

**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATIONS OF
VERMONT**

2023

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES





Priorities for Supporting Vermont's Workforce

Workforce Recruitment and Development

Vermont's economy remains constricted by worker shortages. The RDCs will continue to advocate for policy changes and funding that address employer needs through training, education, and wrap-around services and support individual RDC efforts to lead regional relocation efforts, immigration and refugee resettlement, Pipeline and Pathway programs, and Stay-to-Stay and Welcome Wagon programs.

Childcare

Access to safe, affordable childcare is essential to maintaining strong families and a healthy economy. The RDCs support the proposed outcomes of the [Let's Grow Kids 2023 Legislative Agenda](#) but believe it is essential that they be supported through a broad base of funding sources and not place an undue burden on Vermont's workers and businesses through an outsized payroll tax.

Career Technical Education

The RDCs believe that the importance of technical education will continue to grow as our economy and energy needs evolve and that the current CTE funding model is unable to meet this challenge. The RDCs endorse expanding access to CTE, including funding system modifications and strengthening of career pathways, as well as other measures to reduce barriers to access.



Housing

The lack of affordable housing has become a dangerous restraint on the ability of Vermont's businesses to recruit and maintain employees. The RDCs support the following policy changes to encourage the development of more workforce housing:

- Eliminate Act 250 oversight of housing projects occurring in State designated areas (Designated Downtowns and Neighborhood Development Areas)
- Increase state investment in municipal water and wastewater infrastructure in rural areas to permit greater density in housing developments, where deemed desirable by local municipalities; and
- Remove or increase the unit/population caps for priority housing projects.



Priorities for Business Growth and Retention

Vermont Employee Growth Incentive (VEGI)

All 50 states offer incentive programs to support businesses in growing and adding jobs. In Vermont, this is the VEGI program. Since 2007, the VEGI program has helped create over 8,812 jobs, with average salaries of over \$58,000 per year. The RDCs call for the elimination or delay of the sunset of the VEGI program. The RDCs also support simplification, increased transparency, and more robust reporting so that the value of the program and the efficacy of its checks and balances are more fully evident.

Vermont Training Program (VTP)

The Vermont Training Program provides performance-based workforce grants for training new hires and incumbent workers. The RDCs believe this program has been highly effective where applied but also underutilized due to low state investment. We call on legislators to increase the investment in this program to allow employees to retain and grow in their employment as business needs change.



Project Based TIF

Many smaller municipalities have single development/redevelopment projects that could benefit from the Tax Increment Financing model but do not have the staff capacity or need to establish a full TIF District. Project-based TIF allows smaller communities to accomplish important, transitional economic and community development projects that add incremental property tax revenue and new jobs. The RDCs encourage the enactment of the Project-based TIF concept.

Commercial Property Development

To encourage business growth and relocation, it is important to make full use of the limited land suitable for commercial and industrial development in the state. The RDCs support the creation of a program to encourage the pre-development of commercial and industrial parcel through land banking and loan programs to offset or cover matching grant funds.

RDC Funding Proposal

The Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) of Vermont are private, not-for-profit organizations that are key players in driving economic growth in our state. While each has developed other sources of revenue to support their operations, RDCs rely on a state grant to support their role as the State's primary regional economic development partners. RDC funding has not been increased in over 10 years, and inflation and additional services have strained the ability of each organization to provide equitable services to all businesses and members of the workforce. As such, the RDCs are requesting an increase in base funding during the session. The RDCs requested, and the Governor included in the ACCD base budget, a \$200,000 increase to the annual RDC performance grants that will add about \$16,000 to the funding for each RDC. We are thankful for this budget increase and respectfully ask that our partners in the legislature include it in the ACCD base budget



Increasing Rural Capacity

To assist rural towns with capacity and connectivity to regional partners and markets, the RDCs propose continued funding to its very successful and award-winning technical assistance program - Restart Vermont Technical Assistance Program (ReVTA). First created in 2020 purely as a pandemic response effort, ReVTA was established with partner funding (CARES Act, SBA's Community Navigator Pilot Program, Community Development Block Grants) to deliver critical technical assistance to over 560 small businesses. Those in rural communities as well as businesses owned by women, veterans, and People of Color were prioritized in these efforts. After discussions of the current business challenges, RDC navigators worked to match businesses with in-state vendors providing critical work in the fields of legal, human resources, accounting, bookkeeping, architecture, digitization and technology, website, marketing, videography, photography, and business operations.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS OF VERMONT

About Us

The 12 Vermont Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) are partners with the State of Vermont Department of Economic Development (DED) and serve every region. Each RDC works to deliver technical assistance to develop and strengthen businesses, lead workforce development initiatives, and support employment.

