

WIOA STATE PLAN 2020-2023

State Vision, Goals, and Strategies

Vision

Vermont's employment demands will be met through a statewide, coordinated, and integrated system of workforce education, training, and development where all Vermonters can connect to robust career pathways, advance along career ladders, and new Vermonters can quickly secure employment with a Vermont employer.

Goals

Goal 1: Connect Vermonters to the education, training, and supportive services needed to enter and advance along a career pathway that leads to greater financial independence.

Goal 2: Increase the number of women, veterans, minorities, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented people employed in the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, advanced manufacturing, and other priority industry sectors in Vermont.

Goal 3: Increase the number of Vermonters with barriers to employment who complete high school, earn a post-secondary credential - including an industry-recognized certificate, registered apprenticeship, or post-secondary degree program - and become employed in occupations that align with the needs of Vermont's employers.

Goal 4: Improve Vermont's workforce development system by continuously aligning, adapting, and integrating workforce education and training programs and career and supportive services to meet the needs of all customers.

Goal 5: Expand Vermont's labor force by helping more Vermonters enter the labor market and assisting out-of-state workers in securing employment with Vermont employers and relocating to Vermont.

Performance Goals

See Appendix I

Assessment

The State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the following ways:

1. The six common performance measures reported by the core partners will indicate how many jobseekers and employers are being served, how well they are being served (short and long-term employment, wages, credential attainment, skill gain, repeat services, etc.), and whether our performance is aligned with our goals this program year and over time,
2. The common data elements collected on program participants and services will indicate whether target populations are experiencing positive impacts as expected,
3. The state's unemployment and labor market participation rates will indicate if employers' needs are being met,
4. The WIOA narrative report and VDOL's Annual Workforce Report will describe outcomes from specific initiatives, progress in supporting targeted populations, staff development, sector-based partnerships, etc.,
5. Customer satisfaction surveys administered by each program will reflect whether services are meeting the needs of customers,

6. The State Workforce Development Board's Policy Committee will review and assess the physical and programmatic accessibility of the Burlington AJC and One-Stop system in 2021.
7. The State Workforce Development Board's Policy Committee will be working to establish a common set of workforce system performance measures that public and private stakeholders can look to in evaluating how well Vermont is meeting its labor force education, training, and employment needs.

The State will use the results of the assessments and other feedback to make continuous and quality improvements, using the regular negotiation of the One-Stop MOU as the mechanism for initiating system-wide changes.

State Strategies

Vermont will be using the following strategies to advance the State's goals and meet the objectives highlighted in the questions above:

Strategy A: Publish and share information describing education, training, and skill development opportunities with the public and related service delivery providers in a customer-friendly format.

Strategy B: Collect and review labor market, education and training, and workforce service delivery data by gender, age, race, ethnicity, and disability status.

- Ensure that data supports ongoing analysis whether these strategies are addressing the employment and training needs of Vermonters with barriers to employment, including displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, minorities, individuals with disabilities, youth, older individuals, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, youth who have aged out of the fostercare system, individuals who are English language learners, individuals with low levels of literacy, farmworkers, single parents, veterans, long-term unemployed individuals, and New Americans.

Strategy C: Develop common intake, communication, and referral processes to increase co-enrollment in and alignment of workforce service and support programs.

- Expand physical colocation of WIOA partner programs and service providers.
- Develop and conduct semi-annual opportunities for communication, service coordination, and cross-training of workforce service delivery providers at the regional and state level.
- Share information about available support services, eligibility information, and referral protocols among workforce service providers.
- Provide virtual workshops for partner staff and service providers to facilitate greater alignment and integration of JVSG, TAA, RESEA, SNAP, and TANF programs into the one-stop system.

Strategy D: Develop and coordinate shared professional development opportunities, best practices, and approaches to counseling individuals in entering and advancing along career pathways.

- Increase awareness among secondary school and career and technical education (CTE) counselors about the variety and availability of employment opportunities available to

ensure that students' personalized learning plans are informed by broad exposure to careers, including non-traditional careers for women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities.

Strategy E: Increase outreach and delivery of workforce services to at-risk youth, ex-offenders, women, veterans, minorities, individuals in recovery, New Americans, individuals with disabilities, and mature workers to support their initial, continuing, and extended participation in the labor market.

- Increase access to employment services by providing them in places more convenient to the customer.
- Promote the coordination of and expansion of publicly available transportation options for working Vermonters.
- Improve physical and programmatic accessibility of all WIOA partner program services and spaces.
- Promote program and community-partner collaboration to develop cohort specific programs serving at-risk youth.
- Explore opportunities to jointly pursue Second Chance Act grants to support re-entry of former inmates into successful, long-term employment.

