

GROW YOUR OWN:

Advancing the Next Generation of Leadership in the

—————▶ **NORTHEAST KINGDOM**

Leadership Development Task Force

Action Plan ◀—————

December 2018



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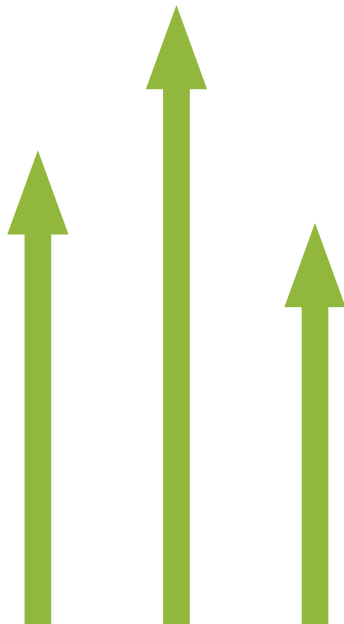
DECEMBER 2018

GROW YOUR OWN:

Advancing the Next Generation of
Leadership in the Northeast Kingdom



The Action Plan of the Leadership Development Task Force



Produced by the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative

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The Northeast Kingdom Collaborative's mission is to develop, promote, and implement economic and community development strategies to improve the quality of life for residents of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative (NEKC) launched a new “Task Force” framework for using collective action to promote economic and community development in the region. The NEKC convened representatives from relevant organizations to form a 12-member **Task Force on Leadership Development**, which met to discuss and strategize through the year.

The result is this platform for action, a regional strategy for **supporting the development of the next generation of leaders in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont**. It represents a blueprint for how conversation among nonprofit and private groups to align their work can result in the development of projects capable of transforming communities.

Backed by this diverse array of partners, these six initiatives can be launched in 2019 and will have a measurable impact on removing the barriers that keep community members, particularly those from underrepresented groups, from stepping out into leadership.

1 EMPOWER EMERGING LOCAL LEADERS ←
by (a) founding the **NEK Leadership Institute**, a cohort-based intensive personal and professional growth opportunity that will follow best practices established by similar model leadership development programs and (b) launching the **NEK Women Engaged in Leadership** Learning program, a network of mission-driven women in leadership positions in the region’s nonprofit and business communities.

2 OFFER MORE AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE LOCAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ←
through (a) coordinating an ongoing **NEK Professional Development Series** that offers low or no-cost classes in desired subjects on a regular basis and (b) seeding an **NEK Training Scholarship Fund** to assist residents in attending existing quality tuitioned programming in the region and beyond.

3 CONNECT CURRENT AND EMERGING LEADERS ←
via a new **NEK Mentor Network** that will match those seeking mentors with volunteers based on location and sector of interest.

4 INTEGRATE NEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS ←
through the **“Connect Over Coffee” Project**, an informal strategy for welcoming new or returning residents, sharing local knowledge and inviting them to get involved.

5 STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL & INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS ←
by holding an Annual **NEK Regional Summit** for municipal, community, business and youth leaders on a different interdisciplinary topic each year related to economic and community development. “Leadership” will be the focus in 2019.

6 INCREASE BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY ←
in the region by building stakeholder consensus around an **NEK Broadband Action Plan** to improve the quality and speed of the internet available to businesses and residents, particularly in rural community hubs.



II. INTRODUCTION

The platform in this report is designed to advance leadership development in the Northeast Kingdom. We believe that local leadership is vital to the success of our state's rural areas, and that there is a need to strengthen the region's pipeline of emerging leaders and to encourage young people to take leadership roles in their communities. Expanding leadership programs will help more people become engaged with the civic life of their communities and provide opportunities for citizen empowerment. To do this, we must act together now.

—————> **“local leadership is vital to the success of our state's rural areas”** <—————

A) THE ROLE OF THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

In 2018, the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative founded and charged a Leadership Development Task Force. The goal was to bring together key leaders and experts who together would evaluate opportunities for leadership development in the region, produce a region-wide dialogue, and frame strategies for how the region can do more to support new and emerging leaders.

Task Force members (listed on the inside cover of this report) worked together over six months to take public input throughout the region. They used these findings to articulate a comprehensive action plan for advancing this work in the region.

The platform for action in this report represents the Task Force members' considered views on what projects and programs would be most effective in supporting the next generation of leaders in the Northeast Kingdom.

