

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

PROGRAM UPDATE: JANUARY 2021

#BUYLOCAL VERMONT



Consumer Stimulus Program

The Buy Local Vermont Consumer Stimulus Program was launched to consumers on Tuesday, September 8, 2020. The program was designed to maximize the effect of local consumer spending, including at restaurants, retail stores, entertainment and performing arts venues, lodging, and tourism-related businesses to support businesses in Vermont that have suffered economic harm due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

This pilot program was funded with a \$500,000 allocation of the Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund.

#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program SUMMARY

The #BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program was designed to maximize the effect of local consumer spending, including at restaurants, retail stores, entertainment and performing arts venues, lodging, and tourism-related businesses to support businesses in Vermont that have suffered economic harm due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. All data reported is as of 12/29/20.

Total Investment	Total Distributed to Businesses	Businesses Receiving Funds	Average Funds Received Per Business	Total Number of Discounts Offered	Percent Discounts Redeemed
\$500,000	\$425,000	974	\$436	15,864	44.8%

Discount offers received by consumers were available for redemption beginning at program launch (9/8/20) and will remain active through the end of 2021. Consumers were surveyed at time of purchase and again 30 days after purchase to project the economic impact of return visits.

Customers Who Chose Offers	Customers Who Redeemed Offers	Total Discount Offers Redeemed	Average Discount Value Redeemed	Average Order Value	Percent Spent Over Value of Discount
11,846	6,127	7,110	\$26.58	\$45.99	73%

First Time Visitors to Business	Have Already Returned to Business within 30 Days	Plan to Return to Business	Actual Sales on First Visits	Actual Sales on Return Visits	Projected Additional Return Spending
70%	26%	66%	\$563,090	\$91,610	\$811,423

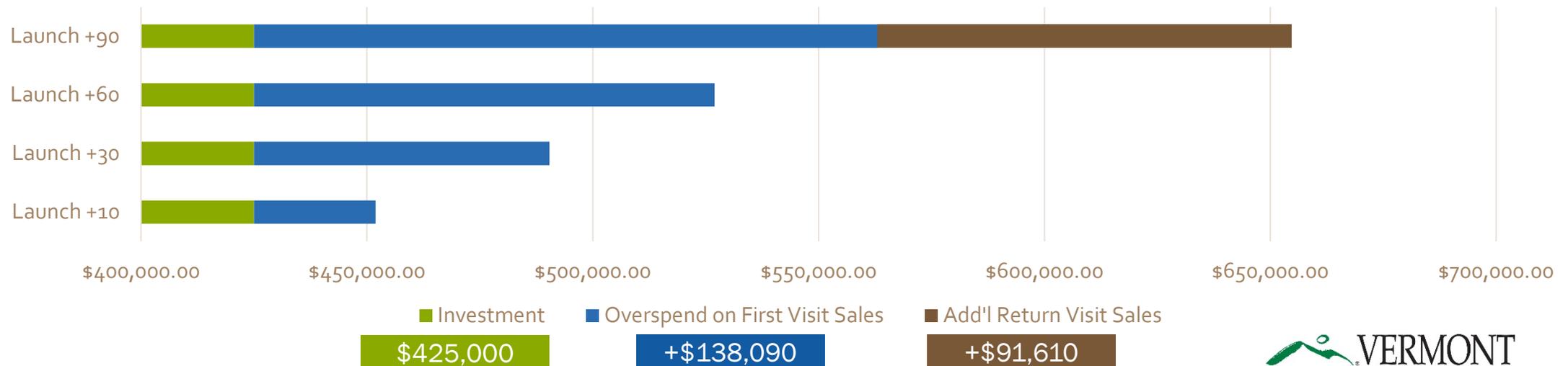
Projected Return Visits Per Year	Total Projected Spending Generated in First Year	Projected ROI
3	\$1,466,124	2.9x



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program ECONOMIC IMPACT

One of the many benefits of a consumer stimulus program like #BuyLocalVermont, is that the economic activity generated surpasses the original investment as the discounts offered to customers spur additional spending. The chart below shows how the cumulative impact of the original \$425,000 investment continues to build as more consumers use the discount offers and make additional purchases. As can be seen in the testimonials at the end of this report, this type of consumer stimulus also has the benefit of bringing local Vermont businesses new customers for future sales, bringing consumers to nearby merchants in downtowns and village centers, and influencing overall consumer spending habits to reinforce the effect that local spending has on the Vermont economy.

