

NVEDD Recovery Plan

Approved by NVEDD Board: October 5th, 2021

Plan Outline

Executive Summary

COVID-19 Impacts in each Region

District Recovery Priorities

 Need

 Strategies

 Metrics for Success

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating health, economic, and social impacts on Vermont communities and businesses. Restrictions necessary to stem the spread of COVID-19 have disrupted how people live and work. Regional and local economies have been hit hard and the livelihoods and the well-being of many have been significantly impacted, changing the social fabric in the process. Being flexible and responsive in our approaches to recovery will provide understanding and insights that will inform how we prioritize use of limited resources to maximize positive impacts over the long term.

This plan focuses on feasible, high-impact strategies to accelerate the recovery of the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD). The plan also recognizes differences in regional economies and provides a path to recovery tailored to each region.

COVID-19 impacts in each region:

Northeast Kingdom

The 3-county Northeast Kingdom (NEK) is the most rural region in Vermont, with just 32 people per square mile. Its unmatched natural beauty, accessible outdoor recreation, local food systems, and overall quality of life continue to keep and attract new residents, however persistent economic challenges that have long made living and working in the region a struggle remain a reality.

Basic needs like broadband internet, housing, childcare, and emergency services are lacking, making it difficult for communities to thrive. With the lowest rate of labor force participation, the lowest household income, and the lowest number of residents with a high school diploma in the state, the NEK is the most vulnerable to the negative economic & human impacts of COVID-19. The devastating effects of the COVID-19 crisis illuminated the NEK's most pressing issues, and the Quebec border closure seriously impacted many businesses reliant on Canadian tourist. However the recovery strategies outlined in this Plan create a path forward to a vibrant and thriving region.

Lamoille County

Lamoille County is heavily reliant on tourism which provides almost a third of all jobs in the region. The COVID-19 pandemic has had particularly pronounced impacts on Lamoille County's outdoor recreation industry. Three of the Region's largest private sector employers are in this industry. These include Stowe Mountain Resort (~2,500), Smugglers Notch Resort (~2,000), Trapps Family Lodge (~500). Employment in the Leisure Hospitality Industry (as defined by NAICS Industry Code) has declined by 49.2% since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, while employment in Accommodations and Food Service has declined by 52%. The decline in travel and tourism not only impacts immediate hospitality-based businesses, but it also impacts many smaller and midsized construction contractors and other support industries that typically derive

much of their income serving the restaurants, inns, resorts, and second homes in the region. This trend manifests itself in a 29.4% decline in construction industry employment.

Grand Isle County

As an isolated rural community dependent on tourism and off-island employment and secondary education, Grand Isle County was deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly hard hit were the hospitality industry, the building industry, and resident youth and senior populations.

The closing of the Canadian Border, decrease in domestic travel, and frequent adjustments in CDC and state guidance all combined to depress the capacity of restaurants, inns, and hotels while at the same time increasing the amount of labor needed to serve a reduced customer base.

While demand for real estate in Grand Isle County increased at the beginning of the pandemic and has remained elevated, unstable supply lines and unprecedented price increases have cut into builder profit margins and contributed to delays and frequent cancelations of new and remodeled building projects.

Senior and youth populations in Grand Isle County have experienced isolation, and inequitable access to opportunities as a result of poor broadband coverage, disruption in social routines, and the discontinuation of transportation services from organizations such as C.I.D.E.R.

COVID has had a transformational effect on the community of Grand Isle County.

Franklin County

Franklin County was especially impacted by the lack of employees for the manufacturing base. The already existing shortage of workers across the state was increased during the pandemic as existing and new barriers to employment were experienced. An increased need for sufficient and affordable child care, health concerns for workers, remote learning in k-12 schools, modified unemployment benefits, and suspension of education and training programs affected Franklin County's manufacturing sector disproportionately. Simultaneously, the demand for some products increased as individuals and families changed purchasing habits due to the inability to leave their homes and communities, focusing on home improvements and outdoor recreation. Additionally, like dairy farmers across the nation, Franklin County's dairy producers were affected by a large decrease in demand for milk-based products due in part to the closing of schools and the food service industry. In turn, with a large ag-related industry, Franklin County businesses were further impacted. Ironically, an increased focus by individuals and families to grow their own food boosted the market for hobby farm materials and products, outpacing availability by local and national retailers. Like the rest of the state, Franklin County will need more people to meet the ever-increasing need for qualified and reliable employees across all sectors.

