

1 Introduced by House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

2 Date:

3 Subject: Commerce and trade; workforce development; economic
4 development

5 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to adopt
6 miscellaneous proposals to enhance workforce and economic development
7 opportunities.

8 An act relating to enhancing workforce and economic development
9 opportunities

10 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

11 * * * Education Workforce; Forgivable Loan Incentive Program * * *

12 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 87, subchapter 6 is added to read:

13 Subchapter 6. Forgivable Loan Incentive Programs

14 § 2871. VERMONT TEACHER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE

15 PROGRAM

16 (a) As used in this section:

17 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
18 established in section 2821 of this title.

19 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
20 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

1 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
2 institution as defined under section 2822 of this title.

3 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
4 tuition, which may also include room, board, and the cost of required books
5 and supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

6 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive
7 Program created under this section.

8 (b) The Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created
9 and shall be administered by the Corporation. The Program provides
10 forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to
11 working as a teacher in a Vermont public school and who meet the eligibility
12 requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

13 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
14 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
15 General Assembly for this purpose.

16 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
17 whether a resident or nonresident of Vermont, shall satisfy all of the following
18 requirements:

19 (1) be enrolled in teaching program at an eligible school;

20 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
21 is enrolled;

1 (3) agree to work as a teacher in Vermont employed directly by a public
2 school located in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for
3 each year of forgivable loan awarded;

4 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
5 the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
6 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
7 service required in this subsection;

8 (5) have completed the Program’s application form, the Free
9 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and for Vermont residents, the
10 Vermont grant application each academic year of enrollment in accordance
11 with a schedule determined by the Corporation; and

12 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
13 require.

14 (e) Students attending an eligible school in Vermont shall receive first
15 priority for forgivable loans.

16 (f) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a teacher in a Vermont public
17 school for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan
18 benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by
19 the Corporation, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness
20 for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free credit

1 agreement or promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering
2 the Program.

3 (g) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this
4 section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds
5 are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over
6 and shall be available to the Corporation in the following fiscal year to award
7 additional forgivable loans as set forth in this section.

8 (h) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
9 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
10 forgivable loan amounts. The Corporation shall not use more than seven
11 percent of the funds appropriated for the Program for its costs of
12 administration and may recoup its reasonable costs of collecting the forgivable
13 loans in repayment.

14 Sec. 2. VERMONT TEACHER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
15 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

16 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
17 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for forgivable
18 loans through the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program
19 created in 16 V.S.A. § 2871.

1 Sec. 3. PEER REVIEW SUPPORT GRANT PROGRAM; REPORT

2 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to encourage and support the
3 development and retention of qualified and effective Vermont educators. To
4 combat the growing educator shortage throughout the State and meet the needs
5 of Vermont students, it is necessary to invest in nontraditional educator
6 training programs.

7 (b) Grant program.

8 (1) Program creation. In fiscal year 2024, there is established the Peer
9 Review Support Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of
10 Education, to provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional
11 development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of
12 Education’s peer review process, with the goal of increased program
13 completion rates.

14 (2) Program administration. The Agency shall adopt policies,
15 procedures, and guidelines necessary for implementation of the Program
16 described in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

17 (3) Eligibility criteria. The Agency shall issue grants to organizations or
18 school districts with programs designed to provide prospective educators in the
19 peer review program the support necessary for successful completion of the
20 peer review process by providing:

21 (A) support through the Praxis exam process;

- 1 (B) local, educator-led seminars designed around the Vermont
2 licensure portfolio themes;
3 (C) local educator mentors;
4 (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing
5 process; and
6 (E) continued professional development support within the first year
7 of licensure.

8 (4) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Agency of Education
9 shall report to the Senate and House Committees on Education on the status of
10 the implementation of the Peer Review Support Grant Program and a summary
11 and performance review of the programs to which grants were awarded. The
12 report shall include any metrics used in the performance review, the number of
13 program participants, endorsement areas of participants, feedback from
14 participants and mentors, and any recommendation for legislative action.

15 Sec. 4. TEACHER LICENSING FEES; SUSPENSION

16 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, teacher licensure
17 fee requirements under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a) are suspended during fiscal years
18 2024–2029.

