

## **Regional Development Corporations of Vermont**

Jamie Stewart, Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, Representing the RDC's of Vermont

Testimony to Vermont House Commerce Committee

January 12, 2017



Dear Representative Bostow and House Committee Members:

Thank you very much for providing the opportunity for me to introduce the Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) of Vermont for this legislative session. It is my hope that this document will provide a concise and informative overview of the RDCs and the services that we provide to enhance economic development in Vermont – primarily through developing and strengthening businesses and creating employment statewide.

### **Who are the RDCs?**

Vermont's twelve Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) serve as the local nexus for businesses and entrepreneurs to connect with local, state, and federal programs and resources. In a rural state like Vermont, with its many small towns and relatively few local economic development officials, the RDCs are the primary contacts for local businesses and entrepreneurs seeking assistance for their business or ideas. The RDCs respective service areas align closely with those of the Regional Planning Commissions.

The Department of Economic Development (DED) provides administrative funding and an annual work plan to the RDCs to serve every geographic region of the state. The RDCs function as “satellites” of the department, providing local knowledge and facilitating assistance in their communities. Our partnership with DED helps to leverage other funding to direct economic development projects in our respective regions as well as serving as the economic development delivery system for the State.

### **What is Our Role? Who are Our Partners?**

The RDCs of Vermont function as a “one-stop-shop” and a frequent entry point for businesses and entrepreneurs seeking access to business support services. The RDCs either provide these services directly, or we serve as the conduit to connect businesses to the needed services.

Frequent RDC partners include (not inclusive):

VT Small Business Development Center (SBDC);  
VT Procurement & Technical Assistance Center (PTAC);  
VT Economic Development Authority (VEDA)

VT Department of Economic Development (ACCD – DED)  
VT Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC)  
Regional Technical Centers or Workforce Investment Boards  
VT State Colleges  
Regional Planning Commissions  
Chambers of Commerce – local, regional, and state

### **What Services Do We Offer?**

The RDCs of Vermont offer a wide variety of business support services on a statewide basis. In many instances the RDCs provide services directly to the client, but other times we connect the client to someone in our partner network. The RDCs are currently wrapping up a voluntary peer review effort undertaken by our organizations to assess the consistency of our service offerings statewide and share best practices. The goal is to make sure that a business has access to the same menu of professional support services no matter where they are located in Vermont. Similarly, the RDCs have added professional development trainings to our work agendas this year as there has been a significant turnover in RDC Directors over the past few years.

Common RDC business support services include (not inclusive):

Direct Business Outreach (w/DED)  
Business Planning (w/SBDC)  
Site Selection assistance + *some RDCs own commercial properties or business parks*  
Permitting  
Financing assistance + *some RDCs manage revolving loan funds*  
Workforce Training and Development  
Brownfields Redevelopment  
Economic Planning – *local plans, regional plans (including CEDS), and statewide plans*  
Business e-newsletters

The annual work plan DED provides to the RDCs typically requires (and measures):  
Business Visitations; Available Sites Database; Business Trainings/Events, including Finance and Workforce Development events; and, CEDS Implementation Tasks. The work plan also asks for regional challenges, goals, and communications and outreach strategies.

Common referral services that RDCs provide to connect businesses with programs and partners in Vermont's economic development system are to (not inclusive):

VT Small Business Development Center – *business planning and technical assistance*  
VT Economic Development Authority (VEDA) - *financing*  
Vermont Training Program (VTP) - *workforce training*  
Vermont Employment Growth Incentive (VEGI) program  
VT Employee Ownership Center (VEOC) – *succession planning*  
VT Procurement and Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) – *government contracting*  
Regional Technical Centers and VT Dept. of Labor – *workforce development*

## **Regional Development Corporations of Vermont**

### **Robin Scheu, Addison County Economic Development Corporation**

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In 2016, ACEDC made loans totaling \$405,000 to 6 businesses which will create 23 new jobs. We made 5 Green Energy Grants to local organizations to help reduce their carbon footprint and save on energy costs. We obtained a grant for a growing local business to purchase equipment, and helped two towns get grants for infrastructure and marketing assistance.

### **William Colvin, Bennington County Industrial Corporation**

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BCIC and a consortium of local business leaders, institutions and civic-minded investors have organized to transform the block of historic buildings at the Four Corners of Bennington into a vibrant, mixed use downtown space with offices, in-town living, restaurants and retail. Bennington Redevelopment Group LLC (BRG LLC) has reached an agreement to acquire the buildings and approximately four acres of land that include the Putnam Hotel, the Old Courthouse/Pennysaver, the Winslow Building, Oldcastle Theatre, H. Greenberg and Son Hardware and the Mobil Station.

