

2025 Upstate Institute Summer Field School Fellowship Opportunities

The community organizations that will partner with the Upstate Institute in the summer of 2025 are listed below. Each agency has provided a brief description of their proposed research project. Each project has a title for the research project following the name of the host organization, along with the areas of inquiry that apply.

To apply for one or more of these projects: Full instructions for students on how to apply can be found at [this link](#). During the application process, you will be able to note up to three projects that are of interest to you. If you are interested only in projects in the Adirondack Park, [use this bookmark](#) to jump to those project descriptions.

Projects in Central New York

Buddha Dama Thuka Temple

“Grant Research for Buddha Dama Thuka Temple’s Sustainable Community Project”

Community Development, Environmental Science, Grant Writing, Local Food, Public Health, Sustainability

The project seeks to identify grant opportunities for Buddha Dama Thuka Temple, which promotes sustainable agriculture and community well-being in Utica, NY. The aim is to support over 100+ acres of farmland, providing employment and healthy food to low-income residents. Collaboration with the Midtown Utica Community Center will enhance economic growth and sustainability efforts, benefiting refugees and immigrants. A student will engage in part-time work, both remotely and on-site, gaining expertise in grant writing and sustainability initiatives. The project aspires to create a model of sustainability, empowerment, and community harmony.

Cazenovia Preservation Foundation & Cazenovia Heritage

“Researching Historical Buildings in Cazenovia to Foster Appreciation for and Preservation of Local Historical Architectural Resources”

Education, History, architecture, historic preservation

Several Cazenovia buildings in the Burr Street neighborhood of Cazenovia may have architectural and historical significance, but little research has been completed in this area further from the prominent early homes in the Village. The project will add to the academic knowledge base of Cazenovia’s socio-economic development and architecture on the east side of the Village. Further, the project seeks to engage new historical homeowners and re-engage prior participants in a Historic House Sign Project, which fosters community engagement and good stewardship of local historical architectural resources.

Charles N Gordon Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Inc

“Wildlife Rehabilitation in Upstate New York”

Community Development, Education, Environmental Science, Grant Writing, Sustainability

Gordon Wildlife seeks a Fellow to research and create educational content based on first-hand experience at our wildlife rehabilitation centers which specialize in orphaned raccoon kits. This

content would educate aspiring wildlife rehabilitators, the general public, and wildlife officials working with rehabilitators in the field, while simultaneously raising awareness about the Center's work. This unique offering allows a Fellow to observe the rarely seen dynamic inner workings of a wildlife rehabilitation organization and would be an engaging opportunity for students who have some videography/filmmaking/photo documentation interest, especially those in a pre-veterinary wildlife biology, or environmental studies track.

Chenango County Historical Society & Museum

"Cultural Competency & Rural Museums"

Arts, Community Development, Education, History, Cultural Competency

The Chenango County Historical Society explores regional culture - its unique traditions and noteworthy stories - through the preservation and presentation of local heritage. Our proposed research is based on Cultural Competency & Rural Museums. The primary questions we would like to address are: "How does an institution of modest means effectively adapt its programming to address inequity and become a more inclusive organization? Furthermore, given the nature of rural regions (characterized by close-knit communities with traditional values and limited access to resources), how does a local community organization incorporate diverse perspectives while remaining responsive to its core audience?"

Chenango Greenway Conservancy

"Audio-Visual Presentation of the Chenango Heritage Rail Trail"

Community Development, Environmental Science, History, Sustainability, Active Transportation Infrastructure Development

The Chenango Greenway Conservancy desires to have a Summer 2025 Upstate Institute Fellow work with the Greenway's Chenango Heritage Rail Trail Committee to prepare a public presentation program that will be designed to inform public officials, various agencies, organizations, and the general public about the 60-mile Rail-Trail vision, and to encourage them to participate. The presentation may be in PowerPoint, video, or some combination of other appropriate formats.