	Launch + 10 Days	Launch + 30 Days	Launch + 45 Days	Launch + 90 Days
Percent of Discounts Redeemed	12.66%	25.23%	34.78%	44.8%
Number of Discount Offers Redeemed	2,008	4,002	5,518	7,110
Percent of Additional Spending Achieved	50%	61%	69%	73%
Actual Spending at Time of Redemption	\$26,903	\$65,409	\$101,992	\$138,090



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program PROGRAM LAUNCH

Enrollment for Vermont businesses interested in participating in the program began on August 25, 2020. Up until and even after the consumer launch of the program on September 8, 2020, business continued to show interest in taking part. FAQs on eligibility and common enrollment questions are available on the [ACCD website](#).

	Enrolled and Approved at Launch	Enrolled or Approved Since Launch	Signed Up After Launch, Pending Approval	Began Sign Up but Never Completed	Expressed Interest in Signing Up Since Launch	TOTAL
Businesses	1,052	71	521	94	26	1764

The Buy Local Vermont program opened to consumers at 11am on September 8, 2020. Interest in the program was swift and intense with thousands of Vermonters trying to sign up within the very first hours. As part of the registration process, activation codes were sent to consumers in the order in which they were requested. Once the codes were sent, offers were awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. To ensure equity in the program across counties and business sectors, funding was allocated to different regions of the state. Ensuring equity slowed down the issuing of the codes, which led to many offers in the most populated areas of the state to sell out before consumers could fully activate their account. The entire \$425,000 available in consumer stimulus discount offers was fully subscribed within about 24 hours.

	Requested and Activated Code	Unique Customers Who Chose Offers	Activated Code But Did Not Select Gift (Either Did Not Like Offer or Sold Out)	Received Activation Code in 60 minutes or less	Offers Redeemed as of Report Date
Consumers	20,857	11,846 (57%)	9,011	79%	7,110



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program NUMBER OF BUSINESSES RECEIVING FUNDS BY COUNTY AND SECTOR

Of the 1,052 Vermont businesses enrolled and approved by launch of the program, 974 or 93% had offers chosen by consumers and received stimulus revenue.

Businesses Receiving Funds

	Retail	Restaurants	Lodging & Accomodations	Health & Wellness	Entertainment & Attractions	Other	Total
Chittenden	88	85	5	20	21	5	224
Washington	55	47	3	7	8	6	126
Windham	42	37	8	6	15	2	110
Windsor	32	29	3	11	18	1	94
Rutland	33	21	2	5	7	4	72
Lamoille	19	19	8	2	6	1	55
Bennington	21	29	2	6	7	3	68
Caledonia	14	28	1	3	6	3	55
Orleans	16	13	1	2	5	2	39
Addison	16	17	7	2	5	2	49
Franklin	13	18	2	4	4	2	43
Orange	6	10	3	1	1	2	23
Grand Isle	3	4	1	0	2	0	10
Essex	2	3	1	0	0	0	6
Total	360	360	47	69	105	33	974



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program

AVERAGE AMOUNT OF FUNDS RECEIVED PER BUSINESSES BY COUNTY AND SECTOR

The average amount of funding business received was \$436. The majority of consumer discounts offered had a \$30 value, but the exact discount amount varied by sector to appropriately incentivize spending at different price points and ranged from \$10 at fast-casual eateries to up to \$150 at lodging establishments.

Funds per Business

	Retail	Restaurants	Lodging & Accomodations	Health & Wellness	Entertainment & Attractions	Other	Total
Chittenden	\$418	\$639	\$1,470	\$179	\$420	\$114	\$497
Washington	\$212	\$302	\$3,100	\$73	\$421	\$110	\$315
Windham	\$206	\$240	\$600	\$300	\$285	\$300	\$264
Windsor	\$356	\$340	\$1,830	\$237	\$438	\$90	\$397
Rutland	\$547	\$385	\$2,475	\$192	\$779	\$525	\$550
Lamoille	\$231	\$352	\$713	\$30	\$155	\$300	\$328
Bennington	\$297	\$214	\$225	\$710	\$366	\$390	\$307
Caledonia	\$515	\$287	\$900	\$520	\$422	\$310	\$385
Orleans	\$315	\$229	\$8,400	\$420	\$310	\$495	\$508
Addison	\$362	\$341	\$1,333	\$150	\$868	\$285	\$533
Franklin	\$582	\$398	\$4,200	\$735	\$1,823	\$495	\$799
Orange	\$1,395	\$282	\$1,950	\$270	\$360	\$465	\$809
Grand Isle	\$290	\$150	\$2,700	\$0	\$320	\$0	\$481
Essex	\$1,320	\$63	\$1,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$672
Total	\$374	\$377	\$1,592	\$285	\$476	\$300	\$436