B) THE ROLE OF THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM COLLABORATIVE

The Northeast Kingdom Collaborative (NEKC) is a convener and leader of collective action for the benefit of the communities of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom.

The NEKC has founded, managed, staffed, and facilitated the deliberations of the Leadership Development Task Force. The NEKC selected members of the Task Force to listen, learn, and capture ideas for advancing leadership in the Northeast Kingdom. The content in this report arose out of these conversations and was closely reviewed and approved by members of the Task Force.

Following this report, the NEKC will work with partners and funders to bring the projects in this plan to life. We expect this work will advance development in the region and help address this significant challenge to our future.

KEY GOALS

This report is designed to address the key goals in the charge to this Task Force to:

1 Identify existing barriers that must be overcome to increase support for leadership development in the region.

2 Identify best practices for leadership development currently in place in NEK or VT, and research other models beyond our state.

3 Identify what is achievable to systemically support leadership development in the region.

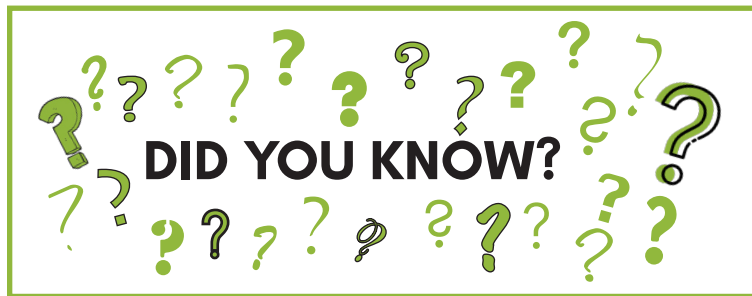
4 Develop an action plan to advance leadership development in the Northeast Kingdom.

III. ABOUT THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM

The Northeast Kingdom (NEK) of Vermont possesses innumerable assets: engaged citizens, dynamic entrepreneurs, exceptional educational and healthcare institutions, natural and cultural treasures, and thriving local food system. Despite these resources, the region continues to face persistent economic and social challenges.

The NEK is comprised of the **LEAST POPULOUS**, least densely-settled counties in a state with one of the **MOST RURAL** populations in the country.

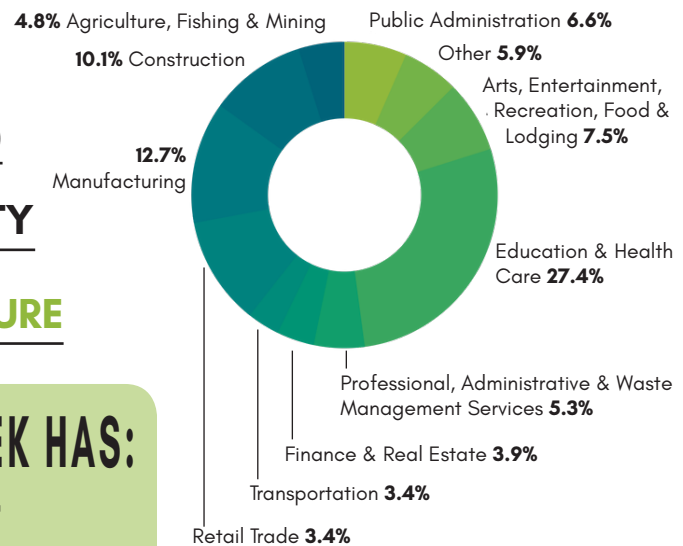
NEK STATS
55 TOWNS & GORES
64,108 RESIDENTS
2,027 SQUARE MILES



The name Northeast Kingdom (NEK) was coined by former Vermont governor George Aiken in a 1949 speech.