District recovery priorities

The NVEDD plan for recovery proposes specific initiatives in twelve categories.

1. Broadband
2. Housing
3. Diversity and Equity
4. Water and Sewer
5. Childcare
6. Business Support
7. Transportation
8. Civic and Cultural infrastructure
9. Outdoor Economy and Recreation
10. Agriculture, Working Lands, and Food Systems
11. Education and Workforce Development
12. Climate Change and Resiliency

Detail on District Priorities

1. Broadband

Need: The pandemic has made the need for connectivity paramount for the education and opportunity of our children, for telemedicine, for remote work, and for social connection. Connectivity has become the essential tool for economic innovation and growth. The fact that many areas, families, and individuals are left out of these essential services is no longer tenable economically or from a health, welfare, education, or social justice position. It is time that we systematically close the digital divide by engaging State and Federal investment, Communication Union Districts, electrical utilities, and the network of current providers to implement last mile solutions throughout Vermont.

Goal: Ensure universal, reliable, and affordable high-speed broadband connectivity.

Strategies:

1. Expand broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the District.
2. Pursue COVID-19 economic recovery stimulus funding to expand broadband to create reliable digital infrastructure.
3. Provide and increase visibility to publicly accessible WiFi as appropriate in Downtowns and Village Centers, public open spaces, and other public gathering spaces.
4. Maintain subsidies for internet service & provide access to equipment for low-income Vermonters.
5. Increase capacity to build a district-wide broadband network through direct grants, expanded VEDA loans.
6. Provide structural support for the Communication Union Districts.

Metrics for Success

- Decrease in underserved or unserved addresses.
- Publicly accessible Wi-Fi hotspots in Villages, Downtowns, trailheads/public open spaces, and other public spaces.
- Percentage of addresses served by fiber-to-the-premises.
- Established subsidies for internet service & related equipment for low-income Vermonters.
- Build out of a district-wide broadband network.
- Increase in municipal participation in Communication Union Districts.

2. Housing

Need: This public health emergency has highlighted how safe, decent, and affordable housing is critical to the health of our state's residents and economy overall. The housing crisis in the NVEDD region was evident prior to the pandemic, and COVID-19 has deepened this well-known challenge. To ensure everyone is well housed, the NVEDD region needs to address the long-term shortage of housing stock, housing unaffordability, and homelessness.

Goal: Meet Northern Vermont's housing needs.

Strategies:

1. Increase the availability and quality of housing that is affordable to moderate- and low-income residents.
2. Retrofit seasonal worker housing to meet any ongoing COVID-19 related social distancing guidelines.
3. Address housing insecurity caused by lingering economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure financial support reaches low- to medium income homeowners, renters and residents experiencing housing insecurity.
4. Encourage and assist communities in developing "housing ready" local bylaws.
5. Provide critical infrastructure necessary to support new housing development.
6. Research opportunities for tiny homes and other non-traditional forms of housing
7. Provide homeowners and landlords with proper weatherization update resources.
8. Address lingering inequities in the quality and safety of the low- and moderate-income housing in some communities, such as lead, asbestos and other materials, energy efficiency, neighborhoods located in flood hazard areas, and/or inadequate water/wastewater infrastructure.

