

Office of Workforce Strategy & Development: Board and Office Updates

January 20, 2026

Testimony to House Committee on Commerce and
Economic Development

Sabina Haskell, Executive Director, Office of Workforce Strategy and Development

Drake Turner, Deputy Director, Office of Workforce Strategy and Development



Agenda

- Background/Roles and Responsibilities
- State Workforce Development Board updates
- Office of Workforce Strategy and Development updates

Background

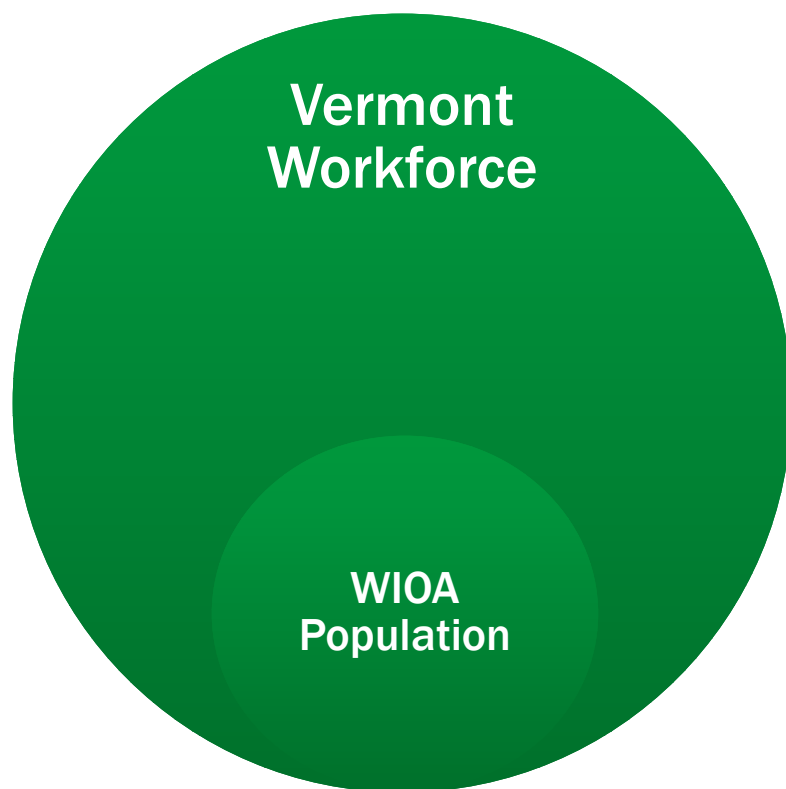
- Act 146 of 2024: created Office of Workforce Strategy and Development, reorganized State Workforce Development Board
- Act 65 of 2025: clarified roles and responsibilities of Office re: workforce education and employment and training

Roles & Responsibilities

State Workforce Development Board Strategy and Oversight (Governance)	Office of Workforce Strategy & Development Coordination and Implementation (Execution)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sets statewide workforce priorities and goals• Advises the Governor on workforce policy & strategy• Approves the WIOA State Plan and major system initiatives• Holds the workforce system accountable for results• Engages employers and stakeholders statewide <p><i>Federally required under WIOA; established in statute</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implements Board-approved priorities and statewide workforce strategy• Coordinates agencies, partners, and funding• Aligns programs to shared goals and reduces fragmentation• Manages data, reporting, and system analysis• Identifies gaps, overlaps, and opportunities for improvement <p><i>Established by Legislature to operationalize strategy</i></p>

The **Board** sets direction and provides oversight; the **Office** executes, coordinates, and reports.

State Workforce Development Board



- Board fully reconstituted with new membership
- Balanced representation from business, education, state agencies, higher education, and legislative sectors
- Focus on action and proactivity in addition to fulfilling federal requirements

Meet the Board

Name	Organization
Jay Bellows (Board Chair)	KORE Power
Chris Loso	Loso's Professional Janitorial Services
Rebecca Kapsalis	UVM Health
Betsy Hassan	UVM Medical Center
Derrick Martens	Brothers Building
Bill Cunningham	Tri-Valley Transit
Betsy Bailey	Little Dippers Doodle Children's Center
Rob Terry	Merck Forest and Farmland
Michael Hulbert	HP Cummings
Valerie White Beaudet	Ladder 1 Grill
Mark Dessureau	Dessureau Machines
Scott Giles	VSAC
Jeremy White	Orange East Supervisory Union
Rhoni Basden	Vermont Works for Women
Aron Tomlinson	Hartford Career and Tech Center
Philip Kolling	SerVermont
Tiffany Walker	Vermont State Colleges System
Mike Doneges	Mayor, Rutland City
Jim Sullivan	Bennington Select Board
Rep. Mike Marcotte	State Representative, Coventry
Sen. Alison Clarkson	State Senator, Windsor District
Kendal Smith	Vermont Department of Labor
Zoie Saunders	Vermont Agency of Education
Lindsay Kurrle	Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development
Jenney Samuelson	Vermont Agency of Human Services

Board Goals

1. Increase supply of workers in key sectors:

Develop recruiting targets for the workforce in Vermont's five sectors with the greatest workforce need and develop sector specific strategies to increase the supply of workers, in collaboration with employers, ACCD, and other stakeholders.

2. Support adults to re-engage and advance in the Vermont workforce:

Support adult Vermonters – including those seeking to grow their skills, change careers, and/or rejoin the workforce – in attaining meaningful employment by expanding access to coordinated, clearly defined, and stackable education and training pathways that lead to credentials of value and align with Vermont's current and emerging workforce needs.

