seedlings at our MOA greenhouses.

The project consisted of:

- Digging holes for thousands of trees and shrubs
- Planting and watering thousands of trees and shrubs
- Caring for dozens of different tree and native plant varieties

Project Dates:

July 1st - 3rd, July 8th - 11th, July 23rd

Ship Creek

Streambank Restoration



Funding:

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF): \$35,932

MOA Funds \$ 25,500

Project Scope:

The teens spent another week this summer working at two different sites along Ship Creek planting native vegetation to help restore areas of the bank that have lost the tree canopy due to overuse and erosion issues. The teens planted 636 native shrubs and trees.

The project consisted of:

- Revegetating the two sites with 636 native shrubs and trees
- Watering all plantings
- Building a semi-permanent fence to further restoration efforts
- Removed invasive bird vetch and white sweet clover

Project Dates:

July 8th - 11th

Government Hill - Sunset Park

Trail Maintenance



Funding:

MOA Funds \$ 35,000

Project Scope:

This project was a portion of a MOA Parks and Trails Plan for Government Hill. The YEP team improved an existing 1,200 ft connector social trail between Sunset and Alderwood Parks. They widened the trail and improved tread for more inclusive public use.

The project consisted of:

- Grubbing and vegetation control on existing foot path to widen trail
- Wheelbarrowing and hauling 80 tons of gravel
- Compacting gravel
- Vegetation control
- Stabilizing existing switchbacks with wood planks, rebar, and compacted gravel
- Constructing a 30 ft wooden boardwalk
- Added additional culverts for added drainage

Project Dates:

July 15th - 23rd

Hanshew Middle School

Trail Maintenance



Funding:

MOA Funds \$ 10,200

Project Scope:

YEP finished their season with a quick trail maintenance project. They improved an existing foot path made by a local school by added gravel and fixing the tread.

The project consisted of:

- Grubbing and vegetation control of existing trail to widen
- Wheelbarrowing and hauling 20 tons of donated gravel
- Compacted gravel
- Spreading gravel and compacting on small parking area near trail

Project Dates:

July 24th - 25th

YEP FUNDING

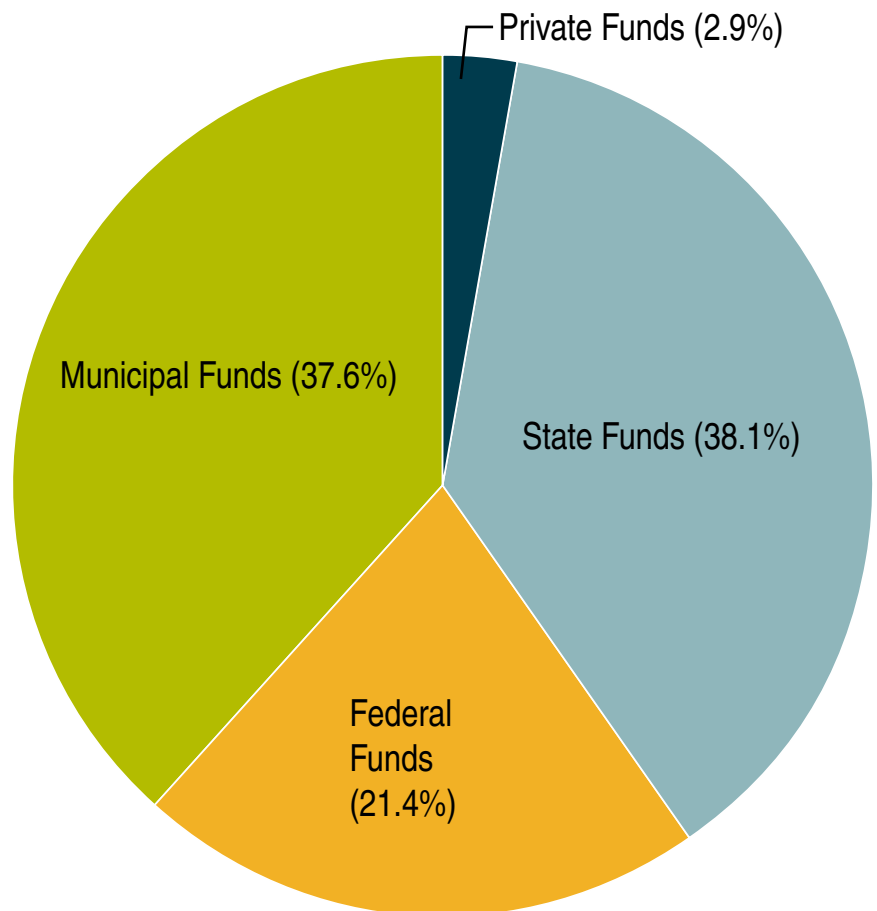
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS IS MADE POSSIBLE BY
A COMBINATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING.

2024 PUBLIC-PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES & BREAKDOWN

Private Funds = \$13,000
Federal Funds = \$94,890
Municipal Funds = \$167,000
State Funds = \$169,000

Total Funds = \$443,890

**Funding includes all project cost*



THANK YOU!

We are grateful to these partners and funders of the 2024 YEP program who have made a difference in the lives of 27 youth and thousands of community members through Anchorage parks and trails improvements.



YEP ACCREDITATION

THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS PROGRAM IS
HONORED TO BE ACCREDITED BY THE CORPS NETWORK.



Anchorage's Youth Employment in Parks was accredited in 2014 by The Corps Center of Excellence. This esteemed honor is granted to highly rated youth development programs that provide participants with opportunities for leadership skills, job training, community improvement, and the development of environmental stewardship.

The Corps Center of Excellence is a leader of the corps movement. They provide an example for corps programs nationwide to harness the power of young adults to solve some of the nation's greatest challenges— often while transforming their own lives in the process.

Youth Employment in Parks is proud to have been granted accreditation by this leading organization. This accreditation assures partnering agencies and donors of the quality of the YEP program; further, the YEP program joins a group of nationwide youth development and service programs that have been evaluated to the highest degree.



The Anchorage Park Foundation builds Healthy Parks & Healthy People by mobilizing public support and financial resources for Anchorage parks, trails, and recreation opportunities.

To learn more about supporting Anchorage's Youth Employment in Parks program, please contact the Anchorage Park Foundation:



907-274-1003



anchorageparkfoundation.org



3201 C Street, Suite 111
Anchorage, AK 99503

2025 YEP Employment Information

YEP will be accepting applications for the following positions on these approximate dates:

YEP Crew Leader, Jan 15 - Positions Filled (3 positions)

YEP Senior Crew Member, Jan 15 - March 31 (5 positions)

YEP Crew Member, Jan 15 - March 31 (21 positions)



A Special Thanks....

We would like to thank the following individuals, organizations and groups for helping to make YEP a reality this year!

- Alaska Airlines
- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska Department of Fish & Game
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Forestry Division
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Boating Safety
- Alaska Geographic
- Alaska Rock Gym
- Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
- Anchorage School District
- BLM Campbell Creek Science Center
- BLM Anchorage Field Office
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- The Home Depot
- Kaladi Brothers
- King Tech High School
- Lifetime Adventures Alaska
- Moose's Tooth
- NOLS
- Rasmuson Foundation
- Skinny Raven Sports
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Victor Mollozzi
- David Wight
- Eleanor Andrews

Many individuals get involved with YEP by helping conduct education and mentorship activities. Contact us if you want to contribute!

To Contact YEP:

907.343.4355

yep@anchorageparkfoundation.org



**YOUTH
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IN PARKS**