19 (b) In fiscal year 2024, the estimated fees that would have been collected
20 under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a) shall be accounted for through an appropriation to
21 the Agency of Education from the General Fund.

1 **Sec. 5. TEACHER LICENSING PORTABILITY**

2 In order to address demand for qualified teachers and a declining educator
3 workforce, on or before January 1, 2024, the Agency of Education shall issue a
4 written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House
5 Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate
6 Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs assessing
7 the costs and benefits of participation in licensure reciprocity agreements and
8 licensure compacts for teachers. In writing the report, the Agency shall consult
9 the Standards Board for Professional Educators and other interested
10 stakeholders.

11 **Sec. 5. PEER REVIEW SUPPORT GRANT PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION**

12 Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), the sum of \$712,500.00 is
13 appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal
14 year 2024 for the purpose of funding the Peer Review Support Grant Program
15 established by Sec. 2 of this act.

16 ~~*** Career Technical Education Students; Admission Preferences ***~~

17 **Sec. 7. 16 V.S.A. § 2181 is added to read:**

18 **§ 2181. VERMONT CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

19 The Colleges shall give preference in admissions to eligible students who
20 are residents of the State and who have completed a career technical education
21 program in a subject matter or industry that the Colleges offer programming in.

1 Sec. 8. [Reserved.]

2 * * * Corrections; Workforce * * *

3 Sec. 6. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONAL

4 DEVELOPMENT; CONTRACT; APPROPRIATION

5 (a) The Department of Corrections shall contract with a vendor to provide
6 supervisory and management professional development services to the
7 Department's employees. The purpose of this professional development
8 initiative is to encourage an inclusive workforce culture leading to greater
9 employee recruitment and retention.

10 (b) In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the
11 General Fund to the Department of Corrections for the purpose of contracting
12 with a vendor to provide supervisory and management professional
13 development services to the Department's employees.

14 * * * Young Adult Workforce; Adult Education and Literacy * * *

15 Sec. 7. VERMONT SERVE, LEARN, AND EARN PROGRAM;

16 APPROPRIATION

17 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,400,000.00 is appropriated from the
18 General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to continue
19 funding through the pilot project the Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn Program,
20 which supports workforce development goals through creating meaningful
21 paid service and learning opportunities for young adults, through the Serve,

1 Learn, and Earn Partnership made up of the Vermont Youth Conservation
2 Corps, Vermont Audubon, Vermont Works for Women, and Resource VT.
3 The Department shall enter into a grant agreement with the Partnership that
4 specifies the required services and outcomes for the Program.

5 Sec. 8. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; APPROPRIATION

6 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
7 General Fund to the Agency of Education for adult learning services.

8 * * * Climate Workforce * * *

9 Sec. 9. CLIMATE WORKFORCE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN;

10 ADVANCE VERMONT: APPROPRIATION

11 (a) Advance Vermont shall create a three-year climate workforce-focused
12 public education campaign that engages current and prospective employees,
13 Vermont youth, adults interested in changing careers, and individuals yet to
14 earn a postsecondary credential, or those who are looking to upskill.

15 (b) The campaign shall include:

16 (1) targeted external communications to support awareness of climate
17 pathways in Vermont, including partnership and collaboration with direct
18 service organizations;

19 (2) engagement through workshops, webinars, and trainings;

1 (3) information about climate sector career and education pathways
2 through centralized and easy to access resources, such as MyFutureVT.org and
3 other websites and applications; and

4 (4) video series and other media featuring opportunities with employers
5 and employee success stories.

6 (d) In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,800,000.00 is appropriated from
7 the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a
8 subgrant to Advance Vermont to implement this section over a three-year
9 period.

10 Sec. 10. VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND;

11 BUSINESS COACHING; APPROPRIATION

12 (a) In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$180,000.00 is appropriated from the
13 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a
14 a subgrant to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund for a three-year period to
15 expand its Business Coaching program to focus on working with a group of
16 existing energy services businesses interested in adopting a climate-centered
17 mission and working with a group of younger trades people looking to start
18 their own climate-centered business.

19 (b) The Fund shall recruit a cohort of up to twelve existing companies and
20 a cohort of up to twelve trained tradespeople to receive advanced business
21 assistance to enable them to either pivot their existing business or start a new

1 business that will expand the State’s ability to deploy renewable energy and
2 efficiency technologies to more homes and businesses across the State.

