

# WORKING TOWARD WELL-BEING FOR ALL WHO CALL VERMONT HOME



## IMPACT REPORT 2023



“You have to know, when you hold a skein of yarn, what does it actually cost to make that skein? The materials, the labor, the energy to run the mill. Knowing that gave us the confidence to get to a wholesale price that we could live with, and that local yarn shops could live with. We were able to feel good about that because of the work we did with our business coach.”

Peggy Allen,  
Co-founder, Junction Fiber Mill



“This is the best accelerator that we have participated in. Specifically, this program has a unique curriculum that’s designed to create a collaborative competition and allow us to sit across the table from electric utilities, planning directors and CFOs.”

Marcelo Sandoval,  
Co-founder, CEO, Chief Scientist, Prosumer Grid  
DeltaClimate<sup>VT</sup> 2023 Winner



“I realized the need for systems improvement. I wanted solid staff and inventory structures. I needed to understand my books. And I needed to evaluate what growth would look like within those parameters.”

Karin Bellemere,  
Owner, Roots Market Farm



“The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund’s Forest Products Development Program remains a pivotal leader, facilitator, and advocate in strengthening the sector. The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation is grateful for their invaluable support in guiding the creation of the Vermont Forests Futures Strategic Roadmap.”

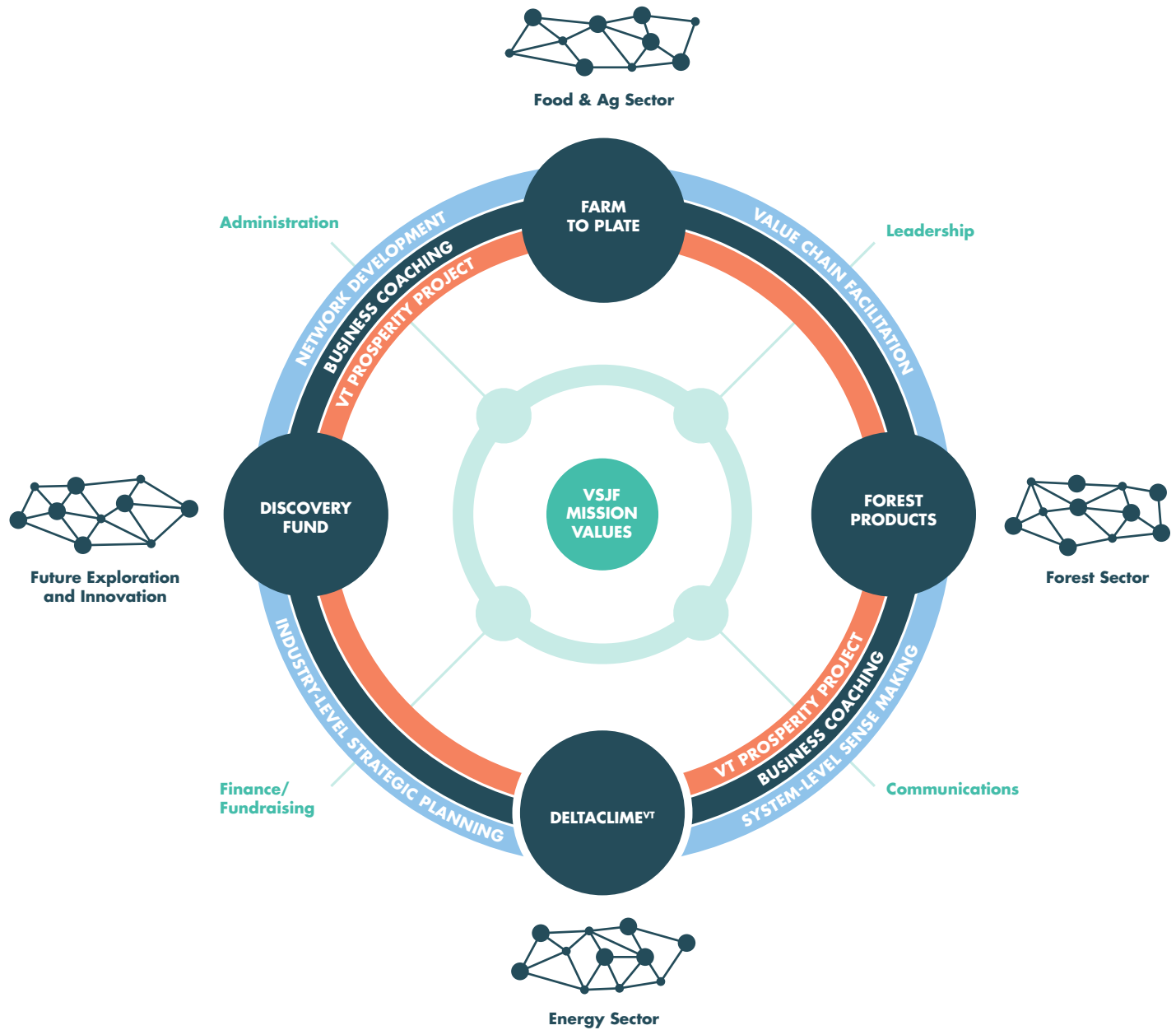
Danielle Fitzko,  
Commissioner for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

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OVERVIEW

# VSJF at a Glance



## Dear Supporters,

**This past year was challenging for many in Vermont. Just as people and businesses were gaining solid footing post-COVID, devastating flooding in July sent many back to square one. The toll was economic, but it was also emotional and for some, deeply personal.**

As we work to accelerate sustainable economic development across Vermont, we are also working to foster **collective wellbeing**. Whether we are coaching small business owners, exploring innovative climate solution technologies, or creating a roadmap to end hunger in Vermont, that means considering how we can better design our economic system so that we are ALL experiencing a sense of wellbeing and are doing so within planetary boundaries.

In 2023, that work looked like:

- Providing **business management coaching** for 26 businesses in Vermont.
- Accelerating 8 **climate/renewable energy solutions startups** in the 2023 DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> cohort.
- Researching innovative **new markets for the forest economy**, including wood-based textiles.
- Developing a **Food Security Roadmap** that aims to end hunger in Vermont by 2035.
- Launching the **Business Sense Series**, essential tools and informational resources to help small businesses grow.
- Collaborating with 7 other statewide organizations on the Vermont Prosperity Project, an initiative that centers **wellbeing in the economy**.
- Establishing the VSJF Discovery Fund to support our **big picture thinking on systems-level change**.

While the following pages speak to our impact in terms of numbers, they do not fully tell the story of our work. The full story of a fourth-generation dairy farm in Weybridge being coached through a strategy that will improve its profitability while also preserving its culture and legacy. The full story of a refrigerated warehouse in Brattleboro that is a cornerstone of a regional food system. The full story of an energy pilot at Jay Peak that makes the resort less reliant on fossil fuels.

That's where I believe our true impact lies. Not only in the services we provide, but in our ability to advance both economic and collective wellbeing. As you read through this report, I hope you'll be inspired to learn more about our programs, services and innovative approaches, and how you can [join us in this important work by making a financial gift to VSJF Discovery Fund](#).

