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# THE VERMONT PROFESSIONALS OF COLOR NETWORK

# ANNUAL REPORT

Design by Charlotte Graf

Photo by Isora Lithgow Creations



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# Executive Summary

The Vermont Professionals of Color Network (VT PoC) began in 2019 with five community members organizing a BIPOC networking event to create a community of professionals of color. Since then, the organization has blossomed into a federally-recognized 501(c)(3), with full and part-time staff and a Board of Directors.

2022 was another busy year for us. We brought on a full-time Project and Events Manager, Krystal Sanchez-Williams. Her background in curriculum development, leadership development frameworks and ethical theories, and small business management made her essential to the development and implementation of both the Community Navigator Pilot Program listening sessions and survey, and the BIPOC Non-Profit Grant Systems Series. In June, Charlotte Graf transitioned to become our part-time Marketing Specialist, and we were also joined by part-time staff DeVonna Sydnor as Outreach Coordinator, and Alex Majmudar as our Events Intern, who has since transitioned to become our Events and Marketing Associate over the academic year.

Our staff lends organizational strength to lay a solid foundation for networking, which supports our three pillars of professional development, entrepreneurship and youth. Our on-going advocacy continues to ensure that the mission of the organization and the interests of our members are protected. Both the Board and the staff are excited about what lays ahead for us in 2023.

We continue to host and facilitate in-person and virtual spaces for our members to exchange ideas, to share challenges, to find professional opportunities, and, most importantly, to build community within safe and affirming spaces. Four keynote events highlighted 2022: Storytelling with BIPOC Women & Non-Binary Entrepreneurs, Northeast Kingdom VTPOC Community Gathering, the 2nd Annual August Kickback, and the Wakanda Forever movie screening.



Additionally, we partnered with The Nature Conservancy on the VT PoC x TNC Walk Series for members to experience natural areas beyond state parks. VT PoC also began facilitating conference affinity spaces, such as the Vermont Council for Rural Development Annual Leadership Summit. All these opportunities drew hundreds of current and new BIPOC members and their families from across the state, finding new ways for them to connect in-person.

We continue our efforts to “build from within” by expanding the resources that are available to our members through our website. In September, we launched our Civic Engagement Listings page to expose our members to open board- and civic service- positions across the state. We also followed that up with the launch of our Membership Portal to enhance the social and networking experience of our website and our BIPOC community.

None of this could be done without the generous support of our supporters and funders. This year, we deepened our connections with businesses and organizations who seek to support the BIPOC community.

Through our partnership with the Vermont Business Roundtable (VBR), we have received generous multi-year capacity building grants from their member organizations such as Champlain Investment Partners, M&T (formerly People’s Bank), UVM Health Network, and Vermont Mutual Insurance Group. We also developed a robust relationship with the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF), which has since connected us to the Cotyledon Fund, the McClure Foundation, and other VCF donor-advised funds. We were excited to also start partnering with organizations like Vermont Economic Development Authority, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, the Vermont Arts Council, and Americorps/SerVermont to support BIPOC businesses, organizations and individuals via outreach, technical assistance, and affinity spaces. We are grateful for these and other partnerships we have developed over the last year.

Read more about all of these accomplishments and what's to come next in the report details below!



Photo by Isora Lithgow Creations





# 2022 by the numbers



Photo by Isora Lithgow Creations

## SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

In 2022, VT PoC brought our social media to new heights. One of our largest goals for 2022 was developing a strong social media presence and a dedicated following. Cumulatively across our Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts, VT PoC gained 1,994 new followers. All of this growth can be seen in the graphics below, which demonstrate how our reach has expanded across all four social media platforms.

Additionally, VT PoC began using the power of social media marketing to reach BIPOC Vermonters beyond our large Chittenden county base - utilizing the ability of social media platforms like Instagram to virtually reach new communities. We will continue these efforts in 2023, to draw in BIPOC from all over the state.

