



Report of the
**2019 Vermont Community
Leadership Summit**
*Strategies, Skills, and Vision for the
Future of Vermont Communities*

August 12th 2019 | Vermont Technical College, Randolph VT



Produced by:
Vermont Council on Rural Development



2019 Vermont Community Leadership Summit

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Introduction

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) was proud to produce the 2nd Annual Vermont Community Leadership Summit and welcome 500 leaders from towns throughout Vermont to learn from each other, connect to potential partners and resources, and support each other's progress in service to their community, and to Vermont.

Democracy is an experiment.

Those that engage, unite, and prioritize action, become a collective spear point of activity.

Don't look to DC or Montpelier for vision and leadership to define your community, your power, or your destiny.

It's all about local leadership.

In democracy, everyone is a leader.

Power is in those who step up and bring people together in collective action. Resources follow.

We see this power every day, and we see it in the Summit participants who joined us.

We deeply appreciate everyone who came to the Summit and for all they do for their communities!

At Hazen Middle School in Hardwick last year a seventh grade class had a geography lesson on southern Sudan. Afterwards, a circle of girls went online to explore the challenges they'd learned about. They found an organization that drilled wells for villages without water resources. The girls immediately got the idea of setting up a school walkathon to raise money. Community members made pledges. Hazen Middle School girls raised over \$5,000 to build a well in one of the most economically challenged places in the world.

We don't need permission to lead. And this story isn't important because it is exceptional. It's important because it is who we are. Despite our current challenges, our local democracy is a woven fabric of creative cooperative activity led by thousands and thousands of people who step up every day for their communities.

For us at VCRD, leadership is not just embodied power, privilege or position. It's action—by definition dedicated to something greater than self—a common benefit, a mutuality, an ideal of freedom and justice, a driving unity, a collective priority. In this world our challenges are what make our lives meaningful and interesting by giving us the opportunity to actualize the best of human nature in working with others for the common good.

What an honor it is for VCRD to be engaged in that enterprise with all the friends, partners, sponsors and attendees of the 2019 Community Leadership Summit!

Background

At last year's "Making It Happen" Community Leadership Summit, VCRD heard some powerful ideas and directions from the 500 people who attended. VCRD later built a symposium for leadership training organizations to digest what we heard. That symposium came up with three Key Findings and Goals for collective action:

► **Advance Youth Leadership**

Vermont's future depends on the skills, values and commitment of the next generation of leaders. Together we should systematically advance vision, funding, and creative policies and programs to provide skills and opportunities for young people to lead today and for the future of the Vermont community.

► **Build Diverse and Inclusive Leadership**

Expanding the diversity of leadership can also expand the idea of the state and what it means to be a Vermonter—and this will be necessary to attracting and welcoming the diversity that can creatively and positively answer Vermont's demographic and economic challenges.

► **Foster and Support Community Leadership**

Symposium participants look to deepen offerings and support to citizen-led initiatives that engage residents and activate the collective power of the community for the common good.

Many of our partners are working to answer these needs; at VCRD we have framed an internal work plan to respond to some of the directions identified last year.

VCRD's Workplan

VCRD is working to:

- 1) Build a Community Leadership Guide with a platform for managing meetings, building budgets, and fundraising, and a major section on practical projects, from developing a local community center to framing a sewer project, improving broadband, or starting a local agricultural network. The guide will consolidate findings, local work plans, and expert recommendations from the last 10 years of VCRD's community work.
- 2) Expand our capacity to be a resource and referral center for local leaders as they step up to advance projects for their communities.
- 3) Strengthen our six-month-long Community Visits and Climate Economy Model Communities programs to work with more towns and to provide shorter term supports and "side coaching" that can help leaders better engage their communities and drive local projects forward.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges we face, together there is a strength and untold capacity for economic renewal and community revitalization throughout Vermont. VCRD finds that when local leaders unify teams for collective action we see the activation of the very foundation of progress and democracy...for their towns, for Vermont, and, really, for our country.

The 2018 and 2019 Summits celebrate the informal partnership VCRD has with so many local leaders, attendees, and leadership organizations—including our Leadership Resource Fair partners and Outreach Sponsors! To us, Summit attendees are crucial to the progress of VT and the foundation of our hopes for the future and we are honored to work alongside them in service!

Key Findings from Vision Session Discussions

Findings come from the points of vision, strategies, and action ideas suggested by Summit participants in vision sessions to support and promote community leadership, and to advance the progress of Vermont.