Thank you,



Ellen Kahler  
Executive Director



## SERVICE

# Business Coaching

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) provides tailored business management coaching, entrepreneurial support, and training to position Vermont entrepreneurs for growth and long-term success. Our clients include Vermont-based, value-added food and agricultural, forest-related, renewable energy, waste management, and environmental/clean technology enterprises that are supplying products and services to a diverse marketplace.

In 2022, the owners of [Babette's Table](#), a Waitsfield-based artisanal charcuterie business, were on the cusp of a big decision: should they move their business closer to home and their two daughters? They reached out to [VSJF's Business Coaching Program](#) and were connected with two coaches who had them dig into their finances, but also examine their values, which included a commitment to local agriculture. For Babette's Table, they realized their focus

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"Our work with our two coaches, Jean and John, revealed that if we are committed to local pork, which we are, it's going to be more expensive. So, we have to be super efficient in order to stay true to our values and priorities and run a profitable business. Jean and John helped us get to an exciting place. We're thinking about growth, new products, and have a better sense of how to plan, how to build the business."

Julie Morton, Co-owner, Babette's Table

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should be on supporting employees, growing sales, and expanding relationships with local farms.

These are the kinds of business decisions that our high-level, experienced coaches help Vermont entrepreneurs make. In 2023, we were able to support the needs of 26 entrepreneurial, small businesses in our market sectors through our targeted,

deep-dive and short-term intensive coaching program for business owners and their managers.



U.S. Small Business Administration

### Business Coaching Client Work

With special, two-year funding support from the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Community Navigator Pilot Program (CNPP), managed by the Vermont Small Business Development Center (VtSBDC), VSJF was able to expand the number of businesses we could support in 2023. Through the program, we offered intensive coaching over 9–12 months to businesses owned by veterans, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and women, along with businesses in rural parts of the state, on a mutually defined scope of work geared towards solving challenges to the business’ development, including access to the right match of capital. Over the two-year life of CNPP, VSJF worked with 15 businesses in our market sectors at no cost to them.

### CNPP Clients by the Numbers

- **15** CNPP clients served
- **843** Client coaching sessions; over 1,350 hours
- **151** Jobs created or retained
- **\$10.5m** Gross sales in aggregate at start
- **\$13.8m** Gross sales in aggregate at finish
- **\$3.1m** New capital raised across 9 companies

### VSJF Welcomed a New Coach

In 2023, VSJF welcomed Tabitha Bowling (Root8Ventures) to our roster of high-quality, C-suite business management coaches. The diversity of talent we can bring to a client is extraordinary: through support, advice, leadership training, and access to extensive network contacts all geared towards helping our clients improve the effectiveness of their business.



Front Row (Left to Right): Beth Gilpin, Linda Markin, Victor Morrison, Tabitha Bowling, Jean Kissner, Ellen Kahler; Back Row (Left to Right): Steve Voigt, Kathleen Murphy Moriarty, Peter Cole, Gabriel Cole, Carolyn Cooke, Jean Kissner, Lawrence Miller.

### VSJF Business Management Coaches

- |                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Tabitha Bowling | Linda Markin             |
| Gabriel Cole    | Lawrence Miller          |
| Peter Cole      | Victor Morrison          |
| Carolyn Cooke   | Kathleen Murphy Moriarty |
| Beth Gilpin     | Steve Voigt              |
| Jean Kissner    |                          |



## Business Sen\$e Series Released

*Business Sense* is a no-fluff source of information that gets right to the heart of what small business owners need: essential tools and informational resources to help their businesses grow. Written by our team of business coaches and released in 2023, this series shares their decades of experience in areas such as financials, operations, sales and marketing, human resources, leadership, and governance. These resources can help build skills and competency across all aspects of business operations so our clients are more well-rounded leaders and managers. This highly accessible resource series is designed to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners with recommendations and practical advice to help their businesses not only survive but thrive. These resources have been shared widely in the Vermont business community and the business financial literacy series has been translated into six languages.

## What's Coming in 2024

With special one-time funding from the Vermont Legislature, VSJF will launch a new 18-month business coaching service called **Tools of the Trade—Business Fundamentals for Energy Pros**, for home performance and weatherization contractors, builders who are renewable energy and energy efficiency oriented, electricians and energy audit firms.

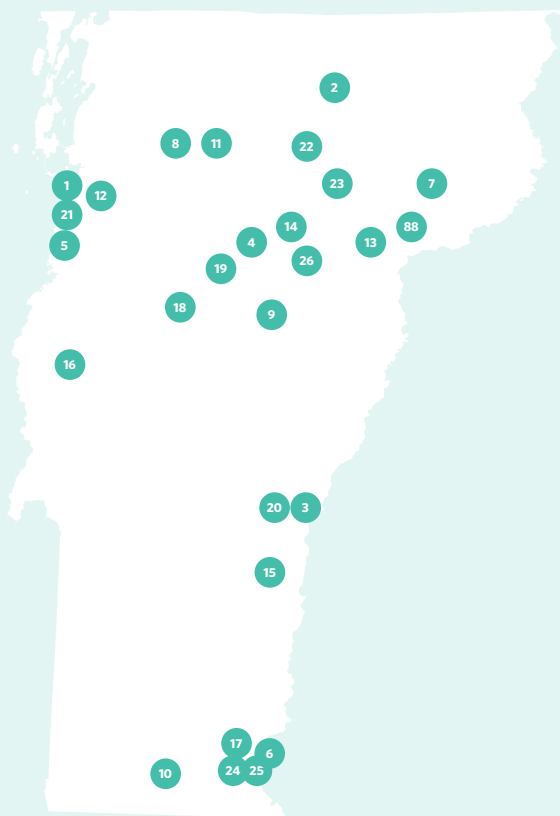
### Why is it important to support this work?

“Leaders need to go to the helicopter”—a powerful insight shared with me in my career trajectory as a small business entrepreneur. The concept of the helicopter or balcony view—the call for leaders to step back from the day-to-day to look at the big picture and work **‘ON their business’** as opposed to **‘IN their business’** is critical. The demands on leaders to change or pivot their businesses in the current climate adds new layers of complexity and challenge. In a competition for a leader’s time, the busy-ness of actions that come with those changes can win over the fundamental and primary need to ensure clarity and reflection at a strategic level. VSJF coaches encourage leaders to create that space, get them to the helicopter and take the seat next to them.