Metrics for Success

- Number of new housing units, number of new affordable housing units.
- Number of new accessory dwelling units.
- Increased number of units reviewed and updated for weatherization.
- Increased number of units inspected for and updated to safety standards.
- Decrease in homelessness numbers.
- Number of local bylaws updated to support additional housing opportunities.
- Water and sewer system expansions to support new housing development.
- Increased number of new Neighborhood Development Area Designations (ACCD)

3. Diversity and Equity

Need: As in the rest of the nation, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in Vermont were hit harder than white Vermonters by the pandemic and its economic fallout. Events of the past year have awakened Vermonters to the uncomfortable but enduring fact of systemic racism and have galvanized us to examine and take action to ameliorate injustices and inequities and to advance diversity and inclusion. In one of the whitest states in the union, many white Vermonters have not confronted racism or been aware of the constant pressure of racism that Vermont residents or visitors of color feel in this state. We need to overcome institutionalized practices that discriminate or disfavor Vermonters of color.

(Source: [Governor's COVID-19 Recovery Task Force Report](#))

Goal: Promote inclusiveness and combat racism in all its forms. Advance equity and inclusion as a foundation for supporting all residents, welcoming new residents, and enhancing our creative and prosperous future.

Strategies:

1. Ensure that historically marginalized people are included and heard in local and regional decision making and conversations by utilizing inclusive and proactive outreach and information strategies at the regional level and encouraging and supporting similar municipal efforts.
2. Address inequities in provisions of government services, housing, and infrastructure.
3. Evaluate and address unique challenges faced by New Americans employed in the District's manufacturing and service/hospitality sectors (i.e transportation and language barriers).
4. Pilot Family SASH model and social worker positions to expand integrated mental and physical health, substance abuse, social justice, and social supports to stabilize families.
5. Support municipal use of the Municipal Engagement Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Toolkit provided by Vermont's Local Solutions and Community Action Team. [Engagement Tools for Municipalities.pdf \(vtrural.org\)](#)

Metrics for Success

- Number of legislative bodies/municipalities hosting public forums on diversity and equity or adopting the Municipal Declaration of Inclusion.
- Number of municipalities utilizing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Toolkit.
- Increased number of BIPOC owned businesses receiving support from state or federal programs.
- Improved methods of measuring support for BIPOC owned businesses.

4. Water and Sewer

Need: Water and wastewater/sewer infrastructure is critical to long term economic development. Housing, childcare, and small businesses essential to the District's recovery require water and wastewater capacity that is currently unavailable in many rural Villages that rely on onsite systems. In larger communities with existing infrastructure, water and wastewater systems are often antiquated and inadequate for current and future needs. Many municipal sewer systems were designed primarily for residential uses and are not currently

equipped to treat high-strength wastewater generated by some value-added agricultural and food-based manufacturers.

Goal: Ensure modern water and sewer infrastructure is available in the District's Villages, Downtowns, and industrial/enterprise areas. Ensure this infrastructure has capacity available to serve needs for future economic development.

Strategies:

1. Address inadequacies and deferred maintenance in existing sewer and water infrastructure, especially those that limit future economic development or increase business operating costs.
2. Increase the water and wastewater capacity available for new development in the District's Villages, Downtowns, and industrial/enterprise areas.
3. Where appropriate, upgrade municipal wastewater systems to treat increased loads of high-strength wastewater.
4. Establish soil based/decentralized wastewater infrastructure to support expanded economic opportunity in unsewered Villages.
5. Support use of new technologies such as pre-treatment, timed dosing, and flow equalization to support expansion of small businesses that rely on on-site wastewater systems.
6. Obtain/provide technical support for local water and fire districts.
7. Support for municipalities looking to expand their wastewater systems.

Metrics for Success

- Increased number of Villages/Downtowns/Industrial Parks served by public water infrastructure.
- Increased number of Villages/Downtowns/Industrial Parks served by public sewer/wastewater infrastructure.
- Increased capacity of Water/Wastewater in Villages/Downtowns available for future development.
- Number of new housing units served by public water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Number of municipalities expanding their wastewater systems.
- Increased number of funding opportunities offered to municipalities.
- Increased number of wastewater systems capable of treating high strength wastewater.

