

# Summary of the Vermont Department of Labor's *Workforce Investment System & Registered Apprenticeship Program Annual Report*

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## Introduction:

- The report is a “systemic evaluation” from the Vermont Department of Labor on its “workforce investment system.”
- The VDOL's largest division is the Workforce Development Division (WDD)
  - The WDD is responsible for “employment services, training assistance, job counseling, and recruitment and placement aid to businesses, job seekers, and workers throughout the State.”
  - It operates offices in 11 towns throughout the State.
    - Breakdown by region:
      - Central Region: Lamoille, Washington, and Orange counties with offices in Barre and White River Junction.
      - Southeast region: Windsor and Windham counties with offices in Springfield and Brattleboro
      - Southwest Region: Bennington, Rutland, and Addison counties with offices in Bennington, Rutland, and Middlebury.
      - Northeast Region: Orleans, Essex, and Caledonia counties with offices in Saint Johnsbury and Newport.
      - Northwest Region: Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties with offices in Saint Albans and Burlington
- The WDD operates Vermont JobLink. Vermont JobLink is Vermont’s “online career, employment, and training resource center.”
  - Allows job-seekers to easily search for opportunities throughout Vermont using a variety of filters (education level, full time or part time, etc.)
  - Serves as a data collection tool for VDOL
  - Efforts are underway to replace Vermont JobLink - further details will become available throughout 2024

## Apprenticeship Programs:

- In July of 2023, Act 55 took effect. This law helped modernize Vermont’s apprenticeship system.
  - Act 55 created the State Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 28 states, including Vermont, utilize a state apprenticeship agency. The remaining 22 defer directly to the US Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship.

- The SAAB will consist of 11 members. The board’s composition will be announced in January 2023. The board will include representatives from relevant industries, such as healthcare, education, construction, etc.
- Act 55 created a framework for Youth Apprenticeships. In November of 2023, VDOL convened with several relevant stakeholders and identified key components of a successful youth apprenticeship program. These include, but are not limited to:
  - establishing a correlation between “acquired competencies and proficiencies and their high school curriculum,”
  - implementing a system to monitor progress and offer constructive feedback,
  - offering “advanced standing or credit when transitioning into an adult apprenticeship,” etc.
- Current state of apprenticeships:
  - As of fiscal year 2023, there were 50 apprenticeship programs and 1,589 apprentices in the state.
  - Several new occupations were approved in fiscal year 2023, including but not limited to: cyber digital forensics analyst, paralegal/legal assistant, home health aide, etc.
  - Currently, 616 people are registered as apprentice electricians, and 366 people are registered as apprentice plumbers. VDOL has identified a shortage of plumbers and electricians in the state, and is focused specifically on ensuring that people pursue and complete their plumbing or electrical apprenticeships.
  - Demographics:
    - Age: The average age of a Vermont apprentice is 27 years old.
    - Race: The apprentice program is slightly more racially diverse than Vermont as a whole.
    - Gender: 84% of apprentices are male, with the top two professions being electrician and plumber. For females the top two professions were corrections officer and electrician.
    - Veterans: 3% of apprentices are veterans.
    - Disability: 3% of apprentices identify as disabled, 40% identify as non-disabled, 57% were identified as having an “unknown disability.” VDOL speculates that many apprentices may be hesitant to disclose their disability status for fear of losing their apprenticeship.
    - Education: 7% of apprentices had no secondary degree. 62% had graduated high school. ~30% had some level of post-secondary education.

- CTE: 76 apprentices, aged 16-25, reported they had been a CTE student.

### **State Workforce Development Programs:**

- Vermont Training Fund: The Vermont Training Fund provides funding to “public, private, and nonprofit entities, including school districts” for the purpose of supporting training programs. In order to receive funding, these programs must lead to an “industry recognized credential, post-secondary degree, certificate, or endorsement.”
  - Adult Career & Technical Education Program Grants: Adult Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs seek to assist in training and retraining of adults in need of workforce development assistance. In FY 2023, VDOL allocated \$400,000 to support 15 regional CTE centers across the state, as well to bolster the program overall. This grant money runs until June 30, 2024.
- Work-Based Learning & Training: This program provides those transitioning from a post-secondary educational institution or a post-secondary focused CTE program with a paid on-the-job experience lasting 12 weeks or fewer. Funds for the program are primarily allocated towards intern-stipends and assistance for employers to implement work-based learning.
  - The first round of funds was dispersed via grants in June 2023. VDOL allocated \$500, 313 to 19 businesses and organizations across the state, such as Burlington Electric, Girl Develop It, and the Media Factory.