3 * * * Higher Education; Workforce Investments; Curricula Expansion * * *

4 Sec. 11. UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT; OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT;

5 APPROPRIATION

6 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
7 General Fund to the University of Vermont Office of Engagement, in
8 consultation with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, for additional
9 forgivable loans of \$5,000.00 per graduate for recent college graduates across
10 all Vermont higher education institutions who commit to work in Vermont for
11 two years after graduation.

12 Sec. 12. VERMONT STATE COLLEGE SYSTEM; RESTORATIVE

13 JUSTICE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

14 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$700,000.00 is appropriated from the
15 General Fund to the Vermont State College System to establish a Bachelor of
16 Science program in restorative justice.

17 Sec. 13. VERMONT STATE COLLEGE SYSTEM; VERMONT POLICE

18 ACADEMY; STUDY

19 On or before January 15, 2024, the Vermont Criminal Justice Council and
20 representatives of the Vermont State College System campuses and other
21 public and private postsecondary institutions that offer a degree program in

1 criminal justice shall review, consider, and take steps necessary to standardize
2 the curricula offered and avoid redundant requirements for obtaining
3 certification by prospective criminal justice personnel and shall submit a report
4 of its actions to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic
5 Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing,
6 and General Affairs.

7 Sec. 14. VERMONT STATE COLLEGE SYSTEM; CERTIFICATE IN 3-D
8 TECHNOLOGY; APPROPRIATION

9 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
10 General Fund to the Vermont State College System to establish a Certificate in
11 3-D Technology program offered as a full-time, six-week, intensive residential
12 summer program at the Randolph and Castleton campuses, which will:

13 (1) offer knowledge and hands-on experience that appeals to a wide
14 range of interests from science and engineering to the arts and humanities;

15 (2) position students for greater success in college and with an
16 employable edge upon completion;

17 (3) attract diverse types of learners from high schools and CTE centers;

18 (4) foster interest in STE(A)M with learners across different disciplines;

19 (5) leverage the latest 3-D technology available at the Advanced
20 Manufacturing Center within the Vermont State College System; and

1 (6) build local and national awareness of the Vermont State College
2 System’s innovative, experiential learning methodology and technical
3 expertise.

4 Sec. 15. VERMONT STATE COLLEGE SYSTEM; CRITICAL
5 OCCUPATIONS SCHOLARSHIPS; APPROPRIATION

6 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$3,800,000.00 is appropriated from the
7 General Fund to the Vermont State College System to provide Critical
8 Occupations Scholarships for eligible students with a household income of
9 [\$75,000][\$125,000] or less enrolled education programs that lead to a career
10 in an occupation with critical need, including early childhood occupation,
11 clinical mental health counseling, and all levels of nursing.

12 Sec. 16. UPSKILL VERMONT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;
13 APPROPRIATION

14 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
15 General Fund to the University of Vermont to provide additional free classes
16 through the Upskill Vermont Scholarship Program for Vermont residents
17 seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance job skills.

18 * * * Vermont Trades Scholarship Program * * *

19 Sec. 17. VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;
20 APPROPRIATION

1 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
2 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to provide
3 additional scholarships through the Vermont Trades Scholarship Program
4 created in 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 14.

5 * * * Vermont Training Program * * *

6 Sec. 18. VERMONT TRAINING PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

7 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$5,000,000 is appropriated from the
8 General Fund to the Vermont Training Program to fulfill Vermont’s obligation
9 to procure incentives in accordance with the Creating Helpful Incentives to
10 Produce Semiconductors for America (CHIPS) Act.