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program PROGRAM FUND ALLOCATIONS BY COUNTY AND SECTOR

In addition to allocating the funds to be geographically distributed by population density across all 14 counties, the funds were also allocated to benefit the hardest hit sectors of restaurants (32%), retail (32%), lodging (18%), entertainment/attractions (12%) and health/wellness (5%).

Funding

	Retail	Restaurants	Lodging & Accomodations	Health & Wellness	Entertainment & Attractions	Other	Total
Chittenden	\$36,810	\$54,280	\$7,350	\$3,570	\$8,830	\$570	\$111,410
Washington	\$11,680	\$14,210	\$9,300	\$510	\$3,370	\$660	\$39,730
Windham	\$8,670	\$8,880	\$4,800	\$1,800	\$4,280	\$600	\$29,030
Windsor	\$11,400	\$9,850	\$5,490	\$2,610	\$7,880	\$90	\$37,320
Rutland	\$18,060	\$8,090	\$4,950	\$960	\$5,450	\$2,100	\$39,610
Lamoille	\$4,380	\$6,680	\$5,700	\$60	\$930	\$300	\$18,050
Bennington	\$6,240	\$6,220	\$450	\$4,260	\$2,560	\$1,170	\$20,900
Caledonia	\$7,210	\$8,030	\$900	\$1,560	\$2,530	\$930	\$21,160
Orleans	\$5,040	\$2,980	\$8,400	\$840	\$1,550	\$990	\$19,800
Addison	\$5,790	\$5,790	\$9,330	\$300	\$4,340	\$570	\$26,120
Franklin	\$7,560	\$7,160	\$8,400	\$2,940	\$7,290	\$990	\$34,340
Orange	\$8,370	\$2,820	\$5,850	\$270	\$360	\$930	\$18,600
Grand Isle	\$870	\$600	\$2,700	\$0	\$640	\$0	\$4,810
Essex	\$2,640	\$190	\$1,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,030
Total	\$134,720	\$135,780	\$74,820	\$19,680	\$50,010	\$9,900	\$424,910



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program DISCOUNTS SELECTED BY CONSUMERS PER BUSINESS BY COUNTY AND SECTOR

Businesses participating in the program achieved an average of 16 consumers choosing the incentive gifts that were offered. The number of offers accepted at each business was based on consumer choice and the number of businesses in any given county that signed up to participate, in addition to the geographic distribution and the distribution between the impacted sectors the program was designed to achieve.

Gift Selections per Business

	Retail	Restaurants	Lodging & Accomodations	Health & Wellness	Entertainment & Attractions	Other	Total
Chittenden	14	42	10	6	14	4	23
Washington	7	18	21	2	20	4	12
Windham	7	15	4	10	9	10	10
Windsor	12	14	16	8	17	3	13
Rutland	18	15	17	6	25	18	17
Lamoille	8	20	5	1	5	10	11
Bennington	10	9	2	24	9	13	11
Caledonia	22	15	6	17	22	10	17
Orleans	11	11	56	14	19	17	13
Addison	12	17	13	5	40	10	16
Franklin	19	26	28	25	61	17	27
Orange	47	22	13	9	12	16	26
Grand Isle	10	6	18	0	12	0	10
Essex	44	4	8	0	0	0	18
Total	13	22	11	10	18	10	16



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program

DISCOUNTS REDEEMED BY CONSUMERS PER BUSINESS BY COUNTY AND SECTOR

In the 3+ months since the program was launched, consumers have been redeeming gifts across all counties and sectors, with restaurants and retail stores seeing the most activity. As noted in the summary, 70% of the consumers redeeming discounts were either first time visitors to the establishment or had not been to the business in over a year. This influx of new customers is precisely what the program was designed to achieve.