- 2.4% REGIONAL POPULATION DECLINE** BETWEEN 2010 & 2017
- 82% OF THE WORKFORCE LEAVES** THE COUNTY FOR WORK (ESSEX COUNTY)
- 14% OF RESIDENTS LIVE IN POVERTY**
- 1 IN 4 CHILDREN ARE FOOD INSECURE**

NEK INDUSTRY SECTORS



COMPARED TO THE REST OF STATE, THE NEK HAS:

- **LOWER** High School **DEGREE ATTAINMENT**
- **LOWEST** Labor Force **PARTICIPATION**
- **LOWEST** median Household **INCOME**
- **HIGHER** median **AGE**

*Data prepared by the Vermont State Data Center at UVM's Center for Rural Studies



IV. CHALLENGE STATEMENT

LOW CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

There is **LOW CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**, particularly among younger people. This leads to **VOLUNTEER BURNOUT** among those who do step forward. On the flip side, municipal, civic and other volunteer organizations frequently do not use social media and other methods most familiar to younger residents to reach out and invite participation. Also, new or returning members of a community often have **TROUBLE LEARNING ABOUT PROGRAMS, NEEDS AND RESOURCES** in their towns. Many municipal and civic leaders have been in that position for multiple decades and have not necessarily made mentoring and training replacements a priority.

INUNDATION

There are many non-profit organizations in the region that provide youth or adult leadership or professional development programming and resources. These groups are often **UNDERFUNDED**, have **OVERLAPPING TARGET AUDIENCES** and **COMPETING FOR THE SAME STATE, FEDERAL AND PRIVATE FUNDING**. This can result in a **LACK OF COOPERATION AMONG ORGANIZATIONS** with similar or interconnected missions. The lack of funding and human capacity at these organizations also makes coordination among themselves more challenging. Joint marketing of services and events often is seen as an extra and often untaken step. This is a recipe for limited outcomes. Indeed, at every summit, we heard some version of the sentiment that the Northeast Kingdom is **"ORGANIZATION RICH" BUT "IMPACT POOR."** Simultaneously, we heard from potential users of these resources and programs that they often don't know about them, or heard about them after a course was finished or a deadline gone by.

LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE

There is a lack of basic infrastructure in our region that makes it very challenging for residents to participate in civic life let alone make time for civic leadership. This is particularly true for young people just out of school, parents of young children and lower-income residents, all groups underrepresented in leadership positions. There are core challenges including the **LACK OF WELL-PAYING JOBS**, requiring residents to cobble together an income from several different sources. The **SCARCITY OF HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE OPTIONS** for working parents also means there is rarely extra energy or time for meetings or trainings. There are transportation challenges due to the **LACK OF PUBLIC TRANSIT** and how far away from each other the major population areas are in our region. There are **COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES** due to the lack of affordable, truly high-speed broadband in many of our communities and **SPOTTY CELL PHONE SERVICE** coverage.

UNDERESTIMATION

Residents sometimes do not see or **UNDERVALUE THE DESIRABLE NATURAL, RECREATIONAL, AGRICULTURAL, CULINARY AND CREATIVE ASPECTS OF THIS REGION**. They view it as an economic and cultural dead-end that anyone with skills and ambition must eventually move away from to get ahead. Previous experiences with touted developments or programs that never materialized has left them jaded and **ANTICIPATING FAILURE**. Unfortunately, these negative perceptions about the region and its possibilities can become a self-fulfilling prophecy by **DAMPENING ENTHUSIASM AMONG POTENTIAL LEADERS** and hindering efforts at progress.

V. VISION STATEMENT

MEASURES OF SUCCESS



We will know we are successful when:

There are incentives to become a leader and a network of support for leaders that provides access to mentorship, training in different models of leadership, information about the strengths and weaknesses about different approaches to leadership and other resources. There are clear pathways or on-ramps to leadership.

INCENTIVES TO BECOME A LEADER



There is a deep, talented and diverse pool of leaders engaged in all areas of life in the Northeast Kingdom. These leaders inspire participation by others and build bridges between different groups. They mentor and recruit the next generation of leaders. They inform and shape local, regional and state public policy as advocates for our region.



LEADERS INSPIRE PARTICIPATION & BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN GROUPS



Businesses, nonprofits and communities are thriving and successful in tackling the challenges of our region and improving quality of life.



