

1 Introduced by Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

2 Date:

3 Subject: Commerce and trade; workforce development

4 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to provide a
5 framework for a public engagement process and succeeding steps to modernize
6 and strengthen the State workforce development system.

7 An act relating to workforce development

8 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

9 Sec. 1. FINDINGS AND INTENT

10 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

11 (1) A skilled and productive workforce is critical for the economic
12 vitality of Vermont. However, our State currently faces several key labor
13 market challenges:

14 (A) Employers throughout our State are facing an extremely serious
15 and ongoing skills gap due to the lack of qualified workers to fill a wide range
16 of jobs across multiple sectors, today and into the future.

17 (B) Vermont has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the
18 country, and there are not enough workers at all skill levels to fill current job
19 vacancies.

1 (C) Many Vermonters are underemployed and require training to
2 update their skills and find available job opportunities that match their
3 interests.

4 (D) Many Vermonters who are unemployed or underemployed face
5 significant barriers to employment and require more support in overcoming
6 these barriers.

7 (E) Vermont youth currently access postsecondary learning at the
8 lowest rates in New England and with significant inequities by family income
9 and background. A strategic focus on addressing equity in postsecondary
10 learning opportunities, in alignment with workforce needs, will ensure
11 Vermont maximizes the potential of every Vermonter to contribute to the labor
12 market.

13 (F) Parents, youths, and families are facing a future where the next
14 generation of workers may not have the same opportunities to prosper as the
15 previous one.

16 (G) Vermont has a series of fragmented workforce development
17 programs, but not a unified workforce development system. The recently
18 reconstituted State Workforce Development Board is central to creating such a
19 system.

20 (2) A major part of the solution to these challenges lies in Vermont's
21 building an effective and efficient State workforce development system that is

1 a diverse public-private partnership among employers, government, and
2 education and training providers designed to ensure that individuals have the
3 skills needed by businesses.

4 (b) Intent. In adopting this act, it is the intent of the General Assembly:

5 (1) to commit to a redesign of Vermont’s workforce development and
6 training system through a concerted three-year effort led by the Commissioner
7 of Labor, in collaboration with key administration partners, the education and
8 training communities, and other stakeholders from business and government.

9 (2) to create a framework for this three-year process that will result in a
10 more coherent, efficient, and effective workforce development system within
11 which:

12 (A) all Vermonters who want to work, and all employers who want
13 workers, can connect through education and training with what they need to
14 thrive; and

15 (B) stakeholders and programs, both inside and outside State
16 government, are optimally connected and aligned.

17 Sec. 2. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
18 PROCESS; DUTIES

19 (a)(1) The State Workforce Development Board, in cooperation with the
20 Department of Labor and the Agencies of Commerce and Community
21 Development, of Education, of Human Services, of Agriculture, Food and

1 Markets, of Natural Resources, and of Transportation, shall conduct a public
2 engagement process consistent with 20 C.F.R. §§ 679.100 and 679.130 and
3 10 V.S.A. § 541a to establish a vision and shared goals for meeting Vermont’s
4 21st century workforce education, training, recruitment, and retention needs.

5 (2) The public engagement process shall be designed to inform
6 workforce-related aspects of other state strategic plans and reports, including
7 the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan, the State Economic
8 Development Marketing Plan, and the Statewide Comprehensive Economic
9 Development Strategy.

10 (3) In evaluating the current workforce service delivery system, the
11 Board shall use a data-driven process and solicit the perspectives of job-
12 seekers, incumbent workers, employers, industry representatives, program
13 administrators, and workforce service delivery providers.

14 (4)(A) The Board shall adopt a vision and describe the State’s collective
15 goals by February 1, 2020.

16 (B) The vision, goals, and any findings or recommendations shall be
17 posted online.

18 (C) The Board shall provide advance notice to the Chair and Vice
19 Chair of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and
20 the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General

1 Affairs if the recommendations may require legislative action during the 2020
2 legislative session.

3 (5) The vision and goals shall serve as the basis for an action plan to
4 revitalize Vermont’s workforce development system.