5. Childcare

Need: In households throughout Vermont, parents are struggling to find high quality care and early learning for their children. Parents' capacity to contribute and participate in the economy is undermined, and many fear that their children are not getting the stimulation and developmental experiences that they need. Their fears are well founded; three out of every five of Vermont's youngest children do not have access to the care they need. Uncertainty, expense, and on-and-off closures have put families into perpetual anxiety and crisis. Many childcare facilities experienced financial stress after the Pandemic caused difficult/hazardous work environments for childcare providers.

Goal: Build an accessible, affordable, and universally available childcare system.

Strategies:

1. Locate new childcare facilities in areas that are accessible and convenient to working families from all communities in the District.
2. Provide necessary infrastructure needed to support new and expanded childcare facilities including the consideration of existing infrastructure.
3. Work with municipalities and the State of Vermont to identify and remove regulatory barriers to childcare facilities.
4. Increase Child Care Financial Assistance Program reimbursements to reflect the true cost of providing care.

Metrics for Success

- Increased number of available slots for infant, toddler, and preschool aged children.
- Increased awareness, involvement, and support by businesses in supporting childcare facilities and programs.
- Number of childcare facilities participating in the Vermont Step Ahead Recognition system (STARS) program.
- Number of registered home providers in areas not served by municipal water and wastewater systems.

6. Business Support

Need: Many small businesses need to increase the knowledge of financial matters pertaining to their businesses, marketing, HR functions, inventory control, and other subjects related to operating a sustainable and successful small business. As many business owners are totally immersed in operating their businesses, it is very difficult for them to take time to obtain this knowledge, therefore, it is imperative that programs be developed to either bring the knowledge to them or provide it in a manner that allow them to participate.

Goal: Develop and implement delivery mechanisms to provide the education and training needed in an effective and palatable way.

Strategies:

1. Organize, train, and promote structured business support for businesses in Northern Vermont to promote long-term recovery.
2. Provide direct financial assistance to small businesses, especially those who did not qualify for initial rounds of pandemic funding through federal government, and those in the hospitality and tourism industries that were especially impacted by the pandemic.
3. Connect businesses to technical assistance, business and financial planning, grant, and loan writing support.
4. Develop one-on-one or group consulting opportunities to provide businesses with financial literacy training.

5. Develop and promote new and existing workshops and trainings to be presented throughout the district.

Metrics for Success

- Increase of Sales/Use and Rooms/Meals Receipts. (<https://tax.vermont.gov/data-and-statistics/sut#2021>)
- Number of jobs retained and/or created. (<http://www.vtmi.info/indareanaics.cfm?areatype=01>)
- Number of SBDC and RDC trainings presented.
- Number of attendees to trainings.
- Number of businesses who received direct financial assistance.
- Number of consulting hours businesses received.
- Number of business referrals to outside support resources.
- Number of businesses who receive direct technical assistance.
- Increase in median household income. (US Census Bureau)
- Decrease in unemployment rates. (<http://www.vtmi.info/laus.cfm>)

7. Transportation

Need: Transportation infrastructure is critical to moving goods and people in and between communities and in providing the foundation to build community wealth. Much of the Region's transportation infrastructure is in poor condition and in need of upgrades to accommodate multimodal transportation and sustain increasing flood risks. Antiquated infrastructure for freight limits opportunities for industrial development in many areas of the District. COVID-19 has also highlighted the important roles streets play in local community and economic development -- particularly in Downtowns and Village Centers. While streets that are inviting to foot traffic bring customers to existing businesses and attract new investment, Village "main streets" that are also State highways have currently been designed primarily for thru traffic, often without recognition of the economic value of walkable, accessible communities to small business development. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of "15 minute" communities in which most essential goods and services are located within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from home. In many of the District's rural communities, small businesses such as general stores have filled this critical role as more residents work from home and choose to avoid large crowds. In order to support social distancing, curbside pickup, and outdoor seating, Vtrans and many municipalities have provided increased flexibility for civic use of transportation rights-of-way.