Community Action Program for Madison County

"Triennial Community Needs Assessment"

Community Development, Education, Grant Writing, Housing, Local Food, Public Health, Anti-poverty programs, strategic planning and service delivery

As a Community Action Agency, we are required by Federal statute to periodically assess the needs of the low-income communities that we serve. This triennial Community Needs Assessment is used to strategically design programs and services to enact meaningful positive change in the status of individuals, families and communities, and to direct resource allocation. One of the tenets of Community Action is to involve maximum feasible participation of impacted communities in the planning and administration of the programs and services which support the identified needs. Literature review, surveys and focus groups are typical methods to amass qualitative and quantitative data for analysis and reporting.

Cornell Cooperative Extension - Central NY Field Crops
"Agricultural Field Research Assistant"

Education, Environmental Science, Local Food, Sustainability, Agricultural Science

One of the major research efforts that the student will assist with is our ongoing effort to identify lower-risk alternatives to neonicotinoid insecticides. NY is the first state in the US to ban these insecticides, and our team of researchers at Cornell is leading the effort to identify more environmentally sustainable methods of managing crop pests. In addition, there is an opportunity for the student to create and conduct a project relating to a subject that inspires them, whether that's insect diversity, pest management, soil health, plant disease, weed diversity and/or management, or others

Cornell Cooperative Extension Madison County
Project #1 of 2: "Rural Third Places & Farmer Well-Being"

Community Development, Local Food, Public Health, Social Well-Being

This project explores how Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) can leverage rural third spaces, such as libraries, diners, and Extension offices, to engage underrepresented farms and foster community well-being, building on a previous farmer mental health project. The Fellow will conduct background research, map local assets, and interview stakeholders to identify factors influencing farmer engagement. Deliverables may include a toolkit or directory of third spaces. The project offers an opportunity to gain skills in qualitative research, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement while addressing the challenge of social isolation in rural communities and enhancing CCE's programming and outreach to farmers.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Madison County
Project #2 of 2: "Shared-Use Kitchen Feasibility Project"

Local Food, Economic Development

What is the demand for and feasibility of establishing a shared-use commercial kitchen in Madison County? Following the 2024 closure of Nelson Farms, the county's only commercial kitchen, there is a need to explore options that meet the needs of local and regional farmers, non-profits, and for-profit entities. The student will conduct background research on similar facilities, agricultural trends, and local needs. Methods include stakeholder mapping, focus groups, interviews, and a market assessment. Deliverables include a demand analysis, feasibility report, and stakeholder engagement map to guide future development efforts and make a difference in farm businesses across Upstate NY.

Earlville Opera House
"Archive Assistant"

Arts, Community Development, Education, Grant Writing, History, Sustainability, Historic Preservation

This research project will lend a hand to preservation of the history of EOH as a 1892 National Landmark by collecting past and current articles and historic documents for organization, digitalization and conservation. These records tell the tale of the origins of the Douglass Block which the EOH resides and includes materials from that time as well as from the rebirth of the EOH in the early 1970's when it was saved from the wrecking ball by artist and activist Joey Skaggs. This

project is on-going and directly relates to our organization's work and legacy as a Registered Historic Site with over 130 years of history as the anchor in the Village of Earlville, NY. The goal is to encapsulate all EOH archival materials onsite for placement in chronological order and public presentation (both digitized and hardcopy). This benefits the Upstate region by preserving and highlighting the rich heritage of our area that helps make up the unique and rich culture of New York State.

Fiver Children's Foundation

Project #1 of 2: "Camp Fiver History Associate"

Education

Fiver Children's Foundation is seeking a Camp Fiver History Associate to build off last year's Summer Field School Fellow project, which resulted in the development of informative and engaging materials on the history of the camp's land usage. Fiver's goal is to incorporate education and recognition of historic land usage into camp rituals and activities that are educational and engaging for all participating age groups. How can Fiver integrate previously developed educational content, language, and materials about Camp Fiver's property into the camp culture to instill knowledge of and reverence for the legacy of historic land usage in participating youth?

Fiver Children's Foundation

Project #2 of 2: "Camp Fiver Staff Recruitment Associate"

Education

What methods can Fiver use to improve recruitment and retention of seasonal Camp Fiver staff members? Fiver Children's Foundation is seeking a Camp Fiver Staff Recruitment Associate to work with our Human Resources department on a project to improve recruitment and retention efforts for seasonal camp staff. Camp Fiver is our award-winning, overnight summer program that serves as a safe place for participating youth to learn, explore identity and strengths, and build skills to prepare for successful futures. The fellow will build upon current practices and develop strategies to utilize new platforms, outlets, and technologies for improved recruitment and retention.

