



VERMONT
COMMUNITY ACTION
PARTNERSHIP

**Financial Capabilities Testimony
to Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
2/11/2026**

VCAP LEADERSHIP



BROC Community Action
TOM DONAHUE
tdonahue@broc.org
802-665-1723
45 Union Street, Rutland VT 05701
Serving Rutland and Bennington Counties



Capstone Community Action
ALISON CALDERARA
acalderara@capstonevt.org
802-479-1053
20 Gable Place, Barre, VT 05461
Serving Addison (Granville, Hancock), Washington, Orange, Lamoille, Rutland (Pittsfield) and Windsor (Barnard, Bethel, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, Stockbridge) Counties



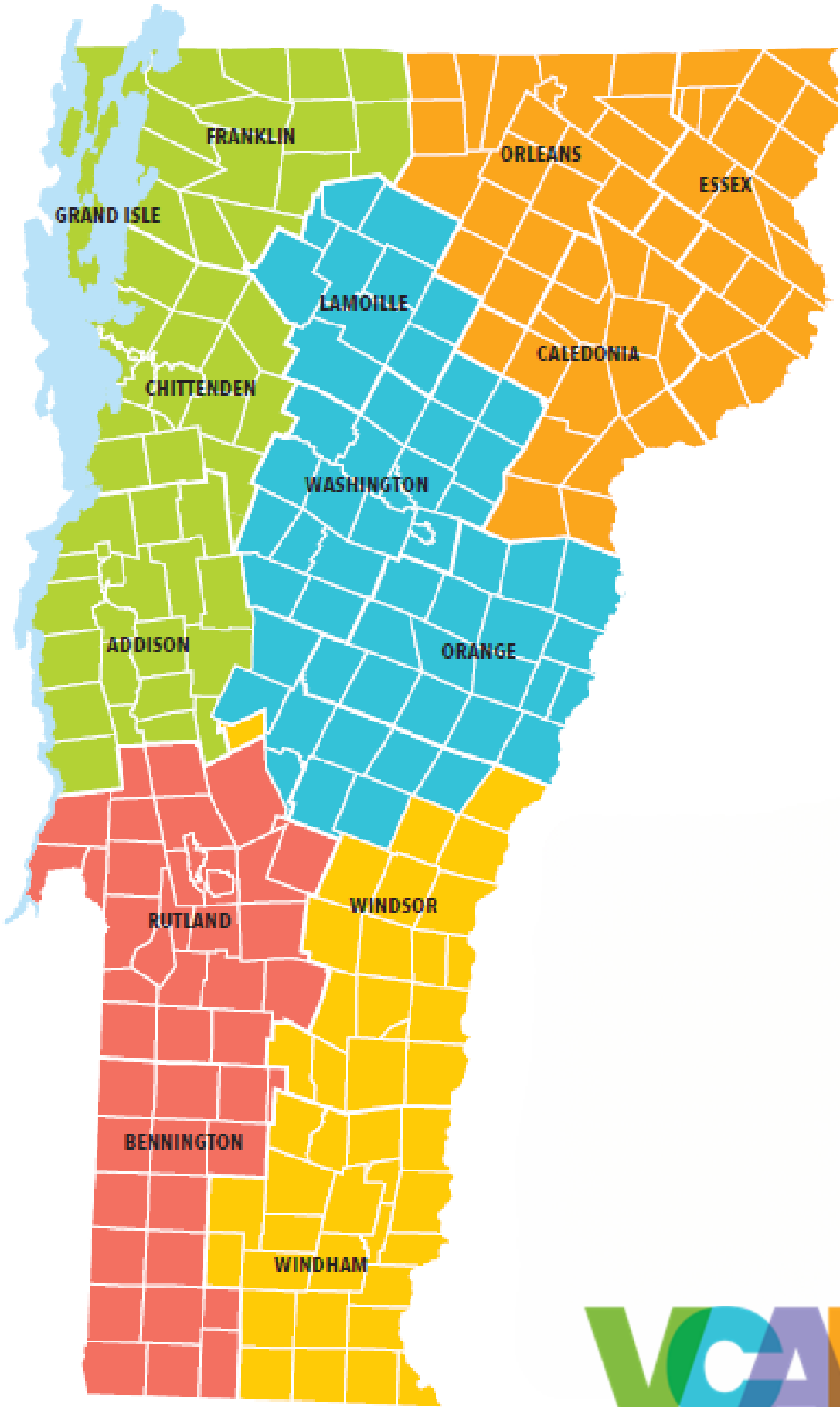
Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
PAUL DRAGON
pdragon@cvoeo.org
802-863-2771 ext. 740
PO Box 1603, Burlington, VT 05402
Serving Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle and Addison Counties (except for Granville and Hancock)



