

**State of Vermont**  
**Department of Labor**  
**Workforce Development Division**  
5 Green Mountain Drive  
P.O. Box 488  
Montpelier, VT 05601  
labor.vermont.gov

[telephone]  
[e-mail]

802-828-4394  
labor.VTJobs@vermont.gov

## T E S T I M O N Y

To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs  
From: Sarah Buxton, State Director of Workforce Development, Department of Labor  
Date: March 31, 2022  
Subject: H.703 and VDOL's Workforce Development Proposals

**Observation:** The workforce development system is one of the most complex systems within the state of Vermont. It involves public and private entities, federal and state regulations, and a myriad of stakeholders who have an interest in the benefits that investments, alignment, and coordination can provide. As you contemplate changes in roles and responsibilities this session, and pursue permanent and one-time investments, I urge you to deeply consider that existing framework for service delivery, coordination and alignment, the work that has been done in the last five years to streamline and simplify work for all stakeholders, and the temporary and lasting impact that your decisions will have.

The labor market and all who are involved in it are still making sense of the changes the pandemic has caused. It's vital that policy makers appreciate this unstable environment and avoid the mistake of adding greater uncertainty in circumstances and focus, by adding points of focus, work, and commitments in time that may be in contrast with the needs of workers and employers as those evolve.

### VDOL's FY 2023 Proposals

#### 1. Workforce Expansion System (\$2.7m one-time over two years)

- (a) Regional Workforce Specialists: Two-year pilot that places (6) workforce expansion specialists in Barre, Bennington, Brattleboro, St. Albans, Rutland and St. Johnsbury regions to focus on workforce expansion by:
- Bridging gap to help job seekers, current and future CTE students to support recruitment and retention.
  - Connecting "supply" (workers) and "demand" (employers) in real time.
  - Developing locally tailored resources, shared labor market information



and coordinate regional strategies.

- Provide technical assistance to employers to help tailor work to attract talent.
- Work in collaboration with ACCD and regional partners on relocation work to provide career counseling, employment and non-employment referrals, spearhead out-of-state recruitment efforts, support program organizational design and implementation efforts.

Activity	Expense Detail	Total
Workforce Expansion Specialists	\$115,000 x 6 FTE	\$690,000
Program Oversight	.5 FTE (shared with #2 below)	\$60,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	7 Limited-Service FTEs	<b>\$750,000</b>

(b) Relocation Support Specialists: local relocation support specialists provide career counseling, employment and non-employment referrals, make warm handoffs, and remain part of the relocation team for any individual until they are no longer needed. VDOL will also now provide employers with out-of-state recruitment efforts such as hiring events and following up on coordinate, targeted outreach. As part of this effort the Department would also participate in job fairs and other events, as both a coordinator and a participant. Additionally, VDOL is expanding its technological systems to support case management, customer and information management, data collection, information bank, and reporting requirements. As part of this process, the solution will integrate functionality that will enhance communication and information exchange about prospective out-of-state jobseekers, recruitment efforts, and prospective relocators. The funds designated under the program will support the following efforts.

- Funding for existing staff to charge time and expenses to this account while providing relocation services.
- Updating system requirements and associate costs with adapting future CRM to operate for relocation assistance tracking.
- Onboarding a services administrator dedicated to helping employers connect with out-of-state jobseekers. This person will also serve as VDOL's program liaison/manager for relocation activities and participates in planning, organization design, and implementation efforts.
- Onboarding of an event coordinator to spearhead all out-of-state activities (i.e., job fairs, Ft. Drum initiatives, targeted recruitment events, etc.)
- Strengthening partnerships between VDOL and ACCD (ThinkVT) to maximize return on investment.



Activity	Expense Detail	Total
Relocation Support Specialists	\$350,000 in staff costs over roughly 12 positions	\$325,000
Program Oversight	.5 FTE (shared with #1 above)	\$60,000
Event and logistics Coordinator	1 FTE	\$125,000
Adapt CRM	VDOL and ADS Time	\$25,000
Travel, Supplies, Materials	To support out-of-state activities	\$65,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	1 Limited-Service FTEs	<b>\$600,000</b>

## H.703 (As Passed by House)

*(See language)*

### \*NEW BUDGET

Activity	Expense Detail	Total
Regional Relocation Support Specialists	\$125k x 3 FTE	\$375,000
Program Oversight	1 FTE \$150,000	\$150,000
Regional Report, Material, Information Budgets	\$25k x 3	\$75,000
System Development Salary	(existing staff salary)	\$75,000
Labor Market Info Development Salary	(existing LMI staff salary)	\$75,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	4 Limited-Service FTEs	<b>\$750,000</b>

## 2. Paid Work-Based Learning & Training (WBLT) Program (\$1m base budget)

Combines the current internship and returnship programs within the Department with this increased investment to support Vermont's workforce and employers through:

- Funding paid 6-to-12-week work-based learning and training opportunities
- Targeting individuals graduating from post-secondary or secondary CTE program, individuals navigating a career change or need pre-employment support and connecting them work paid work experiences.
- Further enhancing Vermont JobLink to detail work-based learning and training (WBLT) opportunities.
- Providing employers with technical assistance to develop and implement meaningful WBLT programs that lead to full-time employment.