Friends of Rogers Environmental Education Center

"The B-Team: Community Science Project"

Community Development, Education, Environmental Science

Lead the B-Team Community Science Project at Rogers Environmental Education Center. Cultivate community engagement, restore pollinator habitat, and research the best methods for community science at New York's oldest environmental education center.

Madison County Public Health

"County-Wide Mosquito Surveillance"

Environmental Science, Public Health

The project research goal is development of a countywide mosquito surveillance plan in alignment with the One Health framework. The implementation of a countywide program will empower Madison County Public Health to analyze robust data and dissemination information among a wide variety of stakeholders, including residents, municipal leaders, veterinarians, and medical

providers. Simultaneously, the student will work with Environmental Health staff to carry out current surveillance strategy in the Town of Sullivan. This will entail setting up the three trap locations, collecting mosquitos, identifying species, and analyzing the pool results from the NYSDOH Wadsworth Laboratory.

Midtown Utica Community Center

“Curriculum Design for Teaching Reading to Refugee Adults”

Community Development, Education, Migration, Literacy, Language

This summer, we are seeking a Colgate student to assist with Midtown Utica Community Center’s ESL program and conduct research on the connection between mental health and language acquisition among refugee and immigrant students. The student will work closely with ESL learners, observing how emotional well-being impacts classroom engagement and language progress. By facilitating supportive learning environments, gathering qualitative data through interviews and participation, and identifying stressors or barriers, this project aims to develop strategies that promote both mental health and language learning success in underserved populations.

Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (assumed name The Center)

Project #1 of 2: “Helping Refugees and Immigrants Attain Economic Independence: Improving Transportation Access to Employment Opportunities”

Community Development, Transportation

The Center in Utica plays a crucial role in helping refugees and immigrants find stable employment by connecting them with local employers. This project seeks to identify the specific transportation barriers refugees encounter when attending job interviews and their regular employment, with the goal of proposing practical improvements to enhance their employment prospects. This research will provide valuable insights into the transportation challenges faced by refugees in their journey toward employment. The study has the potential to improve refugees' access to job opportunities, leading to greater economic independence, better integration into the community, and enhanced social mobility.

Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (assumed name The Center)

Project #2 of 2: Supporting Social Enterprise Initiatives Promoting Organizational Financial Stability

Community Development, Sustainability

Apply international relations and development-based concepts in a local, U.S. based context. Utica is one of the most diverse cities in New York State, where 1 in 4 homes speak a language other than English. The Center is looking for a self-motivated, independent person to assist our team with research supporting social enterprise initiatives promoting cultural awareness, language access, and the resettlement continuum. The fellowship will include a service-learning component, assisting the Volunteer Coordinator with meeting the needs of immigrants and refugees via our Resettlement Department, clothing closet, or tutoring in English classrooms.

National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum

“Assembling Archival Strength to Build Capacity and to Assure Sustainability”

Community Development, Education, History, Sustainability

The Upstate Fellow will organize provided historical research from primary sources into integrated identifiers of time, location, and person. This integrated research information will provide more complete references in less time for the demands of grants, applications, reports, and media releases, thereby improving the quality of work, and the time quantity. Organizing the accomplished research will have immediate and long-lasting capacity building and sustainability impact for the organization and its community. The Fellow will include history selections when s/he hosts the Hall of Fame and Museum

NYS Association for Rural Health, Inc.

“Using Libraries to Support Older Adults”

Community Development, Public Health

The New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH) aims to enhance the health and well-being of rural New Yorkers, with a growing focus on older adults as rural populations age. Despite barriers to service, NYSARH emphasizes asset-based solutions, celebrating rural communities’ strengths. NYSARH seeks a Field School Fellow to explore how public libraries support older adults’ well-being. Libraries, with unique resources and established communication tools, are vital to every community. The project will help NYSARH create a portfolio of promising practices to meet older rural residents’ needs and share these strategies across rural New York.