5 (b) The Board may create a social network map of workforce service
6 delivery providers, employers, workforce program administrators, and industry
7 representatives to:

8 (1) develop baseline data in conformance with the Workforce
9 Innovation and Opportunity Act of how individuals, including new Americans,
10 and organizations, both within and outside State government, are involved with
11 workforce development and training around the State;

12 (2) analyze the relative level of connectivity of people and programs
13 managed inside and outside State government; and

14 (3) identify opportunities to strengthen connectivity to achieve greater
15 program alignment toward and realize the Board’s vision for the State’s
16 workforce development and training system.

17 (c) The Board shall identify what resources are necessary to maintain the
18 network map over time and track changes in levels of connectivity and
19 alignment across the stakeholder community.

1 (d) The Board may, in compliance with any employment and
2 confidentiality regulations, and after reviewing currently available data and
3 resources, collect information from:

4 (1) “front line” service delivery providers to understand how the current
5 system is and is not serving the needs of job seekers and employers;

6 (2) employers and employees to understand the effectiveness of
7 existing workforce programs; and

8 (3) past and present participants of training programs to understand if
9 the program met their expectations and led to a job in their field of interest or
10 training.

11 (e) The Board may initiate activities to improve understanding by
12 stakeholders concerning:

13 (1) the workforce development system;

14 (2) the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act;

15 (3) the role of the Board; and

16 (4) how the Act governs workforce development funding and policies
17 implemented by the State.

18 (f) The Board, in cooperation with the Department of Labor and Agencies
19 of Commerce and Community Development, of Education, of Human
20 Services, of Agriculture, Food and Markets, of Natural Resources, and of
21 Transportation, shall review methods of employer engagement and evaluate

1 the tools available to employers to facilitate their access to and retention of
2 workers. The Board may recommend strategies for improvement to address:

3 (1) how employer outreach positions in each of the State-funded field
4 offices might be shared;

5 (2) what type of coordination is needed between the State level
6 employer outreach staff and local workforce organizations, including staff of
7 the regional development corporations and regional planning commissions, to
8 better serve employers;

9 (3) whether establishing a One Stop American Job Center in each region
10 to provide comprehensive customer-driven services for employers and job
11 seekers could serve businesses better, improve responsiveness to emerging
12 sector needs, and increase access to qualified, available workers through direct
13 outreach and recruitment;

14 (4) scaling or expanding pilot projects that link experts with career and
15 industry knowledge directly with middle or high schools, or both, to foster
16 career readiness and exploration; and

17 (5) ways to share data and information collected from employers among
18 parties who implement workforce development programs.

19 (g) The Board shall review how functions performed by local workforce
20 investment boards, career technical education regional advisory boards,
21 regional planning commissions, regional development corporations, and other

1 regional economic development and workforce related boards could be more
2 equitably executed from region to region, and recommend structures that
3 would foster better regional collaboration, alignment, and employer
4 participation.

5 (h) Following the public engagement process outlined in subsection (a) of
6 this section, the Board may make recommendations to align relevant funding
7 sources to promote:

8 (1) employer-driven workforce education and training opportunities;

9 (2) results-based outcomes;

10 (3) innovative and effective initiatives, pilots, or demonstration
11 programs that can be scaled to the rest of the State;

12 (4) access to federal resources that enable more innovative programs
13 and initiatives in Vermont; and

14 (5) equitable access to employment and training opportunities for
15 women and underrepresented populations in Vermont.

16 (i) The Department of Labor, with assistance from the Board, shall
17 facilitate the sharing of information among workforce development and
18 training delivery organizations so they may stay current with initiatives and
19 plans related to building an effective workforce development system.

1 Sec. 3. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; CAREER PATHWAYS;
2 CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

3 (a) As used in this section, “Career Pathways” means a combination of
4 rigorous and high quality education, training, and other experiences and
5 services, beginning not later than seventh grade, with multiple entry and exit
6 points that:

7 (1) at the secondary level, integrate the academic and technical skills
8 required for postsecondary success;

9 (2) are developed in partnership with business and industry and align
10 with the skill needs of industries in the local, regional, and State economies;

11 (3) prepare an individual to transition seamlessly from secondary to
12 postsecondary experiences and be successful in any of a full range of
13 secondary or postsecondary education options, including registered
14 apprenticeships;

15 (4) include career counseling and work-based learning experiences to
16 support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;

17 (5) include, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in
18 the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific
19 occupation or occupational cluster;

1 (6) organize education, training, and other experiences and services to
2 meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the
3 educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;

4 (7) enable an individual to gain a secondary school diploma or its
5 recognized equivalent, and that allow for college credit and industry
6 certifications to be earned in high school; and

7 (8) prepare an individual to enter or advance within a specific
8 occupation or occupational cluster.

