

# Legal Services for Vermont's Small Businesses

Presentation to Vermont General  
Assembly, Senate Committee on  
Economic Development

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Vermont Small Business  
Law Center

VERMONT LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL





# Who are we, what do we do?

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- Access to legal services for small business:
- Individual educational consults
- Paid attorney referrals for qualifying businesses (10 hours paid, we find the attorney)
- Public educational events



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# Vermont Bar Association Small Business Legal Assistance Program

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- Low bono panel of firms eager to work with small business and organization clients
- Reduced rate for up to ten hours of legal work (no cost to the business/organization)
- Coordinated via VBA's legal access coordinator
- Critical for successful delivery of legal services to Vermont's small businesses



# Seventeen Community Partners in 2024

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Vermont Small Business Development Center  
Vermont Bar Association, and law firms  
U.S. Small Business Administration

<b>Community and Business Development Partners:</b>	<b>Incubator and Accelerator Programs Across the State:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○Capstone Agencies</li><li>○Vermont Professionals of Color Network</li><li>○Center for Women &amp; Enterprise</li><li>○Vermont Arts Council</li><li>○Center on Rural Innovation</li><li>○Micro Business Development Program</li><li>○Regional Development Corporations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○The Cultivator (Randolph)</li><li>○Black River Innovation Campus Actuator (Springfield)</li><li>○Space on Main (Bradford)</li><li>○DeltaClime VT</li><li>○Generator Makerspace (Burlington)</li><li>○Hub Co-Works (Rutland)</li></ul>



# Numbers Served (2024)

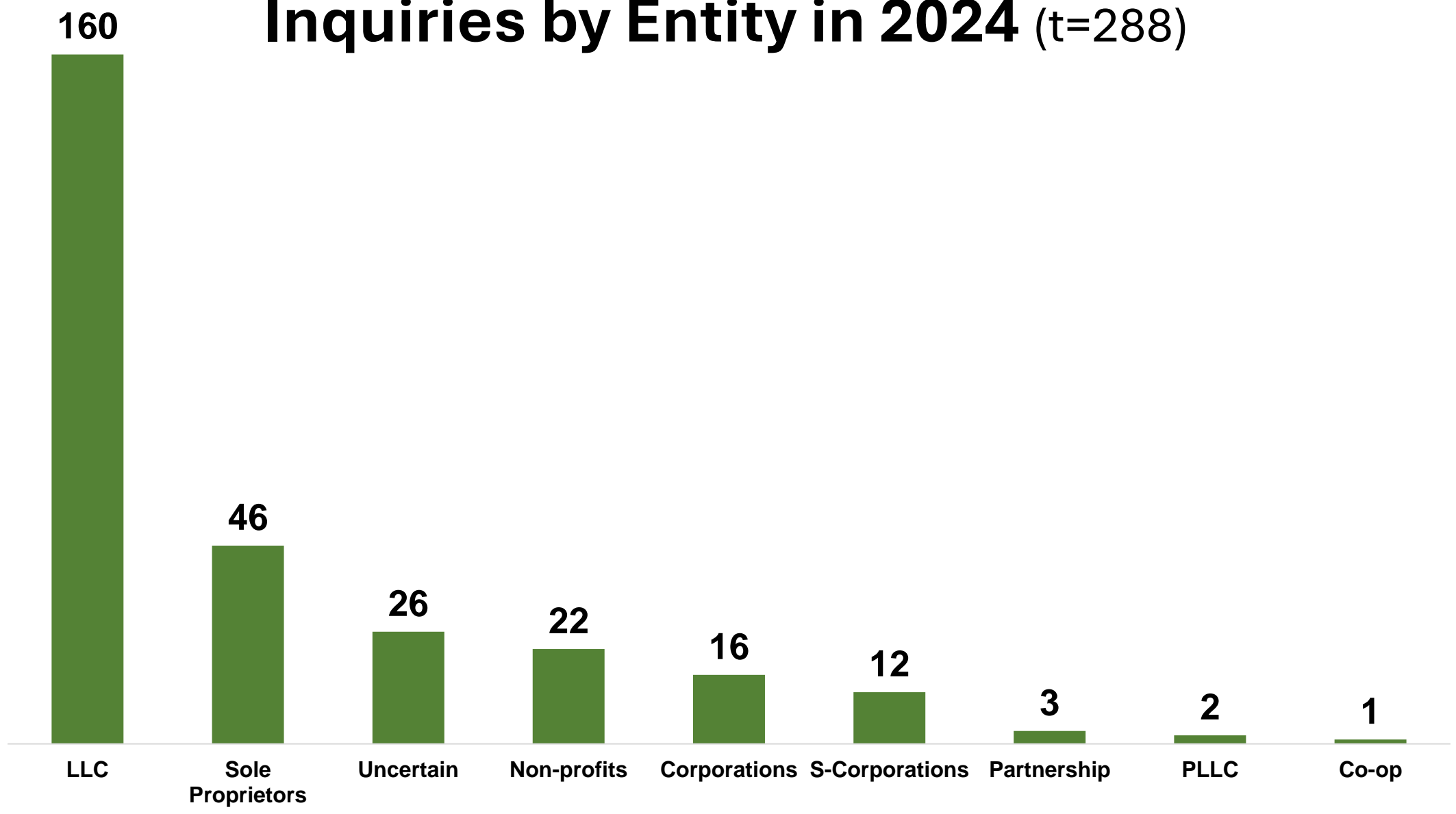
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- 288 – intakes from businesses requesting legal education\*
- 149 – educational consultations with small businesses
- 168 – businesses placed or in process of being placed with attorney
- 80+ – educational presentations to groups of business owners, and flood clinics
- 39 – businesses signed up for an educational consult through April 15, 2025