*Kathy Murphy Moriarty, VSJF Business Coach*



## Business Coaching Clients Across Vermont



### Community Navigator Pilot Program Clients

- 1 **Kitchen, Restaurant, and Bar Specialists:** a consulting firm serving farm-to-table chefs in VT and across the U.S., South Burlington
- 2 **Bobolink Yarns:** a woman owned, specialty yarn and designer supporting local farm partners, Irasburg
- 3 **Junction Fiber Mill:** a women owned wool processing mill, White River Junction
- 4 **Green Mountain Druid School:** a woman owned, adult spiritual education center, 70-acre forest and green burial sanctuary, Worcester
- 5 **Vermont Tortilla Co.:** a woman owned, corn tortilla maker, Shelburne
- 6 **Food Connects:** a food hub focused on increasing access to a range of markets for small Vermont producers, Brattleboro
- 7 **Trenchers Farmhouse:** a specialty food manufacturer, Lyndonville
- 8 **Smugglers Notch Distillery:** a craft distillery, Jeffersonville
- 9 **Butterfly Bakery:** a woman owned specialty food manufacturer, Montpelier
- 10 **WheelPad:** a woman owned modular tiny home manufacturer, Wilmington
- 11 **Up End This:** a modular tiny home manufacturer for unhoused individuals using Vermont wood, Morrisville
- 12 **New Frameworks:** a worker owned design build firm specializing in innovative material use (e.g., straw bales) and Vermont wood, Burlington

- 13 **Currier Forest Products:** a sawmill specializing in large timbers, Danville
- 14 **Sawyer Made:** an heirloom-quality furniture maker, East Calais
- 15 **Rockledge Farm Woodworks:** a small wood manufacturer, Reading

In addition to these CNPP clients, our group of talented business coaches either finished or are still working with several other innovative, entrepreneurial businesses in Vermont through our regular 12 to 18-month deep dive business coaching services or through short-term intensive services. Funding support for these client projects comes from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board's Farm to Forest Viability Program, the Vermont Training Program and client fees for service.

### 2023 Deep Dive Business Coaching Clients

- 16 **Monument Farms:** a multi-generational dairy farm, processor and distributor, Weybridge
  - 17 **VT Hempicurean:** a CBD and hemp product retailer that sells hemp/cannabis grower supplies, and also operates a registered cannabis retail outlet, W. Brattleboro
  - 18 **Babette's Table:** a women owned business, producing locally sourced charcuterie, Waitsfield
  - 19 **Roots Farm Market:** a woman owned, farm-based market sourcing all local products, Middlesex
  - 20 **Global Village Foods:** a BIPOC-owned family business, maker of allergy friendly frozen meals with bold African flavor, Quechee
  - 21 **SugarSnap Catering:** a woman owned catering business, Burlington
  - 22 **Myers Produce:** a woman owned distributor of Vermont food products into southern New England markets, Craftsbury
- ### Short-Term Intensive Clients
- 23 **Kingdom Creamery:** a multi-generational dairy farm and processor, Hardwick
  - 24 **MamaSezz:** a women owned frozen vegan meals manufacturer, Brattleboro
  - 25 **Retreat Farm:** a non-profit ag literacy organization and retail operation (formerly owned by Grafton Village Cheese and the Grafton Foundation), Brattleboro
  - 26 **Vermont WildWoods:** a producer of unique, spalted wood products, Marshfield



## PROGRAM

# Forest Products Program

**Our Forest Products Program continued to evolve, focusing on innovation in our forest products industry in 2023. We are excited to work with the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation on the Forest Future Strategic Roadmap while also continuing to promote our Forest Economy Career Guide and assisting forest products businesses throughout the state.**

### Industry Navigator

When a fire damaged a local sawmill this summer, VSJF Forest Products Director Christine McGowan was on-site with a VSJF business coach to offer support and connecting the owner to state and federal resources. When an entrepreneur in St. Johnsbury was seeking guidance on starting a mass timber components manufacturing business, Christine connected him with several state and regional contacts who could help him. In an industry rooted in tradition, operating in the 21st century economy is more complicated than it used to be. Christine plays a vital role in making sense of the industry—whether it's sharing resources, exploring collaborations between local businesses and career and technology programs, or making business-to-business connections along the supply chain.

### Forest Future Strategic Roadmap

The Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation launched the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap to strengthen and modernize the forest products industry in Vermont. As an industry leader, Christine McGowan was asked to serve on the FPR Project Team to support the Department and its contractor through the roadmap process and make connections with the industry. The Roadmap lays out a 10-year strategic vision for how the industry will transform in the coming years, addressing market and demographic shifts.



## Vermont Forest Industry Summit

We were pleased to see so many new and familiar faces at the [2023 Annual Vermont Forest Industry Summit](#) at Bolton Valley Resort in September. The theme, “Exploring Innovation in the Forest Economy” brought together industry stakeholders from Vermont and the Northern Forest Region to explore new products and technologies influencing the future of our forest economy.

This year, we partnered with the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to help facilitate topical discussions around the Strategic Roadmap, which will be presented to the Vermont Legislature in early 2024.



## Wood-Based Textiles Market Opportunity Assessment

Considering that the global textiles market tops \$1 trillion and that nearly two-thirds of all fibers we wear and use are made from petroleum, VSJF felt compelled to investigate whether our region’s wood basket could contribute to reducing our dependence on oil in favor of a sustainable and renewable resource for a wide range of fiber-based products. We commissioned a [market opportunity assessment for wood-based textiles](#) that could replace plastics in clothing, carpeting, upholstery and biomedical supplies, among other items. The report offers three exciting possible pathways to take advantage of this emerging product category, which we will continue to explore.



## Career Guide

Following the publication of our [Vermont Forest Industry Career Guide](#), we began outreach to Vermont career and technical centers (CTEs), high schools, and colleges. We sent it out to Vermont schools as a resource for students and presented it at a CTE conference. Partnering with [Advance Vermont](#), the Guide is featured on their website to showcase popular forest economy jobs. We also produced three short videos featuring local business owners talking about careers in the forest industry.



## Inspiring Stories

Vermont is known for its wood products, but the people who make it all happen are often behind the scenes. Our series highlighting the people who help keep Vermont’s working forests intact and thriving has been able to tell their stories and showcase their passion. Over the past 5 years, we have released more than 45 stories and deep-dive profiles into the industry, the people, and the forests that make up this sector. All the stories are available on the [VSJF website](#).



## What's Coming in 2024

VSJF joined a coalition of leading forest institutions across Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont to form the [Coalition of Forest Innovation and Research \(CONFIR\)](#). This \$1 million effort made possible by funding from the National Science Foundation aims to accelerate innovations in forest ecosystem management and forest products and open new markets that depend on thriving forests in New England. VSJF is leading the workforce research and assessment aspect of this work while bringing the Vermont Forest Futures Roadmap effort into this new regional planning project.

### Why is it important to support this work?

Vermont is the 4th most forested state in the U.S. with 4.5 million acres of forest covering 76% of the land. Vermont's forest and wood products industries support more than 13,800 direct and indirect jobs and contribute \$2.1 billion in economic output to the Vermont economy annually. Forest-based recreation adds another 10,000 jobs and \$1.9 billion to the economy. But an aging workforce and landowner base coupled with a decline in traditional forest products markets in Vermont and the region have put our forest economy at risk. Our work focuses on efforts to create and retain quality jobs, open additional markets for locally produced forest products, and improve economic development in the industry.

