

VDOL Recruitment Pilot Grant

Grant#2050REL06

Reporting Key Highlights: (6/29/20 - 9/30/20)

Reporting Due Date: 10/15/20

Introduction

A local young professional needs guidance on helping her partner find architecture opportunities so he can move up from Ecuador. A high school history teacher and his family want to move to Vermont but don't know where to start. A newly hired paraeducator just wants some advice on safely meeting new people during a pandemic. BDCC's recruitment, relocation, and retention efforts manifest as a suite of complementary programs and services with the versatility to meet people where they are.

BDCC's current programming provides not only an entry point for a diverse range of potential Vermonters, but also tools for quickly connecting them into the social and professional networks that will allow them to thrive once they land. By leveraging new technology and cultivating relationships with educational institutions and community organizations, BDCC is also able to provide individualized solutions to key talent and retention issues for the region's employers.

With Vermont's status as a national model for managing the public health crisis and a destination for urban refugees, finding adaptable, scalable solutions has become critical. BDCC combined quick programmatic pivots with innovative tools prior to the influx of new and returning Vermonters, a strategy that has positioned the organization to meet these needs head-on.

As BDCC's programs continue to stand as models of success in their own right, it is the planned integration of these programs and services that will raise both the profile and the efficacy of our retention strategy. Consolidating these services through an accessible, audience-conscious portal utilizing existing SoVermont branding and assets will not only remove barriers to entry but also further our collaboration with our Bennington partners. By strengthening our existing infrastructure and spearheading new programs, BDCC is creating a robust and exciting new model for retention in Southern Vermont.

Impact Overview

A Pivotal Moment for Vermont

With both residential [real estate markets](#) and [school enrollments](#) surging, it is clear that if a silver lining exists, it is in the opportunity to walk the path toward reversing decades of population decline. As BDCC leverages its capacity to fully capitalize on this chance to reinvigorate Vermont's workforce, the timeliness of this pilot cannot be overstated. We were ready to act because of our track record in recruitment, and our deep partnerships. Despite the

limitations placed on us by the pandemic, the energy among partners who see opportunity in the population influx has made this an exciting time to launch our recruitment pilot.

For instance, we were able to launch a school-based new employee welcome in partnership with Windham Central Supervisory Union. William Anton, the Superintendent, works with BDCC on our high school programs and co-developed with us a new outreach initiative to help him welcome a record number of new staffers, many from out of this region.

Similarly, the Deerfield Valley local economic development partners see the skyrocketing real estate sales and reached out to BDCC for help. Through a joint effort they are combining postcards to all newcomers (using real estate and schools data) with a volunteer recruitment initiative supported by BDCC, using the Vermont Welcome Wagon framework. This collaboration is in the process of launching their comprehensive outreach campaign, which will then link newcomers with local hosts. It's the sort of welcome we've long talked about in Vermont, but rarely implemented at such a scale.

Building on our track record and relationships, partnerships and expertise, BDCC, through its suite of recruitment and retention programs, seeks to tackle the following challenges:

- Welcoming newcomers across the region during social distancing;
- Facilitating quick transitions into the fabric of the community;
- Connecting new talent with local employers to support reopening and spur resilience in the economy; and
- Translating Vermont's exceptional COVID-19 response and related attractiveness into enduring gains towards our population and economic growth goals.

People Helped in this Quarter

- **30 new, returning, or prospective vermonters** received individualized guidance from BDCC staff (via Zoom and phone) on moving to or finding work in Vermont (Direct referrals, TERR candidates, SoVT WWP Participants)
- **129 community connections** facilitated through SoVTYPs event participations and SoVT WWP host signups
- **79 candidates** were directly connected to specific employment in Vermont through Internships and LinkedIn recruiting

Employers assisted _____ **19**
Referrals received _____ **19**
Partners _____ **32**
Events held / attendance _____ **13 / 91**
Volunteer Network _____ **38**

Individuals contacted _____ **211**
Individuals assisted _____ **37**
Individuals who relocate _____ **9**
Individuals hired or starting a
business in VT _____ **9**

Programs and Services

People come to us through diverse entry points. This section outlines the core Recruitment and Retention activities through which BDCC reaches new and returning Vermonters.

