

VDOL Recruitment Pilot Grant

Grant#2050REL06

Reporting Key Highlights: (1/1/21 - 3/31/21)

Reporting Due Date: 4/15/21

Engaging New and Prospective Vermonters

Previous reporting highlighted BDCC's early successes in building systems for engaging new Vermonters. In the quarter since, BDCC's Talent Specialist has also adapted a virtual Stay to Stay program to highlight life in southeast Vermont and assist prospective Vermonters with their move. With 359 individuals and families indicating an interest in connecting with a Vermonter in February and March alone, it is clear that the demand for the lifestyle Vermont offers is high.

BDCC's Talent Specialist conducted outreach resulting in over fifty one-on-one conversations with people seeking to move to Vermont. One of the most common concerns was how to go about finding career opportunities. The Talent Specialist provides tailored advice to individuals on job search and how to match their skills with regional employers. With the talent shortage as severe as ever going into Vermont's reopening, the first, biggest hurdle to capitalizing on this demand is creating more visibility for southeast Vermont employers.

Increasing Employer Visibility

The SoVermont marketing project, begun in the previous quarter and only increasing in its relevance, proceeded into its second phase. This project leverages a web site and regional marketing initiative geared to attract residents and workforce, an initiative launched three years ago with the support of regional partners, employers, and funding from USDA. During this quarter we secured technical assistance to employ Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to begin driving more traffic to SoVermont.com, BDCC's retention programs, and ultimately to the websites of featured employers.

This effort has become part of a multi-pronged approach to increasing the visibility of southeast Vermont's employers and to increase the ability of talent outside the region to find jobs here. Job opportunities have been featured through the new Career Spotlights blog series, posted on LinkedIn, shared among the Southern Vermont Young Professionals network, and through direct referrals—altogether accounting for more than 1500 unique views during the quarter.

Moving into the final quarter, BDCC plans to complement that push toward visibility by improving employers' technical skills around recruiting. Building upon experience working with employers to market internship opportunities, BDCC's Talent Specialist will provide 1-on-1 guidance to employers seeking to promote open positions as well as host small group trainings on the use of LinkedIn and other recruiting platforms. This combination of digital marketing and technical assistance will constitute the employer-centered facet of BDCC's framework for recruitment and retention.

A Regional Model

As the contours of this model solidify, BDCC continues to be a leader in facilitating partnerships, both locally and with other regions that seek to build their retention infrastructure. BDCC has expanded its collaboration with its Bennington partners across a wide range of recruitment and retention efforts. Highlighting the Stay to Stay-Welcome Wagon pipeline in talks with other organizations has helped to elevate the profile of this model, with the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce being the latest organization to adopt the Vermont Welcome Wagon Project as part of its workforce development efforts.

Organizations like ours see the value of VWW as a “top of the marketing funnel” for people interested in Vermont, helping draw people into our regional systems. BDCC is in conversation with VWWP leaders to potentially act as fiscal agent in order to help the organization evolve to accommodate growing participation and achieve sustainability over the long term.

Committing to Diversity

While it is widely understood that Vermont has significant ground to cover in diversifying its demographics, the digital re-launch of the Stay to Stay program has proven Vermont’s appeal to a diverse national audience and expanded access to broader socioeconomic groups. BDCC’s Talent Specialist spoke with over twenty BIPOC individuals and families this quarter to provide region-specific resources for jobs, housing, childcare and more.

BDCC’s commitment to growing the region’s population and workforce has been guiding the organization towards a new level of commitment to welcoming diversity, including New Americans. Throughout 2020 BDCC led a multi-stakeholder team through the process of applying for Boston Federal Reserve Working Communities funding so that we could translate this organizational commitment into a specific, standalone programmatic effort to build a system that will support a greater influx of immigrant people to this region. Boston Fed funding did not materialize. However, BDCC announced last month a commitment by the board to 1.5 years of funding for this work which we will seek to extend through fundraising. This means that, in addition to the Talent Specialist, a full time staff person (Alex Beck) is working directly on employer pilots, community-based partnerships, and special initiatives to increase the arrival and retention of New Americans.