Oneida Community Mansion House

“Expanding the Story: Phase II of the Oneida Ltd. Oral History Project”

Community Development, Education, History

The Oneida Community Mansion House seeks a Summer Field School Fellow to become the Oneida Ltd. Oral History Assistant. OCMH is a museum preserving the history of the utopian Oneida Community and the global silverware company Oneida Ltd. Oneida Ltd. arose from the radical roots of the Oneida Community as a community-centered business before it declared bankruptcy ca. 2000. The Fellow will help OCMH to expand its oral history program by editing clips for a new interactive exhibit, conducting interviews with employees, family members, and community stakeholders, devising an audience evaluation for the exhibit, and more as the Fellow desires.

Oneida County History Center

“Dinosaur Technology: A Changing World”

Education, History, Museum Studies

How can the History Center attract visitors and appeal to new audiences by leveraging an important asset: its artifact collection? The goal of this project is to address the above question through the creation of a new exhibit about “dinosaur technologies” (or extinct technologies) that explores our changing world, through the lens of technology invented, produced, or used in Oneida County. This project will explore how global and national changes impacted the local community and reveal how these changes are documented in the History Center artifact collection. The dinosaur theme is just for fun :)

Sculpture Space Inc.**“Reimagining Residency: Enhancing Artist Support and Community Engagement Sculpture Space Inc. Utica NY”**

Arts

Sculpture Space is a residency program dedicated to nurturing diverse and underserved artists by providing an inspiring environment for creative exploration. This research project investigates whether the residency fully meets artists' needs, focusing on three areas: capacity (facilities and project support), community engagement (interaction with local and professional networks), and interpersonal engagement (cohort dynamics and growth). By aligning practices with its mission, Sculpture Space aims to enhance the residency experience, support artistic development, and strengthen community connections, ultimately creating actionable strategies to better serve artists and the broader community.

The Bell Tree Inc.**“Creating an Accessible Commercial, Community Kitchen with Locally Sourced Solutions”**

Environmental Science, Sustainability, Environmental Design and Planning

The Bell Tree Inc (all-volunteer-run 501(c)3 nonprofit in Earlville, NY that is both an indoor play space and community center) is embarking on an ambitious remodel of our basement kitchen and social hall. We are looking to create an accessible, commercial kitchen for community use. The project will be done in phases and we need a gregarious student to help us find innovative, practical, environmentally friendly, and cost-saving measures to assist with the planning and implementation of our building project. Having a functional kitchen space will allow us to expand our opportunities for community members. We want to provide more rentable space for events and to also be able to offer community meals, cooking classes, a rentable commercial kitchen for Madison county residents, and more.

Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center**“Website Optimization”**

Arts, Education, History, Information systems

The Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center, based in Oxford, is one of the world's largest holders of archival materials about historic covered bridges in the world. We are launching our first-ever website to dramatically increase access to our postcards, photographs, newsletters, and more. We are seeking assistance in optimizing our new website, through search engine optimization and other techniques, so we attract as many interested users as possible.

United Way of Mid Rural New York**“Campaign Marketing and ALICE”**

Community Development, critical human needs and nonprofit capacity building

The United Way of Mid Rural New York would like a summer Fellow to help us with creating two ways to show our organization's important role in addressing the critical needs of our region. The first part would be to create a video for use in soliciting donations during the fall fundraising campaign. The second part would be localizing an existing ALICE (asset limited, income

constrained, employed) simulation for use with community presentations to help participants better understand the needs of the working poor

Village of Cazenovia

“Village of Cazenovia Walkability Study”

Community Development, Public Health, Sustainability

The Village of Cazenovia is interested in undertaking an in-depth study to understand our gaps in pedestrian access and how to improve mobility for all residents and visitors. This will include doing an audit of pedestrian and bike infrastructure in the Village, as well as identifying strategies for improving problem spots. Engagement with the public will be part of the project.

Young Scholars Liberty Partnerships Program at Utica University

“Research on Best Practices in Youth Mentorship”

Community Development, Education

The Young Scholars Liberty Partnerships Program (YSLPP) at Utica University seeks a Colgate Summer Fellow to research best practices in youth mentorship. Due to new university policies, YSLPP’s mentorship program is on hold, necessitating a redesigned model that aligns with regulations while maintaining its benefits. The fellow will conduct a literature review, case studies, and stakeholder interviews to develop a sustainable framework. This project will inform mentorship strategies locally and statewide, benefiting youth programs and institutional policy development. The fellow will gain hands-on research experience, contributing to meaningful program innovation in compliance-driven environments.

