

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS AREA PARKS STUDENT CAREER INTAKE PROGRAM (SCIP), YEAR 1



## A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

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### In cooperation with

Lowell National Historical Park  
Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area  
Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center

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# INTRODUCTION TO SCIP



The Massachusetts Parks Student Career Intake Program (SCIP) is an innovative pilot collaboration that relies on a **multi-year approach**. **Students from urban and minority communities** in Massachusetts gain practical work experience in national parks.

College age interns follow a **structured progression of career training and agency immersion** leading to **permanent employment with the NPS**, increasing the diversity of **the Service** as we move forward in the **21<sup>st</sup> century**.



SCIP is funded through the National Park Service Youth Intake Program (YIP) and program partners include Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, Lowell National Historical Park, and Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center.

# INTRODUCTION TO THIS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT



As a pilot effort and the first program of its kind in the NER, **SCIP is designed to be adjusted throughout its first four-year cycle to become a permanent NPS intake program.** The NPS Conservation Study Institute and Dr. Jennifer Jewiss from the University of Vermont were asked to provide technical assistance and facilitation to begin documenting the SCIP program and building a solid platform for on-going, developmental evaluation as SCIP continues to be implemented in subsequent years. Kelly Fellner (BOHA), Donna Richardson (LOWE), and Amy Glowacki (LOWE) served on the project team and worked with the Institute and UVM to carry out this project.

The **focus of the first phase of work**, carried out between November 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, was to:

- **engage key stakeholders in building a working model of SCIP** that outlines how the program intends to achieve its goals
- **gather the first 4 SCIP participants' perspectives** on their experiences in the program thus far to further inform and illustrate the program model

# BUILDING THE MODEL



In partnership with Institute staff, Dr. Jewiss facilitated **two workshops** at LOWE in December of 2009 and January of 2010.

The **first workshop** convened representatives from participating Massachusetts area parks, partner organizations, and the NPS Northeast Regional Office. In this intensive full-day workshop, SCIP program stakeholders and Institute staff outlined key components of SCIP as the program is currently envisioned. The project team then developed an initial draft of the model based on the material generated during the workshop.

The **second workshop** brought together the first SCIP cohort to gather their feedback on the draft model and their experiences in the program to date. The model was honed based on this feedback and informed by related research the Institute has been conducting on youth engagement efforts in national parks and other special places.

# HOW THE MODEL WORKS



**The model outlines how the SCIP program is envisioned to work** and is organized in the following categories:

**Resources** needed to carry out the program

– such as staff, partners, participants, funding, and equipment

**Activities** that are intended to achieve program goals

– such as recruiting participants, training staff, and providing learning opportunities for participants

**Outcomes** that are expected to result from program activities over time (short-term and long-term)

– such as increased knowledge and skills on the part of participants and others involved in the program, and subsequent changes in people, practices, and organizations

# HOW TO READ AND USE THE MODEL



**The model** is intended to be **read from left to right** and can be **understood as a long “if-then” sentence**: “*If* the program has these resources and uses them to effectively carry out these activities, *then* it is expected that these outcomes will be achieved.”

The model will evolve as more is learned from the SCIP experience. As a result, the model presented here is labeled “**version 1.0**”, and serves as **a living, working model that will change over time**. As with most models, **a program model is a simplified representation of a more complex reality**. For clarity, the model is organized in a linear fashion – although programs rarely operate in a linear manner. For instance:

- additional resources may be accessed and used to support the program as it grows
- activities may be repeated in order to accomplish the intended outcomes
- SCIP is expected to evolve over time as successive cohorts cycle through and the participating parks and neighboring communities continue to change