DIVERSE POOL OF LEADERS



VI. PLATFORM FOR ACTION

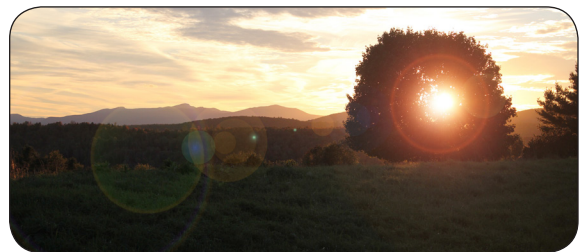
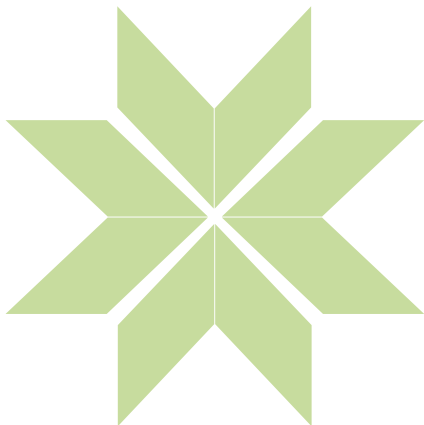
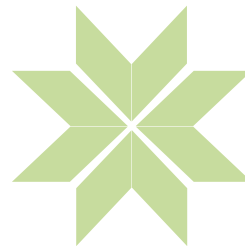
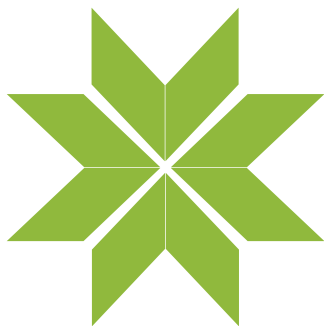
GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Action steps will support and/or develop trainings and other programming that are affordable, accessible and rooted within a specific community or communities.
- Projects will emphasize that all members of the community have the capacity to become leaders. This will involve robust and explicit outreach efforts.
- Multi-generational leadership, where all ages are working and learning together, will be a focus.
- Each project will strive to allow for participants to engage with programming at different levels of time commitment as appropriate
- Trainings will include a significant portion of hands-on, project-based learning, although exploring different leadership models and theories of leadership should also be a component.
- These projects will be marketed jointly to make leadership opportunities more visible in the region.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

NEW LEADERS: Look to reach those historically underrepresented in leadership including young people, lower-income people, people of color, women, and LGBTQ people.

LEADERS ON THE VERGE: Draw “leaders on the verge” into leadership. Find targets of opportunity that may be different in different communities. Identify and bring new resources and energy to existing active structures such as, for example, a regional young professionals network; existing parent leadership group; a professional women’s group, school-based rotary club; sports coaches; etc.





RECOMMENDATIONS

1 SUPPORT AND EMPOWER EMERGING LOCAL LEADERS

PROJECT A: NEK Leadership Institute

ACTION: Develop a framework and pilot in fall/spring 2019-2020. This is envisioned as a nine-month cohort-based program for 12-15 people that would include a series of one-day and overnight workshops at various locations throughout the NEK. Development would include decisions regarding purpose, format, features and outcomes with input from other model leadership development programs.

Who: Northwoods Stewardship Center

Cost: \$30,000 for staffing, facilitation, accommodations and other event expenses

Metrics: (Meets Demand) No. of applicants; (Achieves Result) Pre- and post-program survey of participants on sense of self as a leader and likelihood to lead.

PROJECT B: NEK Women Engaged in Leadership Learning

ACTION: Launch a networking group for mission-driven women in leadership positions in businesses and nonprofits in the Northeast Kingdom. Programming would be informal, based around quarterly dinners and conversation with thought leaders. The goals include forming connections and breaking down barriers that impede public-private partnerships. Its design would be informed by input from existing successful program models.

Who: NEK Collaborative

Cost: \$5,000 for staffing, meals and event expenses

Metrics: (Meets Demand) Attendees per dinner; (Achieves Result) Pre- and post-program survey of participants on sense of connection to other leaders and likelihood to form future partnerships.

2 OFFER MORE AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

PROJECT A: NEK Professional Development Training Series

ACTION: Meet with large employers in the region to ascertain their current internal professional development programming and unmet needs. Work with these employers and their employees to envision a self-sustaining training series in which there would be dedicated slots for employees of participating companies and dedicated slots for non-affiliated community members. Build an agenda/set of topics, hire trainers or contract with existing PD programs, and plan logistics. Determine fee (very low) if any. Survey after programming for feedback.

Who: A cooperative effort of Northern Vermont University Center for Professional Studies; North Country Career Center; St. Johnsbury Academy and NEK Young Professionals Network facilitated by the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative.