Gift Redemptions

	Retail	Restaurants	Lodging & Accomodations	Health & Wellness	Entertainment & Attractions	Other	Total
Chittenden	650	1,521	10	41	148	3	2,373
Washington	250	451	9	9	113	10	842
Windham	156	236	7	23	47	2	471
Windsor	207	210	12	20	83	0	532
Rutland	267	141	4	7	100	12	531
Lamoille	71	128	9	1	10	5	224
Bennington	132	128	1	100	30	7	398
Caledonia	151	217	0	9	15	1	393
Orleans	113	65	15	8	7	10	218
Addison	127	144	26	2	42	9	350
Franklin	151	190	13	14	129	3	500
Orange	93	71	23	1	0	1	189
Grand Isle	13	12	1	0	8	0	34
Essex	47	7	1	0	0	0	55
Total	2,428	3,521	131	235	732	63	7,110



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program DISCOUNTS REDEMPTION RATE BY CONSUMERS PER BY COUNTY AND SECTOR

The total redemption rate of discounts in the 3+ months since the program was launched is currently at 45%, with restaurants and retail stores seeing the highest redemption rates. Consumers were surveyed at time of purchase and again 30 days after purchase. 26% of customers had already returned to the business with the first month and 66% planned to visit the business again in the future.

Redemption Rate

	Retail	Restaurants	Lodging & Accomodations	Health & Wellness	Entertainment & Attractions	Other	Total
Chittenden	53%	43%	20%	34%	51%	16%	45%
Washington	62%	54%	15%	53%	71%	45%	56%
Windham	54%	41%	22%	38%	33%	10%	42%
Windsor	54%	52%	26%	23%	27%	0%	43%
Rutland	44%	45%	12%	22%	57%	17%	43%
Lamoille	49%	33%	24%	50%	32%	50%	37%
Bennington	63%	47%	33%	70%	45%	18%	55%
Caledonia	50%	52%	0%	17%	12%	3%	42%
Orleans	67%	46%	27%	29%	7%	30%	42%
Addison	66%	50%	29%	20%	21%	47%	44%
Franklin	60%	40%	23%	14%	53%	9%	43%
Orange	33%	32%	59%	11%	0%	3%	32%
Grand Isle	45%	55%	6%	0%	33%	0%	35%
Essex	53%	54%	13%	0%	0%	0%	50%
Total	53%	45%	24%	36%	39%	19%	45%



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program TESTIMONIALS FROM PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

Business owners from around the state have been supportive of the program, offering testimonials of their experience. Since the launch of the program, over 500 additional businesses have expressed support in being active participants should the program be funded to continue.



North Branch Café,
Montpelier
[\[video link\]](#)



Brass Lantern Inn, Stowe
[\[video link\]](#)



Lenny's Shoe and Apparel,
Barre, St. Albans, Williston
[\[video link\]](#)



Ruby Charuby Weavings,
Hardwick
[\[video link\]](#)



