



# ADIRONDACK FOUNDATION

What makes a strong community? How does philanthropy factor into it? At Adirondack Foundation, we ask ourselves these questions every day. There is no single answer, and the components of strong and healthy communities are rarely linear. That's why, as a community foundation, we take a "whole community" approach to amplify all that is good about the Adirondacks.

This framework reflects our approach to investing in promising opportunities, addressing critical challenges, and uniting people, institutions and resources to produce widely shared lasting results. We do this in partnership with generous donors and capable nonprofits—by making grants and devoting social, political, and reputational capital to make our region even stronger.



## Our Vision for Each Key Interest Area

**BASIC NEEDS** | Residents of all ages have equitable access to affordable and nutritious food, stable housing, and opportunities for healthy living.

**EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS** | All children benefit from high-quality early learning and development. All students have meaningful opportunities to pursue post-secondary education, career training, and pathways to gainful employment and fulfilling lives.

**COMMUNITY + ECONOMY** | Thriving communities provide equitable and just economic opportunity, attract residents and businesses, and inspire civic engagement.

**ARTS + CULTURE** | Vibrant arts and cultural opportunities underpin community life by promoting social cohesion, expanding perspectives, and helping to drive the economy.

**ENVIRONMENT** | A healthy environment helps sustain healthy communities by bolstering climate change resilience, inspiring stewardship, and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation.

# Making a Positive Impact | \$54 million granted since 1997

Adirondack Foundation builds enduring charitable resources to meet the needs of our communities today, as well as the unknown needs of tomorrow. The following snapshot, shown through the lens of our strong community framework, helps to illustrate areas of positive impact. Together with donors and community partners, we are forever committed to the Adirondacks.



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## BASIC NEEDS | \$4.4 million in grants (2015-2020)

Giving children the best possible start in life

Food assistance and nutrition programs

Housing and transportation assistance

Emergency services and disaster relief

Counseling and social support services

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## EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS | \$6.2 million in grants (2015-2020)

Early childhood education

Career-readiness, post-secondary pathways, trade certifications

Scholarships for medical school, law school, college

Literacy programs for people of all ages

Resources to help teachers excel

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## COMMUNITY + ECONOMIC VITALITY | \$4.8 million in grants (2015-2020)

Workforce development

Community enhancements – from flower boxes to skateboard parks and much more

Mobilizing resources for community benefit

Local news and information

Nonprofit capacity building

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## ARTS + CULTURE | \$2.9 million in grants (2015-2020)

Art centers and community programs

Equitable access to enriching experiences for students

Live performances and festivals

Library programs and outreach

Historic interpretation and preservation

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## ENVIRONMENT | \$2.1 million in grants (2015-2020)

Land protection and stewardship

Outdoor recreation opportunities and access

Ecological research and monitoring

Cross-sector alliance-building

Climate change resilience

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**GIVE. COLLABORATE. ACCELERATE.**



VISION | Adirondack residents of all ages have equitable access to affordable and nutritious food, stable housing, and physically and mentally healthful lifestyles.

## BASIC NEEDS

Meeting basic needs in our region can be hampered by things like travel distances and availability of services. Many communities have limited access to healthy food and people must drive 30 minutes or more to do their grocery shopping. On average, more than 40% of students across the region qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. In some communities, this number exceeds 50%.

A shortage of affordable housing deters young families and professionals from moving here. In Clinton and Franklin counties, 50% of families live in rent-burdened households, which means more than 30% of their gross income is spent on housing.

Behavioral, mental health, and home-support services are strained owing in large part to a critical shortage of therapists and qualified aides. Approximately 1,000 hours of home health services go unfilled every week. What's more, there are a growing number of families who make too much to qualify for assistance programs but not enough to make ends meet.