Goal: Provide safe, accessible, and multimodal transportation systems that effectively serve the needs of the District.

Strategies:

1. Align the region's rail or intermodal freight infrastructure to support manufacturing development.

2. Support development of airport infrastructure and terminal facilities based on Airport Master Plans.
3. Retrofit the District's bridge and culvert infrastructure to withstand increasing flood levels.
4. Continue to provide flexibility for civic use of the highway rights-of-way. Encourage Vtrans to make some of the temporary measures for use of the rights-of-way provided during COVID-19 permanent.
5. Reestablish safe, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in and adjacent to Villages. Where appropriate, extend Village scale patterns of development to adjacent areas within walking or biking distance.
6. Utilize the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail to encourage safe, non-motorized transportation between communities. Enhance trailhead facilities for use as transportation as well recreation/tourism.
7. Increase public transit options.
8. Expand electric vehicle charging network in the district.

Metrics for Success

- Improvements to rail or intermodal freight infrastructure.
- Implementation of Airport Master Plans.
- New Neighborhood Development Area Designations (ACCD).
- Increased ridership of public transit and more diverse users.
- Increased number of bridges and culverts that have been updated for higher flood levels.
- Increased and expanded use of the LVRT and MVRT.
- Increased micro-transit policies and programs in the district.
- Increased number of linear feet or miles of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including rail trails.
- Increased number of public electric vehicle charging stations in the district.

8. Civic and Cultural Infrastructure

Need: Our cultural and civic institutions, public open spaces, community groups, and non-profits are essential to our sense of place. Arts, events, libraries, community groups, recreation, and engaged residents working in partnership with our local municipalities are what make northern Vermont a great place to live, work, and play. We must invest in these organizations, community groups, and the facilities that foster connection and understanding across political, social, and racial lines. As we are able to gather again, civic and cultural infrastructure will help us heal and strengthen our social fabric.

Goal: Support civic and cultural institutions and practices that build community.

Strategies:

1. Equip public outdoor spaces – including trailheads and parks in rural areas, village greens, and streets and allies in downtown settings -- to ease people back into social interaction. Adjust public spaces to make physical distancing easier and movement safer.

2. Encourage communities to program public spaces for events and activities that are safe, accessible, and inspire people to visit and patronize local businesses.
3. Recognize the unique challenges faced by art institutions, libraries, theaters, etc. Support a thriving creative sector in an ever-changing environment by piloting diverse and inclusive programming with artists, startups, community groups, and social enterprises.
4. Provide bridge funding for nonprofit, arts and cultural institutions that experienced closures or significantly reduced operations.
5. Increase the capacity of civic and cultural institutions and support events and organizations that build culture and community.
6. Develop a tool that can help Chambers of Commerce and/or Downtown organizations to measure participation in community events.

Metrics for Success

- Increase in the number of Villages with an active “third place” such as a market/general store or café/tavern.
- Increased library membership/usership
- Increased public activities offered by cultural institutions and community groups.
- Increased participation in local events.

9. Outdoor Economy, Tourism and Recreation

Need: The decline in travel and tourism not only impacts immediate hospitality-based businesses, but it also impacts many smaller and mid-sized trades and other support industries that typically derive much of their income serving the restaurants, inns, resorts, and second homes in the region. Direct spending at outdoor retailers and service providers (gear outlets, manufacturers, sales reps, guide services, marketing firms that specialize in outdoor recreation, etc.) as well as per trip expenditures (meals, gas, hotels etc.) add up to \$2.5 billion annually in consumer spending in the State. By promoting our outdoor recreation assets and recreation-based tourism we will be able to sustainably support this sector and help drive overall economic growth, recovery, and health and wellness in our region. As a district and region, the impact from Canada border closing had a much larger impact than on the rest of the state. Additionally, the recovery of this industry is dependent, in part, to the value of the Canadian dollar which could continue to fall.

Goal: Rebuild the recreation, tourism, and hospitality industries. Diversify the regional economy and develop alternative employment opportunities in higher paying sectors that provide more stable employment.