9 (b) The Agency of Education, in partnership with the State Workforce
10 Development Board, shall promote policies that support introduction of Career
11 Technical Education (CTE) opportunities of study to middle school students,
12 along with career readiness and awareness activities.

13 (c) The Agency of Education, in partnership with the Board, shall promote
14 collaboration among middle schools and regional CTE centers that may result
15 in:

16 (1) development and delivery of introductory CTE courses or lessons to
17 introduce middle school students to Career Pathways and CTE programs, as
18 appropriate;

19 (2) increasing student exposure to local career opportunities through
20 activities such as business tours, guest lecturers, career fairs, and career
21 awareness days; and

1 (3) increasing student exposure to CTE programs through activities such
2 as tours of regional CTE centers, virtual field trips, and CTE guest visits.

3 (d) The Agency of Education shall approve up to four pilot projects in a
4 variety of CTE settings that model a unified funding structure, unified
5 governance structure, or both, designed to streamline the delivery of the
6 educational experiences of both high school and CTE students, consistent with
7 the following:

8 (1) a pilot project shall extend not longer than two years;

9 (2) the Agency shall establish guidelines, proposal submission
10 requirements, and a review process to approve pilot projects; and

11 (3) the Agency shall report on the outcomes of the pilot projects to the
12 House and Senate Committees on Education and the House Committee on
13 Commerce and Economic Development on or before January 15, 2020.

14 (e) Based on the results of the pilot projects approved under subsection (d)
15 of this section, the Agency of Education, in partnership with the Board, shall
16 recommend flexible and student-centered policies that:

17 (1) support equitable access and opportunity to participate in CTE pre-
18 tech foundation and exploratory programs for students in grades 9 and 10,
19 including building such activities into students' personalized learning plans
20 when appropriate, so that students are exposed to a wide variety of career
21 choices in their areas of interest; and

1 (2) ensure that students in grade 10 have access to courses in CTE
2 programs, including building such access into their personalized learning plans
3 as appropriate.

4 (f) The Agency of Education, in partnership with the Board, shall ensure
5 that CTE centers provide rigorous programs of study to students that are
6 aligned with an approved Career Pathway and in combination with a registered
7 apprenticeship when appropriate.

8 (g) The Agency of Education, in partnership with the Department of Labor
9 and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, shall implement
10 a process for reviewing Career Pathways that considers:

11 (1) program relevance to State and regional employer need;

12 (2) participation of regional advisory boards or other boards with
13 employers;

14 (3) pathways to postsecondary education and training; and

15 (4) ability for students to gain credentials of value, dual enrollment
16 credits, postsecondary credential or degree attainment, and employment.

17 (h) The Agency of Education shall report on its Career Pathways review
18 process, findings, and recommendations to the Board on a regular basis.

19 (i) The Board may identify opportunities to leverage Workforce Innovation
20 and Opportunity Act funds, Carl D. Perkins Act postsecondary funds, Next
21 Generation funds, Vermont Training Program funds, and other relevant

1 funding sources to develop community-based Career Pathways that respond to
2 local occupational demands.

3 (j) The Agency of Education, in partnership with the Board, shall work to
4 ensure that every high school student has the opportunity to experience
5 meaningful work-based learning when supported by the personalized learning
6 plan, and that high schools work with regional CTE centers to avoid
7 unnecessary duplication of **programs of study** already provided by the centers.

8 (k) The General Assembly shall create a permanent classified position
9 within the Agency of Education to perform the functions currently performed
10 by the limited service Career Pathways Coordinator position.

11 (l) The Agency of Education and the Department of Labor shall support
12 coordination and alignment of **Career Pathways** programs of study delivered
13 by the regional CTE centers and the State’s postsecondary institutions so that
14 education and training opportunities available to secondary and adult students
15 lead to a degree or stackable credential of value.

