



# VERMONT PROFESSIONALS OF COLOR NETWORK



The Vermont Professionals of Color Network acknowledges that the space we take up is on lands that have been a site of convergence and cultural exchange, nurtured and stewarded by ongoing generations of Indigenous communities, including the Western Abenaki.

The Western Abenaki refer to this land as Ndakinna [in-DAH-kee-NAH], which translates to “homeland.” We recognize the trauma caused by the violence and forced displacement inflicted upon these communities due to colonization.

With humility, we understand ourselves as guests on this land. We hold deep reverence for the profound Indigenous knowledge ingrained in this space. Our commitment lies in uplifting and honoring the presence of Indigenous voices, histories, peoples, and cultures within our community. We express gratitude for the opportunity of enjoying this beautiful land and are dedicated to its protection and preservation.

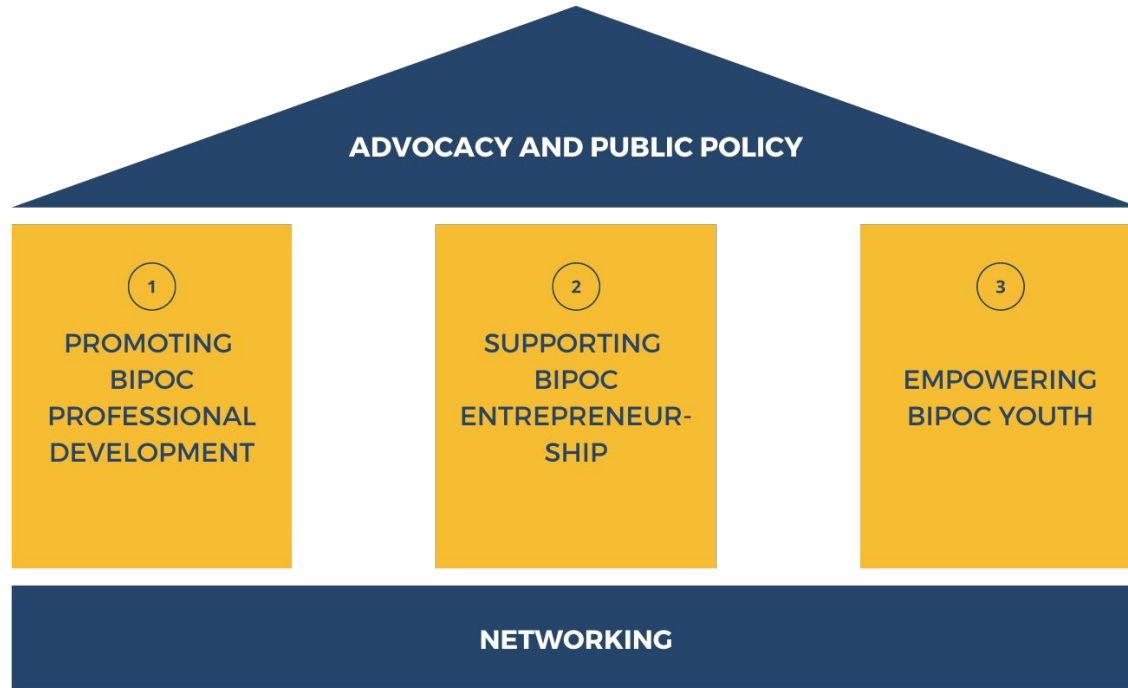


## Mission

Vermont Professionals of Color Network (VT PoC) exists to **advance prosperity for Black, Indigenous and People of Color** across Vermont.

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# What we do



**Prosperity starts with opportunities to climb the economic ladder**

# History of VT PoC!

**2019**

Founding members start creating networking events for BIPOC professionals. At the first event, 100 BIPOC professionals joined us at the Vermont Comedy club for laughter, joy, food, and community.

**2021**

VT PoC becomes an official 501c3. We run the BIPOC COVID-19 vaccine clinic in Burlington along with partners across the city.

More funding opportunities arise as the community continues to talk about us.

We hire our first staff member, Charlotte Santiago Graf, followed by Weiwei Wang.

**2020**

COVID-19 pandemic halts all VT PoC activities and gives us time to consider the future.

Funding opportunities arise and founders begin 501c3 process.

**2022**

VT PoC gains momentum, hiring our second full-time employee, Krystal Sanchez, who supports data collection of over 250 BIPOC small business owners across the state.

**2023**

VT PoC continues to grow, adding Mimi Duong and Airon Shaw to the team.

VT PoC supports the July 2023 flooding recovery process, and continues to offer outreach, resource navigation, technical assistance, and community support to BIPOC Vermonters across the state.

In October 2023, Weiwei and Tino become co-Executive Directors.

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# Housing Needs

- Need for working aged Vermonters to **stay** in the state **AND** to **recruit** from outside the state.
- Housing challenges regardless of income levels
  - **Safe and affordable housing**
- **BIPOC want to stay in the state** AND they can't afford to live in the state.
- Juggling cost/availability of housing vs less preferred areas with “better” opportunities
- Safety of available housing/rentals questionable
- Flood impacts: fear and racism left many out in the cold.
  - Physical threats, evictions, community doesn't own housing > fewer supports

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# Flood Recovery Needs

- On average, businesses who have reached out need \$12,500 to recover.
  - Min: \$400
  - Max: \$150,000
- Businesses need **capital**. Not ready for support resources.
- Economic injury is as severe as physical damage.
  - Equipment still not replaced
  - Overdue bills due to lack of demand/inability to provide services
  - Seasonal businesses with damaged goods couldn't recoup even though businesses are generally successful
- Working to better understand any impact from winter floods/high winds.

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## VT PoC Work - 2023

- Understanding the community (data collection)
- Networking and community building events
- Resource navigation to increase engagement
- Outreach to increase awareness
- Community Technical Assistance (case management)
- Professional and Business Development
- Rapid/emergency response



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# VT PoC Work - 2023 ACCD Contract

Since May 2023:

## **44 businesses/nonprofits supported**

- 9 counties
- Identities across race - Indigenous, Black, African, Caribbean, Latino, East and South Asian, Middle Eastern
- Retail, food service, agriculture, creative sector, nonprofit

## **5 professionals formally supported** - gaining traction!

- Career support in public health, social work, and education.

## **22 events**

- Networking, affinity spaces, conferences (tabling/speaking)

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## VT PoC Work - 2024

- **BIPOC community survey.** How are people doing? What are they doing? What keeps them here? What would drive them to leave?
- **GROW VT program.** How can we provide a safety net and support network for new BIPOC Vermonters?
- **Expanding presence in Northeast and Southern VT.** Networking events, casual pop-ups for professional and business assistance, and more.
- **The Things In Between Educational Series.** Learning about things that often get overlooked or “you don’t know unless you know”.
- **Community Engagement and Support.** Empowering the community by giving more opportunities for voices to be heard and skills to be leveled up.
- **Collaborative Efforts.** Working together with partner organizations like ReLeaf Collective, Upper Valley BIPOC Network, Community Resilience Organizations (CROs), and more.



## Questions?

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