**40,195**

FACEBOOK  
PAGES REACHED



Vermont Professionals  
of Color Network

**↑ 149%**

FROM 2021

**18,263**

IG FOLLOWERS  
REACHED



@vtpoc\_network

**↑ 55%**

FROM 2021

**2,543**

LINKEDIN  
VISITORS



Vermont Professionals  
of Color Network

**↑ 222%**

FOLLOWERS

**7,609**

TWITTER  
VISITORS



@vtpoc\_network

**↑ 160%**

FOLLOWERS



# MEMBERSHIP REPORT



Photo by Isora Lithgow Creations

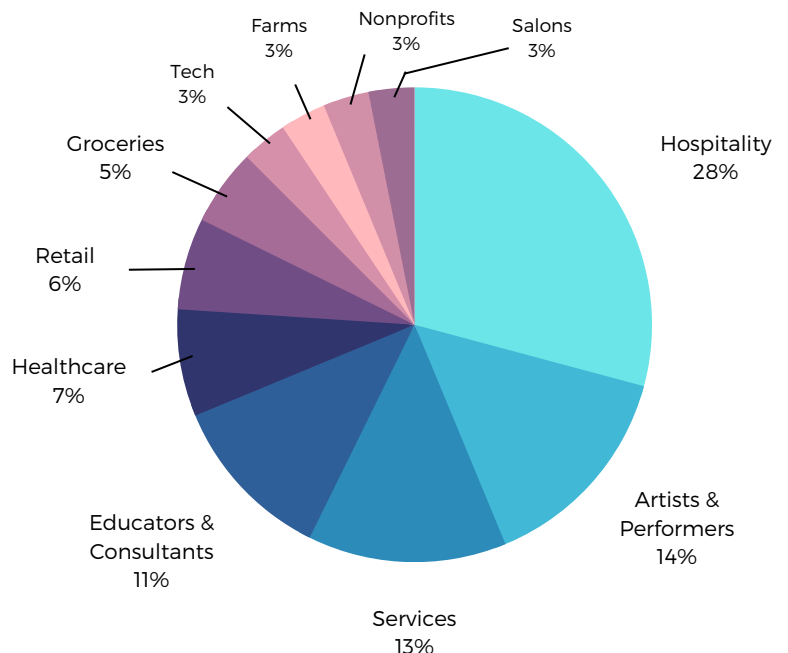
In 2022, VT PoC launched a new Membership Portal to enhance the social and networking experience of our website and our BIPOC community. Through this portal, we see the opportunity for users to discover new members to collaborate with, and spark bold new ideas for meaningful careers and businesses.

As of December 2022, VT PoC had 727 members registered through the portal, which goes each week. Since 2021, we've doubled our membersip.

## BIPOC BUSINESSES IN VERMONT BY CATEGORY

In addition to a growing number of BIPOC community members joining our Membership Portal for online networking and connection, VT PoC saw additional contributions to our BIPOC Business Directory.

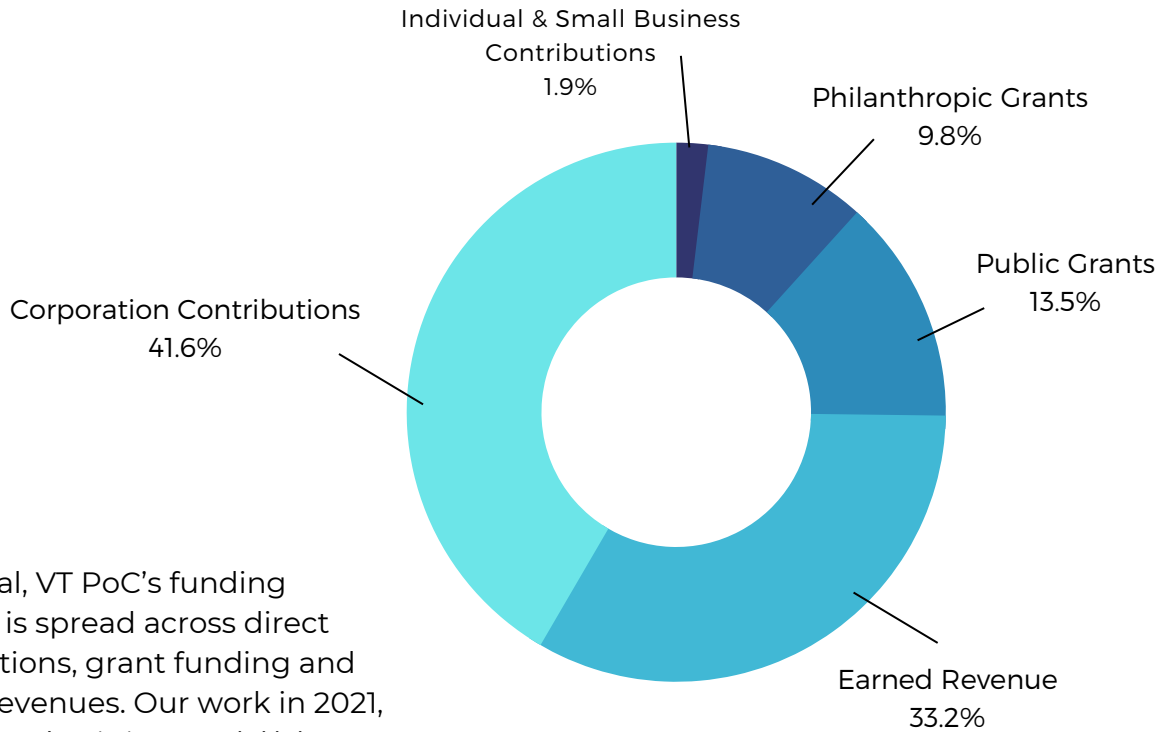
These 312 businesses range in type. Hospitality comprises the majority of listed businesses, with Artists & Performers as well as Educators & Consultants being top categories thereafter.