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



## OUTCOMES\*

- Skilled, committed program manager and program assistant
- Mentors (NPS staff at host sites)
- Training for host parks (cultural competency, youth development)
- “Culturally competent” and committed staff at participating parks
- Network of Mass. parks and their partners
- Feeder programs to generate top-tier candidates
- Cohorts of 4 per year, approximately 16 over 4-year program cycle
- Administrative and HR support (e.g., clarify SCEP process, )
- Field equipment
- Access to transportation
- Regional office guidance and support
- Advisory group
- Sustained funding
- Program communications and marketing

- Recruit to ensure:
  - diverse candidates
  - top-tier applicants
  - clear expectations
- Program management:
  - develop program schedule and manage logistics to provide a broad NPS overview including mission comprehension, career exploration
- Develop annual work plan among program manager, host supervisor(s), participants
- Ensure training for host parks and participants (team-building, cultural competency, youth development)
- Participants:
  - introduction to *National Park System*
  - gain exposure to various career options and how they support the NPS mission
  - engage in activities that build leadership skills and professional identity
  - carry out signature project
- Activate and utilize the advisory group
- Create a clear process through which participants move from SCIP to full-time personnel
- Undertake formative evaluation to support continued program development and adaptive program management

### PRIMARY INTENDED OUTCOME

- SCIP grads hired into appropriate permanent NPS jobs

### ADDITIONAL SCIP PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

- enhanced understanding of NPS
- heightened sense of stewardship
- acquisition of additional leadership skills
- development of peer support network and associated inter-cohort mentoring
- established identity as future NPS leaders
- alumni network created
- further developed and refined career aspirations
- development of professional skills that aligns with career aspirations

### ADDITIONAL NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OUTCOMES

- NPS staff becomes more reflective of the surrounding community
- greater understanding of youth culture
- enhanced cultural competency and communication
- increased community engagement and park-community relationship building
- greater sense of responsibility and opportunity to support more diversity in the next generation of the NPS workforce
- secured/dedicated funding
- new positions and career tracks identified that enhance 21<sup>st</sup> century relevancy
- development of management structures to support program success

\*Note: December 2009 workshop participants identified a need to further define SCIP program outcomes.

# INTERVIEWS WITH THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FOUR SCIP PARTICIPANTS



Conversational interviews were conducted with the initial four SCIP participants, reflecting on their experiences during the program's first year and included open-ended questions such as:

1. How did you **learn about SCIP**? What led you to be interested in the program?
2. If you were talking to someone who was considering applying, how might you **describe** the SCIP program?
3. What have been the **most valuable** aspects of your experience in the SCIP program thus far?
4. To what degree has your **understanding of the National Park Service** increased as a result of your participation in the SCIP program?
5. To what extent do you feel that you've gained **leadership skills** as a result of your participation in the program?



# INTERVIEWS WITH THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FOUR SCIP PARTICIPANTS



This initial set of interviews focused on certain aspects of the program – **offering a participants-eye-view of first-year activities and some early insights about their learning and development.**



In the slides that follow, quotes from the interviews are used to illustrate key points in the model, which are highlighted in bold, black text.

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



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*The role that [the program manager] played was basically like a second mom, because she had to deal with everything. She was the one that made up our schedule for the whole SCIP program. Her position takes a lot of a person – and she was so good to us.*

*After the [first summer of the] program was over, [the program manager] still kept in contact with me, asked me how I was doing, and if there is anything she could do to help. She understood and was there to talk. She was very helpful.*

*[The program coordinator] was a good leader. We so want her around. She was just a good youth program coordinator. She’s like one of us – she has so much energy. Even if we were bummed out with all the travel, she worked us up to an excitement about the day. It’s her personality. She holds us together, and even if we want to go home and sleep, she makes it sound so interesting that we want to go and see it. She’ll email us at the beginning of the week, so we know ahead of time what we’re going to do. And if there’s no response, she’ll try to text us or call us. It was really good communication from her.*

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



## OUTCOMES

*In June, all the participants met for an orientation where we got a big binder filled with information: a schedule of what we'd be doing each week, our transportation, and what parks we would be seeing. That was the first time that all four of us were really together. We were getting to know the people we're going to be spending our summers with. Then we went to our host parks and did a tour, so we got a feel for each participant's host park ... and what each person would be doing when they're at their host park for those two days.*