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*While the needs and barriers across the Adirondack region are real, there are inspired and deeply committed individuals and organizations working to address **basic needs**. Our strategy is to listen to and learn from those on the front lines; understand what works and what doesn't; and maximize philanthropic investment.*

### THREE PRIORITIES FOR IMPACT

## 1 | Mobilize resources to meet pressing needs

- Invest in non-traditional rural hubs that combine social services in one place
- Broaden access to healthy, fresh food including ties to local producers
- Support and foster collaboration among food assistance programs

## 2 | Improve access to safe, reliable shelter

- Explore new models to expand affordable housing
- Support transportation assistance for access to employment and healthcare
- Help our neighbors make it through temporary spells of financial instability

## 3 | Support age-friendly communities

- Ensure access to high quality support networks including home visiting and child care
- Increase the availability of education and training programs for home health and service aides
- Improve and promote access to healthy activities and social engagement

**GIVE. COLLABORATE. ACCELERATE.**

**The best way to love the Adirondacks is to give back.**

To explore ways to make a difference contact Janine Scherline at [janine@adkfoundation.org](mailto:janine@adkfoundation.org) or 518.523.9904.



**VISION** | Educational pathways in the Adirondacks support services that provide children with the best possible start in life and youth with post-secondary education and career training opportunities.

## EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

It is well-documented that a family's income can impact children's physical, health, cognitive abilities, school achievements and behavioral and emotional outcomes. The percentage of children in our region under six who live in deep poverty is 15%, which is higher than New York State as a whole. The differences in development can be profound for children born into different economic classes. The further behind kids start off, the harder it is for them to catch up as they get older. That's why early intervention and equitable access to opportunities that can lead to economic mobility are so important.

At 23%, an even higher percentage of kids from birth to 17 years old live at or below poverty in our region. Still, graduation rates in our schools tend to be high, with between 80 and 90% of students obtaining a high school diploma. But a much smaller percentage of these students go on to college, especially when compared to their counterparts from more affluent areas.

Beyond high school, many students may not be aware of opportunities available to them or may lack financial resources or social support networks to help them attain a certificate, apprenticeship, or two- or four-year degree.

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*Education is more than a pathway to a job and financial self-sufficiency; it is foundational to a stronger, more equitable community. Education is also deeply intertwined with other issues—particularly for our low-income neighbors. Early intervention, summer literacy, and coordinated home, in-school, and after-school support programs are among the areas where philanthropy can play a critical role in helping children and youth at every stage of their educational development.*

### THREE PRIORITIES FOR IMPACT

## 1 | Support early childhood development

- Grow early intervention and home visiting services for our youngest learners
- Support a full complement of services for cognitive, social and emotional development
- Promote parent and family involvement in their children's education

## 2 | Invest in college- and career-readiness

- Support pathways to post-secondary education and technical schools
- Strengthen scholarship support for local students
- Improve access to career connections and mentors

## 3 | Foster a systems approach for cradle-to-career education

- Remove barriers to education and employment for low-income students and families
- Invest in long-term mentoring beyond high school and college to help students succeed
- Empower community innovators to pursue new ideas through non-traditional partnerships

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**VISION** | An Adirondack region that provides equitable and just economic opportunity, attracts residents and businesses, and inspires civic engagement.

## COMMUNITY + ECONOMIC VITALITY

Our region is as defined by its close-knit rural communities as it is by its rugged mountains, freshwater lakes, and meandering rivers. Because these attributes shape our way of life, there is much more to community vitality than employment numbers and economic output.

On any given day, there are more job openings than there are workers to fill them. But a shortage of child care providers makes it difficult for parents to commit to fulltime employment or advance their careers. Plus, with costs as high as \$10,600 annually and median household income between \$49,000 and \$52,000, many parents cannot afford child care.

According to the Opportunity Index, 29% of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 in Franklin County alone are not in school and not working.

For the many challenges we face, there are deeply inspiring examples of people working together to enhance livelihoods and foster a strong sense of community of our towns.