\* Gaps between inquiry and uptake, or desire to go right to working with a lawyer



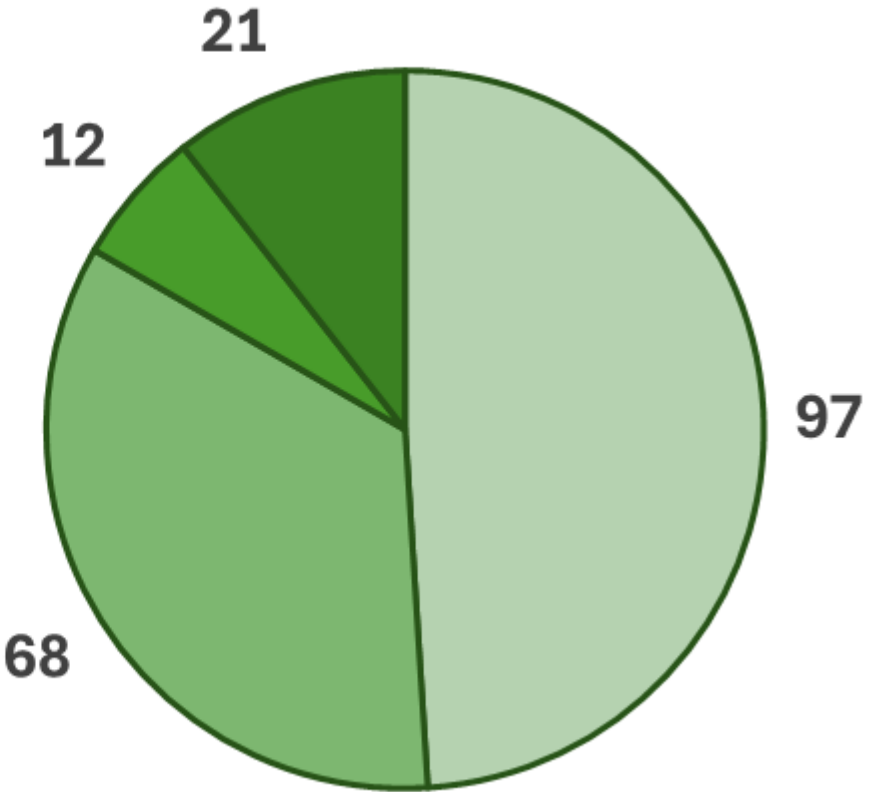
# Inquiries by Entity in 2024 (t=288)