Strategies:

1. Use outdoor recreational assets such as trails to position Northern Vermont as a travel destination compatible with post-COVID era needs.

2. Work with municipalities to capitalize and coordinate efforts that support local trails like Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, Alburgh Rail Trail, Lamoille County Rail Trail, and other organized trails within the district.
3. State Parks are anchor employers in many rural communities, and the Long Trail network is an economic engine in rural communities that lack other infrastructure necessary to support economic development. Upgrade trailheads and other recreation facilities to accommodate increased use and encourage trail users to frequent local businesses.
4. Harness the diverse and sometimes underutilized recreational opportunities of major rivers and lakes to support economic development and recovery of rural communities. Support development of accesses and other amenities for boaters, kayakers, canoers, swimmers, and anglers, as appropriate for the community and natural setting.
5. Provide planning and technical assistance to communities seeking to develop their recreation or tourism economies and/or manage increased use of local facilities.
6. Support community recreation and activities utilizing community recreation fields.
7. Development of new trail networks and/or recreation facilities in local communities.

Metrics for Success

- Increase in visits to Welcome Centers.
- Number of communities who seek technical assistance.
- Number of fishing and hunting license sold. (Dept of Fish and Wildlife)
- Increase amount of Meals and Room Tax collected. (<https://tax.vermont.gov/data-and-statistics/sut#2021>)
- Increased use of organized trails, state parks, and public marinas. (Dept of Forest and Parks)

10. Agriculture, Working Lands, and Food Systems

Need: Food systems have enormous impacts on society and the environment, from production to consumption. Beyond basic nourishment, food touches many segments of daily living including jobs and the economy, health, land conservation, environmental quality, and community quality of life. Access to fresh, healthy food is important for a healthy society. However, food insecurity, already a major issue in the region, became even more widespread during the pandemic, highlighting the need for food systems that are ecologically sustainable; supportive of local farmers, food producers, and economies; and respectful of social equity. Vermont's food system economic output between 2011 and 2020 expanded by roughly 48% adding almost \$4 billion and 6,500 new jobs. Supporting working lands enterprises, local agriculture, and local food distribution systems is instrumental in maintaining food systems as a strong economic sector in the region. Additionally, Vermonters became re-engaged in creating their own food system/supply, lessening reliance on others. An increase in interest will create the demand for education and training, as well as co-op opportunities for value added ag products.

Goal: Create jobs in the food and farm sector to increase sustainable economic growth. Improve education on soil, water, and sustainable agriculture in the face of climate change.

Strategies:

1. Provide support for the Sustainable Agriculture programs at all regional education centers.
2. Pursue the establishment of a district-wide food hub for providing minimal processing, distribution and value-added manufacturing of agricultural products
3. Support the expansion of slaughter and meat processing facilities in the district.
4. Support development of value-added agriculture, agri-tourism, vertical farming, and direct-to-consumer sales of agricultural products.
5. Support expansion of gleaning programs and other efforts to provide fresh produce to low-income residents at reduced costs.
6. Support traditional agriculture in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.
7. Support agricultural diversification and value-added production and reduce regulatory barriers to on-farm business expansion.

Metrics for Success

- Increased number of new food systems jobs.(Labor Dep Title instead of “Food System”)
- Number of new processing facilities created.
- Increased participation of secondary & post-secondary students in ag-related career pathways. (Ask the schools)
- Increase slaughter and meat processing capacity.
- Number of Community Supported Agriculture programs.

11. Education and Workforce Development

Need: Businesses in all industries lack dependable, trained, and hardworking employees, a need compounded during the pandemic. Individuals face multiple barriers to employment, including transportation, housing, childcare, substance use, criminal records, and benefit resource cliffs, most of which were identified in the statewide regional workforce summits and then magnified through the pandemic. Additionally, training and education programs were halted, stunting the abilities of employers, current employees, and those entering the workforce. The convergence of these forces is magnified, as individuals are less motivated to seek employment and training while receiving increased financial benefits through state and federal agencies during pandemic and recovery. Access to affordable education from Pre-K to career increases both workforce participation and household income. Elementary through high school education is suffering learning loss due to the Pandemic, higher education and adult education lacks accessibility and are underfunded. We need affordable pathways to education and workforce development to ensure our region can create leaders, entrepreneurs, and lifelong learners for the 21st Century.