## 2023 Communications Reach

- **3** stories
- **656** impressions

## 2018-2023 Communications Reach

- **48** stories
- **7.4** million impressions
- **30,000** unique page views
- **789** newsletter subscribers
- **12 of 14** counties represented



## PROGRAM

# DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> Business Accelerator

The DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> business accelerator helps transform Vermont's energy sector by jump starting the development of start-up and seed stage climate economy and energy businesses that can solve some of Vermont's most pressing energy and climate related challenges.

For [DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> Energy 2023](#), we recruited 8 companies to accelerate the drive to a zero-carbon future for Vermont. We looked for companies that can help Vermont's utilities increase the adoption of clean energy, smart building and electric vehicle technologies without the need for costly infrastructure upgrades. This not only saves money for the utilities, and in turn, the consumer, but also accelerates Vermont's progress toward its climate goals.

Our partner [ecosVC](#) guided cohort members through a high-quality curriculum that focused on growing their businesses while they received mentorship from Vermont utility and energy companies. Working in person and virtually, this approach strengthened connections between cohort members and mentors and maximized flexibility. In June, we gathered as a cohort alongside supporters and mentors for an energizing final sprint and inspiring award ceremony.

## DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> Energy 2023 by the Numbers

- **8** companies selected out of a pool of 40 applicants
- **3** sprints over 12 days
- **100+** hours of instruction
- **14** hours of webinar engagement
- **24+** hours of 1:1 meetings
- **21** mentors from Vermont utility companies



## Updates from Alumni DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> Participants

### Halitra, 2022

Since winning the 2022 DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> prize of \$25,000 and an opportunity to partner with Burlington Electric Department and VT Gas Systems on a pilot project, Halitra also won a Massachusetts Clean Energy Center RFP that sought “innovative financing solutions to support building retrofits.”

### Qilo, 2022

Qilo is partnering with Vermont Electric Cooperative to quantify impacts of electrification and energy programs and highlight best opportunities for investment—resulting in lower costs for their members. Cyril Brunner, Innovation and Technology Leader, said, “we found valuable and easy-to-understand insights on heat pumps without installation of any devices—we just leveraged the AMI data we already had.”

### Medley Thermal, 2020

DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> alum Medley Thermal has been busy since winning the Energy 2020 prize. The company, which focuses on deploying renewable power-to-heat systems in large commercial and industrial applications, recently partnered with Jay Peak Resort and Vermont Electric Coop to install a 3-megawatt electric boiler that kicks in when heating with electricity is more cost efficient. This major pilot project was made possible not only by the DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> accelerator curriculum, but also the relationships and trust building with Vermont utility mentors. The partnership represents an exciting milestone in DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup>'s success in helping Vermont utilities and businesses transform Vermont's energy sector.



## Energy 2023 Challenge Statement

**“DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> Energy 2023 is looking for start-ups addressing the decarbonization of buildings, transportation, heating and industrial processes through electrification, biofuels or other renewables with a particular focus on load management controls integrated with storage, heat pumps and building systems are encouraged to apply, particularly those that address under-represented and low to moderate income populations.”**

## Prize & Pilot Winners

### DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> Energy 2023 Peer Awarded Prize \$25,000:

**ProsumerGrid** has developed a software solution that allows electric utilities and consumers to forecast and simulate electric grid impacts and optimally plan distributed energy resources.

## Pilot Projects

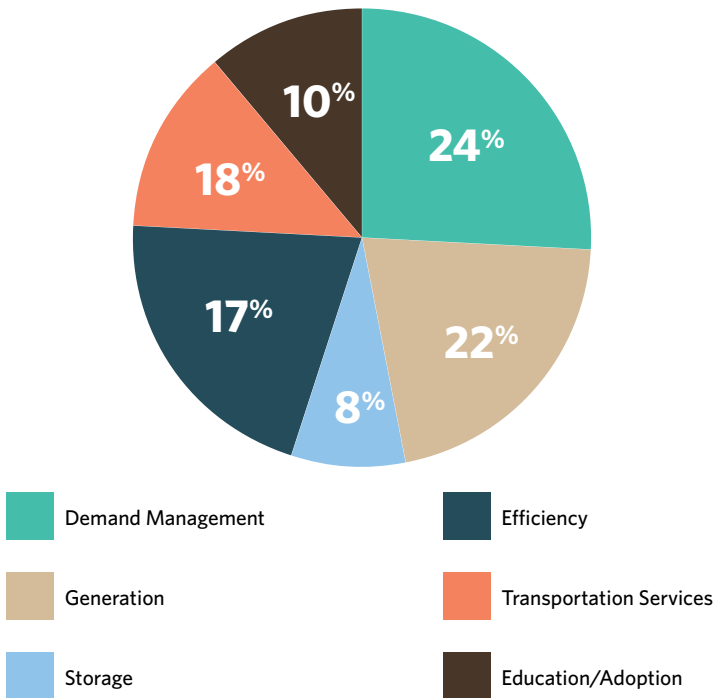
Burlington Electric Department (BED) also awarded three pilot projects:

- **ProsumerGrid:** BED will work with ProsumerGrid to map out multiple circuits on their distribution grid and forecast potential demand changes due to electrification and its effect on those circuits as well as generation needs.
- **Vermillion Power Technologies:** BED will pair Vermillion's novel inverter with Energy 2021 alumni ARC Industries' 3-kilowatt vertical access wind turbine to improve its performance (at a pilot project site at the Burlington International Airport).
- **Plug Zen, LLC:** BED will deploy Plug Zen's innovative electric vehicle charging solution at their headquarters.

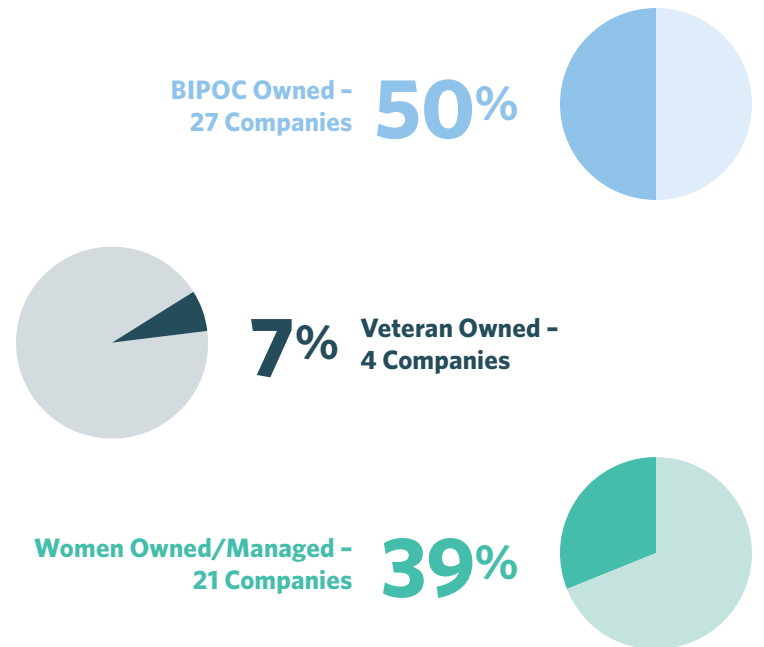
## Cohort Participant Breakdown

Each cohort of 7-9 companies is competitively selected to participate in the program by an advisory board. Of the 54 companies that participated in our first seven programs, we have successfully attracted companies that are women and people of color owned/managed, and a large majority of participants are under 35 years old. This is another important part of our program’s purpose.