Cost: In-kind staff time by participating organizations

Metrics: (Meets Demand) Class subscription & attendance; (Achieves Result) post-class or post-series satisfaction survey

PROJECT B: NEK Training Scholarship Fund

ACTION: Work with employers, funders, and workforce development agencies to create a self-sustaining scholarship fund where community members can apply for assistance in accessing existing professional development opportunities. Identify what programming is eligible; who can apply; size of awards.

Who: Northeast Kingdom Collaborative & NEK Young Professionals Network

Cost: \$25,000 seed/challenge money for Scholarship Fund

Metrics: (Meets Demand) No. of applicants; (Achieves Result) post-program survey to gauge improvement in ability to contribute to leadership in the NEK.



3 CONNECT CURRENT AND EMERGING NEK LEADERS

PROJECT: NEK Mentor Network

ACTIONS: Develop a simple set of guidelines for mentors and mentees; provide outreach to build a database of NEK mentors for emerging leaders in different sectors; market the mentoring program and match interested mentors and mentees.

Who: Northern Vermont University-Lyndon

Cost: \$30,000 for staffing, marketing and digital infrastructure.

Metric: (Meets Demand) No. of mentor volunteers in database; No. of mentors & mentees connected; (Achieves Result) brief post-interaction survey

4 INTEGRATE NEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS

PROJECT: “Connect over Coffee” Welcome Wagon Program

ACTION: Develop a simple set of guidelines for Welcomers (different levels of engagement) with ways to reach out to new members of the community; provide outreach to build a database of Welcomers with the goal of having several in each town or town cluster; market the Welcome program targeting newcomers.

Who: NEK Young Professionals Network

Cost: \$20,000 for staffing, marketing and digital infrastructure.

Metric: (Meets Demand) No. of Welcome volunteers; No. of Welcome interactions; (Achieves Result) brief post-interaction survey

5 SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONAL & INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS:

PROJECT: NEK Annual Regional Summit

ACTION: Plan and hold a daylong event for municipal, community, business, and youth leaders. In 2019, the summit will focus on the role of leadership in boosting the region’s economic and civic vitality. The day will highlight projects with innovative and unique partnerships and initiatives that focus on supporting emerging leaders and leadership development in the Northeast Kingdom.

Who: NEK Collaborative

Cost: \$40,000 for facilitation and event expenses

Metric: (Meets Demand) No. of participants; (Achieves Result) post-summit survey

6 INCREASE BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY IN THE REGION

PROJECT: NEK Broadband Action Plan

ACTION: Create consensus among stakeholders around a specific detailed action plan and next steps. This will be kicked off with a broadband summit convening businesses, legislators, nonprofits, etc. to identify opportunities to increase access to 1) business-class high-speed broadband (guaranteed 100 mbps symmetrical service) in town centers, particularly co-working and community spaces; 2) true high-speed broadband (25/3 mbps minimum) to residences.

Who: NEK Collaborative, NVDA and Northern Vermont Economic Development District

Cost: \$1,500 for staffing and event expenses

Metric: (Deliverables) Action Plan and Next Steps

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

SUMMARY OF PLATFORM FOR ACTION

#	PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	LEAD ORG.	KEY ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	EST. COSTS
1a	NEK Leadership Institute	9-month cohort intensive program, 12-15 people	Northwoods Stewardship Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop framework • Solicit participants • First year pilot 	2019 - 2020	\$30,000
1b	NEK Women Engaging in Leadership Learning	Networking for mission-driven women, quarterly dinner meetings	NEK Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build agenda • Solicit participants • Schedule meetings 	2019	\$5,000
2a	NEK Professional Development Series	Self-sustaining annual training series	Cooperative of career training providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene partners • Survey employers & employees • Build agendas • Advertise program 	2019 - 2020	In-kind staff hours
2b	Northeast Kingdom Training Scholarship Fund	Fund to assist with tuition for leadership and professional training	NEKC & NEK Young Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop framework • Advertise • Distribute awards • Seek ongoing annual funding 	2019	\$25,000 seed funding
3	NEK Mentor Network	Service matching volunteer mentors with mentees	Northern VT University-Lyndon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit mentors • Develop expectations • Advertise 	2019 - 2020	\$30,000
4	NEK "Connect Over Coffee" Program	Volunteers for informal outreach to newcomers and returnees	NEK Young Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit volunteers • Develop expectations • Advertise 	2019	\$20,000
5	NEK Annual Regional Summit	Daylong event spotlighting innovative initiatives	NEK Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build program • Invite presenters • Advertise 	Fall 2019	\$40,000
6	NEK Broadband Action Plan	Action steps for improving high-speed connectivity	NEKC, NVDA, NVEDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene stakeholders • Draft action steps • Build consensus 	2019	\$1,500
Comprehensive series of recommendations to advance leadership development in the NEK						~\$150,000

More detailed plans for these projects, as well as scopes of work and budgets, are available from the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative upon request.