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*We went to the kick-off event for all the youth programs at Thompson Island in the Boston Harbor Islands. We met people from all the different programs and did team building, which I really liked because we didn't know each other at all. We did rock climbing and had the people in our program helping each other. When I was done rock climbing, I went over and hugged every one of them. It was so scary. So I think it was good that we start up with the team building exercise. After the team building, we got a little closer – and after the camping.*

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



## OUTCOMES

*It's one of the best experiences that I've gotten as far as exposure to different resources, because I got the opportunity to go to different parks that I probably would never have gone to. It was an overwhelming, great experience – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We traveled three days a week – so that's 30 days. We went to about 15 different parks.*

*I'm from Boston. I had never been to Vermont in my life. That was something. I really like traveling, apparently, which I didn't know until the end of the summer. Every time that we left a place, the information was just overwhelming. We would talk about the place for the whole ride back.*

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*I'd never been to any national park except for Lowell.*

*On Cape Cod we looked at the piping plover. We actually went past the blocked off area. We looked at the piping plover's eggs to see how it's camouflaged and why it was so difficult for the park – they had a problem with off-road vehicles. The piping plover blends into their surroundings, so you can kill them and not know it. I think they lay like four eggs a year. We had a discussion about the Organic Act for the enjoyment of future generations. For some people, the enjoyment is to ride their off-road vehicle on the beach. But for other people, it's looking at the piping plovers. We discussed how it's hard to balance that out. That left a lasting impression with me.*

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



## OUTCOMES

*For me, the benefit was to see how everything works – not just from a visitor’s perspective, but we were treated as if we were co-workers. That speaks volumes. I enjoyed that so much. I had already gotten exposure because of the Island Ambassador Program, but this was a whole different level of exposure, talking to people who had been at the National Park Service for like 30-plus years.*

*We were always speaking to people who worked in the National Park Service, so we looked for: how long have they been in the park, how did they get into the Park Service, and had they been to any other locations? Those were questions that really interested us.*

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*Everywhere we went, we had a personal conversation with the superintendent. We got to ask questions about what it would take to run that park, so we learned about different career opportunities.*

*When you go to a National Park, they’re telling you a story about the National Park, but you don’t hear them tell their story, how they got to be in the National Park. We get to talk to people who actually work at parks – every person we talked to, they love what they do and they’ve stayed there like 12 years and over. I think Bob McIntosh was with the National Park Service for 40-something years. It’s interesting to see the passion of what these people do, how they love the National Park, and why they stayed in the National Park Service.*

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



RESOURCES



ACTIVITIES



OUTCOMES

*They told me that I'd get to wear a uniform and work for the government, so that got me real excited.*

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*For the summit, all the youth programs from the surrounding area came together. The youth summit is more like a graduation – seeing what the different groups accomplished. ... We actually had to facilitate it. We were like the masters of ceremony, so we had to figure out what to say and what to do. Even though we were traveling and learning, having a big thing like the youth summit that we had to work on towards the end was a good thing. I was in charge of doing the icebreaker. And then we [the 4 SCIP participants] gave a speech of how the day's events should go. It was pretty intimidating at first, because at the kickoff we were just one of the youth programs, and now we were the leaders – but we enjoyed it. ... I like being in a leadership type of position – that's what I learned. I want to help, but I like helping in the background, not really do it myself.*

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



RESOURCES



ACTIVITIES



OUTCOMES\*

*I thought that I knew a lot [about the National Park Service], but in reality I knew like 2 percent. There are 391 sites, and I had only been to one. So after the SCIP program, I felt that I was at about 65 percent – and that’s only my first year. So who knows what I’m going to learn this summer, or the summer after next, or the next summer after that. It’s an overwhelming amount of education.*

