



Heating and Fuel Service Workforce Training Pilot Project

PILOT PROJECT REPORT AND OUTCOMES

Prepared in accordance to An Act Relating to Promoting Economic Development, Sec. E4 (2017)
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STATUTORY CHARGE

* * * Heating Fuel and Service Workforce Training Pilot Project * * *

Sec. E.4. HEATING FUEL AND SERVICE WORKFORCE TRAINING PILOT PROJECT

(a) Findings and purpose.

(1) Vermont's heating fuel and service companies provide high-skill, high-demand jobs, many of which do not require a college degree but pay over \$20.00 per hour and include benefits.

(2) Vermont's heating fuel and service companies have a significant need for new employees. More than two-thirds of these companies report that there is a lack of qualified applicants for heating technician jobs, and more than half report a lack of qualified drivers.

(3) The purpose of this section is to create a partnership between the State and the industry to identify prospective employees, provide them with training and skills necessary for currently available jobs, and provide employers with a skilled workforce.

(b) The Department of Labor, in collaboration with the regional Career Technical Education and Training Centers and the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association, shall establish a Heating Fuel and Service Workforce Training Pilot Project, consistent with the following:

(1) The Department, CTE Centers, Adult Technical Education Providers, and the Association shall:

(A) advertise the availability of workforce training in the field of heating fuel and service;

(B) organize informational sessions, meetings, and other group and individual opportunities for prospective trainees and interested heating and fuel service companies to connect; and

(C) coordinate matches between trainees and employers.

(2) In the event of a successful match, the Department shall facilitate the negotiation and execution of training and employment agreements, pursuant to which:

(A) a prospective trainee agrees to pursue specified training, education, or certification necessary to meet the employer's workforce need;

(B) the Department agrees to provide educational and administrative support to the trainee and 50 percent of the cost of training; and

(C) the employer agrees to provide 50 percent of the cost of training and to employ the trainee upon the successful completion of training, passage of an examination, attainment of a required certification, or a combination of these.

(3) The Association, in collaboration with the CTE Centers and subject to approval by the Department, shall provide education and training that meet the needs of trainees and employers.

(c) The Department shall have the authority to use available private, State, and federal funding to implement the provisions of this section.

(d) On or before January 15, 2018, the Department shall submit a report to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development addressing the implementation of this section, the profile of trainees and employers that participated, and any recommendations for further action.

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vermont Heating Fuel and Service Workforce Training Pilot Program is a collaborative effort with the Department of Labor, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association, a non-profit trade association that trains heating technicians. According to an economic study by the University of Vermont Center of Rural Studies, two-thirds of Vermont companies say there is a lack of skilled applicants for propane and oilheat technician jobs. The study also determined that jobs in the heating fuel industry average \$23 an hour, with health insurance and paid time off. The collaborative effort intended to enroll unemployed Vermonters in propane and oilheat certification programs and make connections between out of work Vermonters and heating companies.

Encouraging collaboration between business, industry and government has been a priority of the U.S. Department of Labor since the beginning of 2017. On June 15th, 2017 the Trump Administration issued an Executive Order expanding apprenticeships and on the job training opportunities. Understanding that a traditional 4-year degree is not the education path suited to everyone, apprenticeships and on the job training programs provide individuals relevant work experience, and employment opportunities that can be used to jumpstart a lucrative career. Under the new Department of Labor Secretary, Alexander Acosta this Executive order, and associated legislation, will encourage businesses and industry to play a larger role in the creation, implementation and funding of apprenticeships and on the job training programs. The Vermont Department of Labor saw the passage of the Heating Fuel and Service Workforce Training Pilot Program as an opportunity to not only promote available training and jobs in the heating fuel and

service industry, but to create the blueprint for how public/partner partnerships in workforce development should be implemented in the future.

Vermont's heating fuel and service companies have a significant need for new employees, and provide high-skill, high-demand jobs, many of which do not require a college degree but pay over \$20.00 per hour and include benefits. More than two-thirds of these Vermont companies report that there is a lack of qualified applicants for heating technician jobs, and more than half report a lack of qualified drivers.

The Vermont Fuel Dealers Association has held four Basic Oilheat Technician Seminars in 2017 and will hold a fifth in February 2018. These courses were held at North Country Career Center in Newport, Vermont Precision Tools Complex in Swanton, the Vermont Tech Enterprise Center in Randolph, at F.W. Webb in Rutland, and in 2018 at the River Valley Technical Center in Springfield. These oilheat technician training seminars graduated 40 students in 2017, some who were new hires of heating fuel and heating services companies, others that were referred by the Vermont Department of Labor and received training for free. The seminar in Springfield in February 2018 has ten registered students as of December 14, four of which are expected to receive tuition assistance through the Vermont Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding, and 6 of which who were previously unemployed.