# Businesses With Employees: How Many Employees?

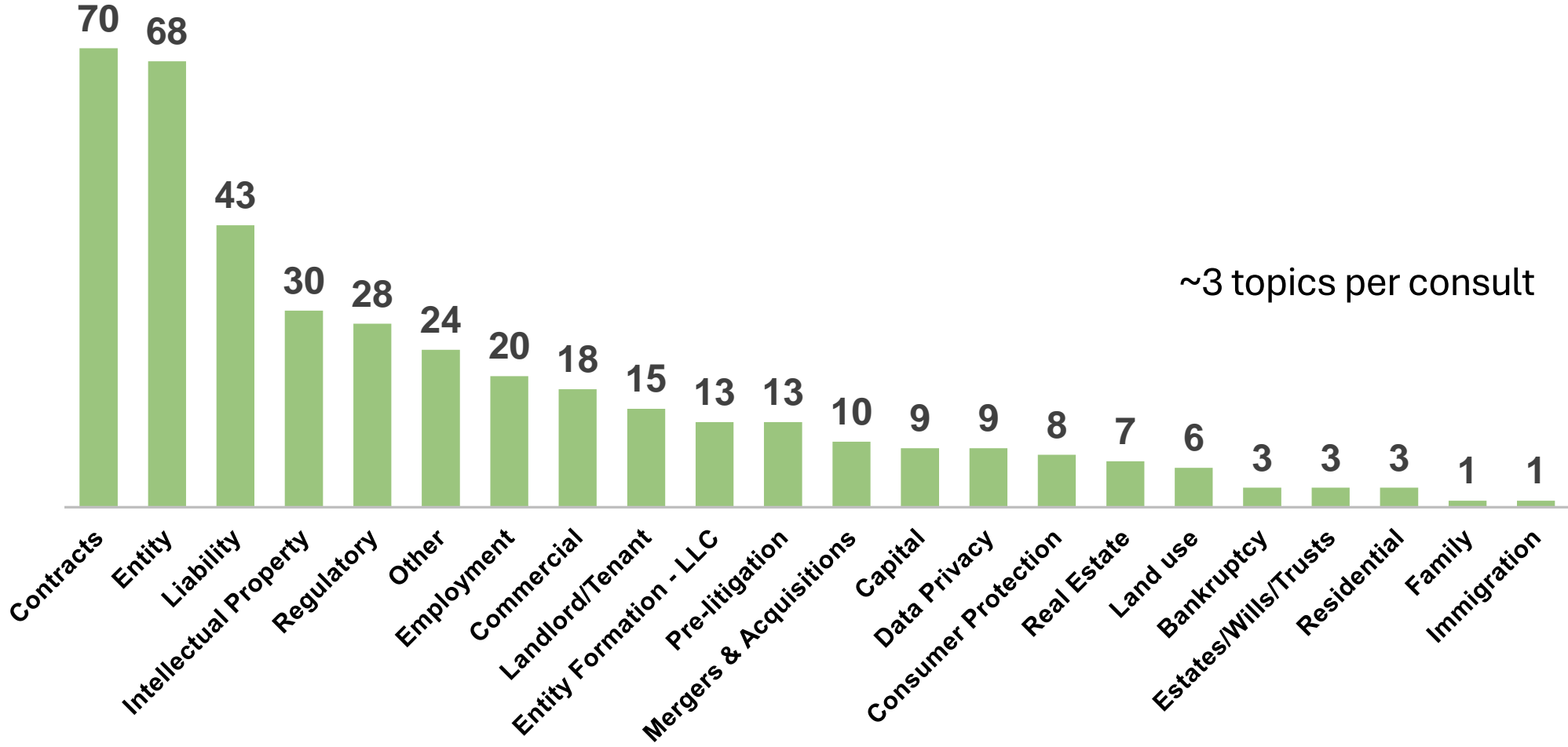
How Many Businesses have How Many Employees?



**51% of the Small Businesses report having at least one employee.**



## Frequency of Topics Discussed in Educational Consults in 2024 (n=402)





# What do we hear from small businesses? (recap)

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- I don't know what I don't know
- The law is confusing and scary
- I don't know whether, when, and how to work with an attorney
- Lawyers are inaccessible and costly
- Lawyers are not representative of me or my background

## Recently:

- I want to make sure I'm doing this right (and this is why we are here)



