A NYC Cultural Institution Partnership

Acknowledgements

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Photos
Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Staten Island Zoo, Wave Hill, Wildlife Conservation Society
The SCI Network NYC is a consortium of eight science-based cultural institutions committed to providing high-quality STEM internships to New York City youth. In 2023, we collectively hosted 1,128 interns who gained experience in a variety of fields, including animal care, horticulture, science communication, teaching, and administration.

GOALS:
- Increase the number of youth from historically underrepresented communities in STEM internships.
- Develop systems to connect interns with employment opportunities across institutions.
- Develop a plan to leverage New York City’s Summer Youth Employment Program to benefit our interns and institutions.
- Demonstrate our collective impact through evaluation, storytelling, and advocacy.

Number of interns per institution

WAWA HILL 45
WCS - BRONX ZOO 175
NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN 134
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY 104
WCS - CENTRAL PARK ZOO 42
QUEENS BOTANICAL GARDEN 184
NEW YORK HALL OF SCIENCE 117
WCS - QUEENS ZOO 44
BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN 103
WCS - NEW YORK AQUARIUM 118
STATEN ISLAND ZOO 22
WCS - PROSPECT PARK ZOO 40
Internships are critical pathways to employment, but have historically been available only to those with financial resources and social capital. SCI Network NYC is working to ensure that youth from all backgrounds can participate in science internships. We partner with local organizations, council members, and schools to recruit youth and support them as they pursue the rich learning experiences at our institutions.

82% of SCI Network youth identify as people of color compared to 69% of New York City residents.

The Other Identity category includes American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and write-in options.
COLLECTIVELY, WE HOSTED 1,128 INTERNS

THIS REPRESENTS A 27% INCREASE SINCE 2022, THANKS IN PART TO SCI NETWORK SUPPORT.

SCI NETWORK NYC INTERNSHIPS ARE WIDE RANGING. WE OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN THE FOLLOWING DISCIPLINES:

- SCIENCE COMMUNICATION
- SCIENCE RESEARCH
- HORTICULTURE/GARDENING
- ANIMAL CARE
- CONSERVATION ADVOCACY
- SCIENCE EDUCATION

COLLECTIVELY, YOUTH EARN MORE THAN

$2.3 MILLION* IN STIPENDS AND WAGES

ON AVERAGE, YOUTH RECEIVE MORE THAN

200 HOURS OF TRAINING THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

*20% of these funds come from NYC Department of Youth & Community Development, CUNY, and Fordham University

YOUTH RECEIVE ACCESS TO THE NETWORK RESOURCES, INCLUDING:

- SKILL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS
- PEER NETWORKING EVENTS
- ASSISTANCE WITH ADVANCING

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Growing SYEP partnerships

We partnered with St. Nicks Alliance, a community-based organization that facilitates a sector-focused SYEP contract. SCI Network partners selected 55 youth for internships at the Bronx Zoo, New York Botanical Garden, Staten Island Zoo, and Wave Hill, and St. Nicks supported the SYEP applications and placements. The efficiencies gained through this partnership benefitted all and in 2024, we plan to place 77 SCI Network youth through St. Nicks, comprising three-quarters of their sector-focused SYEP contract.

Hosting Youth Events

- Staten Island Zoo Natural Sciences Careers & Experiences Panel (Apr 2023)
- New York Hall of Science STEM Career Expo (May 2023)
- Bronx Zoo Holiday Lights Networking Night (Nov 2023)
- Bronx Science Consortium Research Symposium (Jan 2024)
- WCS Job Internship & Volunteer Expo (Feb 2024)
As a supervisor, my role is multifaceted, adapting to the evolving landscape of our youths’ needs. I continuously seek opportunities to foster their exposure and literacy in STEM fields, however, my primary focus is nurturing their development and supporting their professional advancement. Throughout my tenure, I’ve experimented with various supervision strategies and have come to realize that there’s no one-size-fits-all solution. Yet, I’ve observed that maintaining a structured framework while allowing for adaptability has proven remarkably effective. Additionally, I endorse the principle of humanizing every individual I engage with. For me, this entails practicing empathy and finding ways to put myself in their shoes.

