

Developing Collaborations

Includes goals from these **Creative Communities Reports**:

- Establish strong Creative Economy Collaborations (Randolph)
 - Form a Local Creative Economy Association (Plainfield)
 - Form an Alliance for Creative Development of Existing Properties (Richmond)
 - Found a Creative Economy Association (Middlebury)
 - Begin a Public Relations Campaign (Windsor)
 - Form a Local Leadership Group (Windsor)
-
- One popular format for building an inventory of local assets is **Asset-Based Community Development**. Information about this method, including multiple publications, is online at: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>.
 - **The Web Project** (<http://www.webproject.org/>) can serve as a complement to the inventory and as a starting point to build communications to all active groups in the community. Work with the town to ensure the interactivity of the developed site and that it includes information that will interest and ultimately unite a wide variety of constituencies. Be responsive to community interests in what a website should provide.
 - To address the larger issue of collaboration, do a road trip to see how other towns are building collaboration. Contact **Whitney Lamy** at the Chaffee Art Center in Rutland (802-775-0356) or **Gail Nunziata** of the Brattleboro Arts Initiative (802-254-1109). Ask **Preservation Trust of VT** to help organize it (and maybe provide funding). Paul Bruhn, 802-658-6647, is the contact there.
 - Several communities, both in Vermont and elsewhere, have attempted to build platforms that unify local creative economy resources. Here are some examples:
 - **Rutland** and **St. Johnsbury** chose to focus on building collaborations among arts and cultural organizations as part of their Creative Communities Program efforts. The contacts are, in Rutland **Patricia Kreitzer** (kreitzer@sover.net) and in St. Johnsbury **Jerry Aldredge** (catamount_jerry@charterinternet.com).
 - The **Randolph Area** also selected ongoing creative economy organization as a priority. Contact **Julie Iffland**: (802) 728-6014.
 - The **Plainfield Area** has started PACA ([Plainfield Area Community Association](#)) to build a platform for future creative economy work. They are starting with a skills / resources directory. Contact **Karl Bissex** at kbmt@ezcloud.com.
 - The **Lake Champlain Islands** is building several community projects that bring together multiple businesses, organizations, and area residents around the creative economy. Contact **Ruth Wallman** at 802 372-8400. <http://www.champlainislands.com/>
 - A well-known example of bringing creative and cultural businesses together is **HandMade in America**, an organization formed to focus on the economic value of craft and the handmade object in Western North Carolina. Go to <http://www.handmadeinamerica.org/>.

- The **Vermont Arts Council** may have funds to facilitate relationship-building between arts and cultural organizations and the business community. Contact **Sonia Rae** at (802-828-5425): <http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/>
- For the Business Resource Directory project, the Plainfield area can learn from towns that have already done it. Middlesex is one such town; go to middlesex-vt.org/html/business__services.html to learn more.

Surveys

- Finally, there are many ways to design surveys and use the final results. The **Center for Rural Studies** at the **University of Vermont** consults with non-profits around the state on survey techniques and also conducts the annual Vermonter Poll. Visit their website, crs.uvm.edu, to find out what tools they have available and for a list of contacts.

Building Reuse and Restoration

- When discussing currently-owned buildings, it's important to have a clear vision for what the building *could* become. The owners are participating in projects, or selling their building, because of opportunity – not because someone disapproves of a current use. There are many examples of this process:
 - **Vergennes** A group of interested citizens restored the local Opera House (located in their town office building) in 1997 and that sparked several other building restoration projects. Contact Gerianne Smart at (802) 877-2262. An LLC of local investors recently also purchased the Basin Block for revitalization. The contact there is Jeffrey Glassburg (877-0019). Ed Biello (210-819-4951) put together a positive proposal for the A&P building and it is now used by a local engineering business.
 - **Bellows Falls** began creative economy work with restoring the downtown Exner Block for a combination of affordable housing, studio space and art galleries. Since that time, buildings throughout the downtown have been returned to active use. Contact Robert McBride (802) 463-3252 or Richard Ewald (802) 463-3456
 - **Hardwick** is focused on redevelopment of the Centennial Building in downtown, with possible uses including arts, business, and start-up business space. The contact for this project is John Mandeville (802) 748 8235.
 - **St. Albans** is considering options for creating a community arts facility. Contact Mike Curtis (802) 524-9000.
- **USDA Rural Development's Community Facility** direct (or guaranteed) loan program may be able to assist in delivering capital related to construction costs. More information on this program is available at: rurdev.usda.gov/VT/vtnhcf.htm.
- Some of the potential uses for existing properties could be eligible for USDA grants specific to market studies. **Hardwick** applied for these funds in connection with its Centennial Building. A USDA Rural Development **Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG)** might be able to fund a comprehensive development planning activity. These grants can exceed \$40,000 and could serve as a starting point for a development strategy around assisting emerging businesses. Contact Rhonda Shippee at (802) 828-6033.
- The **Preservation Trust of Vermont** can help get work started on historic structures. The amount of money available depends partially on how much a place has already received. **Ann Cousins** (802) 434-5014.

- The **Vermont Community Loan Fund** will lend to projects that include community facilities, small business support, and agriculture. Loans are tailored to meet the needs of the group receiving the funds. Contact **Will Belongia** at (802) 223-1448.

Communication

- An early challenge for many of the creative economy associations is how to communicate efficiently both with each other and with others who might be interested in their work. The Internet offers multiple options: e-mail lists, blogs, wikis (see <http://pbworks.com/>) and also free survey software to gather information (surveymonkey.com). At the same time, it can also be important to have a physical place to go for information. Plainfield, for example, will be keeping information in the former town clerk's office in the center of town.

Art hops

- Many towns have successful art hops that can serve as a starting point for exploring the "Open Middlebury" concept. Consider visiting the following locations:
 - **Bellows Falls** (Contact Robert McBride – ramp@sover.net, 463-3252)
 - **Rutland** (Contact Whitney Lamy - whitney.lamy@chaffeeart.net)
 - **Brattleboro** (Betsy Gentile - betsgentile@verizon.net)
 - **South End Arts and Business Association, Burlington** (seaba.com)

Compiled by the **Vermont Council on Rural Development**, 802-223-6091, www.vtrural.org