Programs and Services Updates

For a more detailed overview of the programs referenced below, please see the highlights from Q1 reporting.

TERR - Targeted Expertise Recruitment and Retention

In this quarter BDCC worked with eight employers on the following high-level initiatives involving developing job descriptions, LinkedIn candidate searching and outreach, and in several cases providing white glove services to new hires.

- Project Coordinator - M&S Development / Stevens & Associates
 - **327** Unique views
 - **14** Candidates clicked to employer website
 - **187** Candidates sourced for employer review
- Staff or Senior Accountant - Stevens & Associates
 - **47** Unique views
 - **3** Candidates clicked through to employer website
- Benefits Administrator - Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
 - **62** Unique views
- Cyber Security Manager - G.S. Precision
 - **47** Unique Views
 - **1** Candidate clicked through to employer website
- Executive Director - The Nature Museum
 - **308** Unique views
 - **4** Candidates clicked through to employer website
- Vice President of Quality - New Chapter
 - Provided concierge-level assistance in connecting them to volunteer and leadership opportunities. Mailed a welcome basket including SoVermont-branded items.
- Executive Director - New England Center for Circus Arts
 - Provided community overview and introductions to other leaders of arts organizations
- Managing Director - Hatch Space
 - Invited to participate in the SoVT Welcome Wagon Project and went for a socially distanced hike!

Jobs Posted on
LinkedIn

***791** unique views*

***22** Total clicks onto
employer career
pages*

BDCC's Talent Specialist and workforce team continues to build and expand relationships with hiring managers, meeting with major employers including:

- Brattleboro Food Co-op
- Windham Southeast Supervisory Union
- Commonwealth Dairy
- Omega Optical
- Chroma
- Brattleboro Retreat
- M&S Development
- The Richards Group
- Fulflex
- Chroma Technology
- Brattleboro Memorial Hospital

Plans for technical training and capacity building for the final quarter of the pilot include hosting LinkedIn hiring manager trainings, a panel discussion on recruiting with industry professionals,

and increasing the awareness and use of varying hiring platforms such as Handshake (for college students), Idealist (for non-profit professionals), and more.

Stay to Stay

As state partners rolled out their online intake form, BDCC's Talent Specialist developed and implemented Southeast Vermont's virtual Stay to Stay experience. This culminated in outreach to every respondent who indicated an interest in Southeastern Vermont or wasn't sure which region they wanted to be connected to.

Of those engaged, a significant portion indicated a desire to move to Vermont within the next year. In one notable instance, BDCC's Talent Specialist spoke with a family of five from Puerto Rico who sought better economic prospects than they felt their current home could offer. The father has a Master's Degree, the mother is studying to be a nurse midwife. They received an overview of Southeast Vermont, the job market, and specific resources that could help them plan a move. Emboldened by the direct support, the family acted quickly. They planned a trip to Brattleboro, during which time the Talent Specialist provided "white glove" welcome and support. The husband has secured employment with C&S Wholesale grocers, and they are currently in talks to move into a 3-bedroom home in the Summer.

Prospective Vermonters Through Stay to Stay

*Outreach to **241** individuals and families*

***4** Small group informational sessions totalling **29** participants*

***45** individuals and families received individualized help*

SoVT WWP: Southern Vermont Welcome Wagon Project

Momentum continues to develop, with three monthly newsletters to program participants and further integration into BDCC's recruitment and retention ecosystem. In addition to a high level of digital engagement, BDCC has seen increasing grassroots involvement in other communities. Following the success of the model pioneered in Wilmington, Next Stage Arts in Putney—it's Director a Welcome Wagon participant—is now hosting regular "Meet Your New Neighbor" virtual events.

BDCC has seen interest sparking in other communities such as Londonderry, and a presentation to the Brattleboro Rotary Club was featured on the front page of the Brattleboro Reformer.

Welcome Wagon Engagement

***22** New Participants*

***19** New Hosts*

***3** Newsletters with avg.*

***58.86%** open rate and*

***11.2%** click rate*

***14** Connections Made*

Plans for the final quarter of the pilot include building community welcoming capacity through a combination of website support for town welcome pages and event planning and facilitation. BDCC also plans to raise the profile of the program in the community by partnering with Front Porch Forum to run free advertising.