### **Federal Workforce Development Systems**

- Vermont is required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)<sup>2</sup> to pursue certain goals in the realm of workforce development.
  - These goals are administered by the State Workforce Development Board (SWBD), in cooperation with the Governor and the Commissioner of Labor.
  - Every four years the SWBD must submit a WIOA state plan to the federal government. The next state plan is slated for submission in March 2024.
    - In June of 2023 a [preliminary plan](#) was adopted by the Board. Its goals include bolstering technical and educational opportunities for Vermonters, expanding Vermont’s labor force overall<sup>3</sup>, increasing representation of historically marginalized groups within Vermont’s labor force, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> WIOA provides funding to states to bolster workforce development and facilitates coordination between states and the federal government regarding workforce development.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, the Board stated that Vermont needs approximately 10,000 new workers annually by 2040. It believes through its workforce development programs this can be achieved.

- VDOL currently receives funding and administers programs under WIOA Titles I and III.<sup>4</sup>
  - Title I programs: Targeted workforce development focuses on job training and related services.
    - Adult Program: Targets individuals over the age of 18 who may lack the qualifications or opportunities to fully participate in the workforce.
    - Dislocated Worker Program: Targets individuals who have been pushed out of the workforce through lay-offs, who are unlikely to return to their previous occupation, etc.
    - Youth Program: Targets in school youth ages 14 to 21 and out of school youth ages 16 to 24.
    - Rapid Response Program: Attempts to alleviate the harm of layoffs through training, intervention, and coordination.
    - Vermont Eligible Training Provider List: This program supplements existing Title I programs. It provides funds for tuition and information regarding Title I programs.<sup>5</sup>
  - Title III programs: labor exchange services. Labor exchange services have no eligibility requirements. The top five most utilized services are “job search planning, resume assistance, career guidance, UI claimant activity, and labor market information.”
  - Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program: Under this program, a State Monitor Advocate works to “administer a Federal and State monitoring system that ensures migrant and seasonal farmworkers have equitable access to career services, skill development, and workforce protections.”
    - Foreign Labor Certification (FLC) program: While not a part of WIOA, The FLC program helps ensure a “reasonable balance” between the needs of Vermont’s employers and the protections of foreign workers and citizens.
  - Title I & III Employer Services: This includes coordinating directly with businesses and providing resources such as Vermont JobLink to assist in hiring, as well as other programs to assist in training. High retention rate from businesses for VDOL services indicate satisfaction with services provided.

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<sup>4</sup> Funding from WIOA Title II is administered by the Department of Education. Funding from WIOA Title IV is administered by the Department for Aging and Independent Living.

<sup>5</sup> VDOL reports that a burdensome approval process has discouraged many businesses from being included in the ETPL. VDOL recently received a grant of \$159,683 to cover tuition costs programs not supported by WIOA due to their absence from the ETPL.

- Trade Adjustment Act (TAA): The TAA is a federal program that assists workers who have lost their job due to foreign trade. Due to Congressional inaction, the TAA began to be phased out in July of 2022.
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program: The JVSG provides career and training-related services to veterans. The program works with both state entities and the Department of Defense.
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC): The WOTC is a federal tax credit provided to employers designed to incentivize hiring individuals from groups who have traditionally faced barriers to employment. Award amounts vary from \$2,400 to \$9,600 per employee.
  - Groups covered under the WOTC include: Certain SNAP and TANF recipients, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with felony convictions, long-term unemployment recipients, SSI recipients, eligible youth during the summer.
  - The current WOTC system is experiencing a backlog. The VDOL received a \$100,000 grant from the United States Department of Labor to facilitate system modernization. The VDOL plans to launch its new system sometime in 2024.
- Federal Bonding Program (FBP): The FBP provides fidelity bonds to employers who hire individuals who may pose a risk to the employer based on their background.<sup>6</sup> The bonds are intended to reduce risk and incentive hiring of these individuals. Each bond has “a \$5,000 limit with a \$0 deductible, covering the first six months of a selected individual’s employment.”
  - The US Department of Labor discontinued funding in 2019. Bonds are still available, however, through state funds.
- Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN): The ICAN program is a cooperation between VDOL and SNAP. The program offers voluntary services to SNAP recipients, such as job training, education (both basic and vocational), job retention assistance..

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<sup>6</sup> This includes those with substance abuse disorders, those dishonorably discharged from the military, individuals with poor credit, justice-involved individuals, etc.