Concierge Support & Personal Networking

Before detailing the entry points, a word on how BDCC handles each “lead”. Every newcomer receives some degree of individualized contact by email or phone, which in many cases leads to a more thorough “intake” by phone or Zoom to enable BDCC staff to ascertain what advice and referrals will be most useful. This contact is all tracked through our Zoho CRM contact management system and coordinated among staff based on appropriate, Young Professionals link with YP lead (Sarah Lang), and general recruitment and Internship referrals are held by the Talent Specialist (Casey Lang). Having a clear point of contact is part of the success of our concierge support, as is cross-referring questions among staff to provide the best information we can about jobs, housing and other important relocation questions.

Individual Referrals

As a hub-and-spoke model for community and employer resources, BDCC frequently receives direct referrals from individuals and partner organizations. Whether an individual is looking to relocate to Vermont, seeking employment, or curious about starting a business, BDCC staff meet and provide actionable information to over **a dozen referrals** each quarter. As we have seen increased traffic into the state, BDCC staff engage in **2-4 zoom calls each week** to connect individuals with these services.

Stay2Stay

As one of the lead partners with the state’s Stay2Stay program, BDCC pioneered the program designed to provide potential Vermonters with access to memorable activities and networking opportunities. Since the inception of Stay2Stay, BDCC has provided input on how to continuously improve the success of the program, such as collecting resumes beforehand, having each region implement the program in the way that best fits their needs and skills, and the creation of the Stay2Stay Ski weekends. Before we knew of the existence of COVID, BDCC had pushed for another improvement, sector themed weekends, which could allow for even more targeted success in each region. As COVID-19 required in-person events be put on hold, BDCC remained a consistent partner in leading the conversation about how to provide virtual alternatives to the Stay2Stay program.

BDCC is collaborating with the state to develop a digital alternative that recreates the “concierge” Stay2Stay experience. This will include an intake form for potential Vermonters followed by a virtual meet-and-greet with staff to provide a regional overview and clarify needs. Finally, staff will extend an invitation to a virtual Stay2Stay employer/community partner meeting specially tailored to the participant’s needs.

TERR: Targeted Expertise Recruitment and Retention

TERR is BDCC's employer-driven recruitment. We work directly to support employer efforts to attract and retain specialized talent. Employers have been telling us for years that talent is their biggest challenge, when it comes to growing and thriving in the Windham region. Three years ago BDCC launched a task force to understand the difference between the general need for labor, and the effect upon employers of struggling to secure and retain people with specialized skills. Thus was born TERR, which works directly to support employers in finding, recruiting and retaining "targeted expertise".

Recruitment – candidate identification

In the recent quarter TERR has worked directly with several organizations to find specialized personnel who meet specific skill criteria

- Whitney Blake Manufacturing LinkedIn recruiting in search for a Manufacturing Planner
- M&S Development a nationwide recruitment search for an Architect / Project Lead
- Town of Vernon nationwide recruitment search for a Town Manager, leading to a hire
- Town of Brattleboro in a regional recruitment search for a senior firefighter

Recruitment – direct support to secure and settle new personnel

- NECCA (New England Circus Arts) identifying and securing an interim Executive Director
- Whitney Blake with new hire planning transition
- Unspecified manufacturer (search still open, details confidential for now)
 - recruitment attempt with Phd level scientist (advance outreach and concierge outreach during recruitment visit to Brattleboro) – candidate rejected offer.
 - recruitment attempt with 2nd scientist candidate (concierge outreach during recruitment visit to Brattleboro and follow up support). Outcome pending.
- Chroma Technology Corp Phd level scientist through concierge support involving overcoming relocation challenges such as difficulty securing drivers' license, applying for VT relocation funds, housing, school placement for children.

TERR also leverages the powerful toolset contained with the LinkedIn Recruiter platform. During the quarter, positions posted on LinkedIn received **40 applications**, and BDCC conducted direct outreach to **21 additional candidates** sourced from employer criteria.