Common Points of Vision

We look to a future for Vermont where:

- Every child in Vermont grows up knowing they can be a leader and have the opportunity to do so.
- Youth are engaged in decision-making and leadership at all levels. Their opinions are welcome, respected, taken seriously, and built into strategy, decision-making, and direction in a meaningful and genuine way.
- Vermont leaders, communities, schools, and other institutions are open to youth voice and ideas. Youth feel empowered, engaged, connected, and valued. They have a sense of belonging, civic responsibility, and connection in their schools and communities.
- Vermont leaders use appropriate technology, training, funding, and policies to build a climate economy future that is affordable and equitable; one that boosts jobs and innovation, and attracts creative entrepreneurs and young people to the State.
- Communities have the infrastructure needed to support walkability, vibrant village centers or downtowns, local businesses, housing, and economic and cultural vitality.
- Vermont leadership and communities open themselves up by welcoming new residents and diversity of opinions, ideas, income levels, experience, and backgrounds to build a culture of genuine empathy, invitation, equity, inclusivity, and ongoing engagement.
- Leaders at all levels have worked together so that Vermonters have equitable access to resources to meet their basic needs, to actualize their full potential, and to connect to economic opportunities including housing, transportation, childcare, internet and communications connections, and higher education and or training so that all live happy, productive and fulfilled lives.

Promoting Leadership & Advancing Key Points of Vision for the Future of Vermont

The Optimal Future of Vermont Communities Will Require Leadership to:

- Build civics and community connection into the education system to provide opportunities for all youth to engage and connect to their communities and find opportunities to thrive within and outside of the traditional educational system.
- Build meaningful opportunities for youth leadership and engagement by creating seats on existing boards and committees and building a State-level Youth Leadership Board to engage in decision making and building a vision for the future of education and youth engagement in Vermont.
- Create mentorship opportunities for Vermont youth to promote and support civic engagement and cultivate mutual learning between youth and community leaders, business owners, entrepreneurs, educators, young professionals, and other mentors.
- Support public education and provide tools and incentives to dramatically expand renewable energy generation, electric vehicles, and weatherization to make efficiency affordable and accessible to all Vermonters.
- Identify, invest, and leverage policies to boost housing, transportation, childcare, healthcare, and job opportunities for all Vermonters.
- Improve high-speed internet access for all.
- Support meaningful policies and investments in early education such as tax structures to fund childcare, public-private partnerships to support program start-up and expansion, and employer support and advocacy to boost access to care for young families.
- Because there is no one secret to unlocking the economic potential of Vermont, we need to support community leadership and engage communities to identify, support, and direct resources to locally-led solutions to improve community infrastructure, boost outdoor recreation, enhance village and downtown vitality, provide public transportation, and define and realize the optimal economy of their future.

Thank you, Senator Pat Leahy and Governor Phil Scott!

Summit attendees deeply appreciated the encouragement of Senator Leahy, who helped open the Summit, and Governor Phil Scott, who closed it.

As Megan Camp, VCRD Board Chair expressed in her introduction: “There probably isn’t an issue or activity in Vermont, our nation, and in the world that Senator Leahy hasn’t touched—from campaigning against land mines to protecting democratic institutions and the health of our environment! Senator Leahy’s integrity and passion for public service is an inspiration for all of us and he is one of the reasons we can feel proud to be Vermonters.”

And Jon Copans, Director of the VCRD Climate Economy Model Communities program introduced Governor Phil Scott for his role as a community leader, as much as Governor, who connected “hundreds of Vermonters with safe and affordable used tires while also raising money to heat low-income Vermonters’ homes. He did the hard work of getting it started. He inspired others to help, he marshaled resources, he attracted a crowd, and he built something that has now raised more than \$400,000 to benefit fuel assistance programs and recycled more than 50,000 tires. After Irene, he took on the difficult task of organizing the removal and disposal of destroyed mobile homes around the state at no cost to homeowners and without spending any taxpayer dollars. And all the while, throughout his work, he sets an example by continuing Vermont’s proud tradition of civil discourse and leadership.”



Awards

At the 2019 Summit, Ted Brady, VCRD Board Emeritus Chair, and Paul Costello awarded the 2019 Vermont Community Leadership and Vermont Lifetime Achievement Awards.

The Vermont Community Leadership Award: Emily Maclure

The VT Community Leadership Award is presented to celebrate a Vermonter who exemplifies “dedication, integrity and honorable service to community and to rural Vermont,” and who has had a “transformational” effect on their community. VCRD presents the award annually to highlight the work of community heroes who epitomize the best spirit of local community service, who are volunteers — not paid employees or elected officials — and whose work has made their community a better place.