Strategy F: Expand the use of progressive employment practices.

- Expand coordination and availability of transition support for individuals moving from secondary to post-secondary education and training to enable successful entry into future employment in a career pathway with opportunities for advancement.
- Offer additional support to employers who hire individuals overcoming barriers to employment.

Strategy G: Prioritize participant enrollment in education and training programs that result in measurable skill gain and attainment of a high school diploma or post-secondary credential.

- Maximize the use of work-based learning and training to help jobseekers build and master skills.
- Increase the number of registered apprenticeship opportunities in the State
- Establish a pre-apprenticeship registration program that outlines how credits and hours earned will be recognized when enrolled in subsequent registered apprenticeship program.

Strategy H: Support sector partnerships that inform the development and expansion of career pathways and alignment of education, training, and recruitment activities.

- Support partnerships among primary, secondary, and post-secondary education and training providers, including career and technical education centers and adult education providers to establish and expand career pathways, especially for in-demand and higher-wage industries and occupations.
- Expand development of career pathways, pipelines, and ladders that extend from introductory and entry-level to middle-management.

- Expand partnerships with employers and industry and economic development leaders to develop training programs that meet the employment needs of local businesses.
- Prioritize career pathway development in the manufacturing, health care, human services, construction, business services, information technology, and hospitality sectors with development of new registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs by 2023.

Strategy I: Assist employers in accessing and retaining qualified workers.

- Increase the coordination and availability of services offered to employers.
- Adopt a “no wrong door” approach with the business community to reduce redundancy, confusion, and streamline service and funding access.
- Encourage and assist employers in providing information about available employment opportunities in publicly accessible spaces.
- Develop common, easily accessed tools and resources to assist employers in receiving workforce services.
- Provide relocation information and employment assistance to in- and out-of-state jobseekers to connect them with available jobs.
- Expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS)
- Increase outreach and explore best practices for enhancing and systematizing Rapid Response, Layoff Aversion and Trade Adjustment Assistance activity.

State Strategy Implementation

State Board Role

The Vermont State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is a majority-business board, appointed by the Governor, with members representing all sectors of the economy and all geographic regions of the State. In addition, board membership includes top officials from State agencies and education and training institutions, representatives of labor and special populations, and members of the Vermont legislature. The Chair of the SWDB is appointed by the Governor from among the business membership. The SWDB advises the Governor on the development and implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, and responsive workforce education and training system. Vermont is designated as a Single State Local Area and the SWDB is designated as the State and Local Workforce Development Board under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under Section 101(d) of the WIOA, the SWDB assists the Governor in the following functions:

- The development, implementation, and modification of the State Plan. The SWDB plays an active role in coordinating completion of the State Plan, drafting components specific to the SWDB, participating in the development of the vision and goals, and soliciting public comment.
- Review of statewide policies, statewide programs, and recommendations on actions to align workforce development programs to support a comprehensive and streamlined

workforce development system, including the review and provision of comments on the State Plan, if any, for programs and activities of One-Stop partners that are not WIOA core programs.

- The development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system, including:
 - Identification of barriers and means for removing barriers to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among the programs and activities carried out within the system.
 - Development of strategies to support the use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities), with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment.
 - Development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improve access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the system.
 - Development and expansion of strategies to meet the needs of employers, workers, and job seekers, particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in demand industry sectors and occupations.
 - Development and continuous improvement of the One-Stop Center delivery system, including assistance to the One-Stop operator, partners, and providers through planning and delivery services (including training and supportive services) to support effective service delivery to workers, job seekers, and employers.
 - Development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported by the system.
- Development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the state's core programs. The Policy Committee of the SWDB continues to engage with the Core Partners in identifying key performance metrics and necessary data collection.
- Identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for:
 - Effective operation of One-Stop Centers, including business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment.
 - Effective training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis and make effective use of direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences and evaluate such skills and competencies for adaptability to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways.
- Development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the state's One-Stop delivery system, including the development of:

- Objective criteria and procedures for use in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of One-Stop Centers.
- Guidance for the allocation of One-Stop Center infrastructure funds.
- Policies relating to the appropriate roles and contributions of entities administering One-Stop partner programs within the One-Stop Delivery System, including approaches to facilitating equitable and efficient cost allocation in the system.