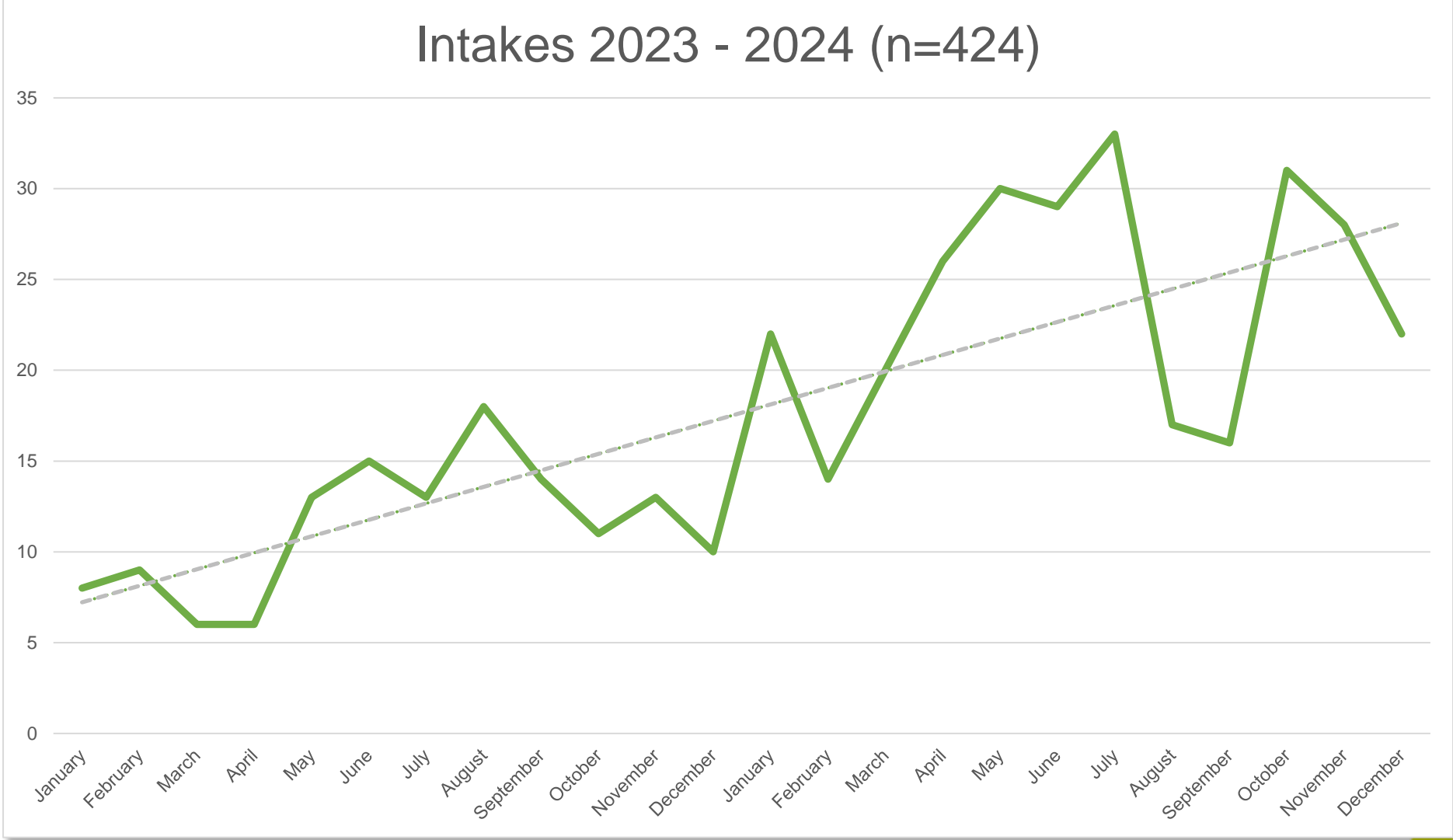
# Areas of Need for Regulatory Education (2024 Observations)

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- Home vs. commercial kitchen
- Commercial leases
- Employees vs independent contractor
- Death with dignity / medical assistance in dying
- Benefit cliff and self-employment
- Beneficial Ownership Information reporting
- Data privacy
- Zoning and Act 250