The 2019 Vermont Community Leadership Award was presented to **Emily Maclure of Craftsbury**. Emily has owned and operated the Craftsbury General Store since 2012 with her partner Kit Basom. She grew up in Orleans, VT, but spent a decade living in Los Angeles as an event organizer. Emily says that it’s the sense of community that brought her back to the Northeast Kingdom and also what drives her career. You can see that in action: everywhere she goes, Emily builds community through food and fun, along with her positive energy and can do spirit! Emily is vice chair of the Craftsbury Planning Commission, Co- Chair of the Center for An Agricultural Economy Board, and one of the proud hosts of the Annual Craftsbury Block Party—where Craftsbury takes to the street in a massive meal, party, and summertime sledding! She and her partner Evan Karp recently had a daughter, their first child, Esme, and are enjoying all the fun new adventures of parenthood.

When VCRD produced a Craftsbury Community Visit process in 2015, residents identified Emily as an organized person who could best act as the Community Visit Chair to be the touchstone during the process and the coordinative lead as

the community work moved forward. Emily helped bring 200 residents together and set three goals for the future: Advancing Land Protection; Improving Cell Service and Broadband Access; and Building a Partnership between the Schools and the Community—along with traffic safety, arts and child care initiatives that sprang from the energy of Emily and the Craftsbury community.

Vermont Lifetime Achievement Award: Gus Seelig

Over the last few years VCRD has recognized a Vermonter who has dedicated their life and career to communities throughout the State with the *Vermont Lifetime Achievement Award*. This award is given in recognition of his or her transformational leadership in service to the people of Vermont. Past Awardees include John Ewing, Rick Davis, Paul Bruhn, Molly and Hank Lambert.



VCRD recognized **Gus Seelig** for his lifetime commitment and unconditional dedication to social justice, economic opportunity, land conservation, and housing for all Vermonters.

Gus Seelig has served as the Executive Director of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board since its inception in 1987. Under his leadership, VHCB has invested \$370 million in state funding and leveraged \$1.4 billion to develop or rehabilitate 13,000 affordable homes, to conserve 740 farms comprising 167,000 acres, and 267,600 acres of natural areas and recreational and forest lands, and to restore 71 historic community buildings. Prior to his work for the Board, Gus served as the Executive Director of the Central Vermont Community Action Council, a low-income advocacy and community development organization. Gus has also served on the Affordable Housing Program Advisory Board for the Federal Home

Loan Bank of Boston. He is a past chair and current board member of the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, and Vice-Chair of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency. He is Town Moderator in Calais, Vermont. In 2010 Mr. Seelig was presented with the Art Gibb Award by Smart Growth Vermont for safeguarding Vermont values and our unique landscape. He received a B.A. from Goddard College in 1976 and completed the Harvard University's Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government in 1995.

For Gus, the war on poverty does not get a truce. In his careful way, Gus embodies for so many of us many of the best ideals as Vermonters—conservation of the land married to strong town centers, and housing with dignity for all members of the VT community. Along with his ideals, Gus is a crafty campaigner; it took more than idealism to frame and lead VHCB, and more than good spirits to convince governors, legislators and federal partners to pour hundreds of millions of dollars through it to serve communities and to protect and enhance VT's chief assets. It has been hard, long, consistent work; requiring endurance, steel, and states personship. Gus is a unequalled champion of the people, buildings, and land of Vermont.

Leadership Fair

- Center for New Leadership at Marlboro College / Common Good VT | marlboro.edu/community/cnl
- Essex CHIPS QYD Project | essexchips.org/copy-of-qyd-project
- Genuine Network/The Presence Point | thepresencepoint.com/
- Governors Institute of VT | giv.org
- Leadership Champlain | vermont.org/chamber/programs-affiliations/workforce-education-training/leadership
- Up For Learning | upforlearning.org
- UVM Extension 4-H Program | uvm.edu/extension/youth
- Vermont Leadership Institute at the Snelling Center for Leadership | snellingcenter.org/leadership/vermont-leadership-institute/
- Vermont State Colleges | vsc.edu