### Cohort Companies by Energy Sector 2017-2023



### A Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, 2017-2023



## What’s Coming in 2024

The recruitment phase of Energy 2024 has already begun, which will focus on addressing the decarbonization of buildings, transportation, heating and industrial processes through electrification, biofuels, thermal energy networks or other renewables with a particular focus on load management controls integrated with storage, heat pumps, electric vehicle charging equipment and building systems. Ventures that address energy burden for under-represented and low to moderate income populations are of particular interest. To learn more about Energy 2024 visit [www.deltaclimevt.com](http://www.deltaclimevt.com).

### Why is it important to support this work?

Decarbonizing Vermont’s energy system is paramount to reaching our aggressive climate goals. Utilities are key players in the energy transition, but they need help identifying new technologies and vetting the companies behind them. That’s where DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> comes in. Our cohort companies are recruited to best address the needs of Vermonters. Working closely with the utilities, our cohorts aim to deploy their technologies and services to help meet Vermont’s climate goals. It’s not only a win for the utilities gaining access to emerging solutions, but also for the companies. They gain invaluable insights into the energy system and how to scale their solutions. Vermont serves as a proving ground for these companies and provides a model in decarbonization for the rest of the country and world.

“DeltaClimeVT is a real-time, real-life, reality-based accelerator for #CleanTech companies. It is an excellent path for early-stage firms like DaiTechCorp. DeltaClimeVT positioned DaiTechCorp to cultivate and grow a new business category within the transportation electrification sector. I’m totally excited about our impact on this new industry.”

Sheryl Ponds,  
CEO, DaiTechCorp



## PROGRAM

# Farm to Plate Network

**2023 has been a year of transformative change for the Farm to Plate Network. Following the relaunch of the Network and the website last year, we've turned our focus to the collaboration and project management that is at the heart of the Network. We made great strides on projects such as the Beef on Dairy program, the Food Security Roadmap, and the Vermont Agroforestry Species Project. We were also thrilled to welcome so many familiar and new faces at the 2023 Annual Gathering, where we further explored the theme of transformation.**

The late frost and flooding events this past year have demonstrated the challenges Vermont will increasingly face in the wake of climate change and the effects that come with it. The July flooding has further crystallized the need for collaboration across organizations to address pressing issues such as food insecurity and climate resiliency.

### **13th Annual Farm to Plate Network Gathering**

The theme of this year's Gathering was Transformative Change, which reflects the growing sense in Vermont and in the Network that now is the time to "be brave" in how we work together to

address some of the most pressing issues facing our state, region, and world. Eighteen breakout sessions highlighted the different ways transformation is happening within Vermont's and the Northeast region's food system and engaged participants in activities that built partnership and collaboration.

Three hundred forty-four people gathered at the Killington Grand Resort to grapple with issues such as climate change, economic inequality, industry and market consolidation, food insecurity, and racial inequity. It was both challenging and inspiring.





## Food Security Planning

The [Food Security Roadmap](#), to be released in January 2024, is built on the foundation of community stakeholder input from 600 Vermont residents who contributed their experience, expertise, and opinions about how to create a food secure Vermont. The Roadmap sets out a path to end the injustice of hunger in Vermont and create resilient, climate-ready communities across the state by 2035. The Roadmap has activities in four goal areas, to reach the overarching goal of a Vermont where all people have the food they want and need at all times:

- State government ensures food security in Vermont;
- Vermont communities have the tools and information they need to create community food security;
- Secure Vermont's food supply by equitably investing in farms, rural communities, and agricultural infrastructure in a changing climate;
- Food security action is well coordinated with a high level of collaboration.

The goals and their affiliated objectives and strategies are implementable, actionable items that will guide the state through 2035.

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“As a society, making decision[s] about how to provide and care for each other is a sign of a healthy democracy. It is also essential to engage and empower communities experiencing food insecurity to develop and implement solutions.”

Anonymous Vermonter

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## Racial Equity in our Food System

Over the course of summer 2022 to April 2023, 21 interviews and two meetings were held to develop a workplan for the Network's new Racial Equity Priority Strategy Team. Results were summarized and released in a report entitled: [Findings and Next Steps to Improve Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System](#), which identified the following five areas of activity that will guide the work of the team:

- Define and collect relevant data about racial equity in order to set clear and measurable targets for the state and food system in Vermont.
- Create an assets “map” of people and organizations working on racial equity issues in VT with a focus on agriculture-related work.
- Set meaningful and measurable racial equity objectives for the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (F2P backbone organization), the F2P Network including the Racial Equity Priority Strategy Team, and willing partners.
- Use the group to develop a community of practice for improving racial equity.
- Identify specific racial equity training needs and opportunities.

The team's leadership team has been formed and will be organizing the group to work on these five areas of activity in the coming years.

## Beef on Dairy Project

The first phase of the [Beef on Dairy](#) project was completed, which resulted in the successful crossbreeding of 100 animals, an agreement with a Vermont slaughterhouse to slaughter and process into sub-primals at an affordable rate, an agreement with a livestock broker to pay a floor price with a premium above conventional prices for loads sent in 2025, brand development with Place Creative Team and initial brand testing and surveying in Boston, and the creation of a website with online ordering. Six dairy farms, two processors, two retailers, and one livestock broker are currently actively engaged in the project, with the aim to engage 5-7 more farms and 8-10 retail buyers.

## Independent Grocers Project

The Independent Grocers Project aims to increase the number of local products sold at independent grocers in the state. To do this, we have provided store owners with training and merchandising support, technical assistance in their stores, and connected them through our [Small Bites e-newsletter](#) and in person events.



## Agricultural Literacy Priority Strategy Team

As the agricultural landscape shifts in Vermont, this team is reflecting on how this impacts collective understanding of the importance of our state's farming communities and consequently, behaviors. Can we anticipate whether greater agricultural literacy will, for example, impact an individual's purchasing habits, likelihood to pursue an agriculturally based career, or support of policies tied to our state's farming communities? The team recently issued a report, [Agricultural Literacy: Farm and Food Education in Vermont and Beyond](#). The findings are based on a network analysis of efforts in Vermont and beyond, and 26 in-depth interviews. Moving forward, this team will use this fact-finding effort to inform expansion of food systems related education.

## Workforce and Labor Topic Exchange

Leaders of this topic exchange bring together voices from the private sector, youth programs, technical and higher education to discuss how we can best align efforts around the state. Although agricultural training programs do exist in both secondary and higher education, enrollment is faltering and learning and training opportunities often do not reflect the needs of employers. In 2024, this group plans to publish an updated version of the [Exploring Food Systems Career Guide](#) and also organize conversations tied to the importance of maintaining agricultural training programs at Vermont State University's Randolph campus and other institutions.