The State of Vermont Division of Fire Safety requires that anyone that installs or services an oil burning heating appliance have a Vermont Oilheat Certificate or Fitness. Additionally, Vermont requires that any individual working with propane must have a Vermont Propane Certificate of Fitness. The Vermont Fuel Dealers Association provides and conducts training and certification courses that are needed to obtain and maintain the certifications, and the continuing education courses as well.

About the Heating Industry in Vermont

According to the *Vermont Heating Fuel Delivery and Service Providers 2016 Industry Survey*¹, "the Vermont fuel dealers support over 1,000 jobs and a little over \$100 million in economic activity". With an average hourly rate above the average was per capita income in Vermont, the lack of qualified and trained labor is one of the major obstacles to business and industry growth.

About the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association

The Vermont Fuel Dealers Association (VFDA) is a non-profit trade organization that works for companies that sell heating oil, BioHeat®, diesel, biodiesel, kerosene, wood pellets, and propane. VFDA member companies also sell and service heating equipment. VFDA is also the leading provider of training for heating technicians in the state.

Founded in 1963 as the Vermont Oilheat Institute (VOHI), VFDA changed its name in 2001 after merging with the Vermont Propane Gas Association (VPGA). VFDA's mission is to

advance the use of heating fuels and heating equipment, to promote the standards of installing and servicing of heating equipment, and to deliver educational programs to meet the needs of the membership. VFDA has nearly 250 members, including companies that sell heating fuel, heating service, and heating equipment.

For the last 25 years, the VFDA has been conducting these courses all over Vermont and Northern NH, connecting businesses with qualified employees. VFDA is a great example of how apprenticeships and on the job training programs will look in the future. By leading the program, providing curricula and subsidizing the cost of training for eligible individuals, the VFDA was able to partner with the Department of Labor to target Vermont's unemployed and underemployed population and help fill vacancies in over 10 Vermont, MA, and NH businesses.

About Oil Technician Training and Certification Programs

The *NORA Bronze Basic Oilheat Technician Program* is a program for those who have minimal field experience as an Oilheat technician. The program is a mix of classroom and lab instruction, and in order to successfully complete the training, the individual must pass the Bronze certification exam. This program is designed to teach individuals the fundamental skills of Oilheat, and is the first-step towards a career as an Oilheat Service Technician. Students who complete the NORA Bronze course receive an industry-wide recognized credential.

WORKPLAN AND EXECUTION

As part of the overall workplan for the promotion and education of the Pilot Project, the Vermont Department of Labor and the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association created a series co-branded materials.

- **Co-Branded Postcards:** In order to target Vermont's unemployed population, VDOL and VFDA created a postcard that promoted the training and certification opportunities offered by the VFDA. These postcards were paid for with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) education dollars, and were sent out to every individual who filed for unemployment benefits. Approximately 2,500 were sent

TRAINING • CERTIFICATION • JOBS • OPPORTUNITIES

The Vermont Fuel Dealers Association and the Vermont Department of Labor can help you get and stay certified in the HEATING FUEL AND PROPANE INDUSTRIES



Vermont's heating fuel companies report there is a lack of qualified applicants for heating technician and driver jobs. For a complete list of training seminars contact the VFDA: vermontfuel.com Training@vermontfuel.com 802-230-4722

VFDA
Vermont Fuel Dealers Association
www.vermontfuel.com

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
www.labor.vermont.gov

◆◆◆◆◆ **DID YOU KNOW?** ◆◆◆◆◆

Did you know that Vermont's heating fuel and service companies provide high-skill, high-demand jobs, many of which do not require a college degree but pay over \$20.00 per hour and include benefits?

Vermont's heating fuel and service companies have a significant need for new employees. More than two-thirds of these companies report that there is a lack of qualified applicants for heating technician jobs, and more than half report a lack of qualified drivers. **The Vermont Department of Labor** has teamed up with the **Vermont Fuel Dealers Association** to promote training and certification opportunities.

VFDA
Vermont Fuel Dealers Association
www.vermontfuel.com

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
www.labor.vermont.gov

The Vermont Department of Labor identified communication and collaboration gaps through participating in this pilot program. It was clear from the beginning of implementation that new strategies and systems would have to be created so all regional offices new of new programs and opportunities.