VII. NEXT STEPS

The Northeast Kingdom Leadership Development Task Force is excited to be able to present this Action Plan. There will be both short-term and long-term work underway to bring these recommended projects to life.

In the coming months, the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative and partners will be promoting the recommendations in this plan and building additional partnerships to advance the work. As the lead organizations begin implementing the projects over the course of 2019, the Collaborative will serve as advisor to the projects, support the ongoing efforts, and track project development. The Collaborative will produce a mid-year progress report providing an update on the projects.

WE NEED YOUR HELP:

- **SPREAD THE WORD** and invite others to join us in building support for the plan.
- **VOLUNTEER** to help us with the next steps. Let us know if you or your organization would like to assist with a specific project in the report
- **INVEST** in this work. Let us know if you or your organization would like to contribute to a specific project in the report.
- **STAY TUNED** and sign up for future leadership and professional development opportunities as we move forward with implementing the recommendations.



VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Northeast Kingdom Collaborative would like to express our deepest appreciation to all of the dedicated partners, contributors, expert presenters, wonderful colleagues, and committed Vermonters who helped make this Leadership Development Report a reality.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The members of the Leadership Development Task Force are some of the most knowledgeable and driven leaders in advancing leadership in the Northeast Kingdom, and we appreciate their hard work and dedication to moving this effort forward. The inside cover of this report includes a list of Task Force members.

TASK FORCE PRESENTERS

We are grateful for the input from enthusiastic and knowledgeable experts around the state who joined the Task Force's monthly meetings to share their perspectives and ideas to advance leadership development:

- **Jenny Hyslop** from the Vermont Conservation and Housing Board
- **Will Lathrop** from the High Meadows Fund
- **Suzanne Trahey** from the Snelling Center for Government.

PUBLIC FORUMS

In July and August of 2018, NEKC hosted three summits in Brownington, Island Pond, and St. Johnsbury to gather input from the public on strategies to advance Leadership Development in the region. These events were made possible by the contribution of meeting locations, generous forum sponsors, fantastic outreach partners, and our knowledgeable facilitators. We are particularly thankful to the over 150 dedicated NEK residents who came out to share their ideas and strategies to advance leadership development in the NEK.

FUNDING PARTNERS

The NEKC deeply appreciates the leadership and investment of our generous philanthropic partners in the work of the Leadership Development Task Force including the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Community Foundation, and USDA Rural Development.





IX. MISSION & PRIORITIES

THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM COLLABORATIVE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a vibrant, thriving Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. The NEKC has been working for more than 20 years with the mission of promoting economic and community development and improving quality of life for residents in the region. We do this by:



DEVELOPING STRATEGY



BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY



GUIDING INVESTMENT

REGIONAL PRIORITY AREAS:

- 1 Leadership Development
- 2 Advancing Economic Development through the Intersection of the Creative, Recreation and Food Sectors.

NEK Collaborative Board of Directors

Sarah Waring (Chair)

Executive Director, Center for an Agricultural Economy

Jody Fried (Vice-Chair)

Executive Director, Catamount Arts

Susan Ohlidal (Secretary)

Interfaith Partners NEK

David Snedeker (Treasurer)

Executive Director, Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Kathy Austin

President & CEO, Community National Bank

Paul Bengtson

CEO, Northern Vermont Regional Hospital

Elaine Collins

President, Northern Vermont University

Patrick Flood

Interim CEO, Rural Edge

Jon Freeman

President & CEO, Northern Community Investment Corp.