11 * * * Credential of Value * * *

12 Sec. 19. CREDENTIAL OF VALUE GOAL; PUBLIC-PRIVATE
13 PARTNERSHIP; APPROPRIATION

14 (a) Duties. In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$350,000.00 is appropriated
15 from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a
16 performance-based contract to perform the following duties, in coordination
17 and alignment with State partners, in support of the State’s goal articulated in
18 10 V.S.A. § 546 that 70 percent of working-age Vermonters hold a credential
19 of value by 2025:

20 (1) increase public awareness of the value of postsecondary education
21 and training to help persons of any age make informed decisions about the

1 value of education and training that would further their advancement in
2 educational pathways and pursuit of career goals, through targeted outreach as
3 outlined in subsection (b) of this section;

4 (2) promote a broad understanding of the public good and value in
5 achieving the State’s goal and of actions stakeholders can take to increase
6 attainment;

7 (3) assist or coordinate with stakeholders, such as educational, business,
8 governmental, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations, in activities that seek
9 to align the delivery of high-quality education and training opportunities with
10 career advancement and support the policy priorities outlined in 10 V.S.A.
11 § 546;

12 (4) collect and display publicly available, nonconfidential information
13 about postsecondary credentials available to Vermonters;

14 (5) facilitate conversations or provide information about the national
15 best practices in aligning, recognizing, measuring, tracking, and promoting
16 postsecondary credentials of value to the Vermont Department of Labor, the
17 Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the State Workforce
18 Development Board, and the Agency of Education when requested;

19 (6) maintain web-based resources that provide information about
20 opportunities to obtain a postsecondary credential of value, in coordination
21 with State partners;

1 (7) support the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education
2 transition or integration of Advance Vermont’s web-based resources and
3 collected information referenced in subdivisions (4) and (6) of this subsection
4 into a State-supported system in a coordinated way; and

5 (8) meet on a quarterly basis with the Vermont Department of Labor and
6 Agency of Education about activities described in this subsection.

7 (b) Outreach. The contractor may use funds awarded by the State to:

8 (1) create and distribute public-facing communications and resources
9 related to the duties described in this section; and

10 (2) offer support to career and education counselors, employment and
11 training counselors, jobseekers and their families, and other stakeholders
12 consistent with best practice and State policy and programs, to help them better
13 understand the postsecondary education and training landscape.

14 (c) Reports. The contractor shall provide written reports to:

15 (1) the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education about
16 anticipated work and activities using a simplified reporting template jointly
17 developed by the contractor and the State entities on a quarterly basis; and

18 (2) on or before December 15, 2023, the House and Senate committees
19 of jurisdiction regarding the use of funds, activities performed, and outcomes
20 achieved pursuant to this section.

1 * * * United Way; Working Bridges * * *

2 Sec. 20. WORKING BRIDGES; APPROPRIATION

3 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$255,026.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services for a subgrant to United Way
5 to expand resource coordination for employee stability through its Working
6 Bridges program.

7 * * * Healthcare Workforce * * *

8 Sec. 21. 18 V.S.A. § 39 is added to read:

9 § 39. VERMONT PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE

10 PRACTITIONER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM

11 (a) As used in this section:

12 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
13 established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

14 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
15 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

16 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
17 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

18 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
19 tuition, which may also cover room, board, and the cost of required books and
20 supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

1 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse
2 Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created under this section.

3 (b) The Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable
4 Loan Incentive Program is created and shall be administered by the
5 Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program
6 provides forgivable loans to students enrolled in a master’s program at an
7 eligible school who commit to **working as a psychiatric mental health nurse**
8 **practitioner** in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in
9 subsection (d) of this section.

10 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
11 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
12 General Assembly for this purpose.

13 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
14 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
15 requirements:

16 (1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program, whether through in-
17 person or remote instruction, **that leads to a master’s degree or specialty in**
18 **psychiatric mental health;**

19 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
20 is enrolled;

1 (3) agree to work as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner in
2 Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for each year of
3 forgivable loan awarded;

4 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
5 the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
6 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
7 service required in subdivision (3) of this subsection;

8 (5) have completed the Program’s application form and the Free
9 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), in accordance with a schedule
10 determined by the Corporation; and

11 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
12 require.

13 (e)(1) First priority for forgivable loans shall be given to students
14 attending an eligible school in the Vermont State Colleges System.

15 (2) Second priority for forgivable loans shall be given to students
16 attending another eligible school in Vermont.

17 (f) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a psychiatric mental health
18 nurse practitioner in this State in compliance with the Program for a period that
19 would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the
20 individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in
21 consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the individual shall

1 receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant
2 to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the
3 individual at the time of entering the Program.

4 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
5 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
6 forgivable loan amounts.

7 Sec. 22. PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER
8 FORGIVABLE LOAN PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

9 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,068,136.00 is appropriated from the
10 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to increase the
11 number of Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners and expand access to
12 mental health and substance abuse providers in this State.

