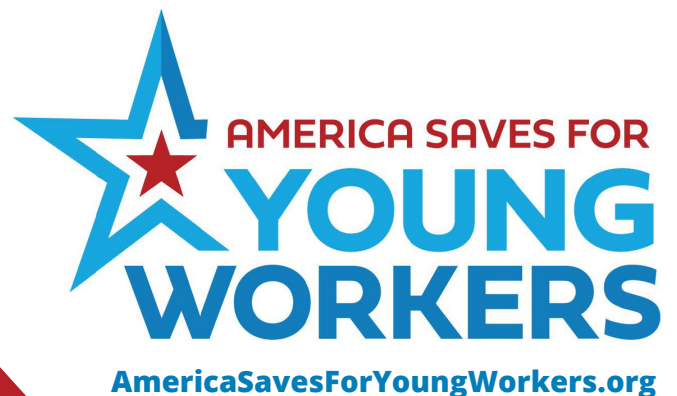


# America Saves for Young Workers

2021 Impact Report



# Executive Summary

2021 saw Americans working toward a hopeful rebound, though still tracking a K-shaped recovery. While continuing to adapt and grow in the face of an ongoing global health crisis, businesses slowly reopened and schools leaned into flexibility with hybrid models. During the past year we learned that Americans embraced alternative approaches to work and brought the lessons we learned in 2020 with us as we continued to grow.

As such, more of our partner employers were able to launch their youth employment programs in 2021 with normal, or in some cases increased, numbers of youth employees. Though some programs retained reduced hours or smaller numbers of youth hires, these programs were not only able to pay their young workers, but none reported lasting budget cuts that carried over from a challenging previous year. Our youth employer partners persisted during what was undeniably a challenging year to continue to provide invaluable first-time employment experiences to their youth. In addition, they continued to implement the America Saves for Young Workers program to ensure that their youth made the most of their first earning experience by providing the essential foundational building blocks to financial stability now, and into the future.

The America Saves for Young Workers initiative continues to engage youth around the idea that learning to save should be a significant part of youth employment. Our youth employers prove each year to be effective partners as we work to make youth saving the norm. With each year that passes, our youth employers help illustrate that young workers not only have the drive and tenacity to succeed at saving, but they also have the willingness to build a foundation for a lifetime of financial health.

**14 youth employment  
programs employed 94,238  
young workers in 2021**

# COVID-19 Impact

Many organizations were still navigating the continued impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, while working to move forward to support their employees and their communities. Fourteen of our youth employers were able to hire young workers in 2021 and implement the America Saves for Young Workers program. These programs were not only able to pay their young workers, but none reported lasting budget cuts that carried over from a challenging previous year.

Impressively, youth employers adapted their approach in the face of the continuing implications of a global health crisis. One third of programs reported reducing either the number of young workers hired, or the available hours offered and the length of program, with some making both of those changes. All of our partner programs incorporated at least some virtual aspects into their programs, with all but one program expecting to use a hybrid model beyond Summer 2021.

It's important to note that our youth employers weren't the only ones who adapted, as young workers also showed a great deal of flexibility and perseverance this year. One youth employer indicated that, because of the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, some young workers chose to help out their families and use their earned wages for household expenses in lieu of saving for their own saving goals.

**All partner programs  
implemented virtual  
aspects into their programs**

# 2021 Impact Numbers

America Saves for Young Workers aims to teach youth how to most effectively save at their first, or early, earning experience. To support that behavior, America Saves encourages direct deposit utilization and facilitates high quality account ownership. First-time earners are in the perfect space to begin a lifelong habit of saving.

- 14 youth employment programs implemented the America Saves for Young Workers program.
- These programs employed 94,238 youth.

Thanks to America Saves for Young Workers' partner youth employers, 8,590 young workers took the America Saves Pledge, building their saving plan and making a commitment to their financial wellness. Those young workers planned to save a total of \$18,101,198, with the average young worker pledging to save \$2,107 over five and a half months. This is a significant increase in amount planned to save, as the average total pledge in 2020 was \$1,670 to be saved over five months. We hypothesize this increased saving reflects multiple variables: an increase in hours or return to normal pay; an adjustment from the shock of Summer 2020; and a broader bounce back in unemployment (reflecting parental employment status, perhaps) over the previous year. We know that taking the pledge was an invaluable step for these youth, as they've learned the most effective way to save and have initiated their own saving habit.

There was modest recovery in the use of direct deposit in 2021 (52%) over 2020 (47%). We believe this is an ongoing effect of reduced hours and program lengths do to COVID-19.