- **Education & Promotion:** The Vermont Department of Labor conducted targeted education and outreach to all 12 regional Career Resource Centers. Located in nearly every county, regional field staff were given educational material to offer the individuals they provide services to. It was made clear through this pilot project that the Department needs to replicate this wholistic outreach approach when new programs and training opportunities are presented. Previously, regional CRC's had the ability to work within their communities to find and promote opportunities, but as the Department shifts to a model of a "one-stop" center, this example of coordination will be replicated and implemented.

The Vermont Department of Labors "Training Waiver" allows individuals receiving unemployment insurance benefits to collect benefits while also participating in certified training programs.

- **Unemployment Training Waiver Expansion:** The Department of Labor took the passage of Act 69 as an opportunity to examine rules governing the ability of an eligible individual to receive unemployment insurance benefits while also receiving training. Currently outlined in the Employment Security Board Rules, an eligible individual has the opportunity to receive benefits while in an approved training program if they have been permanently separated from a declining occupation, and are training into a high demand occupation. This current rule is incredibly prescriptive, with very few individuals being able to take advantage of it annually. The Department of Labor is currently rewriting the rule, for considering and approval by the Employment Security Board, that would broaden the Commissioners authority to approve training waivers based on wage and career potential, employment opportunities, and how likely the individual will or will not exhaust benefits. This broadened authority will allow more eligible individuals to participate in training.

The Vermont Fuel Dealers Association received interest and commitment from several businesses, from all over the state, who committed to filling vacancies in their companies with individuals who participated in and successfully completed the training programs.

- **Business Interest and Participation**

Company	City
Allen Brothers Oil	Westminster
Alliance Mechanical	Essex Jct
ARC Mechanical	Bradford
Barrows & Fisher Oil	Brattleboro
BART Energy	Bellows Falls
Blue Flame Gas Co	Hoosick Falls
Bourne's Energy	Morrisville
Cacicio's Heating	Montpelier
Climate Systems	Williston
Conti Oil Inc.	Websterville
Cota and Cota	Bellows Falls
Crane Plumbing & Heating	Whiting
Dead River Company	Woodstock
Energy Co-op of Vermont	Colchester
Fred's Energy	Morrisville
Fred's Energy	Derby
Harriman's Heating	Springfield
Haskins Gas	Dorset
Irving Energy	Claremont
J.R. Martin Inc	Springfield

Kelly Fuels	Bennington
Keyser Energy	Proctor
Lloyd P&H Gas Service	Cabot
Manley Plumbing & Heating LLC	St. Albans
Marcell Oil	Pittsford
McCuin Fuels	Highgate Center
Osterman Propane	Whitinsville
Plouffe's Boiler & Mechanical Service	Middlebury
Preite Oil	North Adams
Robert Greene Inc	Bennington
Rowley Fuels	Milton
Rymes Propane	Pembroke
Simple Energy	W. Lebanon
Suburban	Lebanon
Suburban Propane	Bennington
Wrights Plumbing & Heating	Newport

**These out of state businesses have retail location*

• **Participating Students (by region)**

First	City	State
Mohamed	Burlington	VT
Justin	Rutland	VT
Larry	Manchester Ctr	VT
Robert	St. Johnsbury	VT
Marc	Highgate Center	VT

Don	St. Johnsbury	VT
Kevin	Essex Jct	VT
Steven	St. Albans	VT
John	Claremont	NH
Thomas	Pembroke	NH
Lance	St. Johnsbury	VT
Kevin	Websterville	VT
David	Whiting	VT
Jack	Morrisville	VT
Tyson	Claremont	NH
Rob	Proctor	VT
Joshua	Jericho	VT
Dana	St. Albans	VT
Greg	Cabot	VT
Ken	Woodstock	VT
Sean	Westminster	VT
Brian	Mendon	VT
Kyle	Williston	VT
Robert	Colchester	VT
Shaun	Brattleboro	VT
Jason	Derby	VT
Mark	Springfield	VT
Judson	Whiting	VT
Robert	Springfield	VT
Jakob	Springfield	VT
Mark	Websterville	VT

Matt	Pembroke	NH
Nate	Pittsford	VT
Leonard	Burlington	VT
Jordan	Morrisville	VT
Jeffrey	Springfield	VT
Austin	Middlebury	VT
Ryan	Milton	VT
Eugene	Cabot	VT
William	W. Lebanon	NH
Spencer	Springfield	VT
Rodney	Littleton	NH
Robert	Claremont	NH
Rayne	Middlebury	VT
Chase	North Adams	MA
Jacob	West Lebanon	NH
Nate	Essex Jct	VT
Matthew	West Lebanon	NH
Art	Springfield	VT
Adam	Bennington	VT
Michael	Springfield	VT
Kyle	Bennington	VT
Don	Pittsford	VT