*Before doing the SCIP program, I just knew interpretation. I didn’t know about the environmental side. I didn’t know about the education side. I didn’t know that there were so many other aspects of a park. SCIP broadens your horizon if you are looking to be part of the Park Service. ... It gave you hands-on experience – like with Mr. Price, for example. We were on Cape Cod, and he showed us what he does during the day, how he goes about it, and what actions need to take place to make things successful. So you see behind the scenes.*

## PRIMARY INTENDED OUTCOME

- SCIP grads hired into appropriate permanent NPS jobs

## ADDITIONAL SCIP PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

- enhanced understanding of NPS
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- acquisition of additional leadership skills
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- established identity as future NPS leaders
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## ADDITIONAL NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OUTCOMES

- NPS staff becomes more reflective of the surrounding community
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- new positions and career tracks identified that enhance 21<sup>st</sup> century relevancy
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**\*Note: December 2009 workshop participants identified a need to further define SCIP program outcomes.**

# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



RESOURCES



ACTIVITIES



OUTCOMES\*

*For the first time, I would actually lead a group by myself without help. More responsibility was given to me. I liked that. I felt like I had like more power.*

*I liked working with the Spindle City program. I think I gained some leadership experience about how to manage the kids, mostly by watching how the other leaders interacted with the kids and what they do. Sometimes the kids get tired; they don't want to work any more. So we'd say, "It's only five more minutes, and then we can take a two-minute break."*

*I think that my leadership skills definitely increased. I learned tactics to deal with certain things, and I just started thinking in a certain way. I learned how to work with people – to compromise. I also learned how to listen more, to know when you've got to take charge, to know just when to sit back and let other people do what they've got to do.*

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RESOURCES



ACTIVITIES



OUTCOMES\*

*[Before SCIP], I'd been with the park for three summers. To me, it was always a fun summer job. I never actually thought that I'd work here – and now I really do want to have a career with the National Park Service. I never thought that far before. It was always a summer interpretation job, and my major in college was business administration. So I didn't see how it actually clicked until trying to get into the National Park Service through the SCIP program as a budget technician. ... Everyone [we talked to] is so excited about the National Park Service. They have so much passion for it, and I want to take that with me. It's interesting – you can change your career, but still stay in the National Park Service. A lot of people jump from park to park. That's appealing. I'm not just stuck in one place. I can jump around. I really want to stay with the National Park Service. It's not just a summer job any more. I want it to be my career.*

*I was an Island Ambassador for two years, and I'd read up on my history about the Boston Harbor Islands. So when we went to the Boston Harbor Islands on the SCIP program, I wasn't just treated as an Island Ambassador. I was treated as more of a leader. The ranger there said, "Oh, Irving can tell you better." It was like that with all of us, because we all came from our particular parks.*

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# SCIP PROGRAM MODEL, VERSION 1.0



## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



## OUTCOMES\*

*The benefit is knowing more of what I'm interested in – and what I'm not interested in. Every week was based on a different career path, so every week I would be like, "Oh, I'm interested in this." By the end of the summer, I really got a sense of direction and knew where I wanted to gear myself to. ... I had always been more into natural resources. But near the end of the summer, I also began to like interpretation. I found out that I was good at it, and by the end of the summer, I actually really started liking interpretation. ... The week that we did interpretation, we went to Lowell. The way they conveyed that story to us at their park gave me a mental picture of what they're talking about. I want to create that picture in somebody else's mind.*

*We traveled three days a week and stayed in a host site for two days. For those two days, I worked a lot with the Spindle City youth program. I had fun doing that. When I do get a job with the National Park Service, I want to do something with youth programs – because I started in a youth program, and I've worked my way up, so I'd be a perfect model for them.*

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## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



## OUTCOMES\*

*At first I was scared to do Ranger on Board, because it's talking over an intercom to large groups of people that I didn't know. So as far as public speaking, it helped a lot.*