Projects in the Adirondack Park

Adirondack Diversity Initiative/Adirondack North Country Association

“Visitor Safety and Comfort in Adirondack Park Visitor Use Management 2025”

Community Development, Environmental Science, Public Health, Sustainability, Humanities and Social Science

ADI is interested in understanding the motivations, attitudes and experiences of people who recreate in the Adirondack Park. This research project is intended to address tourism and attitudes of diverse visitors to assess community needs and center community voices relative to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This project will gather visitor information through surveys from several High Peaks trailheads. The surveys will collect data on:

- a. Basic demographics
- b. Motivations, attitudes and experiences
- c. Feelings of safety and belonging

ADI and NYS DEC will then use this information to further NY’s Visitor Use Management tools and the work of ADI.

Adirondack Experience

“2025 ADKX Audience Evaluation”

Education, History, Sustainability

The Adirondack Experience (ADKX) will use visitor evaluation collected during its 2025 season to better understand visitor needs and expectations and to inform exhibition planning for upcoming major renovations. Given changing populations in the North Country combined with efforts to market the region to diverse audiences, the ability of ADKX to understand and respond to visitors' motivations will lead to strategic institutional efforts to address visitor needs and continue to play a significant role in the economic health and tourism industry in the region, particularly in Hamilton County.

Adirondack Foundation

Project #1 of 3: “Modeling the effect of market downturns on a Community Foundation's ability to fulfill its mission”

Economic models of Community Foundations, Policymaking given fiscal considerations and goals

Charitable giving is generally greater when the stock market is appreciating and less when donors “feel” less wealthy due to losses in their stock portfolios. So, just when a community needs its community foundation most, when the economy may be in a recession, is the same time when resources that fund the foundation are constrained. This project will assess: (1) How will the foundation's income statement and spending power be impacted in various market scenarios? (2) What adjustments can the foundation make to policies to prepare for the downturn? (3) What reserve levels should we attain based on this analysis?

Adirondack Foundation

Project #2 of 3: “The Foundation's Impact on Addressing Community Needs”

Community Development

This impact and evaluation focused project at Adirondack Foundation will deepen understanding of the successes and challenges faced by nonprofits and community-based organizations in addressing three priority areas: basic needs, educational pathways, and economic vitality. The fellow will analyze qualitative and quantitative data from approximately 120 grant reports to identify trends, patterns, and opportunities for future impact. The project includes engagement with nonprofit leaders through interviews and site visits to gain a deeper understanding of how organizations are addressing regional challenges and achieving success. The fellow will contribute to the evolution of the Foundation's grantmaking strategies and help communicate impact to the community.

Adirondack Foundation

Project #3 of 3: “Local Engagement of Seasonal Residents”

Community Development

Adirondack Foundation is a community foundation serving the Adirondack region, an area known for its natural beauty and popularity as a vacation destination. This is also a region with stark wealth disparities between the year-round and seasonal populations. The Foundation seeks to understand how much seasonal residents are aware of, and engaged in, Adirondack community

issues. The student will interview seasonal residents throughout the Adirondack region, with a special focus on lake communities, helping to guide the Foundation's future communication efforts.

Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts

“The ALCA Programming & Impact Survey Project”

Arts, Community Development, Sustainability

The student will create and implement a programming and impact survey for the Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts (ALCA) in Blue Mountain Lake, NY. The student will conduct this survey and report on the findings. The student will also have the opportunity to do a public presentation of the findings. ALCA is a multidisciplinary arts center, serving communities spanning more than 2,000 square miles within the vast Adirondack Park.

Adirondack North Country Association

“North Country Small Business Regional Analysis and Ecosystem Strategy”

Community Development, Local Food, Sustainability

ANCA is developing a regional analysis and ecosystem strategy to improve programs for entrepreneurs and retiring/exiting small business owners. We invite a Colgate fellow to support our deputy director and small business team to gather and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data which will drive services and programs to sustain rural small businesses across the Adirondack North Country region. The fellow will have the opportunity to interact with entrepreneurs and community developers across the region, learning about the barriers and opportunities faced by both current and future business owners as we work to sustain vibrant rural communities.

