



PROGRESS *for* VERMONT

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Advancing
our economic future
in an age of climate change

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The Action Plan of the
Vermont Climate Change Economy Council

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Produced by

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The Vermont Council on Rural Development
helps Vermonters and Vermont communities develop their
capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through
coordination, collaboration, and the effective use
of public and private resources.

To help tell the Vermont Climate Change Economy story, VCRD and the Climate Change Economy Council are collecting Vermont Climate Innovator stories that highlight creative business owners and entrepreneurs around the state finding practical ways to reduce carbon emissions, mitigate climate risk, and stimulate green economic development.

To view the complete list of Climate Innovators and read their stories, visit our website at <http://vtrural.org/programs/climate-economy>

"As more renewable energy generation hits the grid, the need for distributed energy storage will increase. Ultimately this helps everyone involved, from the utility down to the end user. In the end, our storage solves many problems, from disaster recovery all the way to potentially cutting electricity costs for everyone."

—Jay Bellows, CEO of Northern Reliability Inc.,
a Vermont-based company developing and building
energy storage solutions

executive summary

Vermont has a tremendous opportunity to systematically advance economic activity that addresses the challenge of climate change by reducing and mitigating carbon impacts while spurring innovation and creativity, encouraging entrepreneurship, attracting youth and building jobs for the future.

The Vermont Climate Change Economy Council (VCCEC) was founded in February 2015 by the Vermont Council on Rural Development to frame a platform of ideas to move this economy forward. This document serves as the final report and action plan for the council.

The council defines the climate economy to include key sectors of distributed energy development, green building, efficiencies, and resource recycling. The term also includes the resilient foundation of our working lands economy, the innovative problem solving of the digital economy, and is a feature in all manufacturing, tourism, and community development in the climate change era. Because of its scale, flexibility and values, Vermont has an opportunity to take an innovative lead in spurring this economy, which can provide a rural model to respond to the climate challenge, and can grow and attract entrepreneurship needed for Vermont's economy.

Members of the VCCEC share a vision for the future of Vermont's economy that is detailed in the introduction of this report. We also recognize and celebrate the tremendous assets in the leadership already in play in businesses, investors, utilities, government, and non-profits who are advancing or supporting innovative projects in the climate economy today.

To take responsible leadership in mitigating Vermont's climate impact and to fully realize the potential for economic renewal, the VCCEC final report and action plan proposes the following **seven-point platform** to advance Vermont's climate economy:

- 1 Build a public/private **Comprehensive Energy Efficiency** partnership to build efficiencies in home heating, weatherization, and household energy retrofits along with transportation systems changes that can reduce the use of fossil fuels.
- 2 Establish a **Climate Economy Network Development Initiative** to provide seed funding and technical assistance for entrepreneurship to attract, support, cultivate and nurture a new generation of business creators and help them successfully grow their enterprises in Vermont.

- 3 Build or strengthen **Codes, Regulations, and Incentives** that reward innovation, encourage climate-smart economic growth, stimulate economic activity in downtowns, set market signals around residential and building efficiencies, and strengthen distributed energy and efficiency markets.
- 4 Stimulate investment through a **Clean Energy Finance Collaborative** that develops new financial tools, leverages private sector investment, provides a one-stop-shop for consumer financing information, and sets up a vehicle for members of the public to invest in the progress of Vermont's climate economy.
- 5 Evaluate effective ways to send market signals to reduce carbon use and to simulate economic development through a **Carbon Pricing or Trading** structure for Vermont.
- 6 Allow local communities to model effective change at a rapid rate and gain regional or national attention by concentrating a set of efficiency, energy development, transportation change, and other services through a **Climate Economy Model Communities Program**.
- 7 Set up a partnership, funding, and a strategy to **Market Vermont as a National Climate Economy Leader** as a way to attract mission-oriented young people, entrepreneurs and investors to participate in Vermont's model for economic renewal in the climate change era.

While some of the elements in this **seven point plan** require state regulation, legislation or investment, other features of this report can move forward through existing organizations or collective action. With this report, the VCCEC completes the work charged to it and disbands with confidence in the people of Vermont and all partners in the greater work ahead.