## Land Access and Land Use Topic Exchange

Reflective of other topic exchanges, this group focuses on building connections, fostering relationships and developing understanding of complex issues. This past June, the exchange met at Lareau Farm in Waitsfield for a discussion on the intersection of the housing crisis and land access for farm employers and employees. In October, leaders of this group organized a joint meeting with the Food Security Topic Exchange to explore the correlation between land and food access, and how we can organize within communities to support equitable access to both.

## Climate Soil & Environment Topic Exchange

This topic exchange is focused on building connections between food system resilience and state climate policy and action. Currently, climate action and policy in Vermont is largely segmented between mitigation on one hand and resilience and adaptation on the other, with greater policy focus on mitigation. The role of agriculture for Vermont's climate policy and actions as a result is not well understood, discounted, or taken for granted. For 2024, the group plans to identify and recommend solutions, strategies and policy that can meet the need for adaptation and resilience action in Vermont by convening opportunities for collaboration and coordination.



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY A REGIONAL APPROACH TO FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE

MAY 2023

## New England Feeding New England Project

VSJF is providing important leadership for a new initiative called New England Feeding New England (NEFNE), aimed at increasing to 30% the food that is produced and consumed in New England by 2030. The initiative aims to unite the food system community across six states to strengthen and grow a climate resilient, equitable, regional food system.

In June 2023, the New England Food System Planners Partnership, which initiated the NEFNE project, released its report, **A Regional Approach to Food System Resilience** outlining what it will take for the New England states to provide 30% of its food by 2030. The seven-part report is intended to help policy-makers, funders, food system businesses and stakeholders, community groups, and consumers understand the relative resilience of New England's food system and plan for the future.

Sixteen researchers from around the region:

- calculated the economic impact (sales and jobs) of New England's food system
- explored current eating patterns and considered what a regionally resilient eating pattern would include
- conducted a regional self-reliance assessment of our current land and sea-based production in the region, and
- calculated production increases that would be required to achieve the 30% goal and considered what changes to existing market channels will need to occur in order to achieve our regional goal.

"No single county, state, or region can become food self-sufficient. But the quest for increased regional food self-reliance is both an investment in our shared future and an insurance policy against future risks, particularly due to climate change."

Executive Summary,  
New England Feeding New England: A Regional  
Approach to Food System Resilience

Vermont's Agriculture and Food Systems Strategic Plan 2021-2030 is very much in alignment with this regional project. Farm to Plate has led the way for food system planning efforts across the country with a laser focus on the power of networks to transform systems. The Farm to Plate Network has already built a strong business services, technical assistance, and financing support system for small and mid-size

producers, processors, and food system businesses. We've continued to make significant investments in long-term food production, increasing the viability of local farms and food businesses, and protecting and preserving agricultural land.

What we know from the NEFNE report is that our state will have an outsized role to play in increasing production of food that can be sold throughout the region. To reach more consumers with our locally produced food, we will need to increase the number of acres in agricultural production (which also includes more efforts to increase farmland protection) and we will need to open up more regional wholesale market outlets to our products.

**Find the Report here: [nefoodsystemplanners.org/projects/report-components/](https://nefoodsystemplanners.org/projects/report-components/)**



## PARTNERSHIP

# Vermont Prosperity Project

**VSJF has joined forces with a formidable team of human beings dedicated to working toward a more regenerative and distributive model of economics.**

Together, we want to evolve our current market-based economy to one that centers human wellbeing and shared prosperity, where no one is left behind and we live within the means of our living planet. VPP's Steering Wheel Team currently includes the [Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund](#), [UVM GUND Institute for Environment](#), [Abundant Sun LLC](#), [Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility](#), [Public Assets Institute](#), the [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#), [Recovery Vermont](#), and the [Vermont Council for Rural Development](#).

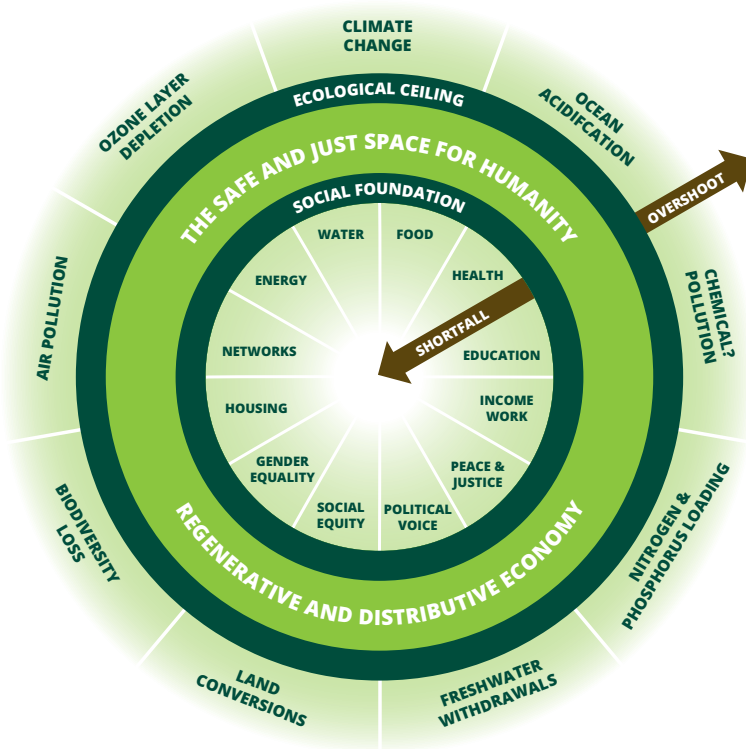
As a group of thought-leaders and doers, we are inspired by a growing global movement to shift the definition of progress from economic growth (GDP) to sustainable wellbeing. In so doing, we want to design and evaluate our economy by its contribution to our collective and future wellbeing, for both people and the planet.

We recognize that we cannot solve the multiple and interconnected crises we all face without transforming our current economic system. Inspired by the principles of ecological

### About the Vermont Prosperity Project

Envisioned as a 'network of networks', the [Vermont Prosperity Project \(VPP\)](#) is an initiative among a growing number of organizations in the state united around a common desire for our economic future, one that centers human and planetary wellbeing. It is not intended to be a new organization on its own. While we continue to build a base of support, we are focusing on:

- Raising awareness, developing understanding, and inspiring passion towards creating transformative change in Vermont, based on the principles of Doughnut Economics and the Wellbeing Economy.
- Connecting with like-minded individuals, groups, and organizations aligned with Doughnut Economics and Wellbeing Economy principles, seeking to enhance and amplify their work.



economics and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we have been exploring the growing global movement of communities, businesses, cities, and countries that are gathering around the [Doughnut Economics](#) framework, the [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#) movement, the [Circular Economy](#) movement, and others like it.