13 Sec. 23. EMS TRAINING; APPROPRIATION

14 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
15 General Fund to the Department of Health to provide training for emergency
16 medical services personnel.

17 Sec. 24. VERMONT MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL FORGIVABLE
18 LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

19 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
20 [General Fund] [Global Commitment Fund] to the Department of Health to

1 provide forgivable loans through the Vermont Mental Health Professional
2 Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created in 18 V.S.A. § 38.

3 Sec. 25. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
4 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

5 In fiscal year 2024, the following amounts are appropriated for forgivable
6 loans for nursing students under the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan
7 Incentive Program established in 18 V.S.A. § 34:

8 (1) the amount of \$3,000,000.00 in Global Commitment funds is
9 appropriated to the Department of Health for forgivable loans for nursing
10 students under the Program;

11 (2) the amount of \$1,304,400.00 is appropriated from the General Fund
12 to the Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
13 State match for the Program; and

14 (3) the amount of \$1,695,600.00 in federal funds is appropriated to the
15 Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
16 Program.

17 Sec. 26. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; POSITION;
18 APPROPRIATION

19 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$170,000.00 is appropriated from the
20 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services to provide one additional year
21 of funding for the classified, three-year limited-service Health Care Workforce

1 Coordinator position created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of
2 Health Care Reform, pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 34(a).

3 **Sec. 27. 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 29e is amended to read:**

4 Sec. 29e. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED
5 AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE
6 DEVELOPMENT

7 (a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from
8 the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery
9 Funds to the Agency of Human Services to be distributed to the designated and
10 specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency’s proportion of
11 full-time-equivalent (FTE) mental health and substance use disorder treatment
12 staff to the total number of FTE mental health and substance use disorder
13 treatment staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide.
14 The designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan
15 repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of
16 high-quality mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals
17 available to Vermont residents in need of their services, as set forth in
18 subsection (b) of this section.

19 (b)(1) Each designated and specialized service agency shall make the funds
20 received pursuant to subsection (a) of this section available to its current and
21 prospective employees as set forth in subdivisions (A) and (B) of this

1 subdivision (1) on a rolling basis in exchange for a one-year service obligation
2 to provide mental health services or substance use disorder treatment services,
3 or both, at a designated or specialized service agency in this State. The funds
4 may be used for the following purposes:

5 (A) loan repayment for master’s-level clinicians, bachelor’s-level
6 direct service staff, and nurses; and

7 (B) tuition assistance for individuals pursuing degrees to become
8 master’s-level clinicians, bachelor’s-level direct service staff, and nurses.

9 (2) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be available to the
10 current and prospective employees of designated and specialized service
11 agencies in the form of forgivable loans, with the debt forgiven upon the
12 employee’s completion of the required service obligation.

13 (c) On or before March 1, 2023, the Agency of Human Services shall make
14 a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health
15 Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations
16 and on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated in this section.

17 * * * Economic Development; Technical Assistance * * *

18 Sec. 28. 10 V.S.A. § 2 is added to read:

19 § 2. RURAL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE

20 (a) There is created the Rural Business Technical Assistance Exchange, a
21 business assistance program through which the regional development

1 corporations shall provide small- and mid-sized businesses with professional
2 and technical assistance:

3 (1) through in-house Business Navigators;

4 (2) through partnerships with organizations specializing in outreach to
5 historically underserved populations; and

6 (3) through grants to private providers for professional services,

7 including:

8 (A) business operations, financial management, and grant writing;

9 (B) digital strategies;

10 (C) architecture and physical space design;

11 (D) reconfiguring manufacturing equipment and processes and
12 incorporating safety measures;

13 (E) technology and software consulting;

14 (F) legal and other professional services; and

15 (G) other technical assistance.

16 (b)(1) Through the Exchange, the regional development corporations shall
17 maintain a directory of, and build connections to, Vermont technical assistance
18 providers who have demonstrated the ability and expertise to assist businesses
19 with critical tools to grow and adapt their businesses to the ever-changing
20 business climate.

1 (2) The Exchange shall award technical assistance grants of not more
2 than \$5,000.00 per business for technical services from approved providers.