Northeast Kingdom Community Action
JENNA O'FARRELL
jofarrell@nekavt.org
802-334-7316 / 802-748-6040
10 Main Street, PO Box 346, Newport, VT 05855
Serving Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties



Southeastern Vermont Community Action
JOSH DAVIS
jdavis@sevca.org
802-722-4575
91 Buck Drive, Westminster, VT 05158
Serving Windham and Windsor Counties (except for Barnard, Bethel, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon and Stockbridge)



VERMONT
COMMUNITY ACTION
PARTNERSHIP

Triple the Impact

FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES

VCAP's Legislative Request

VCAP is seeking **\$2,213,635** in base funding in FY27 for the MBDP, VITA Tax and Financial Coaching programs.



MBDP: Requesting a total of \$993,335 for FY27, a **\$500,000 increase in base funding** from FY26

VITA: Requesting \$550,000 for FY27, an overall \$2,000 increase from FY26 and a **\$150,000 increase in base funding** from FY26

FINANCIAL COACHING: Requesting a total of \$670,300 for FY27 a **\$500,000 increase in base funding** from FY26

MICRO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business Plan Development
1-3 Year Cashflow Analysis
Access to Capital
Marketing
Social Media

VITA

Free Tax Prep and Filing
Tax Support Throughout the Year
Past Years' Tax Prep and Filing
Working with the IRS
Property Tax and Renters' Credits

Financial Capabilities

Money Management
Personal Finances
Access to Credit
SS Impacts

W4 Navigation
Tax Credits
Refund saving and planning

Household budgeting
General Savings
Retirement Savings
Debt Management
Credit Buidling

FINANCIAL COACHING

"I've taken many of your classes over the years and they significantly improved my financial literacy. Practices I learned from CVOEO are the reason I have been able to survive for more than a decade on a low fixed income." – Client response to 2025 FFP Annual Survey

"[John] supported me in a variety of ways including getting more clear about my target audience, being more precise with my website copy, troubleshooting operational barriers, and suggesting various programming opportunities... I now have much greater peace related to the management of my finances and the management of my business is far more dialed in than before." – Annual Survey 2025



**VERMONT
COMMUNITY ACTION
PARTNERSHIP**



VITA TAX

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program helps families or individuals who make \$69,000 or less file.

IRS Certified and Trained volunteers and paid staff help Vermonters file during normal tax season. VITA helps Vermonters each year claim their refunds and credits and help put dollars back into our communities.

In 2025, **\$5,345,071** in tax refunds were returned to the Vermont economy through the VITA Program including **\$2,420,938** in tax credits.

VITA REQUEST	
FY26	FY27
\$400,000 base plus \$148,000 one-time	550,000
INCREASE FY26 to FY27	\$2000 overall, \$150,000 in base funding

This maintains a 1 FTE Tax Program Coordinator per agency, +\$20,000 to CVOEO for statewide administration



VITA TAX

FY 25 Community Action VITA By the Numbers

115 Volunteers averaging 70 hours/volunteer

5170 returns filed in 2025

1050 Earned Income Tax Credits received averaging **\$1711.00**

368 returns with Child Tax Credits averaging **\$1443.00**

344 returns with Additional Child Tax Credits averaging **\$1774.00**

431 Small Business/Schedule C Tax returns filed

\$5,345,071 in tax refunds and credits back into the community

“My tax preparer passed away and my friend told me about your tax services. I have been paying \$450 a year to file my simple taxes (social security and a small pension) and my homestead/property tax credit. I’m so excited to get my appointment!”

Sandra P, Barre



FINANCIAL COACHING

Across Vermont, **FINANCIAL COACHES** are supporting Vermonters in making wise financial decisions to increase economic security.

Coaches support individuals and families with the following:

- Creating a budgeting and spending plan
- Credit coaching and credit building strategies
- Debt management
- Financial goal setting
- Homeless prevention/retention supports and rent-ready coaching
- Foundational counseling for self-employment
- Tips and resources to save on living expenses
- Financial Fraud Education
- Income Tax and W4 withholding supports
- Navigating Benefits and Programs and Addressing the “Benefits Cliff”
- Monthly financial literacy workshops

The Community Action Network of Financial Coaches are AFCPE® Accredited Financial Counselors®

The Association of Financial Counseling and Planning Education is a national nonprofit organization and the nationally recognized leader in financial counseling, coaching and education



FINANCIAL COACHING REQUEST	
FY26	FY27
\$170,300	\$670,300
INCREASE FY26 to FY27	\$500,000

This includes an increase from ~0.3 FTE to 1.0 FTE per agency



FINANCIAL COACHING

FY 25 Community Action Financial Coaching by the Numbers:

798 Vermonters received 1:1 Financial coaching to build assets and increase personal finance skills

1015 Vermonters enrolled in Financial Capability classes

145 New Americans participated in financial coaching, classes and house parties

115 Vermonters increased their savings after working with a coach

149 Vermonters improved their credit scores

"[Our coach] has been an absolute lifesaver for us. I'm genuinely not overstating this! It's not an exaggeration! He helped us see our options and create meaningful, measurable goals with clear steps to completing them, doing so in a pressure-less way that didn't risk becoming the straw that broke the camel's back. He has been gentle in his encouragement, empathetic to our circumstances, and incredibly helpful and supportive both in and out of appointments (email)..."



MICROBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



MBDP's across the state have helped launch or expand more than **2,100 Vermont businesses**, created thousands of jobs, and helped entrepreneurs leverage more than **\$15 million** in financing.

- **Personal Finance Foundations for Sole Entrepreneurs**
- **One-to-one business counseling**
- **Networking Opportunities**
- **Business Workshops**
- **Funding Opportunities**

MICROBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLAN REQUEST	
FY26	FY27
\$493,335	\$993,335
INCREASE FY26 to FY27 \$500,000	

Funding will support 2 FTE coaches per agency



MICROBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



FY 25 Community Action MBDP by the numbers

664 Vermonters utilized business coaching and workshops

77 businesses started

35 business expansions

\$524,256 in capital accessed by **50** businesses

52 FTE jobs created (including sole proprietor)

Vermont's Small Business Landscape*

62% of working Vermonters are employed by small businesses (500 or fewer employees)

Vermont had over **15,150 small business establishments employing 1-19 employees** (not including the owner)

Vermont ranks **#5 in the country for the greatest per capita rate of sole proprietor establishments** (no paid employees) (10 establishments for every 100 people)
In 2023, there were **65,028 non-employer establishments** in Vermont

*2025 Small Business Profile, US SBA Office of Advocacy and US Census



MICROBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



Eric Petit – Fine Artist

My time counseling with Dustin (NEKCA) in the Micro Business Program has been one of great leaps forward for the growth of my small business, both in terms of goals and vision. I was encouraged and inspired by so much in the sessions we've had together. Since I started the program I have grown my reach in untold ways. The strategies we spoke about led to me to being featured as an Artist in profile on the front page of a regional paper and being commissioned to create several unique pieces of art in prominent locations throughout the community. I am now attending State University of Vermont pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts and have grown my following and patronage in manifold ways because of the way I was able to organize my small business dreams into attainable goals. I am so pleased I was able to take advantage of this exceptional program.



email from client

"I want to say here how grateful I am for all of the time, energy, and expertise you've (CVOEO) given me these last few years. I have never doubted the belief you have in me to make a living doing what I love. Honestly, I don't know how I would've navigated all of these years of Slow Process' successes and failures (Covid, bad consignment arrangements, etc.) without your counsel."

Heart of Vermont Soap Works, LLC

One of the best things I ever did for my business was to take an online business course (with Rosie Gray, Capstone). If you're thinking about doing a business this business course is amazing. You should think about taking it. I won't lie- it can be scary, but you get through it and you do the stuff that they tell you to do and you'll be happy that you did. I know that I am and I am so much better off and my business is better off because of it.





MICROBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



From dream to reality, built through years of trusted business coaching

Client E began working with the Micro Business Development Program in Spring 2024. Their goal was to start a small food business and although they had tried to sell food before, the experience had not worked out. At the very first meeting, Client E and their coach reviewed important aspects of running a business such as the need for licensing, health inspections, how to register a business, collecting meal tax, pricing, and vending. Their coach provided a list of resources and helped them connect with each one. By the Summer of 2024, Client E had registered their business and had vended twice in Burlington. They worked with their coach to adjust prices and to identify sources of capital.

In Fall 2024, Client E worked with their business coach to write a thorough business plan which was then used to **access \$10,000 in HireAbility funding**. They were also supported in a successful application to the **Vermont Community Loan Fund** which awarded them a \$50,000 Justice Forward Loan. Other important connections included an insurance agent, a social media consultant, and a representative at the Vermont Small Business Law Center.

With the support of their Micro Business Coach, Client E opened a business and within 1.5 years was even able to expand their business to operate at a heavily frequented concession stand in Winooski. They have hired 4 part-time seasonal employees and are regularly asked to participate in a number of local events and farmers markets.





VERMONT
COMMUNITY ACTION
PARTNERSHIP

Thank you