16 (m) The Department of Labor shall be responsible for the oversight and
17 coordination of adult career technical education in the State. The Agency of
18 Education shall provide technical and programmatic assistance, as necessary,
19 to the Department to ensure alignment between secondary and postsecondary
20 institutions, programs, policies and funding.

21 Sec. 4. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD;

1 STRENGTHENING AND ALIGNING WORKFORCE TRAINING
2 PROGRAMS

3 (a) The State Workforce Development Board shall take steps to encourage,
4 promote, and support the creation of registered apprenticeship programs, pre-
5 apprenticeship programs, paid internships, occupational trainings, and other
6 work-based and on-the-job learning opportunities that lead to industry
7 recognized certificates and credentials. The Board shall consider ways to meet
8 employers' immediate and long-term employment needs in a variety of ways
9 that can include:

10 (1) expanding the number and diversity of employer-sponsored
11 registered apprenticeships;

12 (2) promoting the development of and access to pre-apprenticeship
13 programs in high schools and career and technical education centers;

14 (3) engaging Vermont's colleges and universities in delivering the
15 related instruction components of registered apprenticeship programs;

16 (4) expanding the number of internships and returnships available in
17 current and new sectors;

18 (5) developing partnerships and alignment between training programs
19 offered in correctional facilities and those offered in business or community
20 settings; and

1 (6) registered apprenticeship programs that guarantee offers of
2 continued employment or consideration for future employment upon
3 completion of the program.

4 (b) The Board shall create a process for identifying, monitoring, and
5 evaluating occupational trainings and industry-recognized credentials. The
6 Board may consider establishing a process for endorsing credentials and
7 certificate programs to facilitate targeted investments in programs that meet
8 industry needs.

9 (c) The Board shall create and review periodically publicly available
10 documents that list:

11 (1) current industry, State, and federally recognized credentials;

12 (2) requirements to obtain these credentials;

13 (3) training programs that lead to these credentials; and

14 (4) the cost of training and educational programs required to obtain the
15 credential.

16 (d) The Board shall work with the Office of Professional Regulation to
17 increase recognition of professional skills and credentialing across states, in
18 addition to supporting professional paths that involve more than one industry,
19 state, or federally recognized credential and rules adopted by the Office;

20 Sec. 5. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD; GROWING THE
21 SIZE AND QUALITY OF THE WORKFORCE

1 (a) The Department of Labor and the Agencies of Commerce and
2 Community Development, of Education, and of Human Services, in
3 partnership with the State Workforce Development Board, shall take steps to:

4 (1) increase labor force participation of Vermonters by creating multi-
5 tiered engagement, training, and support activities that help working age
6 Vermonters who are able to participate, or participate to a greater degree, in the
7 workforce; and

8 (2) recruit and relocate new workers and employers to Vermont; and

9 (3) assist businesses in locating and retaining qualified workers.

10 (b) To meet these objectives, the Department of Labor and the Agencies of
11 Commerce and Community Development, of Education, and of Human
12 Services shall:

13 (1) engage regional and statewide stakeholders, including regional CTE
14 centers, regional development corporations, and regional planning
15 commissions, to identify needs, strategies, and define success;

16 (2) identify targets and methods of recruitment, relocation, re-training,
17 and retention;

18 (3) leverage resources available in current State and federal programs to
19 support more workers within and outside of Vermont entering and staying in
20 the workforce; and

1 (4) create metrics for tracking the success of outreach efforts and
2 economic impact.

3 (c) The Board may examine incentives to encourage participation in the
4 labor force by target populations, including unemployment insurance waivers,
5 income tax reductions, exemption of State tax on Social Security, housing and
6 transportation vouchers, tuition and training reimbursements, or waivers for
7 training. The Board shall notify the House Committee on Commerce and
8 Economic Development of any findings or recommendations, as appropriate.

9 Sec. 6. VERMONT TALENT PIPELINE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

10 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

11 (1) The Vermont Talent Pipeline Management Project (VTPM) is an
12 employer-oriented strategy that expands the role of employers as end-
13 customers of the education and workforce systems. VTPM seeks to improve
14 the employability of Vermonters and the alignment of employer needs with
15 education and workforce development and training programs.