Activity	Expense Detail	Total
Paid WBLT Experiences	300 people x 4k average	\$1.2m
Program Coordinator	1 FTE	\$125,000
Technical Assist. Provider Grant	Competitively Awarded	\$50,000
Platform Adaption	VDOL and ADS Time	\$25,000
New Employer Start-Up Grants	To help new employers develop a WBLT pipeline (4 x 25k)	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	1 Limited-Service FTEs	<b>\$1.5 m*</b>

**\*1m in new funds, \$500,000k in existing funds**

### 3. Apprenticeship Expansion Funds (\$1m carryforward)

During the 2021 session, the legislature appropriated \$2MM to the Department for apprenticeship expansion activities. To date, the Department has not fully spent this appropriation and is seeking to carry forward up to \$1MM for the following work:

- a. Reimburse employers for the cost incurred for work tools and personal protective equipment for new apprentices (up to \$300 per participant).
- b. Continue the work to expand registered apprenticeship programs and participants.

The Workforce Development Division has hired an Assistant Director to oversee the Apprenticeship Program. With this, the Department is confident that this money can be invested to bring new energy to the Apprenticeship program at a crucial time in Vermont's COVID recovery.

### 4. Vermont Trades Scholarship and Reimbursement Program

VDOL supports these sections and will work with VSAC to administer. Examples of occupations and skill programs covered include:

#### **Building Trades Examples: (construction, carpentry, flooring, masonry and plumbing)**

- Carpenter
- Carpet installer
- Electrician
- Heavy equipment operator
- Insulation installer
- Landscaper
- Painter
- Plumber



**Mechanical Trades Examples (often span from journey level, apprentice, to master):**

- Auto mechanic
- HVAC installer
- Machinist
- Mechanical drafter
- Locksmith
- Mechanical insulator
- Elevator mechanic
- Mechanical installer

**Industrial Trades Examples (manufacturing and technology):**

- Steam engineer
- Cargo freight agent
- Ironworker
- Line installer and repairer
- Paving equipment operator
- Metal fabricator
- Asbestos worker

**Medical Trades Example:**

- Ultrasound Technician
- Dental assistant
- Paramedic
- Phlebotomist
- Respiratory therapist
- Clinical laboratory technician

**5. Secondary Student Industry-Recognized Credential Pilot Program**

VDOL supports these sections and will work with the Agency of Education to administer. We will use existing funds to support for this fiscal year.



**ATTACHMENT A – 10 VSA §540 – VDOL DUTIES**

**§ 540. Workforce education and training leader**

The Commissioner of Labor shall be the leader of workforce education and training in the State, and shall have the authority and responsibility for the coordination of workforce education and training within State government, including the following duties:

- (1) Perform the following duties in consultation with the State Workforce Development Board:
  - (A) advise the Governor on the establishment of an integrated system of workforce education and training for Vermont;
  - (B) create and maintain an inventory of all existing workforce education and training programs and activities in the State;
  - (C) use data to ensure that State workforce education and training activities are aligned with the needs of the available workforce, the current and future job opportunities in the State, and the specific credentials needed to achieve employment in those jobs;
  - (D) develop a State plan, as required by federal law, to ensure that workforce education and training programs and activities in the State serve Vermont citizens and businesses to the maximum extent possible;
  - (E) ensure coordination and nonduplication of workforce education and training activities;
  - (F) identify best practices and gaps in the delivery of workforce education and training programs;
  - (G) design and implement criteria and performance measures for workforce education and training activities;
  - (H) establish goals for the integrated workforce education and training system; and
  - (I) with the assistance of the Secretaries of Commerce and Community Development, of Human Services, of Education, of Agriculture, Food and



Markets, and of Transportation and of the Commissioner of Public Safety, develop and implement a coordinated system to recruit, relocate, and train workers to ensure the labor force needs of Vermont's businesses are met.

(2) Require from each business, training provider, or program that receives State funding to conduct workforce education and training a report that evaluates the results of the training. Each recipient shall submit its report on a schedule determined by the Commissioner and shall include at least the following information:

- (A) name of the person who receives funding;
- (B) amount of funding;
- (C) activities and training provided;
- (D) number of trainees and their general description;
- (E) employment status of trainees; and
- (F) future needs for resources.

(3) Review reports submitted by each recipient of workforce education and training funding.

(4) Issue an annual report to the Governor, the House Committees on Appropriations and on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs on or before December 1 that includes a systematic evaluation of the accomplishments of the State workforce investment system and the performance of participating agencies and institutions. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subdivision.

(5) Coordinate public and private workforce programs to ensure that information is easily accessible to students, employees, and employers, and that all information and necessary counseling is available through one contact.

(6) Facilitate effective communication between the business community and public and private educational institutions.

(7) Notwithstanding any provision of State law to the contrary, and to the fullest extent allowed under federal law, ensure that in each State and State-funded workforce education and training program, the program administrator collects and reports data and results at the individual level by Social Security number or an equivalent.

(8) Coordinate intentional outreach and connections between students graduating from Vermont's colleges and universities and employment opportunities in Vermont.