SoVT WWP: Southern Vermont Welcome Wagon Project

Recognizing the need for a scalable solution to integrating new and returning Vermonters during COVID, BDCC launched a Southern Vermont chapter of the Vermont Welcome Wagon project. This platform for connecting newcomers to enthusiastic local "hosts" began as a volunteer-run initiative, with BDCC spearheading the effort to realize the potential of the tool by infusing it with staffing capacity as well as workforce expertise and a broad network of community and employer partners.

In order to test the platform in preparation for a wider launch, BDCC conducted a series of rollout pilots that targeted several key stakeholders.

- Direct Outreach to Newcomers:
 - BDCC staff attended Leland and Grey High School's new teacher orientation to establish BDCC as a resource for local social and professional networking.
- Employers:
 - BDCC coordinated with the Windham Central Supervisory Union Superintendent to conduct outreach to each of the schools' Human Resources professionals to offer SoVT WWP as a retention resource they could provide to new hires.
- Community Partners:
 - After seeing an uptick in new residents, our community and economic development partners in the Deerfield Valley were eager to find ways to do proactive outreach to their newcomers that didn't mean entirely reinventing the wheel.
- Hosts:
 - Conducted a host orientation meeting to provide an overview of BDCC, the SoVT WWP, and how local Vermonters can get involved with welcoming newcomers.

During the pilot activities and **2 outreach and training events, 10 participants** and **28 hosts** signed up, with many more participants and hosts expected to join as the program is more widely marketed.

SoVTYPs: Southern Vermont Young Professionals

Our unofficial slogan is "If you have friends but no job, you wont stay. If you have a job but no friends, you wont stay." The Southern Vermont Young Professionals provides professional and social networking for Vermonters between the ages of 20-something to 40-something.

In a state with the second highest median age, and a county with the highest median age of the state, this program attempts to make connecting with other young professionals as easy as possible. The SoVTYPs, led by a **10 member volunteer steering committee** with capacity provided by BDCC, serve 149 members, host at least 24 events a year, and connect with over 500 recipients with our monthly newsletter. We have had **11 virtual and distanced in-person events** with **83 attendees** this quarter.

This is also a workforce program. The future of our region's workforce looks pretty bleak if we are not able to attract and retain young professionals that would naturally fill in after the Boomer generation retires in the next 5 years. That's why we've just launched our Professional Development Grant Program. This program is the newest offering for Southern Vermont Young Professional members. The goal of this pilot program is to help support SoVTYP members in advancing, or pivoting, their career by providing financial assistance to help them achieve those career goals. This grant will fund up to \$500 for eligible grant uses such as certification, continuing education, professional conferences, and much more.

BDCC's Paid Internship Program

Since launching in 2014, the BDCC Internship program has partnered with hundreds of employers and career services professionals to connect students to high-quality, paid internships. Participants in the program have made lasting connections with Windham County employers and come away with critical career skills.

In response to COVID-19, BDCC focused on outreach to employers to identify needs and support remote-capable internship positions.

During the quarter, BDCC's Paid Internship Program facilitated and provided support for hands-on work experience for **6 interns** and conducted additional outreach to **12 internship candidates**.