16 (2) VTPM is a statewide public and private partnership among the
17 Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Brattleboro
18 Development Credit Corporation, Franklin/Grand Isle Workforce Investment
19 Board, Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Vermont
20 Business Roundtable. It is informed by resource partners including the
21 Agency of Education, Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation, State

1 Workforce Development Board, Vermont Chamber of Commerce, and the
2 Vermont Student Assistance Corporation.

3 (3) Partners will coordinate the network of training providers to deliver
4 industry, State, and federally recognized credentials, job training, and
5 workforce education in targeted job areas, sectors, and industries which
6 connect to the skills employers are looking for when filling available positions.

7 (b) Intent. It is the intent of the General Assembly:

8 (1) to acknowledge VTPM as an important, statewide, employer-led
9 model in its start-up phase with pilots in key industries;

10 (2) to support development, scale-up, funding, and roll-out of VTPM
11 across all economic sectors, businesses of various size, and regions of the State
12 by training regional partners in local communities statewide; and

13 (3) to encourage the Agency of Education, Department of Labor, the
14 State Workforce Development Board, and VTPM to collaborate in identifying
15 and developing additional credentialing programs within applicable industries.

16 Sec. 7. RESULTS BASED MONITORING

17 (a) The Department of Labor, with the assistance of the Government
18 Accountability Committee and the State Workforce Development Board, shall
19 develop a framework to evaluate workforce education, training, and support
20 programs and services. The framework shall be applied to the State's
21 workforce system inventory and shall distinguish programs and services based

1 on method of delivery, customer, program administrator, goal, or other
2 appropriate category. The framework shall:

3 (1) create population level indicators based on desired outcomes for the
4 workforce development delivery system;

5 (2) along with social network mapping work that the Board may pursue,
6 support program and service alignment of State-grant-funded projects with the
7 State Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Plan;

8 (3) align with the Board’s vision;

9 (4) note performance measures that already exist in the workforce
10 system and identify where State-specific measures would help monitor
11 progress in achieving the State’s goals; and

12 (5) identify gaps in service delivery and areas of duplication in services.

13 (b) The State Workforce Development Board shall consider whether the
14 information and data currently collected and reported throughout the workforce
15 development system is useful and shall identify what information and data are
16 not available or readily accessible. The Board shall make its findings available
17 and recommend a process to improve the collection and reporting of data.

18 (c) The State Workforce Development Board may create a process and a
19 timeline to collect program level data for the purposes of updating the State’s
20 workforce system inventory.

1 (d) The State Workforce Development Board may develop tools for
2 program and service delivery providers that support continuous improvement
3 using data-driven decision making, common information-sharing systems, and
4 a customer-focused service delivery system.

5 Sec. 8. 10 V.S.A. chapter 22A is amended to read:

6 CHAPTER 22A. WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

7 § 540. WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING LEADER

8 The Commissioner of Labor shall be the leader of workforce education and
9 training in the State, and shall have the authority and responsibility for the
10 coordination of workforce education and training within State government,
11 including the following duties:

12 (1) Perform the following duties in consultation with the State
13 Workforce Development Board:

14 * * *

15 (G) design and implement criteria and performance measures for
16 workforce education and training activities; and

17 (H) establish goals for the integrated workforce education and
18 training system; and

19 (I) with the assistance of the Secretaries of Commerce and
20 Community Development, of Human Services, of Education, of Agriculture,
21 Food and Markets, and of Transportation, and of the Commissioner of Public

1 Safety, develop and implement a coordinated system to recruit, relocate, and
2 train workers to ensure the labor force needs of Vermont's businesses are met.

3 * * *

4 (8) Coordinate intentional outreach and connections between students
5 graduating from Vermont's colleges and universities and employment
6 opportunities in Vermont.

7 * * *

8 § 541a. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

9 (a) Board established; duties. Pursuant to the requirements of 29 U.S.C.
10 § 3111, the Governor shall establish a State Workforce Development Board to
11 assist the Governor in the execution of his or her duties under the Workforce
12 Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and to assist the Commissioner of
13 Labor as specified in section 540 of this title.