Participating in the training session provided a valuable opportunity for self-reflection, where I could examine our practices and confront common challenges. Knowing that others share similar challenges was reassuring, which fostered meaningful discussions and collaborative problem-solving. Moving forward, I envision involving the youth in addressing our challenges to contribute to impactful solutions. Additionally, I aim to forge connections with colleagues, creating a supportive network where we can mutually bolster each other’s efforts.
“Before my internship, I was not interested in science, but I applied because I liked being outside. During my internship, I saw first-hand how the environment affects our communities and became passionate about environmental justice. I learned that science is really about curiosity and wanting to learn more about the world around us. By the end of the internship, I knew that I was going to work in this field. Now I have graduated high school and am going to college as an urban studies and environmental science major!

-Wave Hill Intern

87% of youth reported that their internship helped them identify something they would like to do in a career. For some, their experience helped them see science in a new and transformative way.

Upon completion of their internship, 65% of youth envisioned their career involving science.

73% of youth would like to work or intern at a cultural institution in the future.

2023 Youth Spotlight

Julio Alonso • Queens, NY

- WCS New York Aquarium Youth Ocean Advocates, 2021
- AMNH Science Research Mentoring Program, 2021
- AMNH Museum Education Employment Program, 2023
- AMNH Teaching Assistant, 2023-present

“One of my most memorable experiences was when I was able to facilitate science conversations with AMNH visitors, but in Spanish! I understand the lack of science education opportunities in Spanish-speaking communities first-hand and it felt wonderful to answer scientific questions about a particular topic or exhibit. I will continue to pursue opportunities where I am able to communicate about science, especially to those who are underrepresented in STEM fields.”
“The thing that drew me to these positions was my love for the environment and working with children and animals. I have always wanted to work surrounded by nature, but I live in a city where it may seem hard to find those opportunities. I felt supported and welcomed in my internship communities and got better at working in a team, despite being an introvert. These experiences have helped me grow and will help me in any career path I choose.”

- Keely Jean-Baptiste, Brooklyn, NY

**2023 YOUTH SPOTLIGHT**

**Keely Jean-Baptiste**

- BBG Garden Apprentice, 2022 - 2023
- WCS Prospect Park Zoo Discovery Guide, 2023
- WCS Prospect Park Zoo Discovery Guide Leader, 2023

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- Keely Jean-Baptiste, Brooklyn, NY
2023 YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

Maliha Mehjabin  o  Bronx, NY

- NYBG Edible Academy Educator, 2022
- NYBG Explainer, 2022–present

“I applied to the program as a way to complete a graduation requirement, however, I ended up falling in love with the welcoming community and being able to give back. I love teaching kids about topics that they typically don’t get to cover at school, from sustainability to endangered plants. My experiences have taught me to be open-minded and allowed me to see things from the perspectives of people who have been immersed in different cultures, mindsets, and views.”

INTERNS DESCRIBED THE FUTURE RELEVANCE OF OTHER POSITION-SPECIFIC SKILLS LIKE PEDAGOGY, PLANT IDENTIFICATION, CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND ANIMAL Husbandry.

“I will use all of the knowledge I learned about the care of the specific animals I worked with, as well as the confidence I gained to work with these animals independently and safely.”

- Staten Island Zoo Intern

“Learning how to talk to kids had a huge impact on me. Helping kids realize and understand wildlife conservation really brought out my passion to educate kids and people all around the world.”

- WCS Queens Zoo Intern

OTHERS DESCRIBED HOW THEIR EXPERIENCE IN A WORKPLACE HELPED THEM BUILD PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND CAREER AWARENESS THAT WILL BE USEFUL IN THE FUTURE.

“I’ll use the confidence I built in my teamwork skills and professionalism. I know how to interact with my coworkers and what the type of workplace atmosphere I’m looking for.”

- QBG Intern

“My internship helped me to appreciate each person’s different skill set and what they can bring to a collaborative effort.”

- WCS Bronx Zoo Intern