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<p>Ghost Dog Dairy (Hardwick)</p>	<p>Piece Meal Pies (White River Junction)</p>	<p>Advanced Skin Care Solutions Vermont</p>	<p>ART, etc. (Northfield)</p>	<p>Bijou Blu VT Cryotherapy (South Burlington)</p>
<p><i>“As a small farm we struggle to find the time and energy to market our products and connect with new customers. We always seem to have too many things to do around the farm and not enough time. With the pandemic it is harder to get out and open up new stores and go to events.</i></p> <p><i>The NIFT certificates have brought in a whole new crop of in-state customers who are learning about our farm for the first time just by selecting the certificate. Many of them we hope will continue to buy from us locally now that they know about us. The program is really easy to use and gave us a quick marketing boost at a time when it was needed most. THANK YOU SO MUCH.”</i></p> <p>-Steve and Kathy F.</p>	<p><i>“The collaborative program developed by Nift and Vermont is a great example of the state's innovative solutions to support independent restaurants during the pandemic. Restaurants are in the business of feeding their community, and this program allows us to continue doing so while generating much needed revenue. It would benefit the food insecure, small businesses, and ultimately the health of our communities if we got grant funding to continue #buylocalVermont.”</i></p> <p>-Justin B.</p>	<p><i>“As a small business owner during Covid I am so grateful to programs like the Vermont Nift Network Program! Not only have they brought me new customers they also bring me hope and encouragement to hang in there during these times. I believe small businesses are so precious and I am so grateful and relieved to be receiving help to sustain during this difficult times.”</i></p> <p>-Mary F.</p> <p>Henry's Diner (Burlington)</p> <p><i>“I think it is a great idea for the public and small businesses to support each other. Our first transaction worked well. The customer came to Henry's for the first time! Hopefully with more visits to come. Before signing up I watched the info/video online. Seems cut and dry. Thank you and the State of VT.”</i></p> <p>-Naomi</p>	<p><i>“13 more customers! YIPPEE!!! About half of those who have already come in were completely new to the store (!) and one came back a few days later to purchase a very nice (read: pricey!) necklace. So this program is DEFINITELY working for my small business!! And I'm sure those that were new to the store will return for upcoming holiday shopping. This program was certainly the “nudge” some needed to get out and shop safely, support local businesses and were willing to try stores completely new to them.”</i></p> <p>-Andrea</p> <p>Bayberry Cottage (Saint Albans)</p> <p><i>“At this time I feel the program has been a great success. I have seen a lot more traffic in downtown - especially from outside Franklin County. Picking up many new customers!!“</i></p> <p>-Sharon</p>	<p><i>“As a new business in Chittenden County we were planning on opening March 29th of this year and because of COVID we were pushed out two months and opened May 29th with a very uncertain future. This funding from the state is not only helping Bijou Blu Cryotherapy boost revenue but it also gives us another avenue to create awareness that we are in fact open for business and the state's program is an excellent means of educating the community about Cryotherapy & what the benefits are. The 5 customers that picked our center to receive and use a \$30 giftcard will hopefully turn into residual business and also from these 5 customers we will gain 15 more new customers via word of mouth. On behalf of Bijou we would like to thank the State of Vermont for initiating this program. As the owner I can assure you the efforts of the program will help to grow my business.”</i></p> <p>-Annie S.</p>



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program TESTIMONIALS FROM PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

Business owners from around the state have been supportive of the program, offering testimonials of their experience. Since the launch of the program, over 500 additional businesses have expressed support in being active participants should the program be funded to continue.

Courtney Reckord Jewelry

"I appreciate this program and believe that it was a fantastic way to get business distributed around the state and to different businesses. I think it would be wonderful to expand this program and give the \$150 card to all Vermonters. Thank you"

-Courtney R.

Clear River Inn & Tavern (Killington)

"We are a casual restaurant in the Killington area with plenty of beautiful outdoor space and are already noticing the slowing of business as the temperature drops and customers are having to dine inside more. If there is any chance of extending this program with more funding after the initial plan sold out, we would surely benefit from it."

-Mark S.

Stowe Fabric & Yarn (Stowe)

I am very thankful for the state implementing the gift card promotion. Everything helps right now. My shop is in a resort town and my sales were down over 50% last month. I encourage the state to do more of these promotions to help the businesses to survive."

-Carla B.

The Frozen Ogre (St. Albans)

"I'm writing today to give my opinion of the current state of the Buy Local Vermont program. My initial response is very enthusiastic. I see many positive indicators, the first the huge initial response by customers. I know many, many people were unable to receive any offers due to the program running out of funding so quickly. The very next day I redeemed 3 offers immediately! People used this value to buy things for themselves that they've put off due to a lack of funds, making a positive impact! We're a toy and game store so the other thing that people have redeemed the funds for were gifts for children. Everyone who redeemed value has been very happy to do so. And I was happy to redeem them for them, since I'm guaranteed the value. I went to the Nift page, logged in and saw many local people had chosen our store, which is both gratifying and exciting since the value of the Nift will more than cover next month's rent! What a great windfall! The last great part of the program is that several of the people that have redeemed value hadn't been in our store and now hopefully will become regular customers!"

-Erik S.

Vermont Maple BBQ (Bethel)

"I am thrilled and surprised that Vermont Maple BBQ has had a quick and positive response from this program. We are super happy with this program and for the opportunity to be a part of Buy Vermont Local. This will give our local community members an opportunity to step out and enjoy a gift of kindness and a good homemade meal. This will give Vermont Maple BBQ as well as other small business a boost that we all need. This program is working, and I request that it be extended as it is helping small business like mine. It will help to keep the lights paid and the doors open."