### 2023 Activities

Over 120 leaders, representing 95 different organizations, from all aspects of society attended our kick-off event in April where we explored the framework of [Doughnut Economics](#) at a high level. Following this success, we welcomed [Sophie Howe](#), the former Welsh Wellbeing of Future Generations Commissioner, to Vermont for an event at the Vermont State House and at UVM to explore the potential for a [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act](#) for Vermont in September. In November, we held a 3-hour workshop that featured a presentation by Doughnut Economics author [Kate Raworth](#) and deep dive conversations about which metrics would indicate how well we are meeting the needs of people who live in Vermont within the means of a living planet. Finally, we wrapped up the year with a webinar on the [Two Loops Model](#) of change that describes the nonlinear, emergent processes of change—inspired by looking at the growth and decline cycle of living systems, hosted by Jude Smith Rachele of [Abundant Sun](#) and Jacob Racusin and Ace McArleton of [New Frameworks](#).

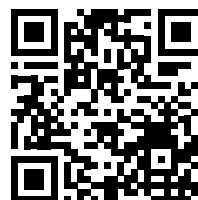
### What's Coming in 2024

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) to stay current with our plans to further explore the development of a Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Vermont, modeled after similar efforts in Wales. We'll also be organizing additional opportunities to learn more about the [Doughnut Economics](#) framework and the [Two Loops Model](#).

### Partner Organizations

The Vermont Prosperity Project is currently a partnership between the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, UVM GUND Institute for Environment, Abundant Sun LLC, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, Public Assets Institute, Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll), Recovery Vermont, and the Vermont Council on Rural Development.

### How You Can Support This Work



Donate to the VSJF's Discovery Fund to support our early-stage efforts to develop a wellbeing-oriented economy in Vermont.



FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

## Vermont RELEAF Collective

Racial Equity in Land, Environment, Agriculture, and Foodways

**The Vermont Releaf Collective cultivates connection, shares resources, and amplifies the voices of people of color in Vermont within our focus areas of Land, Environment, Agriculture, and Foodways. We are a collaborative ecosystem for growing power and community for our members.**

The Vermont Releaf Collective—a membership-based network created by and for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in Vermont with shared interests in land, environment, agriculture, and foodways—is proudly a fiscally-sponsored project of the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund since early 2022.

### Meet Jennifer Morton-Dow

Through this partnership, we have been able to grow our capacity to hire another full time staff person, a Technical Assistance & Resource Manager, to strengthen our network and support farmers, producers, and members in accessing resources and navigating bureaucracy. This critical increase in capacity, along with VSJF's generous support, helps us to grow stronger roots as



*Jennifer Morton-Dow,  
Technical Assistance and  
Resource Manager*

we steward Releaf into its next stage of growth.

Launched in the summer of 2020, the Vermont Releaf Collective was born out of the isolation of the pandemic that was compounded by the erasure and limited visibility of BIPOC contributions in Vermont. For almost two years, the organization was supported by a team of dedicated volunteers who served on the Organizing Squad. Recently this has shifted to support by a volunteer Board of Directors, two full time staff, and a new round of Organizers who are now part-time staff.

Three years after our founding, we have over 330 members across the state of Vermont.

As our work has grown, our community remains true to our roots. Our in-person community dinners are a staple offering that support member connections while our email listserv is one of the most vital connection platforms for our community. With direct access to the Releaf community, members use the listserv for a variety of topics, including grant opportunities, local mental health resources, and other community supports. The email list has also contributed to broad scale change in the greater Vermont community by encouraging employers to share salary ranges for transparency, staff demographics, and internal racial equity practices when conducting a hiring process. Our initiatives continue to center and prioritize the needs and hopes of our community members as a guiding star of our work.

“I’ve loved and so valued the community that you all have created through Releaf—it feels like a constant source of connection.”

Anonymous Releaf Member

**330+** community members  
from 13 of the 14  
Vermont counties

July 2023 also highlighted the necessity for emergency response to meet the needs of communities of color. We have been working to provide direct technical assistance to farmers and business owners to access emergency funding and critical supplies. Physical and mental wellbeing are also a key part of emergency recovery and Releaf is working to increase access

for BIPOC to services that will sustain them long after flood waters have receded.

### What's Coming in 2024

The Vermont Releaf Collective looks forward to increasing our capacity as an organization in the coming months, both internally and externally. We have begun our application for formal non-profit status and see this exciting development as the next step to collectively create a dignified future that is an equitable and safe place for Black, Indigenous, People of Color. We also hope to bring on additional staff in the next year to help us manage administrative and financial tasks. Finally, as Releaf offers more events and community convenings, members will continue to be invited to join planning teams to shape these powerful community-centered spaces.

**Website:** [www.vtreleafcollective.org](http://www.vtreleafcollective.org)



### The Year in Review

Over the last year, Releaf has significantly increased its offerings to the collective with a mix of skills focused workshops and community gatherings. Offerings have ranged from building chicken coops to oral history workshops, and all gatherings and events strive to source food and services from BIPOC businesses. Releaf has also deepened its connections with peer organizations, collaborating to share resources and information. At the state level, Releaf is an active participant in the Land Access and Opportunity Board, where we hold a seat to support initiatives that strengthen BIPOC land and housing access.

ABOUT

# Board and Staff



VSJF 2023 Staff Back Left to Right: Anthony Mennona, Kelly Dolan, Becka Warren, Jake Claro, Geoff Robertson; Front, Left to Right: Ellen Kahler, Christine McGowan, Sydney Lucia, Ester Erbe, Laura Brill, Kelly Nottermann; Not pictured: Janice St. Onge.

## 2023 VSJF Staff

Ellen Kahler,  
*Executive Director*

Janice St. Onge,  
*Deputy Director*

Christine McGowan,  
*Forest Products Program Director*

Geoff Robertson,  
*DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup> Managing Director*

Jake Claro,  
*Farm to Plate Director*

Kelly Dolan,  
*Farm to Plate Network Manager*

Becka Warren,  
*Food Security Roadmap Project Manager*

Kelly Nottermann,  
*Communications Director*

Anthony Mennona,  
*Finance Director*

Laura Brill,  
*Bookkeeper and Contracts Manager*

Sydney Lucia,  
*Grants and Fund Development Manager*

Esther Erbe,  
*Office Manager & Events Coordinator*

\* Leah Rovner,  
*Project Director,  
New England Feeding New England*

\* Samantha Langevin,  
*Network Manager,  
Vermont Releaf Collective*

\* Jennifer Morton-Dow,  
*Technical Assistance and  
Resource Manager,  
Vermont Releaf Collective*

\* VSJF serves as the fiscal sponsor for these programs

## 2023

### Board of Directors

Shelly Severinghaus,  
*Long Trail Sustainability,  
Chair, as of 07/23*

Nate Hausman,  
*Green Mountain Power,  
Vice Chair, as of 07/23*

Noelle Mackay,  
*Regulatory Assistance Project,  
Secretary/Treasurer*

Tayt Brooks,  
*Deputy Secretary, Agency of Commerce and  
Community Development*