3 (3) To be eligible to receive technical assistance through the Exchange,
4 a business:

5 (A) must be a for-profit entity located in a rural area of Vermont; and

6 (B) must have at least \$5,000.00 in average annual revenue.

7 (4) A business whose owner’s income is higher than the federal labor
8 market area in which the business operates, as evidenced by a self-attestation
9 provided by the owner, shall provide a 50 percent match for the costs of
10 professional services funded by a grant.

11 (c) The regional development corporations shall operate the Exchange to
12 produce benefits for both the client companies as well as the vendors providing
13 the assistance and to expand the capabilities of the regional development
14 corporations to serve an even larger portion of the rural business community,
15 including historically underserved populations.

16 (d) The regional development corporations shall publish a report on the
17 activities and performance of the Exchange on or before January 15 and July
18 15 each year.

19 Sec. 29. RURAL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE;

20 APPROPRIATION

1 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from the
2 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a
3 subgrant to provide services and assistance through the Rural Business
4 Technical Assistance Exchange created in 10 V.S.A. § 2.

5 * * * Economic Development; Vermont Arts Council * * *

6 Sec. 30. VERMONT ARTS COUNCIL; APPROPRIATION

7 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$72,000.00 is appropriated from the
8 General Fund to the Vermont Arts Council to provide a State match for
9 National Endowment for the Arts funding to enable the Council to continue its
10 work boosting the creative economy in Vermont.

11 * * * Brownfields * * *

12 **Sec. 31. BROWNFIELDS FUNDING; USE IN FISCAL YEAR 2024**

13 **The Department of Economic Development shall use the \$10,000,000.00**
14 **appropriated in fiscal year 2024 for Brownfields Redevelopment for the**
15 **remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites to be used in the same**
16 **manner as the Brownfields Revitalization Fund established by 10 V.S.A. §**
17 **6654, except notwithstanding the grant limitations in 10 V.S.A. § 6654.**
18 **projects supported by this appropriation shall be limited to a maximum grant of**
19 **\$500,000.00 per site. The Agency of Commerce and Community**
20 **Development shall award the amount of \$1,000,000.00 in fiscal year 2023 to**
21 **regional planning commissions for the purposes of brownfields assessment. In**

1 awarding funds under this section, the Secretary, in consultation with VAPDA,
2 shall select one regional planning commission to administer these funds. To
3 ensure statewide availability, the selected regional planning commission shall
4 subgrant to regional planning commissions with brownfield programs, with not
5 more than 10 percent of the funds being used for administrative purposes.

6 Sec. 32. 10 V.S.A. § 6654(e) is amended to read:

7 (e) A grant may be awarded by the Secretary of Commerce and
8 Community Development with the approval of the Secretary of Natural
9 Resources, provided that:

10 (1) A grant may not exceed \$50,000.00 for characterization and
11 assessment of a site.

12 (2) A grant may not exceed ~~\$200,000.00~~ \$500,000.00 for remediation of
13 a site.

14 (3) A grant may be used by an applicant to purchase environmental
15 insurance relating to the performance of the characterization, assessment, or
16 remediation of a Brownfield site in accordance with a corrective action plan
17 approved by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

18 (4) Financial assistance may be provided to applicants by developing a
19 risk sharing pool, an indemnity pool, or other insurance mechanism designed
20 to help applicants.

1 (5) All reports generated by financial assistance from the Brownfield
2 Revitalization Fund, including site assessments, site investigations, feasibility
3 studies, corrective action plans, and completion reports shall be provided as
4 hard copies to the Secretaries of Commerce and Community Development and
5 of Natural Resources.

6 * * * Economic Development; New Relocating Employee * * *

7 Sec. 33. 10 V.S.A. § 4 is amended to read:

8 § 4. NEW RELOCATING EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES

9 * * *

10 (e) As used in this section:

11 * * *

12 (2) “Relocating employee” means an individual who meets the following
13 criteria:

14 (A)(i) ~~On or after July 1, 2021~~ the individual is a new relocating
15 employee who meets the following criteria:

16 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State;

17 (II) the individual becomes a full-time employee at a Vermont
18 location of a for-profit or nonprofit business organization domiciled or
19 authorized to do business in this State, or of a State, municipal, or other public
20 sector employer; and

1 (III) the employer attests to the Agency that, after reasonable
2 time and effort, the employer was unable to fill the employee’s position from
3 among Vermont applicants; or

4 (ii) ~~on or after February 1, 2022~~ the individual is a new remote
5 employee who meets the following criteria:

6 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State; and

7 (II) the individual is a full-time employee of an out-of-state
8 business and performs the majority of his or her employment duties remotely
9 from a home office or a co-working space located in this State.