SoVTYPs: Southern Vermont Young Professionals

Under the leadership of its **12** volunteer Steering Committee members, SoVTYPs continues to develop meaningful social and professional opportunities for Southern Vermont's young professionals. Yps during this quarter have put special attention to broadening the kinds of events and activities offered in order to appeal to a wider range of the young workforce. While garnering online event participation continued to be a challenge, the group saw an uptick in new members.



Additionally, promoting local career opportunities within the network has also been an excellent tool for the word-of-mouth promotion that employers in rural communities often rely on.

- Director of Brand Development - Vermont Way Foods | 55 views
- Human Resources Assistant - Adaptiva HR | 92 views
- Various - Brattleboro Food Co-op | 60 views
- Benefits Administrator - Brattleboro Memorial Hospital | 55 views
- Administrative Assistant - Omega Optical | 62 views
- Various - Brattleboro Museum & Art Center | 60 views
- Various - BDCC | 91 views
- Various - Soundview Paper | 77 views

Paid Internship Program

BDCC continues to maintain relationships with educational institutions such as the Community College of Vermont, University of Vermont, and Franklin Pierce University. These connections along with posting employment opportunities to the Handshake platform on behalf of employers will ensure that Southeast Vermont will be visible to students in and around the region.

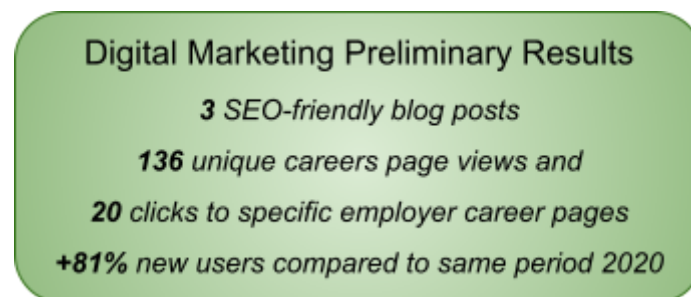
BDCC has created generalized blog content to help employers with a potential interest in creating internship positions, and continues to work directly with employers like The Nature Museum and the Brattleboro Words Trail project in developing and marketing their entry-level and internship positions directly to campuses in the region and using social media.

SoVermont Digital Marketing

Effectively utilizing digital tools has been a key strategy in managing candidate pipelines, and in the second phase of the SoVermont digital marketing project, BDCC has leveraged technical assistance to augment its existing recruitment efforts. After completing an initial round of updates to the SoVermont website, Bytes (the vendor) and BDCC pivoted to ongoing digital marketing and content generation.

Through SEM strategies, Bytes was able to place highly targeted ads in front of users searching for relevant key phrases like “moving to vermont” and “vermont business registration”. Through a collaborative process of refining those key phrases with BDCC, Bytes was able to begin driving traffic to SoVermont.com on a small budget. Bytes also provided hands-on guidance for creating useful, engaging content optimized for search engines that would drive ongoing organic traffic to the site. While the process of improving SEO takes time, BDCC has already seen promising results. Keyword rankings for the site moved up an average of 5 points, with some keywords jumping between 23 and 93 spots in Google’s search rankings.

BDCC’s modest investment in these tools and technical assistance has established a promising foundation. We envision facilitating shared investments by employers in ongoing digital marketing to attract more talent from outside the region. During the final quarter of the pilot, BDCC intends to wrap these digital recruiting services into the comprehensive suite of recruitment and retention strategies available to employers.



SoVermont Summit

One of the programmatic goals of the recruitment pilot is to engage more people in welcoming newcomers, and to increase understanding of the role newcomers play in our communities and economy. The annual Southern Vermont Economy Summit will take place in mid-May over three days. BDCC organizes the Summit in partnership with BCRC/BCIC as part of a long term strategy to increase the economic vibrancy of the Southern Vermont Economic Zone. More detail will be provided on this event in the next progress report, but of note regarding recruitment is that each day will feature a New to Vermont lunch, each with a different theme and panelists specific to the theme:

- Covid Newcomer - Here to Stay?
- New American to New Vermonter
- How New People Generate New Opportunities