Jeanne Gervais

President, Island Pond Chamber of Commerce

Joe Kasprzak

Asst. Town Manager, St. Johnsbury

Jim Kisch

President & CEO, Passumpsic Savings Bank

Julie Laforce

Co-owner, Built by Newport

Tom Lovett

Headmaster, St. Johnsbury Academy

Michelle Tarryk

Executive Director, Northeast Kingdom Learning Services

Steve Wright

General Manager, Jay Peak Resort

Dana Young

Owner, Dana Young Construction

NON-VOTING:

Ben Doyle

Asst. State Director VT/NH, USDA Rural Development

Suzanne Legere-Belcher

Field Director, Vermont Agency of Human Services

Emilye Pelow Corbett

Philanthropic & Planned Giving Advisor, Vermont Community Foundation

Tim Tierney

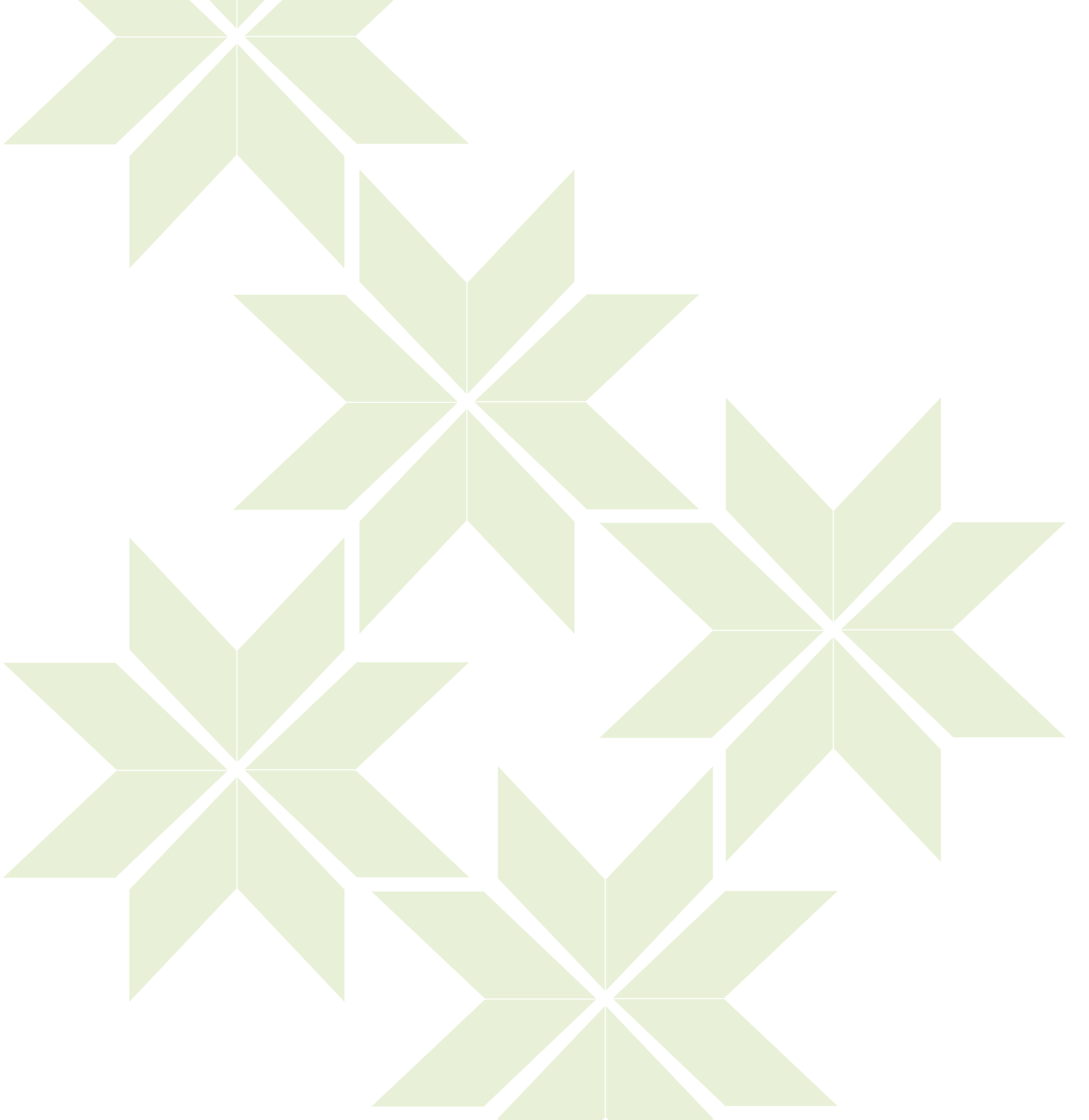
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