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Thank you for having me here to talk about the relationship between CVOEO's Weatherization Program and Vermont Adult Learning. I am going to be brief as I think it is more important for you to hear about the impact that programs like VAL have on their participants than on the benefits they give me as a program director. Bobby Sweeney, who you will hear from as well, has become a valuable team member since joining our program in September last year.

The single greatest limiting factor to the weatherization program in Vermont in helping our neighbors with low-income is the ability to find, hire and keep staff to do the challenging work that we do. The housing stock that the clients we serve are often mobile homes or older less well-maintained homes. Both types of homes bring about different challenges. The work is very much unlike building new homes. Our homes are lived in, children and pets are raised in them and our clients are making financially based decisions about whether maintenance is done at the home, food is put on the table or medicines are purchased. While the unemployment rate is slightly higher than a year ago there are very few businesses that are not looking for help and we are currently short 5-6 crew members in our Colchester and Middlebury offices. For every crew member that we are short, 10 families are not being served in our service area.

Workforce development programs like Weatherization intensive program that VAL runs throughout Vermont have helped the four community action agencies and the Northeast Employment Training Organization (NETO) hire critical crew members. The folks that come through these programs have a wide range of experiences that they bring to us. The main thing that these programs offer is employee supports to help make them successful in the workplace. Many have little construction experience when they enter the work programs but when they come out with OSHA 10 training, NCCER certification and hands on experience with power tools and specialized weatherization tools and equipment that is a huge benefit to us. It allows new employees to come up to speed much quicker, makes our program more efficient and allows us to serve more clients that truly need our services.

The thing that is most helpful about these programs, however, is the shadow experiences. Whether that is through a formal weeklong experience working one on one with one of our seasoned crew members or working with our crew members as instructors and demonstrators. The program participants are given firsthand knowledge and experience in regard to exactly what they will be doing. More importantly they can see the benefits to the clients by meeting them, visiting job sites and learning firsthand what their work will mean to the neighbors they serve.

Thank you.