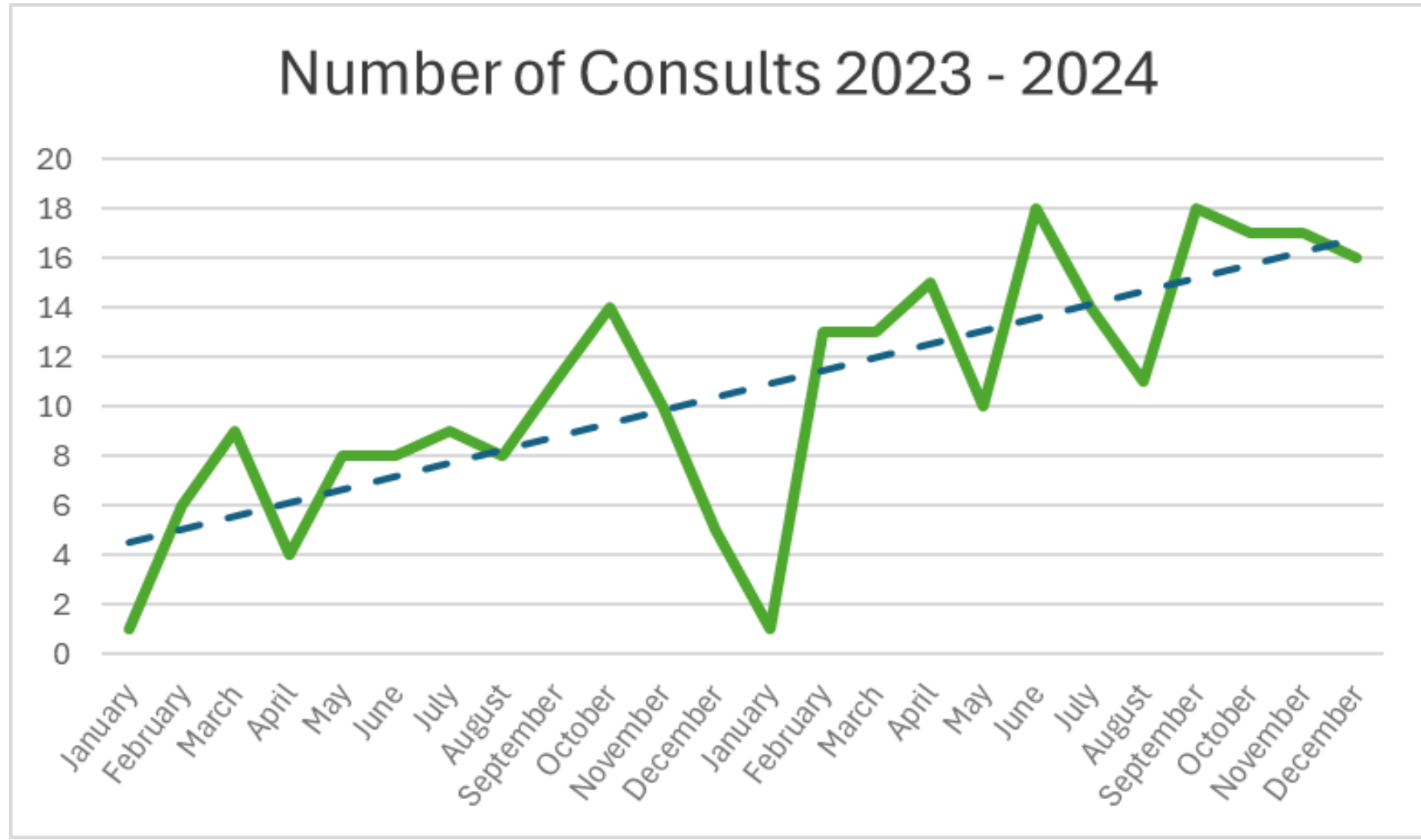


# Intakes are Increasing: 2023-2024





# Requests for Consults are Steadily Increasing





# Current Operating Budget and Ask

- Currently 100% federally-funded:
  - Congressionally-Directed Spending grant (SBA-administered) through 6/30/2026
  - U.S. Treasury/State Small Business Credit Initiative (with VtSBDC) through 5/31/2026
- Small operating budget to maintain capacity - \$600k
  - 150-160 businesses educated and referred
  - 35 presentations per year
- **Ask – half (\$300k)**
  - **Opens up opportunities for matching funding**
  - **Facilitates educational programming on new legislation**
  - **Allows us to better scale to meet demand**

# Thank you!

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U.S. Small Business  
Administration