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*While Government funding must play a crucial role in economic development, it cannot take care of everything needed to help a community thrive. The real power in making positive change comes from public/private partnerships and philanthropic investments that empower nonprofits, agencies, innovators, and doers to work together to improve our communities.*

### THREE PRIORITIES FOR IMPACT

## 1 | Support working families

- Expand options for child care and early childhood education
- Leverage public and private investment to help residents find meaningful work
- Support hands-on career exploration opportunities

## 2 | Promote workforce development

- Identify the skill sets and occupations needed to build the future Adirondack workforce
- Bridge the gap between high youth unemployment and regional workforce needs
- Support specific workforce initiatives to fill employment needs in tourism, professional services like home health aides, manufacturing, and other critical sectors

## 3 | Inspire community engagement

- Convene community stakeholders and civic leaders to address common needs
- Promote a positive narrative to inspire local community pride, increase volunteerism, bolster engagement and increase social capital
- Invest in programs with strong community buy-in that significantly enhance quality of life and fuel the economy

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**VISION** | Vibrant arts and cultural opportunities underpin community life by promoting social cohesion, expanding perspectives, and helping to drive the economy.

## ARTS + CULTURE

Arts, culture and creativity are integral to the health and vibrancy of the Adirondack region. They provide ways to communicate across barriers of language, class, and culture to enrich people’s lives and create shared experiences.

The grandeur of the Adirondack landscape helps to attract and inspire creative people who enliven our communities through music, theater, visual arts, collaboration, and engagement.

While it’s clear that investing in arts yields a tremendous return through personal growth and economic impact, the remoteness and socio-economic disparities of our region result in inconsistent access. Travelling performances, school programs, and innovative partnerships are among the powerful ways to overcome these challenges.

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*The breadth of local arts programming in our sparsely populated region is an unexpected surprise to many residents and visitors alike. It grounds people here and can help attract newcomers. Adirondack Foundation donors support grassroots and established arts and culture efforts in our communities and encourage collaboration across the region.*

### THREE IMPACT AREAS

## 1 | Support local arts centers

- Foster a vibrant arts culture
- Provide opportunities for participation for people of all ages
- Support cultural exchange and awareness

## 2 | Provide equitable access to arts and cultural events

- Support arts programming in schools
- Promote public art initiatives (such as the North Creek mosaic project pictured on the front, which is supported in part through the Community Fund for the Gore Mountain Region at Adirondack Foundation)
- Help people of all economic levels access museums, performances, and shows

## 3 | Nurture inner growth, health, and healing

- Provide programming for vulnerable populations like children and veterans
- Inspire tomorrow's playwrights, poets, musicians, writers...
- Help young people develop compassion and empathy

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**VISION | A healthy environment helps sustain healthy communities by bolstering climate change resilience, inspiring stewardship, and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation.**

## ENVIRONMENT

The Adirondack region is distinguished by vast stretches of protected lands and waters interspersed with tight-knit rural communities. It is a place where forests have been recovering from overharvesting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and moose, mink and other animals have returned after habitat loss pushed them out.

Indeed, the natural landscape factors into everyday life, underpins the economy, provides clean air and water, and offers an array of outdoor recreation opportunities.

And yet, our natural resources and the sustainability of our communities are threatened by climate change, invasive species, limited capacity for stewardship, and other factors.

Philanthropic support plays a critical role helping to ensure that our most treasured asset can thrive today and for future generations.

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*Philanthropy is helping to conserve important lands and waters, strengthen resilience to climate change, inspire stewardship, enhance recreational opportunities, and so much more.*

### THREE IMPACT AREAS

#### **1 | Protect important lands and waters**

- Safeguard forests, farmland, and other critical lands
- Support scientific research to identify threats and inform strategies
- Invest in strategic advocacy to hold government agencies to account, secure funding, and influence policy

#### **2 | Promote and increase stewardship**

- Prevent invasive species from harming native plants and animals and threatening the local economy
- Improve trails, recreational access, and stewardship efforts
- Foster cross-sector cooperation and innovation

#### **3 | Bolster climate resilience and adaptation**

- Help communities pursue win-win strategies for people and nature
- Support renewable energy
- Safeguard pathways for animals to adapt and move in response to a changing climate

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