The SWDB has established such criteria and procedures for certifying Vermont's One-Stop Center(s), most recently recertifying in June 2019 for a period of two years with a status report and formal review in the interim. In these periodic certifications, the SWDB has identified several areas for improvement in service delivery including enhanced accessibility and colocation of services and providers, comprehensive cross training among staff of One-Stop partners, improved mechanisms for client feedback, and more.

- Development of strategies for technological improvements to increase facilities access and the quality of services and activities provided through the One-Stop delivery system, including such improvements to:
 - Enhance digital literacy skills.
 - Accelerate acquisition of skills and recognized post-secondary credentials.
 - Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals.

Ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas.

- Development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures, including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, performance accountability measurement and reporting processes, and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation to improve coordination of services across One-Stop partner programs.
- Preparation of required annual reports.
- Development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system.
- Development of other policies that may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system.

In addition to the functions required under section 101(d) of the WIOA, the SWDB is tasked with the following duties:

- Conduct an ongoing public engagement process throughout the state that brings together employers and potential employees, including students, the unemployed, and incumbent employees seeking further training, to provide feedback and information concerning their workforce education and training needs; and
- Maintain familiarity with the federal Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and other economic development planning processes, and coordinate workforce

and education activities in the state, including the development and implementation of the State Plan required under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, with economic development planning processes occurring in the state, as appropriate.

Core Programs (VDOL, VR, DBVR, AOE/AEL Programs) Role

Vermont's workforce development system serves jobseekers, workers, and employers more effectively and efficiently as service providers, employers, educators, and community partners operate more as an integrated system. As partners understand and respect one another's areas of expertise and program oversight, they avoid replication of services and staff time, overcoming the weaknesses (described earlier) that come with operating on a small scale and expanding their ability to provide more and higher-quality services. As progress is made in unifying and aligning programs, work plans, and timetables and infrastructure, an even stronger workforce development service system emerges.

Strategy A: Publish and share information describing education, training, and skill development opportunities with the public and related service delivery providers in a customer-friendly format.

Representatives from VDOL, AOE, and VR are all participating as a cohort Vermont's credential attainment team along with ten other states, supported by the ETA, OCTEA, and OSERS. As processes for defining, recognizing, and coordinating credential attainment materialize, VDOL anticipates including this information along with eligible training provider (ETP) and registered apprenticeship (RA) information through its online systems. It's likely that there will be small progress made by other community partners in culminating and organizing the information around trainings and apprenticeship opportunities before all the information will be located in one place in a customer-friendly format.

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 VDOL workforce programs. The consortium is currently supporting an extensive update of the system – which includes its job board, ETP, and RA functionalities. The VDOL expects this project (Rapid Storm) to be complete by the fall of 2020. 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 VDOL 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. The VDOL plans to involve other departments, agencies, and public and private workforce partners in developing the RFIs and RFPs that will be part of this procurement.

Strategy B: Collect and review labor market, education and training, and workforce service delivery data by gender, age, race, ethnicity, and disability status.

The state workforce board and core partners will be working together in program year 2021 and 2022 to identify which data points serve as the more effective indicators of outreach and success in making services more inclusive and helping more underrepresented people participate in Vermont's labor force. As the state begins to implement Perkins V, core partners will consult with the AOE and secondary and post-secondary providers to align data collection and review efforts serving similar purposes. Additionally, VR has done extensive work in establishing internal "leading" measures to guide approaches to service delivery that most likely

result in positive outcomes. Similar approaches will be considered in deciding what data to collect and review.

Strategy C: Develop common intake, communication, and referral processes to increase co-enrollment in workforce service and support programs.

A “one-stop” or “no wrong door” service model is the aim of Vermont’s workforce system. To help more customers access employment services, training, and support to advance in along their career pathway, the core partners will develop a common intake process that will include gathering and sharing relevant information, making effective referrals, and following-up with one another to support customers. A key step in this development will be the creation of a process map, and subsequent trainings to use tools developed, including the possibility of a common form or online information sharing mechanism. Core partners expect to complete this during PY 2021. The second phase of this work will be to expand the process map and resources to other one-stop partners, including economic services, youth services, and training providers, refining systems of information sharing and referrals at each step.

Vermont’s Jobs for Independence (JFI) pilot, conducted several years ago, coordinated SNAP E & T services across many One-stop partners. It’s newest iteration, Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN) continues this work. Evidence from this work shows that there are greater instances of service co-enrollment, stronger “teaming” in case management, and better outcomes for customers in regions where partner programs are collocated. VDOL and VR plan to expand physical collocation of their staff, programs, and services in local offices throughout the state. They expect to focus on one office annually.