10 (B) The individual receives gross salary or wages that equal or exceed
11 the Vermont livable wage rate calculated pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 526.

12 (C) The individual is subject to Vermont income tax.

13 * * * Economic Development;

14 Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant Program * * *

15 Sec. 34. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. H.18, as amended by 2022 Acts

16 and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 46, is further amended to read:

17 Sec. H.18. COMMUNITY RECOVERY AND REVITALIZATION

18 GRANT PROGRAM

19 * * *

20 (b) Eligible applicants.

21 * * *

1 (3) The following are ineligible to apply for a grant:

2 (A) a State or local government-operated business, unless affiliated
3 with, or representative of, an applying municipality’s water district;

4 (B) a business that, together with any affiliated business, owns or
5 operates more than 20 locations, regardless of whether those locations do
6 business under the same name or within the same industry; and

7 (C) a publicly traded company.

8 * * *

9 * * * Rural Industry Development Grant Fund * * *

10 Sec. 35. 10 V.S.A. § 6 is added to read:

11 § 6. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

12 (a) Creation; purpose.

13 (1) A Rural Industry Development Grant Program is created within the
14 Agency of Commerce and Community Development to provide grant funding
15 through local development corporations for business relocation and expansion
16 efforts, including the purchase, demolition, and renovation of property for
17 industrial use.

18 (2)(A) There is established a Rural Industry Development Special Fund
19 comprising amounts appropriated to the Fund, contributions from other
20 sources, and the return of principal from the sale of any property invested
21 through the Program.

1 (B) Monies in the Fund shall be available to Agency to make grants
2 through the Program to assist local development corporations with business
3 relocation and expansion efforts throughout Vermont.

4 (C) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, interest
5 earned and any remaining balance at the end of the fiscal year shall be retained
6 by the Fund and carried forward in the Fund.

7 (b) Grant considerations. In making grant awards, the Agency shall
8 consider:

9 (1) the real estate needs of growing and relocating businesses, including
10 nonprofit organizations, in the applicant’s region;

11 (2) the ability of the proposed project to meet the site-specific needs of
12 businesses considering whether to expand or locate in this State;

13 (3) the funding that the applicant has identified, or secured, to leverage a
14 grant award; and

15 (4) the readiness of an applicant to move a project forward.

16 (c) Eligible applicants; priority.

17 (1) To be eligible for a grant, an applicant must be a local development
18 corporation, as defined in subdivision 212(10) of this title, located within this
19 State.

20 (2) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development may
21 designate projects and agreements as first priority based on rural communities

1 that continue to experience insufficient economic and grand list growth as per
2 the rural index.

3 (d) Eligible activities. A grant recipient may use funding for the following:

4 (1) to purchase land for potential industrial use;

5 (2) for the costs of site development, permitting, or providing
6 infrastructure for property the recipient owns;

7 (3) for the equity investment required for a loan transaction through the
8 Vermont Economic Development Authority under 10 V.S.A. chapter 12,
9 subchapter 3; or

10 (4) for the matching requirement of another State or federal grant
11 consistent with this section.

12 (e) Application; market assessment.

13 (1) An applicant shall include in its application a local and regional
14 market assessment that demonstrates reasonable need for the proposed
15 development and identifies imminent, potential, or existing business growth
16 opportunities.

17 (2) An applicant shall submit the following to demonstrate a readiness to
18 begin and complete the proposed project:

19 (A) community and regional support for the project;

20 (B) that grant funding is needed to complete the proposed project;

1 (C) an ability to manage the project, with requisite experience and a
2 plan for fiscal viability; and

3 (D) a description of the permitting required to proceed with the
4 project and a plan for obtaining the permits.

5 (f) Awards; amount.

6 (1) An award shall not exceed the lesser of \$1,000,000 or 20 percent of
7 the total project cost.