Planning and Partnerships

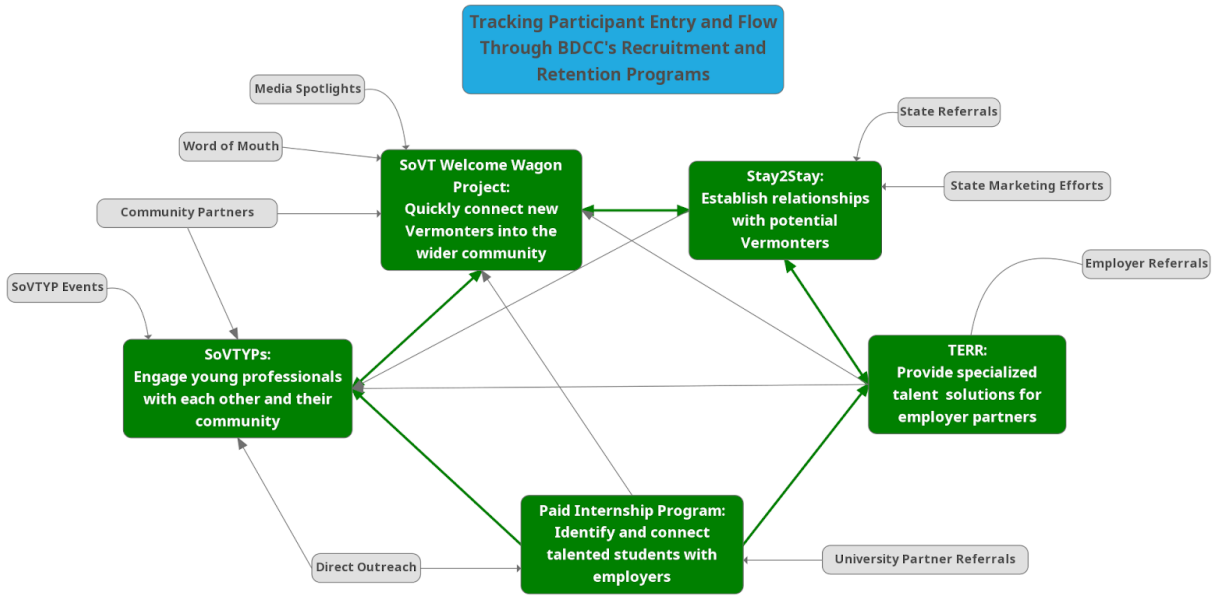
At BDCC **strategic planning** guides our work. Recruitment directly supports our core imperatives:

- **Increasing population** is baked into the SoVermont **CEDS** because it is critical to economic growth and resilience.
- **Meeting employer demand for talent** is baked into **BDCC's Workforce Center of Excellence** which gave rise to BDCC's recruitment programming (see below)

Partnerships are key to translating long-stated intentions to welcome new & returning Vermonters, into meaningful and sustained action. BDCC Recruitment operates at the nexus of four major partnership "systems" that are enabling us to operationalize our recruitment goals:

- State - together, creating a "marketing funnel" and referral network to ensure everyone who wants to come here / stay / return finds a welcome and a home
- SoVermont - activating local and regional partnerships to provide "concierge" welcome to individuals and households
- Employers - enhancing recruitment efforts and leveraging the attraction of great jobs to increase population
- Volunteer - coordination of hosts and community-based volunteers

Please refer to the diagrams and tables below which provide illustration and detail.



Visualizing examples of current entry and flow through BDCC's Recruitment and Retention Programs

Recruitment Pilot Employer and Community Partners					
TERR	Internships	SoVTYPs	VWWP	S2S	Direct Referrals
NECCA	Vermont Center for Photography	NECCA	Wilmington Works	State of Vermont	Windham Regional Commission
Town of Brattleboro	Downtown Brattleboro Alliance	Brattleboro Area Hospice	Town of Wilmington	Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce	The Richards Group
Whitney Blake	Senior Solutions	Entera Artisanal Catering	Town of Dover	Downtown Brattleboro Alliance	Southeastern Vermont Transit
Stevens & Associates	Building Green	Edward Jones	Vermont Welcome Wagon Project	Brattleboro Chamber of Commerce	Windham Career Center (CTE)
Chroma Technology Corp	Town of Brattleboro	Vermont Canoe Touring Center	Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce	Bennington County Regional Commission	Brattleboro Retreat

Brattleboro Retreat	Vermont Foodbank	Vermont Foodbank	Shires Young Professionals	Bennington County Industrial Corporation	Community-based local contacts in Vernon, Guilford, Brattleboro and other towns
Town of Dover	Community College of Vermont		Southern Vermont Young Professionals	Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce	
Omega Optical	Franklin Pierce University		Bennington County Regional Commission		
	Keene State College		Bennington County Industrial Corporation		
	BDCC		Supervisory Unions of southern Vermont (8)		

Resources:

School Enrollment Increases as Families Move to Vermont:

<https://www.wcax.com/2020/10/08/school-enrollment-increases-as-families-move-to-vermont/>

Pandemic Migration Fuels Vermont Real Estate Market:

<https://middleburycampus.com/52106/local/pandemic-migration-fuels-vermont-real-estate-market/>