*I've matured more. ... I was on a boat. I was answering questions.*

*I definitely learned how to use a computer much more, as far as office work. That really helped – knowing how to sort things, make letters, and construct flyers in the correct way.*

*I definitely learned more professional skills. I have never really talked to people that were so high rank before, so I got a feel for knowing how to talk to people that were up there. We interacted with hundreds of people in one summer – so by like the 10<sup>th</sup> person, I kind of had it down pat.*

*I like the amount of responsibility I was given because it was preparing me for what I will see in later years when I become a young adult from a young teenager. It's prepared me for future times, because I was working a 40-hour shift and that was my first time ever doing that. It was a big shift. I wasn't used to the workload. The exposure from nine to five is definitely good.*

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## RESOURCES



## ACTIVITIES



## OUTCOMES\*

*The SCIP program offers you tools to be successful in a career with the Park Service. I want to sharpen my skills and be a sponge and absorb everything that the Park Service has to offer. SCIP gives you a tutoring of things to expect and how to go about certain issues.*

*I gained more confidence. I'm very shy, but it gave me more confidence to open up a little bit. When we went to parks, we had to engage and ask questions. I'm looking at interpretation and what I need to be successful in interpretation. This is my personal goal: by the time I'm 35, I'm hoping to be the head of interpretation in a park – so I'm going to need those attributes to be successful.*

*A facility manager from Boston showed me what he does on his spreadsheets. I was pretty amazed, because budget stuff is my area of interest. I got a lot from him with his Excel style. This year, the [supervisor at my host park] wants me to track the budget in a different way, so it'll be nice if I can just sit down with that facility manager and see what he does with his spreadsheet. By tracking it a different way and learning new techniques, it makes it easier to see what's going on and to just plug in numbers and have it calculate everything for me.*

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# CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE USE OF EARLY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SCIP EXPERIENCE



## Small number of participants

- Starting with a small number of participants provides a strategic way to learn from early pilot efforts before expanding the program. At the same time, is important to keep in mind that the **lessons learned so far are based on the experiences of just 4 participants** and thus may not be representative of the broader pool of potential YIP participants.

## Ethical considerations

- The visibility of the small number of young, diverse participants and the employment-based objective of the program require sensitivity on the part of NPS staff and partners. It is important to recognize that these **early participants are under a “big spotlight”** as we collectively learn how to diversify the NPS workforce. The participants’ feedback on the program is essential – and at the same time, they are being asked to comment on parts of the NPS system in which they hope to gain permanent employment.

## Early developmental phase of the program

- SCIP is designed as a multi-year experience. This report presents lessons learned from the 1<sup>st</sup> year of that experience. Please stay tuned as the program progresses and “the rest of the story unfolds.” These **early insights will evolve as more is learned about the SCIP experience in coming years.**



# IMPLICATIONS FOR SHARING LESSONS LEARNED



As a pilot program, **SCIP is intended to generate learning that will inform further program development** for the participating MA area parks and share lessons learned with others throughout NPS.

The model and illustrating quotes are designed to be accessible to and easily shared with wider audiences. The current working model, version 1.0, documents and distills SCIP **stakeholders' collective vision** of how the program is intended to work. The accompanying quotes illustrate **participants' perspectives** based on their first year in the program.

The current model can serve as a **program development and design tool to be refined over time**. In addition, the model provides an important **foundation for future evaluation efforts** as the program continues to be implemented and further evidence is available to assess progress toward the stated outcomes.



# NEXT STEPS



The next phase of this technical assistance project will **gather additional input from program participants (cohorts 1 and 2)**.

The perspectives of these early participants and other program stakeholders will be used to **further hone and illustrate the model**.

In addition, the project team will **identify administrative data that may be tracked to monitor progress** according to the draft model and reporting requirements.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION



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We encourage you to share the information in this report and request that the following citation be referenced:  
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