8 (2) A recipient may combine grant funds with funding from other
9 sources.

10 (3) The Agency shall release grant funds upon determining that the
11 applicant has met all application conditions and requirements.

12 (4) A grant recipient may apply for additional grant funds if future
13 amounts are appropriated for the Program and the funds are for a separate but
14 eligible use.

15 (g) Deed restrictions; property sales. The Agency shall include deed
16 restrictions that require the return of the principal amount of the grant to the
17 Special Fund and may require the payment of a percentage of the sales profit.

18 Sec. 36. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUND;

19 APPROPRIATION

1 (2) The purpose of the Program is to utilize crowdfunding to spark
2 community revitalization through collaborative grantmaking for projects that
3 create, activate, or revitalize public spaces.

4 (3) The Department may administer the Program in coordination with
5 and support from other State agencies and nonprofit and philanthropic partners.

6 (b) The Fund is composed of the following:

7 (1) State or federal funds appropriated by the General Assembly;

8 (2) gifts, grants, or other contributions to the Fund; and

9 (3) any interest earned by the Fund.

10 (c) As used in this section, “public space” means an area or place that is
11 open and accessible to all people with no charge for admission and includes
12 village greens, squares, parks, community centers, town halls, libraries, and
13 other publicly accessible buildings and connecting spaces such as sidewalks,
14 streets, alleys, and trails.

15 (d)(1) The Department of Housing and Community Development shall
16 establish an application process, eligibility criteria, and criteria for prioritizing
17 assistance for awarding grants through the Program.

18 (2) The Department may award a grant to a municipality, a nonprofit
19 organization, or a community group with a fiscal sponsor for a project that is
20 located in or serves a designated downtown, village center, new town center, or

1 neighborhood development area that will create a new public space or
2 revitalize or activate an existing public space.

3 (3) The Department may award a grant to not more than ~~one project~~
4 three projects per calendar year within a municipality.

5 (4) The minimum amount of a grant award is \$5,000.00, and the
6 maximum amount of a grant award is \$40,000.00.

7 (5) The Department shall develop matching grant eligibility
8 requirements to ensure a broad base of community and financial support for
9 the project, subject to the following:

10 (A) A project shall include in-kind support and matching funds raised
11 through a crowdfunding approach that includes multiple donors.

12 (B) An applicant may not donate to its own crowdfunding campaign.

13 (C) A donor may not contribute more than \$10,000.00 or 35 percent
14 of the campaign goal, whichever is less.

15 (D) An applicant shall provide matching funds raised through
16 crowdfunding of not less than 33 percent of the grant award.

17 (e) The Department of Housing and Community Development, with the
18 assistance of a fiscal agent, shall distribute funds under this section in a manner
19 that provides funding for projects of various sizes in as many geographical
20 areas of the State as possible.

1 (f) The Department of Housing and Community Development may use up
2 to 15 percent of any appropriation to the Fund from the General Fund to assist
3 with crowdfunding, administration, training, and technological needs of the
4 Program.

5 * * * Downtown Development * * *

6 Sec. 38. 24 V.S.A. § 2792(d) is amended to read:

7 (d) The Department shall provide staff and administrative support to the
8 State Board, ~~and~~ shall produce guidelines to direct municipalities seeking to
9 obtain designation under this chapter, and shall pay per diem compensation for
10 board members pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b).

11 Sec. 39. 24 V.S.A. § 2793(b) is amended to read:

12 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
13 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
14 application, the State Board shall designate a downtown development district if
15 the State Board finds in its written decision that the municipality has:

16 * * *

17 Sec. 40. 24 V.S.A. § 2793a(b) is amended to read:

18 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
19 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
20 application, the State Board shall designate a village center if the State Board
21 finds the applicant has met the requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

1 Sec. 41. 24 V.S.A. § 2793b(b) is amended to read:

2 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
3 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
4 application, the State Board shall designate a new town center development
5 district if the State Board finds, with respect to that district, the municipality
6 has:

7 * * *

8 Sec. 42. 24 V.S.A. § 2793e(d) is amended to read:

9 (d) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
10 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
11 application, for designation of a neighborhood development area, the State
12 Board, after opportunity for public comment, shall approve a neighborhood
13 development area if the Board determines that the applicant has met the
14 requirements of this section.