AdkAction

“Thriving Together: Advancing Adirondack Pollinator Conservation Through Research, Restoration, and Community Engagement”

Community Development, Environmental Science, Sustainability

AdkAction, a nonprofit championing community development and environmental conservation, seeks a 2025 Upstate Institute Field School Fellow to advance groundbreaking efforts to protect native pollinators in the Adirondacks. Despite global alarm over pollinator decline, significant knowledge gaps remain about local species. The fellowship combines research fieldwork at an innovative pollinator sanctuary landfill reclamation project and engages the public in a dynamic community science initiative. By collecting critical data and inspiring public participation, the Fellow will play a pivotal role in securing a sustainable future for native pollinators in the Adirondacks while gaining invaluable experience in environmental stewardship and community-driven conservation.

Ausable Freshwater Center

“Growing Local: Ausable Conservation Nursery at Uihlein Farm”

Community Development, Environmental Science, Sustainability, Agriculture

Join the Ausable Freshwater Center as our Native Plant Nursery Fellow. The right candidate will be a motivated individual who gains experience in all aspects of native plant nursery operations, including propagation, production, and distribution. No previous agricultural and/or nursery

knowledge is required, but a willingness to learn and get your hands dirty is encouraged. The fellow will have a variety of research to choose from, including identifying the best ways to involve community volunteers, testing best production practices for hard-to-grow species, mapping wild seed collection data, or researching potential native plant markets.

Bobolink Project/ Mass Audubon

“Assessing Opportunities and Barriers for Grassland Bird Conservation in New York’s Champlain Valley”

Environmental Science, Local Food, Sustainability, Ecology and Ornithology

The Bobolink Project provides financial and technical support to farmers and landowners to help them alter their hayfield management practices to protect grassland birds. We operate across five states and are interested in expanding our network of protected fields in the Champlain Valley. The Bobolink Project would like to work with a Colgate Upstate Institute Fellow to study grassland bird distributions, haying patterns, invasive species encroachment, and the cost of delayed haying practices in the Champlain Valley. The Colgate UI Fellow will spend most of their time in the field and must be comfortable reaching out to and talking with farmers and landowners.

Champlain Area Trails

“Restoring Biodiversity: Invasive Species Management and Native Plant Restoration in the Champlain Valley”

Environmental Science, Sustainability

Champlain Area Trails is proposing a research project on managing invasive species within our Essex Quarry Nature Preserve and across 100 miles of trails in the Champlain Valley. The fellow will engage in hands-on removal of invasive plants, such as buckthorn and honeysuckle, while reintroducing native wildflowers and documenting species in iNaturalist. The project will enhance our understanding of invasive species' impacts on the ecosystem, contribute to local conservation efforts, and promote biodiversity in Adirondack Park, all while providing students valuable field experience in ecological research and trail maintenance.

John Brown Lives!

“Capturing 25 Years of History”

Arts, Education, History, Social Justice Activism, Communications

John Brown Lives! (JBL!), the freedom education and human rights project and Friends Group of the John Brown Farm State Historic Site, seeks a Fellow to capture stories about JBL!'s impact over its first quarter-century. They will coordinate with JBL!'s communications team and 25th Anniversary Committee and receive training to collect, transcribe, and upload 3-5-minute oral histories on our website; be mentored by Martha Swan, Founder/Executive Director of JBL!, and J; and be encouraged to bring their creativity to bear through personal reflections, blog posts, poetry, or music, for example.

Saranac Lake Central School District

“Mapping Resources for the Saranac Lake Central School District”

Education

The Saranac Lake Central School District, located in the heart of the Adirondacks, serves a rural community of just over 1,000 students. As a Community School, we have gained a deeper understanding of the families we serve, the service gaps within our district, and the importance of fostering a sense of belonging through in-school and out-of-school opportunities. We are now prepared to map and curate local and county-wide resources, complete with contact information. Additionally, our field school fellow will focus on identifying and curating civic engagement opportunities for students and community members across the region to strengthen connections and involvement.