-Pauline P.

Gypsy Coast Company (Danville)

"I'm a small business owner in Vermont and heard about your company and this program from a friend and am so glad I was able to sign up and see results so quickly! Not only did we receive nearly 20 customers in the first couple of hours that the gift cards were made available, but they are also all new customers who may not ever have found us otherwise. I also really appreciate the excellent customer service, how quickly you responded to me, and how friendly and helpful you were! I'll be sure to spread the word about you and I hope you can continue to grow and help more small businesses like mine."

-Stephen

Otter Creek Used Books (Middlebury)

"Thank you for bringing this program to Vermont. I appreciate the business it brought into my store with no effort on my part. Such a win-win! As a business off the beaten path in downtown Middlebury and closed for over two months the program proved to be a shot in the arm - financially and mentally. Please keep this #BuyLocalVermont by GoNift.com going."

-Barbara H.



#BuyLocalVermont Consumer Stimulus and Business Recovery Program TESTIMONIALS FROM PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

Business owners from around the state have been supportive of the program, offering testimonials of their experience. Since the launch of the program, over 500 additional businesses have expressed support in being active participants should the program be funded to continue.

North Branch Café (Montpelier)

“As a business in the hospitality industry that has been hit hard by COVID-19, we are so appreciative of this program. We consider every new customer who finds us because we were on this list to be a tremendous opportunity for us to expand our customer base. As we look at the list of people who have selected us, we see a LOT of new names. This is great for us as we recreate ourselves and respond to the side effects of the pandemic. Thank you very much for this program!”

-Lauren P.

Vermont Organic Solutions (Norwich)

“I would like to point out that this program is a bigger win for us than just the immediate orders. Customers are using the \$30 coupon to order a minimum of \$30 worth of products, so the potential for sales will exceed the 16 orders of \$30 each! We're also getting invaluable local exposure to new customers. It expanded our customer email list for potential future sales. It offers the potential for media/social media exposure and promotion. And it allowed us to get our products in customers hands which is how we get most of our sales. This should prove to have long term positive impacts on many, many Vermont businesses. I would love to see this program utilized by the state of Vermont to help promote and grow Vermont businesses beyond the COVID-19 crisis.”

-Amy L.

Living the Dream Alpaca Farm (Quechee)

This was the perfect way to inject quick money into a business like mine.”

-Lisa M.

Brass Lantern Inn (Stowe)

“The \$150 stimulus money that this guest received from this program will translate directly to our lodging business as an approximately \$600 sale for those three nights. Additionally, these newlyweds will of course be dining, shopping and most likely taking advantage of attractions while here in Stowe that will then be a net add onto that direct spending. We appreciate the opportunity to be included in this program and I hope our state legislators can appreciate the immediate, positive, economic impact of this program has had on a small, family owned, operated business such as ours.”

-George L.

Ruby Charuby Weavings (Hardwick)

“I am the sole proprietor of my weaving business. Every single one of my crafts shows, weaving conferences and teaching gigs (throughout the country) has been canceled due to Covid, creating a year of zero income (possibly continuing into next spring as well). Unemployment has absolutely helped but the Buy Local Vermont program has unexpectedly put the joy back into my weaving life (yeah, does sound corny but it's true!). Having 20 people suddenly express interest in my Ruby Charuby Weavings craft business has boosted my hopes that perhaps there is financial light in the tunnel, and I can continue to find new, local and potentially loyal customers.”

-Ruby L.

Brandon Music and the Compass Music and Art Center

“We cannot thank you enough for this opportunity. We are an intimate performance venue and have operated for 12 years in Brandon, Vermont. We are known as a music haven, offering high quality music performances by the very best musicians both in and beyond the State of Vermont. Our business had to close on March 6, 2020 to comply with COVID-19 regulations and also our deep desire to keep everyone in our community and the State safe and well. I was speechless with gratitude when contacted to say that we would benefit from the program. We can't thank you enough. It is a very difficult time for those of us involved in Vermont's creative economy.”

-Edna S.

Lasting Image Salon (Waterbury)

“The Vermont buy local giveaway was amazing. New clients are coming in and loving the program and my salon!!!! Thank you Thank you.”

-Jodi G.