**8,590 young workers pledged  
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# Top Saving Goals

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## Top 3 Young Workers Saving Goals

### 2021

Education (18%)

Emergency fund (17%)

Clothing and Shoes (14%)

### 2020

Education (20%)

Emergency fund (17%)

Clothing and Shoes (15%)

Savings goals are a great indicator where our young workers priorities lie. This year's saving goals track the top three from 2020, but overall makeup a smaller portion of all saving goals (49% in 2021 as compared to 57% in 2020). For the second year in a row, building an emergency fund was the second most popular goal with our youth, where it cracked the top 2 goals for the first time in 2020. We believe this to be a result of the financial difficulty that faced much of the world during the past few years, leading our young people to embrace financial preparedness. But, in true young worker fashion, we see that clothing and shoes remains a top three goal for young workers. These goals highlight that our young workers priorities are varied and balanced, as they save for their education, prepare for the unexpected, and ensure that they have the funds necessary to prioritize their "wants" as well.

## In measuring our post-employment impact with young workers, we found:

79% percent of respondents reported saving money from their 2021 summer employment.

The majority of respondents (58%) opened a new account. Only 8% of respondents reported owning an account going into their summer employment.

Over 75% of respondents reported meeting their saving goal.

Over 80% of respondents say their experience with ASYW will make them more likely to think about saving at their next job.

# Youth Created Content

2021 was an impressive inaugural year for the America Saves National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC). The NYAC is comprised of 24 youth from across the country, meticulously chosen out of a pool of hundreds of excellent potential candidates. The Council worked to inform and influence the resources of the America Saves for Young Workers Program, ensuring that young workers everywhere are receiving the most meaningful motivation to build a lifelong habit of saving crafted by peer voices.

The Council also spent the year immersed in the lessons of financial capability so that they could create and disseminate informational content out into their own communities. They accomplished this in a variety of ways, including creating digital content that was shared via social media. The Council served as a vital lifeline to the youth and young adults of America, to help us better serve our young workers during this informative and significant time in their lives. Among the amazing content created by the Council this year was a variety of infographics highlighting core components of saving, including the importance of setting up direct deposit, how to open a bank account, creative ways to save, and much more. The graphics were fresh and youthful in their design, and were widely shared by our youth to positively impact their peer groups as the Council took on the valuable role as savings advocate.

The Council also worked hard to plan the successful Paying for Education Town Hall, an informative, youth-focused addition to the America Saves #ThinkLikeASaver Town Hall series. This Town Hall invited industry experts to the table to help provide college-bound students and their families with information and resources to help inform the process. This event was viewed by almost 8,000 people, and the recordings have been shared via social media and beyond.

Additionally, the Council worked to create and disseminate a survey that was shared with youth across the country to help inform how we can better teach young people to save. This survey provides valuable insights and new messaging strategies to include even more youth in financial capability efforts.

# Youth Saving Success

We recognize and appreciate the hard work and dedication that goes into running the summer youth employment programs with which we partner. After another year of inspirational youth support and engagement, we are happy to share some successes from our youth employers.

Virginia Beach Summer Youth Employment Program shared that one of their young workers set a savings goal that would enable them to attend college. Because this youth set a goal and committed to reaching it, she was able to save the money she needed to make her educational goal a reality. We wish her the best of luck as she embarks on her first semester this fall at Mary Baldwin College!

Our young workers also shared their successes from the 2021 youth employment season. Ariel Barrabes, a young worker with the Summer Jobs Connect (SJC) program shared her story:

“My experience in the SJC program has changed my mindset regarding the importance of saving and having a bank account. Every time I get paid, I put money into my savings account for emergencies. Having a bank account keeps my money safe from thefts and doesn't require me to have all of my money in cash. I had a great experience working with the SJC program. This work experience will help me in the future when I get a full time job or career. Now I feel more confident when I talk to people over the phone and understand how to deal with unexpected road blocks. Also, the financial literacy courses have helped me a lot as well. I have set goals for myself and plan to use the information I've learned for the present and the future.”

Sharing the successes of our young workers remains a highlight of this initiative, as we understand that these young people were positively impacted by the America Saves for Young Workers intervention. These successes are also an inspiring reflection of the dedication and effort of our youth employers. Their impact on their young workers and their youth employment experience is significant.

**The top three saving goals in 2021 were Emergency Savings, Education, and Clothing & Shoes**

## Conclusion

America Saves for Young Workers supports and encourages young workers to take advantage of their first earning experience by building a solid foundation for a lifetime of saving excellence. We know that the past few years have been a trying time for workers of all ages, but we continue to be impressed with the determination of your youth employers to encourage their youth to build healthy financial habits today that will serve them well for a lifetime. In the face of an ongoing global health crisis, our youth continue to adapt and embrace the practice of saving.