14 (b) Additional duties; planning; process.

15 (1) In order to To inform its decision-making decision making and to
16 provide effective assistance under subsection (a) of this section, the Board
17 shall:

18 ~~(4)(A)~~ conduct an ongoing public engagement process throughout the
19 State that brings together employers and potential employees, including
20 students, the unemployed, and incumbent employees seeking further training,

1 to provide feedback and information concerning their workforce education and
2 training needs; and

3 ~~(2)~~(B) maintain familiarity and promote alignment with the federal
4 State and regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
5 and other economic development planning processes, and coordinate
6 workforce and education activities in the State, including the development and
7 implementation of the State plan required under the Workforce Innovation and
8 Opportunity Act of 2014, with economic development planning processes
9 occurring in the State, as appropriate.

10 (2) To ensure that State-funded and federally funded workforce
11 development and training efforts are of the highest quality and aligned with the
12 State’s workforce and economic goals, the Board shall regularly:

13 (A) Review and approve State-endorsed Career Pathways that reflect
14 a shared vision across multiple sectors and agencies for improving
15 employment outcomes, meeting employers’ and workers’ needs, and
16 leveraging available State and federal funding.

17 (i) Career Pathways shall encompass educational and training
18 experiences from middle school to the postsecondary years, and may focus on
19 particular target populations or industry sectors.

20 (ii) Career Pathways shall include or culminate in degrees,
21 certificates, and other relevant credentials approved by the Board.

1 (B) Publicize the State-endorsed Career Pathways, including on
2 websites managed by the Agency of Education, Department of Labor, and
3 Department of Economic Development.

4 (3)(A) The Board shall have the authority to approve State-endorsed and
5 industry-recognized credentials and certificates, excluding high school
6 diplomas and postsecondary academic degrees, that are aligned with the Career
7 Pathways.

8 (B) The Board shall design a review process that ensures:

9 (i) business and industry are participants and are engaged early in
10 the process;

11 (ii) the credential review process involves relevant stakeholders;

12 (iii) credentials are differentiated based on rigor and industry
13 demand; and

14 (iv) systems are designed to be responsive to changing industry
15 needs.

16 (C) The Board shall ensure that a review and oversight process is in
17 place on or before July 1, 2019.

18 * * *

1 § 543. WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING FUND; GRANT
2 PROGRAMS

3 (a) Creation. There is created the Workforce Education and Training Fund
4 in the Department of Labor to be managed in accordance with 32 V.S.A.
5 chapter 7, subchapter 5.

6 (b) Purposes. The Department shall use the Fund for the following
7 purposes:

8 (1) training for Vermont workers, including those who are unemployed,
9 underemployed, or in transition from one job or career to another;

10 (2) internships to provide students with work-based learning
11 opportunities with Vermont employers;

12 (3) apprenticeship, preapprenticeship, and industry-recognized
13 credential training; ~~and~~

14 (4) assistance to small businesses for recruiting, including building
15 connections with secondary and postsecondary institutions and others to locate,
16 hire, and retain workers from among Vermont students and graduates; and

17 (5) other workforce development initiatives related to current and future
18 job opportunities in Vermont as determined by the Commissioner of Labor.

19 * * *

1 (f) Awards. The Commissioner of Labor, in consultation with the Chair of
2 the State Workforce Development Board, shall develop award criteria and may
3 grant awards to the following:

4 * * *

5 (2) Vermont Strong Internship Program. Funding for eligible internship
6 programs and activities under the Vermont Strong Internship Program
7 established in section 544 of this title.

8 (3) Vermont Strong Returnship Program. Funding for eligible
9 returnship programs and activities under the Vermont Strong Returnship
10 Program established in section 545 of this title.

11 (4) Apprenticeship Program. The Vermont Apprenticeship Program
12 established under 21 V.S.A. chapter 13. Awards under this subdivision may be
13 used to fund the cost of apprenticeship-related instruction provided by the
14 Department of Labor.

15 ~~(4)~~(5) Career Focus and Planning programs. In collaboration with the
16 Agency of Education, funding for one or more programs that institute career
17 training and planning for young Vermonters, beginning in middle school.