## FINANCIAL REPORT: REVENUE



In general, VT PoC's funding portfolio is spread across direct contributions, grant funding and earned revenues. Our work in 2021, including obtaining 501(c)(3) designation, increased our capacity to seek and receive funding. We significantly increased corporate contributions, thanks to early work by our Board Chair, Tino, who worked with organizations like VBR to develop meaningful relationships, cultivate substantial donations, and expand opportunities for mutual growth and learning. We also received support from generous individual and small business donations to complete our direct contributions portfolio. Tino's efforts funded almost 42% of our organizational budget, and we are excited to continue these and similar relationships in 2023 and beyond.

Concurrently, we increased our earned revenue streams, including the jobs board, consulting, and fiscal sponsorship of the Vermont Health Equity Initiative. In terms of grant funding, we were supported by two major projects (see Major Projects section below) that received state and federal funding support (Community Navigator Pilot Program) and philanthropic support (Non-profit Grant Systems Series). In total, grant funding supported about a quarter of our total operational budget.

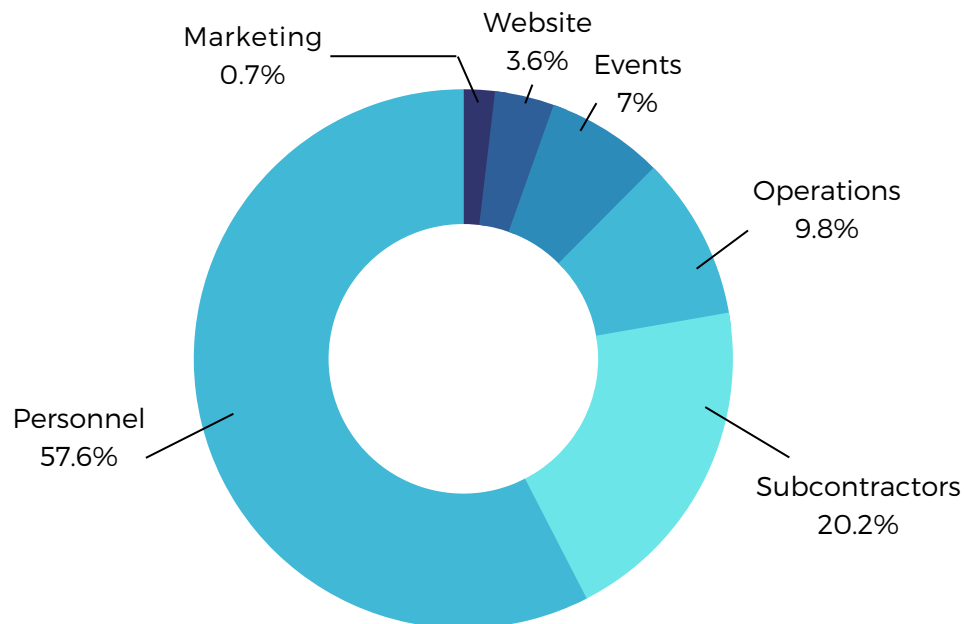


## FINANCIAL REPORT: EXPENSES

The work that we do at VT PoC is only possible through the work and effort of our incredible staff. In FY22, our staff capacity grew and the majority of our overall budget went towards supporting the incredible new team members, increasing our staffing budget by ten percentage points from 2021. At VT PoC, we also believe in supporting all of the BIPOC individuals who give us their time and energy to provide services, whether as part of their work day or in their personal time. As such, our expenditure towards subcontractors, including consultants working with us across the Community Navigator Project and participants of the Grant Systems Series, increased by over 17 percentage points over FY21.