Anson Tebbetts,  
*Secretary, Agency of Agriculture, Food  
and Markets*

Andrea Cohen,  
*Vermont Electric Cooperative*

Aditi Datta,  
*Brief*

Jean Hamilton,  
*Skinny Pancake*

Maureen Hebert,  
*University of Vermont, as of 09/20/23*

Laura Sibilias,  
*Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation*

Amanda Wheeler,  
*Vermont Department of Labor, as of 11/23*

Dustin Degree,  
*Deputy Director, Vermont Department of  
Labor, through 02/23*

Allison Hooper,  
*formerly of Vermont Creamery, through  
06/30/23*

Tori Biondolillo,  
*Executive Director, State Workforce  
Development Board, March–July, 2023*



ABOUT

# FY23 Funding Sources



## VSJF could not continue without the generous support of our many funding partners including:

- |   |  |   |                                      |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Anonymous Foundation & Individuals                                  | Northern Border Regional Commission  | Various Corporate Sponsors supporting VT Farm to Plate and DeltaClime <sup>VT</sup> | Vermont Housing & Conservation Board |
| Angell Foundation   | Sandy River Charitable Trust   | Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (General Fund)                        | Vermont Community Foundation         |
| Centers for Disease Control (via VT Department of Health)           | Small Business Administration  | Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (General Fund)                   |                                      |
| US Economic Development Administration (via Northern Forest Center) | US Department of Agriculture   | Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (General Fund)                  |                                      |
| Henry P. Kendall Foundation   | US Department of Health & Human Services/HRSA (via Bistate Primary Care Association) |   |                                      |
| Jane's Trust Foundation   |  |   |                                      |

VSJF also provided fiscal sponsorship services for the Hunger Mountain Food Coop Fund, the New England Food System Planners Partnership and the Vermont Relief Collective.

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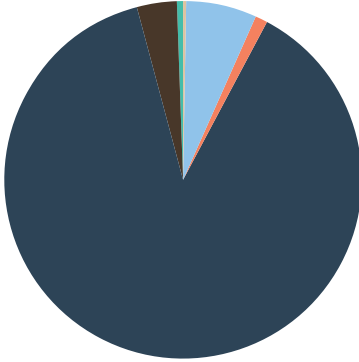
**Photo Credits:** Front cover, clockwise from top left, Erica Houskeeper, Kelly Nottermann, Andy Duback, Erica Houskeeper; Inside cover, clockwise from top left, Erica Houskeeper, Kelly Nottermann, Erica Houskeeper; pg. 4, Erica Houskeeper; pg. 5, clockwise from top left, Erica Houskeeper, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 6, Erica Houskeeper; pg. 8, left, Erica Houskeeper, bottom right, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 9, top left, Kelly Nottermann, bottom right, Erica Houskeeper; pg. 10, Erica Houskeeper; pg. 11, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 12, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 14, clockwise from left, Erica Houskeeper, Andy Duback, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 15, clockwise from top left, Erica Houskeeper, Sarah Webb, NH Food Alliance; pg. 16, Philo Ridge Farm, Lareau Farm; pg. 17, bottom left, Andy Duback, top right, Vermont Community Garden Network; pg. 18, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 19, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 20, clockwise from top left, Vermont Relief Collective, bottom, K Nottermann; pg. 21, Vermont Relief Collective; pg. 22, Kelly Nottermann; pg. 23, Kelly Nottermann.

ABOUT

# VSJF Financial Report

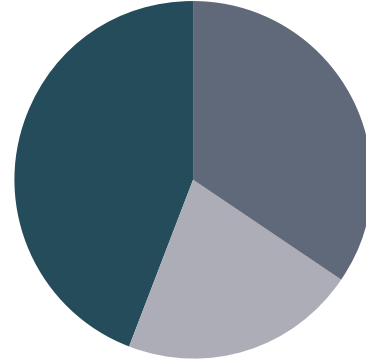
July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023 (unaudited)

## VSJF Revenues by Source



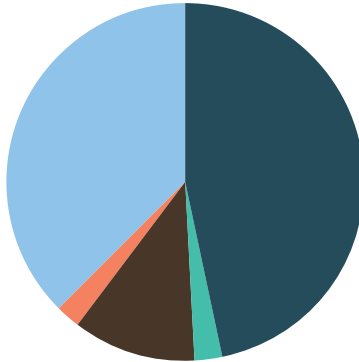
VSJF REVENUE BY SOURCE		
Grant Revenue	\$1,996,918	88.1%
Fees for Service	\$148,102	6.5%
Special Events	\$24,247	1.1%
Interest & Misc. Income	\$8,532	0.4%
Corporate Sponsorships	\$81,350	3.6%
Contributions	\$7,226	0.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,266,374</b>	

## Grant Revenue by Source



VSJF GRANT REVENUE BY SOURCE		
State	\$689,608	34.5%
Federal	\$425,732	21.3%
Foundation	\$881,578	44.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,996,918</b>	

## VSJF Expenses by Category



VSJF EXPENSES BY CATEGORY		
Personnel	\$1,120,459	46.7%
Grantmaking	\$61,060	2.5%
Operations	\$266,709	11.1%
Occupancy	\$57,177	2.4%
Professional Services	\$893,475	37.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,401,380</b>	

## VSJF Expenses by Initiative



VSJF EXPENSES BY INITIATIVE		
Operations	\$533,165	22.2%
Farm to Plate	\$752,048	31.3%
Forests Products	\$167,671	7.0%
Climate Economy	\$176,485	7.3%
Business Assistance	\$262,471	10.9%
Flex Cap Fund—Fund Manager	\$138,177	5.8%
Fiscal Sponsorship	\$371,363	15.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,401,380</b>	

**Note 1:** Federal Grant Revenue Sources include the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), USDA, Centers for Disease Control (via VT Dept of Health), US SBA, US DOE (via VT Dept of Public Service), and US HHS (via Bistate Primary Care Association). Foundation grants represent private philanthropic foundation funds received in FY22 or FY23 but expensed in FY23. Some General Support funds will be expensed in FY24.

**Note 2:** Professional Services include accounting, audit, and legal expenses as well as special projects conducted by consultants which are related to specific market development initiatives and/or are connected to specific grantee and/or business client support services.

**Note 3:** VSJF provided fiscal sponsorship services in 2023 to the Hunger Mountain Coop Foundation, the Vermont Relief Collective, and the New England Food System Planners Partnership.

**Note 4:** This is an unaudited financial report. As of January 1, 2022 the VSJF has switched to a calendar based fiscal year (Jan–Dec). This financial report represents revenue and expenses during the period of the state fiscal year (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023).



“People aren’t hungry only because of inadequate food access programs. The more we create programs, the more we build systems that rely on the current inequity we have. But at the same time, I think these programs are amazing. Everything just has to be happening at the same time—emergency services, and longer-term sustainable change.”

Food Security Roadmap Participant



# Accelerating Sustainable Economic Development



**Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund**

3 Pitkin Ct #301E  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
802-828-1260

**VSJF.ORG**



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**VERMONT FOREST PRODUCTS NETWORK**



**DELTA CLIMATE<sup>VT</sup> BUSINESS ACCELERATOR**



**FARM TO PLATE NETWORK/  
ROOTED IN VERMONT**