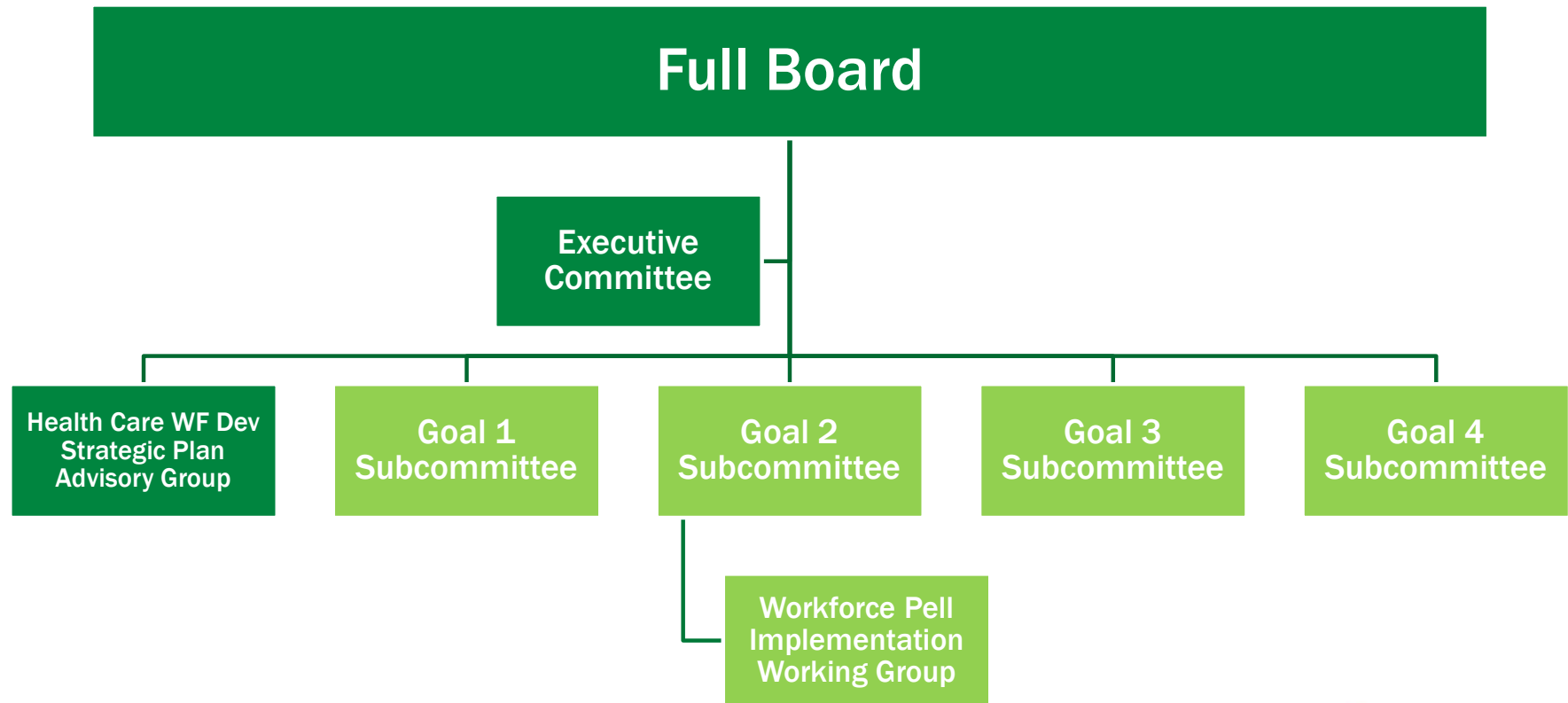
3. Support business expansion and relocation:

Support ACCD's business growth and recruitment strategy by aligning workforce development resources with economic development targets. Work in coordination with ACCD, VDOL, and regional partners to identify workforce barriers and solutions for Vermont-based companies poised to expand, and target out-of-state companies with potential for relocation.

4. Increase postsecondary graduate retention:

By 2027, increase the number of college and university graduates who remain in Vermont to work and live after graduation.

Board Structure



Office of Workforce Strategy and Development (OWSD): Year One Progress

- Stood up office and hired core staff, built foundation for future success
- Relaunched State Workforce Development Board
- Built relationships with key partners at state agencies, training providers, employers, and community partner organizations
- Fulfilled federal and state statutory responsibilities

Opportunities and Challenges

- Federal WIOA requirements (state plan modification, One-Stop American Job Center, etc.)
- Workforce Pell
- 5-year Rural Health Transformation Program (\$30m/year for health care workforce)
- Housing
- CTE/Adult Education
- Service to Career Pathways
- Data integration and alignment

What We're Hearing and Learning

- Vermont has strong workforce programs, but fragmentation and silos limit impact
- Data and outcomes must drive decisions, but we don't need to measure everything
- Long-term success requires sustained collaboration
- This work demands urgency, while taking the care needed to build trust and alignment that will endure

What's Next: Year Two Priorities

- Deepen Board work through establishment of committees, identification of metrics/KPIs relative to goals, and progress
- Develop and advance a clear workforce expansion strategy, driven by the Board
- Navigate federal requirements (including Workforce Pell implementation)
- Improve alignment of funding and programs
- Update and redesign OWSD website to serve as comprehensive resource for job seekers, state and external workforce partners, and employers
- Strengthen employer and partner engagement

Questions?