This year, our marketing budget and expenses decreased significantly because of the changes in need. In 2021, most of our marketing budget went towards the Burlington BIPOC COVID-19 vaccination clinic, including printed advertisements and flyers, while we focused on digital advertisements in 2022.

The generous corporate, individual and small business contributions in this year also meant an increase in our events and operational budget. Thank you to those who made these contributions; you help to make our gears work and our events better than ever!







# Projects

## US SBA COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR PILOT PROGRAM (CNPP)



This year, we joined the Vermont Small Business Development Center (VtSBDC) and eight other statewide service and outreach organizations in the Community Navigator Pilot Project (CNPP) funded by the US Small Business Administration. This two-year grant funded opportunity seeks to connect available business service resources to small business owners. VT PoC's role in this first year has been to better understand the opportunities and challenges faced by the BIPOC small business community via a survey and listening sessions held across the state. In all, we collected survey data from 277 BIPOC business owners statewide. In addition, we hosted 21 listening sessions, which translated to 1,890 minutes of listening sessions, and 87 BIPOC small business owners represented across those listening sessions. VT PoC is currently drafting a final report inclusive of survey and listening session data. This work and the data resulting from it is critical to supporting positive change within business service organizations and policy development, and will inform our future efforts to improve the quality of business for BIPOC entrepreneurs, and the delivery of resources by business service organizations like VtSBDC.





# Projects



## GRANT SYSTEM SERIES

In June, we launched our BIPOC Non-Profit Leader's Series on Grant Systems, which provided an introduction to the grant funding landscape, writing, budgeting, and management, with the goal to demystify traditional systems. Funded by generous donations from the Vermont Community Foundation, the Cotyledon Fund, and VCF donor advised funds, the series ran through December 2022, and attracted 17 BIPOC non-profit leaders representing Bennington, Brattleboro, Rutland, Morrisville, Cavendish, NEK and the Greater Burlington areas. Participants from this workshop benefited from:

- A curated space to learn about- and share experiences on-navigating the traditional grant/funding process
- Education on grant writing and management, budget writing, the reporting process, and closing a grant
- Tools to navigate the traditional grant writing landscape
- Dedicated time to build community between the BIPOC participants
- Compensation for their time away from their typical workday.





# Event Highlights



## Storytelling with BIPOC Women & Non-Binary Entrepreneurs - *May 1, 2022*

Our first event of the year celebrated BIPOC women and non-binary entrepreneurs. With Salt & Bubbles (Essex) as our backdrop and Ferene Paris Meyer of All Heart Inspirations as our keynote speaker (and baker extraordinaire), we were joined by an amazing group of leaders to celebrate one another, connect professionally and exchange ideas about BIPOC entrepreneurship.

## Nature Walks with The Nature Conservancy Vermont - *June - August, 2022*

This year, VT PoC partnered with The Nature Conservancy to pilot the VT PoC x TNC Walks, with the goal of bringing BIPOC community members to publicly accessible conserved lands across the state. Over the course of the summer months, 24 members visited Eshqua Bog, Barr Hill and Chittering Bog. We are excited to offer more walks and hikes in partnership with TNC in 2023!





# Event Highlights



## 2nd Annual August Kickback – *August 14, 2022*

Our annual family event was held at Oakledge Park, Burlington and attracted over 100 VT PoC members and their loved ones. The theme of the event was BIPOC media representation and highlighted the work of three incredible VT PoC members working in this space: Akshata Nayak, owner of Little Patakha; Kris Brown, owner of Kris Brown Voice Overs, and CD Mattison, UX Designer. Thanks to all the families who came out to celebrate

## Wakanda Forever – *November 11, 2022*

Poet and activist James Baldwin once wrote, “The place in which I’ll fit in will not exist until I make it.” In November, 144 of our members helped us to cultivate a space filled with BIPOC pride, connection, and joy by attending the special VT PoC member screening of Black Panther: Wakanda Forever. Representation matters, and gratitude abounds for all who came out that night to celebrate us!





# Web-Based Member Resources



## Business Directory

Our BIPOC Business Directory continues to grow. We now have well over 300 business listings and counting. Financial stability is the key to economic empowerment, and the most effective way to support the BIPOC community is financially. Visit [vtpoc.net](http://vtpoc.net) to see BIPOC-owned businesses ranging from healthcare, to hospitality, to educators/consultants.