18 (g) Career Pathways. Programs that are funded under this section resulting
19 in a credit, certificate, or a credential shall demonstrate alignment with a
20 Career Pathway.

1 (h) Expanding offerings. A regional career and technical education center
2 that develops an adult technical education program of study using funding
3 under this section shall:

4 (1) make the program materials available to other regional career and
5 technical education centers and adult technical education programs;

6 (2) to the extent possible, align the program with subsequent programs
7 offered through the Vermont State College System, the University of Vermont
8 and State Agricultural College, or an accredited independent college located in
9 Vermont; and

10 (3) respond to current or projected occupational demands.

11 * * *

12 § 545. VERMONT **STRONG** RETURNSHIP PROGRAM

13 (a) As used in this section, “returnship” means an on-the-job learning
14 experience working with an employer where an individual may, but does not
15 necessarily, receive academic credit, financial remuneration, a stipend, or any
16 combination of these.

17 (b)(1) The Department of Labor shall develop and implement a statewide
18 Vermont Strong Returnship Program for individuals who are returning to the
19 workforce after an extended absence or are seeking a limited duration on-the-
20 job work experience in a different occupation or occupational setting.

1 (2) The Department of Labor shall coordinate and provide funding to
2 public and private entities for returnship programs and opportunities that match
3 experienced workers with Vermont employers.

4 (3) Funding awarded through the Program may be used to build and
5 administer coordinated and cohesive programs and to provide participants with
6 a stipend during the returnship, based on need. Funds may be made only to
7 programs or projects that:

8 (A) do not replace or supplant existing positions;

9 (B) expose individuals to real and meaningful workplace
10 experiences;

11 (C) provide a process that measures progress toward mastery of hard
12 and soft professional skills and other factors that indicate a likelihood of
13 success in the workplace;

14 (D) are designed to motivate and educate participants through work-
15 based learning opportunities with Vermont employers; or

16 (E) offer participants a continuum of learning, experience, and
17 relationships with employers that will make it financially possible and
18 attractive for individuals to continue to work and live in Vermont.

19 (c) The Department of Labor shall:

20 (1) identify new and existing funding sources that may be allocated to
21 the Program;

1 (2) collect data and establish program goals and performance measures
2 that demonstrate program results for returnship programs funded through the
3 Program;

4 (3) engage appropriate agencies and departments of the State in the
5 Program to expand returnship opportunities with State government and with
6 entities awarded State contracts; and

7 (4) work with other public and private entities to develop and enhance
8 returnship programs, opportunities, and activities throughout the State.

9 Sec. 9. **RESERVATION OF FUNDS; APPROPRIATIONS**

10 (a) In fiscal year 2019 the Department of Labor shall reserve the amount of
11 \$40,000.00 from the Workforce Development Council Fund and the amount of
12 \$40,000.00 of federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds
13 reserved by the Governor for statewide workforce investment activities,
14 subject to permissible use, to assist the State Workforce Development Board in
15 performing the duties specified in this act.

16 (b) In fiscal year 2019 the amount of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the
17 General Fund to the Department of Labor to implement the Vermont Strong
18 Returnship Program created in 10 V.S.A. § 545.

19 (c) In fiscal year 2019 the amount of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the
20 General Fund to the Department of Labor to implement the Vermont College
21 Graduate Placement and Small Business Recruitment Initiative to provide

1 small businesses with support and resources to more effectively recruit new
2 employees from among graduates of Vermont colleges and universities.

3 Sec. 10. REPORTING

4 (a) On or before January 15, 2019, the State Workforce Development
5 Board shall report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic
6 Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing
7 and General Affairs concerning the implementation of this act.

8 (b) On or before January 15, 2019, the Department of Labor, in
9 collaboration with the Agency of Education and the State Workforce
10 Development Board, shall report to the House Committee on Commerce and
11 Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic
12 Development, Housing and General Affairs concerning:

13 (1) how to encourage more businesses to offer apprenticeships;

14 (2) how to encourage more labor force participation in
15 apprenticeships; and

16 (3) of the myriad federal and private apprenticeship opportunities
17 available, which additional opportunities, and which industry sectors, should
18 be offered or enhanced in Vermont.

19 Sec. 11. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.