

To: House Commerce & Economic Development
From: Sarah Buxton, State Director of Workforce Development, VDOL
Hugh Bradshaw, Assist. Director of Workforce Development, VDOL
Date: February 13, 2020
Re: H. 703, H.704, H.707

Workforce Systems Alignment

Since 2017, VDOL has been actively pursuing steps to reorganize, align, and improve the many systems and activities related to the workforce development throughout the state. Act 53, Act 189, and Act 80 all included multiple directives related to this work – much of which is still ongoing.

For example, in Act 189, the General Assembly stated that it was its intent

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

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

VDOL submitted its 2019 Annual Report and a Report on the 2019 Regional Workforce Summits and our 2018 Annual Report and Report of on the Implementation of Act 189. These reports describe the various activities, initiatives, and successes in strengthening our system.

In Act 80, the General Assembly directed VDOL to develop and execute a transparent process, involving multiple stakeholders, to create one or more designs of a fully integrated adult postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) system that provides Vermonters throughout the State with high quality programs that are standardized, replicable, and offered with regularity and consistency; coordinates, or integrates where appropriate, the many programs and providers into the state’s workforce education and training system to maximize the efficient use of training resources; and features a governance structure that provides consistency across the system whenever appropriate, but also provides the flexibility necessary to respond to local and regional workforce demands. VDOL is currently negotiating a contract with a highly qualified consultant to assist in this work. We estimate that we will have a report for you by early next fall.

Apprenticeship

Registered Apprenticeships are federally recognized workforce education and training programs that combine hands-on learning with related technical instruction. Hands-on training is provided under the supervision of a registered apprenticeship sponsor, while technical instruction is typically provided by a training provider or educational institution. Registered apprenticeships require a minimum of 2,000 hours of work experience and recommend 144 hours of related classroom instruction, with a few higher-level occupations requiring as many as 10,000 hours for completion. Wage increases linked to mastering of competencies, mentoring, and simultaneous employment with a sponsor employer are also key components of a registered apprenticeship. At the completion of a registered apprenticeship program, the participant gains a nationally-recognized, portable certificate and career pathway advancement with their sponsor employer.

The Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) is the designated Apprenticeship Agency for the State of Vermont. VDOL has three full-time staff dedicated to administering and overseeing the State Apprenticeship Program. Additionally, Workforce Development Division leadership, administrative staff, performance management staff, ADS, and VDOL business office staff also spend time supporting the program.

In 2019, VDOL applied for additional funds to support the continued development, outreach, and organization of Registered Apprenticeship programs in Vermont. A portion of this funding will be dedicated to increasing the number of individuals with disabilities, New Americans, and individuals exiting the correctional system who are enrolled in a Registered Apprenticeship program.

In 2019, due to our expansion efforts and very robust plumbing and electrical enrollments, we saw a significant increase in the number of new Apprentices, going from 405 in 2018 to 821 in 2019. With a strong economy and more and more employers realizing that they must “grow their own” employees, we see tremendous opportunity for expansion of the registered apprenticeship program into more and more industry sectors, with a growing range of approved occupational titles over time.

Performance Metric	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Apprentices Enrolled	1301	1350	1621	2015
Total New Apprentices Enrolled	247	284	405	821
Registered Apprenticeship Certificates Issued	111	290	128	304
Total Active Apprenticeship Sponsors	320	330	354	379
Total Approved Occupational Titles	209	213	215	220
Total Active Occupational Titles	24	34	30	35

To support and coordinate the State’s apprenticeship expansion efforts, VDOL has established an Apprenticeship Team comprised of members from Vermont Technical College, Community College of Vermont, Agency of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The Team is working to create new Registered Apprenticeships in occupations that are in high demand here in Vermont. In just the first year, the Team has supported the development of several new registered apprenticeships including Pharmacy Technician, Medical Assistant and an innovative pre-apprenticeship to registered apprenticeship track for LPN certification.

2020 Apprenticeship Proposal

Apprenticeship Expansion: The Department of Labor will work to double the number of registered pre-apprentices and apprentices enrolled in a federally-recognized registered apprenticeship program by 2023. The Department of Labor will work to double the number of active registered apprenticeship programs in the next five years.

Apprenticeship Pathways: In partnership with the Vermont State Colleges, the Department of Labor will work to increase the delivery of related instruction associated with a registered apprenticeship through the state college system so that student apprentices may earn some college credits while completing an apprenticeship.

By 2021, the Department of Labor will establish a system for registering and recognizing pre-apprenticeship programs delivered at career and technical education centers, high schools, the Vermont State Colleges, and other occupational training providers, in alignment with federal law and guidance.

In consultation with the Agency of Education, the Department of Labor will explore feasibility of establishing statewide matriculation agreements between secondary programs and registered apprenticeship programs.

Creating a Workforce Development Portal

VDOL is in a ten-state consortium called American's Job Link Alliance (AJLA) to develop and maintain cost-effective workforce technology to support the delivery of our workforce programs. In Vermont our system is called Vermont Job Link (VJL). Our consortium is currently supporting a massive overhaul of our IT system – which includes our Job Board, reporting system, and case management system. We expect this project (Rapid Storm) to be complete this fall. The updated product will make a marked improvement for users and customers (both job seekers and employers) in locating accessing and understanding workforce services and opportunities. Further, the Department is completing Phase 1 of a three phase procurement process (required by the state) to competitively bid our information management systems in 2021 and 2022 to meet short- and long-term needs. Our intention is to involve other Departments, Agencies, and public and private Workforce Partners in developing the RFIs and RFPs that will be part of this procurement. To the extent practicable, we aim to maintain IT systems, sites, and online services that meet the needs of multiple users and believe we could incorporate the aims of H.703 into this process.

Supporting Emergency Service Training Opportunities

VDOL looks forward to working with the Committee and education partners in supporting the aims of H.707 through the use of federal WIOA funds, state training funds, and the expansion of registered apprenticeship opportunities.