## Jobs Board

Our Jobs Board accounts for almost 20% of the page views on our website. Our members have expressed appreciation for the career building and senior level opportunities they have found through the page. Additionally, private partners have conveyed gratitude for the exposure to a more diverse pool of candidates,



## Civic Engagement Listings

In August, we launched our Civic Engagement Listings page in order to expose our members to open board- and civic service positions across the state. These listings provide BIPOC professionals opportunities for leadership, exposure to other leaders across different sectors and regions, insight into organizational management, and seats at the table at a leadership level.



## Member Portal

In September, we launched our member portal, which gives our BIPOC members an opportunity to connect in a virtual space. This member portal will be home to BIPOC community news, professional connection features, and social engagements over the next year as we continue to build the site.





# Press

Vermont Professionals of Color Network, and our incredible staff, have been featured numerous times across various Vermont and national news sources.

In February 2022, co-founder Tino Rutanhira was interviewed as the opener on the Vermont Viewpoint with Ric Cengeri, showcasing our innovative BIPOC Business Directory.

Also in February, co-founder and Director of Operations and Development Weiwei Wang was interviewed by My Champlain Valley surrounding the historic Vermont and US court picks of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson and Vermont Superior Court Judge Nancy Waples. "I do identify with the Chinese community and that's part of why this is exciting is that she is an immigrant to this country and that is meaningful to me personally," said Weiwei Wang. "I hope that over time there is so much more recognition of the diversity of Vermont. There are new Americans here, there are BIPOC individuals here, people of the global majority, we are represented here, and we'd like to see that more in the workforce."



Photo courtesy of VT PoC from the Comcast Newsmakers Interview



Photo courtesy of VTDigger

Tino Rutanhira was also interviewed by Comcast Newsmakers, a news platform that welcomes regional and national trailblazers to discuss ideas, assess community challenges and progress, and inspire meaningful action. Tino spoke to host Nathan O'Leary about "Why BIPOC Professionals Should Live And Work In Vermont."

On June 19th, as part of the weekend long Juneteenth celebrations, Tino Rutanhira was one of the keynote speakers and represented VT PoC by speaking about "The Black Experience" and the importance of celebrating being Black, creating a sense of belonging, pride and self-worth.

In late November, Weiwei Wang was interviewed by Kiana Burks at WCAX to discuss why VT PoC created the Civic Engagement Listing page, and the importance of BIPOC representation in non-profit leadership.

In December, Weiwei Wang joined Connor Cyrus on Vermont Public's Vermont Edition to discuss the importance of buying from Vermont-based BIPOC small businesses during and beyond the holiday season.



# Meet the Team!



**Tino  
Rutanhira**

Tino has continued to juggle roles between his “W2 job” and the role of co-founder at VT PoC. On top of that Tino is doing his best to prepare for a pivotal time in his life as his daughter prepares to finish her final year of high school and go off to college. “It is not going to be pretty folks”!



**Weiwei  
Wang**

Weiwei just rediscovered the joy of audiobooks, courtesy of the free audiobook app via her public library. She’s “read” more in the last three months than she has in the last five years, and is quite excited about that. Her dog, Don Covito Corleone, is not pleased with the constant noise. He would rather be rolling in the snow.



**Krystal  
Sanchez-Williams**

Krystal is a Queer Puerto Rican Pisces, social change practitioner, bad millennial extraordinaire and fur momma. She has been in higher education for 5+ years and is excited to have made her non-profit debut with VT PoC.



**Alex  
Majmudar**

Alex recently graduated from University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with a BA in Comms. with an emphasis on Public Relations and a minor in Marketing. As a student, he was proud to be a part of Delta Chi Fraternity where he held an executive board position as well as being on student government and Inter Fraternal council. He is always seeking career opportunities in the business field and would welcome a conversation on any advice for a recent graduate.



**Charlotte  
Graf**

Charlotte lives in Boston with her two roommates and their cat, Stella. She has been working part-time as the Marketing Specialist at VT PoC since May 2022, when she started a new position as Executive Assistant at Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, an anti-poverty advocacy center in Boston.