Goal: Reimagine an effective, sustainable, birth-to-career educational system.

Strategies:

1. Provide adequate training and education opportunities for second chance citizens.
2. Work with Vermont State College System (VSCS), Regional Technical Education Centers, and other educational programs to provide workforce development and upskill training for District residents.
3. Provide job training and upskilling opportunities for a broad base of industries via multiple media and delivery methods.
4. Support Vermont State College System (VSCS) through endorsing the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont.
5. Implement the Pupil Weighting Factors Report recommendations to ensure that all students receive substantial equality of educational opportunity.
6. Conduct a study to identify the 1) educational needs of at-risk students and adults without high school diplomas, 2) barriers to existing programs, and 3) gaps in programs.
7. Expand the VT Talent Pipeline Management Initiative to additional sectors (beyond Construction, Health Care, and Manufacturing).

Metrics for Success

- Increased post-secondary education/training opportunities and participation.
- Development of Career Centers in all high schools in the district.
- Increase in the diversity of students and adults attending training and post-secondary education opportunities.
- Number of trainings presented.
- Number of attendees to trainings.
- Number of job placements after program completion.
- Increase programming and participation in regional Tech Centers.

12. Climate Change and Resiliency

Need: Climate change is the defining issue of our time. We, as a people, are faced with an unprecedented environmental challenge, and must identify strategies to reduce energy use and carbon emissions. Climate change disproportionately impacts rural and marginalized communities, which already bear significant public health, environmental, socioeconomic, and other burdens. Flooding, drought, and changes in snowpack and the freeze/thaw cycle will impact the economy throughout Northern Vermont. Communities face increased risks from flooding, as well as drought related water shortages in both public water supplies and private wells. To ensure the health and growth of the region, climate change must be addressed and mitigated. Heating and transportation remain the highest output of greenhouse emissions in Vermont. This challenge presents an economic opportunity as we pivot away from fossil fuels.

Goal: Vermont can take the lead in modeling economic solutions to climate change. The Vermont Climate Economy Initiative is designed to make the state a destination for entrepreneurs who want to be at the center of the climate change movement.

Strategies:

1. Advance a public, private Comprehensive Energy Efficiency partnership to advance efficiencies in home heating, weatherization, and household energy retrofits along with transportation systems changes that can reduce the use of petroleum-based heating and transportation fuels.
2. Establish a Climate Economy Network Development Initiative to provide seed funding and technical assistance for entrepreneurship to attract, support, cultivate and nurture a new generation of business creators and help them successfully grow their enterprises in Vermont.
3. Allow local communities to model effective change at a rapid rate and gain regional or national attention by concentrating a set of efficiency, energy development, transportation change and other services through a Climate Economy Model Communities Program.
4. Address drought-related water shortages for both public water systems and private wells. Work with communities and conservation organizations to secure well-head protection areas and upland forests for floodwater storage and groundwater attenuation.
5. Implement infrastructure retrofits and floodplain/wetland restoration to protect communities from increased risks of flooding.
6. Coordinate floodproofing and weatherization efforts to the greatest extent possible

Metrics for Success

- Homes, businesses, and municipal facilities weatherized. (Public Service Department?)
- Homes, businesses, and municipal facilities floodproofed or elevated.
- Acres of restored floodplain and wetlands. (Agency of Natural Resources)
- Acres of conserved upland forests. (Agency of Natural Resources)
- Number of public water systems with full wellhead protection area in publicly owned or conserved land.
- Number of communities with climate action plans or climate action elements in their municipal and/or regional plans.
- Number of communities with enhanced energy plans.