### **Adam Grinold, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**

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BDCC led the development of what was a successful Public/Private and regional retention project that was fully implemented with state permits and a New Market Tax Credit closing a short 4 months after signing of the development agreement. The GS Precision project, with 100 new positions, 30,000 square feet of new space and \$8MM in new equipment, came together through a variety of funding sources including the Windham County Economic Development Program, Vermont Employment Growth Incentive (VEGI) Vermont Rural Ventures, MHIC, and VEDA. This remarkable success was from collaboration between the Town of Brattleboro, the BDCC, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development and GS Precision.

### **Jamie Stewart, Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation**

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CVEDC's Central Vermont Job Fair takes place on the first Wednesday each April. (April 5, 2017 at the Barre Auditorium this year!) We have had 500-800 attendees and over 40 vendors for the past 4 years. The job fair has featured a live radio broadcast, on-site interviews, a resource room and workshops on how to start your own business and job readiness preparation.

### **Tim Smith, Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation**

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FCIDC is another step closer to completing the St. Albans Town Industrial Park Extension. A 600,000 Infrastructure Project, now complete, provides 8 more industrial parcels with municipal water and sewer; natural gas; three-phase power and telecommunications.

**Frank Cioffi, Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation**

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Site selection is critical to the success and growth potential of our regional employers. GBIC works with both developers and commercial and industrial real estate professionals to find space to meet the needs of business. Additionally, GBIC has developed seven industrial parks since its inception and currently operates Catamount Industrial Park in Milton, VT. Our deep history of developing in Vermont and close relationships with the State and the Regional Planning Commission provide support with permitting and zoning throughout Chittenden County.

**Bob Haynes, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation**

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In October 2016, GMEDC and a local commercial banker organized an important forest-products sector forum that was attended by over 100 participants including: loggers, foresters, truckers, saw mill and power plant operators, land owners, legislators and staff from Vermont's congressional offices as well as state and federal officials. This was in response to discussions with clients in the region who were experiencing financial difficulty with businesses related to the forestry industry in all aspects. A goal is to find long-term solutions to keep Vermont's forests productive and retain jobs in the forest industry.

**Jan Marinelli, Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation**

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In 2016, LCIEDC assumed the manager and facilitator roles for the region's **water quality education and outreach initiatives**, especially those that affect farm businesses and water-based tourism industries. This made sense because we are surrounded by water and many of our businesses are directly linked to Lake Champlain.

**John Mandeville, Lamoille Economic Development Corporation**

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LEDC operates the Lamoille County Revolving Loan Fund which provides micro-loans up to \$10,000 and small business loans up to \$50,000. The fund provides loans to small and medium sized businesses whose activity has a direct benefit to low and moderate income individuals. The fund is intended to supplement existing or private sources of funding when those funds are limited. The purpose of the fund is to provide meaningful economic benefit to the residents of Lamoille County.

**David Snedeker, Northeastern Vermont Development Association**

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NVDA assisted Newport with a USDA funding application for *Newport Bienvenue!* - a long-range marketing and promotion campaign led by Newport's downtown organization and designed to draw Quebec businesses, consumers, and visitors to Newport City and drive Newport's economic growth. NVDA assisted the City's downtown committees by providing market research, data analysis, and business support to enhance the Quebec visitor and business experience in Newport and develop promotional strategies for reaching the Quebec market.

**Lyle Jepson, Rutland Economic Development Corporation**  
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In September 2016, the REDC board of directors approved a plan to support the launch of a makerspace for the Rutland region. The plan includes three years of free rent and utilities at 112 Quality Lane in Rutland and \$50,000 of startup capital from a special job creation fund donated to us by Green Mountain Power. Businesses, including VELCO and Green Mountain Power are joining community members advance the project. Rutland Makerspace volunteers have reorganized the space by removing walls to accommodate a wood shop, metal shop, studio space, storage, and floor space for larger projects, and electrical work is nearly complete. REDC is thrilled to watch the transformation from a functional industrial space to an inspirational makerspace! The space will open to the public by early spring.

**Bob Flint, Springfield Regional Development Corporation**  
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In 2016, SRDC completed construction on a new \$1.2 million facility in Windsor's Artisans Park this summer for Blake Hill Preserves. 12 people are now working in this expanded facility producing and distributing jams, jellies and preserves, as well as overseeing a new retail store. SRDC also assisted Konrad Prefab from concept to production, including financing, to open a new manufacturing facility in Springfield.

To conclude, the Regional Development Corporation structure provides a coordinated statewide vehicle for economic development delivery in Vermont. While there are regional differences, we all share the same goal – to serve as the one-stop shop for existing value-added companies, including facilitation of available state resources, as well as assisting those looking to start a business, in partnership with the Small Business Development Center. This means we work with the largest employers in our regions, but also the single-person with a great idea, and everything in-between!

Please let me know what other information the RDC's, can provide. Like all of you, we appreciate the opportunity to be of service to the State of Vermont!

Sincerely,

David Snedeker  
President – RDC's of Vermont