One-stop partners participated in twelve regional workforce summits in the fall of 2019. Designed to start the continued practice of regular regional convenings of workforce partners, the core partners plan to develop and host t semi-annual opportunities for communication, service coordination, and cross-training of workforce service delivery providers at the regional and state level.

Strategy D: Develop and coordinate shared professional development opportunities, best practices, and approaches to counseling individuals in entering and advancing along career pathways.

Career counseling occurs at local schools, post-secondary education institutions, through WIOA programs – including VR, VDOL, and AEL – and through many other state and local organizations. Over the next four program years, Vermont intends to convene career counselors at different levels and serving different populations throughout the state. Through a series of meetings, partners hope to gain insight into best practices, learn more about how and where counseling can be accessed, and develop a plan for coordinating information and high-quality counseling better.

System improvements might include: creating resource directories, streamlining service delivery models, sharing best practices, identifying common professional development opportunities, and developing shared principles or approaches to providing career advice. In addition to the core partners, AOE’s secondary school career services providers, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), the Community College of Vermont (CCV), VDOL’s labor market information specialists, and key community organizations will be invited to help develop and participate in a shared plan for improving career development and guidance.

An intentional focus of work under this strategy will be to Increase awareness among secondary school and career and technical education (CTE) counselors about the variety and availability of

employment opportunities available to ensure that students' personalized learning plans are informed by broad exposure to careers, including non-traditional careers for women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities. VDOL and VR will support this work, particularly as it applies to connecting guidance systems and opportunities that help individuals' transition from secondary education into post-secondary education, training, or a career.

Strategy E: Increase outreach and delivery of workforce services to at-risk youth, ex-offenders, women, minorities, individuals in recovery, New Americans, individuals with disabilities, and mature workers to support their initial, continuing, and extended participation in the labor market.

VDOL is exploring ways to increase access to employment services by providing them in places more convenient to the customer. This includes coordinating more with community partners like recovery facilities, CTE centers, health care providers, rotaries, retail and other establishments, restorative justice centers, and more to bring employment services to places that people already are.

VR organized the Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities in 2019 in partnership with Vermont's Agency of Transportation. Focusing on the issue of non-existent or inconsistent access to transportation for many Vermonters, the day successfully brought together workforce partners and transportation stakeholders to begin developing ways to make improvements at the local and state levels. With a number of projects now in design stage, core partners plan to prioritize and promote the coordination of and expansion of publicly available transportation options for working Vermonters.

In partnership with the Department of Corrections (DOC), state and community workforce partners are working to strengthen relationships and understanding of program requirements between regional workforce staff, case managers, DOC leadership, and local probation and parole staff. With better relationships, understanding, and methods of referral and communication, more ex-offenders will be referred to WIOA services and better supports can be offered to help them return to the labor force. In addition, VDOL, DOC, AOE, VR, Career and Technical Education (CTE) leaders, and Vermont State Colleges are working on an adult re-entry employment support system that will be the foundation for focused work over the coming years – including a proposal for a Second Chance Act grant to support re-entry of former inmates into successful, long-term employment.

In 2019, VDOL was directed by the Vermont Legislature to design and begin implementing the Vermont Youth Employment Program (VYEP). The aim of VYEP is to establish a comprehensive system of delivering employment services and support to any Vermonter ages 15-24. Current federal and state funding streams and programs are incorporated into the umbrella design of VYEP so that Vermont's youth and young adults will no longer have to navigate siloed programs and eligibility requirements. VDOL staff will work with VR, AEL, employers, training providers, and state and community partners to develop, oversee, and support employment projects that are customized to meet employer needs and, when possible, involve community service, improvement, or beautification. The continued development of VYEP, with its key focus on partnerships and braiding of existing funds and programs, will be one way the State aims to support at-risk youth successfully entering a career pathway.

Strategy F: Expand the use of progressive employment practices.

Vermont will expand coordination and availability of transition support for individuals moving from secondary to post-secondary education and training to enable successful entry into future employment in a career pathway with opportunities for advancement. Additionally, core

partners and employer partners will continue to pursue how additional support to employers who hire individuals overcoming barriers to employment can be expanded and funded with existing or new funds.

Strategy G: Prioritize participant enrollment in education and training programs that result in measurable skill gain and attainment of a high school diploma or post-secondary credential.

As described under Strategy A, Vermont is involved in better defining, recognizing, and promoting credential attainment. This work aligns with the common performance goals of WIOA's core partners, and Vermont's recently adopted public policy aim of helping 70% of Vermonters to attain post-secondary credential by 2025. The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has established a committee tasked with work related to approving training providers and recognizing credentials. In program year 2021, VDOL, AOE, and VR will take the work of the credentialing cohort and work with the SWDB create a system for evaluating and promoting high-quality workforce training programs that result in a credential.