## MEET THE BOARD!

- Tino Rutanhira (Chair)
- Weiwei Wang
- Belan Antensaye
- Phet Keomanyvanh
- Beth Awhaitey



# Looking ahead to 2023

We have so much to be thankful for; the past couple of years have been challenging, but they have also created so many new opportunities for the BIPOC communities that we represent. There is no doubt that our amazing community and committed staff have been the key to our success. We are excited as we enter 2023, our fourth year of existence, that we will rise to meet the challenges ahead and create more opportunities for our community. We are excited about the following highlights in the new year:

- More in-person and virtual networking events
- Financial literacy series (a year-long series aimed at educating our community on becoming financially literate and building generational wealth)
- Internship portal (similar to our jobs board, this database will expose paid internship opportunities with Vermont companies to our BIPOC youth)
- Procurement portal (this will be a consolidated listing of contract and procurement opportunities for our businesses to participate in)
- Career fair (a career fair to help expose our BIPOC talent find new employers and employment opportunities and vice versa)

- Professional member survey (the goal is to build more programming based on a data-informed understanding of what our community of professionals want and need)

As co-founders of the organization, it has been incredible to see the continued growth and potential of VT PoC. The phrase from the disability movement, "Nothing about us without us", resonates philosophically with us and our mission. In order to continue elevating the voices of our community, we promise to continue to build this organization from within; for BIPOC by BIPOC. We promise to continue dedicating all our efforts, programs and activities around creating a professional BIPOC community, and to do everything we can to elevate and expand access to statewide economic, professional, social, and environmental resources that are critical for economic and social justice. We are convinced more than ever that with the support of our accomplices, we can make Vermont increasingly accessible to low- and middle-income BIPOC families that wish to call this state their home.

Many thanks,

Weiwei Wang + Tino Rutanhira





# Our Supporters

Our community of donors makes our work possible. More than 53% of our operating revenue comes directly from individuals, foundations and corporations.

Investing in VT PoC directly supports the lives of hundreds of BIPOC Vermonters. Your support can come in many forms:

- Monthly & annual donations
- Honorary & memorial gifts
- Planned giving
- Foundation grants
- Event sponsorship
- In-kind donations

To discuss your giving plan, please contact Weiwei Wang at [weiwei@vtpoc.net](mailto:weiwei@vtpoc.net) or go to [www.vtpoc.net/support-vt-poc/](http://www.vtpoc.net/support-vt-poc/)

We thank you for your generous support!

## US Small Business Association

VT Community Foundation

Phi Gamma Delta of MIT

Champlain Investment Partners

M&T Bank

UVM Health Network

VT Mutual Insurance Group

PC Construction Co.

Data Innovations

Vermont Gas Systems

Green Mountain Power

Hickok & Boardman

King Arthur Baking

Redstone

SymQuest Group, Inc.

Smugglers Notch Resort

VT Student Assistance Corp.

ECHO Leahy Center

Global Z. International, Inc.

KPMG, LLP

Leonardo's Pizza, Inc.

VT Electric Power Co, Inc.

Tenth Crow Creative

Foley Services, Inc.

VBT Bicycling Vacations & Country Walkers

Basin Harbor Resort & Boat Club

VT Center for Emerging Technologies, Inc.

Winthrop H. Smith Charitable Fdn.



# Our Supporters

Ben & Jerry's Foundation  
Women of Wisdom/Sweet Charity  
West Central VT CEDS

The Alchemist Foundation

UVM EPSCoR

CRJ Consulting Group, L3C

Karin Chamberlain

Elizabeth Stevens

EmpowR

Rebecca Holcombe

Marielle Matthews

Amanda Van Vranken

Rachel Jolly

Dr. Stacey J. Young

William Schubart

Eliza Wilcox

Kelly Blewett

Rae Carter

Zach Pollakoff

Neha Subramanyam

Alfred Belluche

Robert Spottswood

Angelique Franzoni

Elaine Wang

Freeman French Freeman

Scott Giles

Nicole Curvin

Timothy Burgher

Jeffrey Glassberg

Brian Lowe

Emily Gaynor/Jeff Lue

Mona Miyasato

Kathy Comstock

Hyun Kim

Reynaldo Arellano

Meg Hammond

Theodore Heck

Shawn Behlendorf

Nicole Hansen

Scott Finn

Stephen Kiernan

V M Smiley

Olivia Burgher

Alexa Woodward

Rebecca Johnston

Elise Brunelle

Hilary Melton

Qinby McLellan

Roxanne Vought

Monica Davis

Tadayoshi Kawawa

Rilla Murray

Amy Kelsey

David Zuckerman

Victoria Wilson

# The Vermont Professionals of Color Network



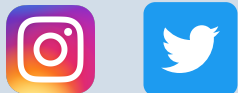
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of Color Network