As this system work continues, Vermont is also working to maximize the use of work-based learning and training to help jobseekers build and master skills and earn credentials. VDOL is working to double the number of registered apprentices and registered apprenticeship programs by the end of 2023. Additionally, VDOL, AOE, CTE centers, and the state colleges will be working to establish a pre-apprenticeship registration program that outlines how credits and hours earned will be recognized when enrolled in subsequent registered apprenticeship program. This work will help more Vermonters increase their skills and earn a credential while meeting real-time needs of the state's labor market.

Strategy H: Support sector partnerships that inform the development and expansion of career pathways and alignment of education, training, and recruitment activities.

Active collaboration with educational partners, industry leaders, economic development and VDOL will form a comprehensive workforce development system. Vermont will continue to support partnerships among primary, secondary, and post-secondary education and training providers, including career and technical education centers and adult education providers to establish and expand career pathways, especially for in-demand and higher-wage industries and occupations. Title II and Perkins V providers will be key participants in this work.

Vermont will expand partnerships with employers and economic development leaders to develop training programs that meet the employment needs of local businesses. Customized trainings that are developed with groups of local employers and supported by CTE and post-secondary education providers will be a shared focus of the core partners.

Additionally, VDOL and AOE will be working with CTE providers and the Vermont state colleges to develop a comprehensive, multi-year initiative to bolster, integrate, and align the state's workforce and training programs to provide Vermonters throughout the State with high quality programs that are standardized, replicable, and offered with regularity and consistency. A recent, legislatively mandated initiative requires the design of a fully integrated adult postsecondary CTE system will meet the following aims:

- Provide Vermonters throughout the State with high quality programs that are standardized, replicable, and offered with regularity and consistency;
- Coordinate, or integrate where appropriate, the many programs and providers of adult training and education to maximize the efficient use of workforce education and training resources;

- Feature 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;
- Outline statutory or administrative barriers to implement the redesigned system;
- Delineate funding and cost implications that could arise when implementing the redesigned system; and
- Identify data and information sharing systems that would need to be developed to support effective integration.

Vermont will also expand the development of career pathways, pipelines, and ladders that extend from introductory and entry-level to middle-management in key sectors of growth including health care, social services, manufacturing and information technology. Increasing the number and variety of registered apprenticeship programs in partnership with industry groups, specific employers and local training providers will help meet this aim. With the creation of a formal pre-apprenticeship recognition system, sector partners will be organized more intentionally around pathways and pipelines into occupations that are in-demand throughout the state.

Strategy I: Assist employers in accessing and retaining qualified workers.

Vermont will increase the coordination and availability of services offered to employers. Applying the “one-stop” or “no wrong door” approach with the business community will reduce redundancy, clarify roles and streamline service and funding access. VDOL and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) are planning systematic changes in the way they jointly assist employers, including combined visits, development of common resource tools, serving as advisors on one another’s granting processes, and shared professional development. An area of focus will be to increase outreach and explore best practices for enhancing and systematizing Rapid Response, Layoff Aversion and Trade Adjustment Assistance activity. Additionally, workforce partners are exploring opportunities to partner more with Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS), a non-profit organization that currently works with employers to place individuals served by VR and TANF, and JVSG’s local Veteran’s employment representatives (LVERs).

In each region of the state, Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) work with the Department of Economic Development (DED) to support economic development. In recent years, many of the RDCs have become more intimately involved in workforce development activities, as labor force shortages have mounted pressure on businesses and caused barriers for growth. Core partners will build on relationships fostered through the 2019 regional workforce summits and pursue recommendations about state and local collaboration in support of meeting employers’ workforce needs.

Vermont is known to have a “shadow” job market – where employment needs of employers at middle and high-skill levels aren’t always written and publicized. In the coming years, Vermont aims to work with employers to encourage and assist them in providing information about available employment opportunities in more publicly accessible spaces. This will also support the state’s interest in helping new Vermonters find work in the state. Vermont is developing relocation and employment information to assist both in- and out-of-state jobseekers in connecting with available jobs. Helping to surface more information about employer needs is a key first step in meeting them.

Many organizations are working to develop common, easily accessed tools and resources to assist employers in receiving workforce services. Core partners will work with industry groups, employer organizations, and other advocates to support the development of common tools for businesses to access in meeting their employment needs. This will include best practices for recruiting, employing and retaining specific populations, information about tax incentives and resources for hiring, and other points of contact for services available locally and statewide within the workforce development system.