Speakers

- **Maura Adams**, *Program Director*, Bike the Borderlands
- **John Antonucci**, *Director*, Launch VT
- **Emma Bauer**, *Director*, VT Youth for GunSense / UVM Student
- **Ted Brady**, *Deputy Secretary*, VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development
- **Adelle Brunstad**, *Activity Leader*, LEAPS Afterschool and Summer Program
- **Eric Buker**, *Student*, Winooski High School
- **Megan Camp**, *VP/Program Director*, Shelburne Farms / VCRD Board Chair
- **Evan Carlson**, *Entrepreneur in Residence*, Do North Coworking
- **Joyce Cellars**, *Associate*, CPG Enterprises
- **Susan Clark**, *Consultant*, Slow Democracy
- **Allison Cleary**, *Active Partner*, Vermont Story Lab
- **Jon Copans**, *Climate Economy Model Communities Program Director*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Mike Coppinger**, *Executive Director*, Killington Pico Area Association
- **Paul Costello**, *Executive Director*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Steve Costello**, *Community Leader*, Rutland
- **Ali Dieng**, *Member*, Burlington City Council
- **Liz Dohrman**, *Education and Events Manager*, VBSR / VT Changemakers' Table
- **Ben Doyle**, *Assistant State Director*, USDA Rural Development
- **Karen Duguay**, *Executive Director*, Better Middlebury Partnership
- **Tyler Duso**, *Student*, Enosburg High School
- **Alissa Faber**, *Project Support Specialist*, Vermont Afterschool
- **Zac Freeman**, *Co-Founder and Board Member*, RASTA
- **Ben Freeman**, *Network Coordinator*, Vermont Learning for the Future
- **Ceilidh Galloway-Kane**, *REACH! Director*, OSSU
- **Dimitri Garder**, *Board Chair*, Lighting Jar
- **Christine Graham**, *President*, CPG Enterprises
- **Sam Graulty**, *Youth Voice Coordinator*, Vermont Afterschool
- **Charlie Hancock**, *Chair*, Montgomery Selectboard
- **Matt Harrington**, *Executive Director*, Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce
- **Sam Hooper**, *Owner and President*, Vermont Glove/R3
- **Porter Knight**, *President*, Bristol Trail Network
- **Jenna Koloski**, *Community and Policy Manager*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Tawnya Kristen**, *Founder*, The Phoenix Rising Program/GM United Way
- **Mary Lacy**, *Artist*, Mary Lacy Art
- **Senator Patrick Leahy**, US Senator
- **Daimian Lix**, *Co-Owner*, Penniless Projects
- **Kristine Lott**, *Mayor*, City of Winooski
- **Kathryn Lovinsky**, *Executive Director*, GRACE
- **Alex Maclean**, *Partner and President of Public Relations and Issue Campaigns*, Leonine Public Affairs
- **Emily Maclure**, *Owner*, Craftsbury General Store
- **Bruce Mallory**, *Senior Advisor*, NH Listens
- **Sue McCormack**, *Founder*, Creative Discourse
- **Kate McGowan**, *Director*, Center for New Leadership
- **Karen Mittelman**, *Executive Director*, Vermont Arts Council
- **Holly Morehouse**, *Executive Director*, Vermont Afterschool
- **Pat Moulton**, *President*, Vermont Technical College
- **Marissa Parisi**, *Executive Director*, Rise VT
- **Heather Pelham**, *Deputy Commissioner*, VT Department of Tourism and Marketing
- **Monique Priestley**, *President and Founder*, The Space on Main
- **Kesha Ram**, *Former State Legislator*, Equity Policy Consultant
- **Curtiss Reed**, *Executive Director*, VT Partnership for Fairness and Diversity
- **Aly Richards**, *CEO*, Let's Grow Kids
- **Lucy Rogers**, *Representative*, VT Legislature
- **Chuck Ross**, *Director*, UVM Extension
- **Maia Segura**, *Co-Owner*, Penniless Projects
- **Samantha Sheehan**, *Communications Manager*, VBSR/Valley.Works
- **Amy Shollenberger**, *Owner/Consultant*, Action Circles
- **Denise Smith**, *Program Manager*, Rise VT Franklin County
- **Mark Snelling**, *President*, Snelling Institute
- **Greg Stefanski**, Johnson Downtown redesign
- **Kate Stephenson**, *Chair*, Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee
- **Fran Stoddard**, *Advisory Partner*, Vermont StoryLab
- **Tom Torti**, *President and CEO*, Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce
- **Shana Trombley**, *Associate*, CPG Enterprises
- **Sarah Waring**, *VP for Grants and Community Investments*, Vermont Community Foundation
- **Anne Watson**, *Mayor*, City of Montpelier
- **Melinda White**, *Recovery Coach and MAT Care Coordinator*, Northwestern VT Medical Center
- **Sarah Wolfe**, *Treasurer*, Northfield Energy Committee

Outreach Partners

- AARP
- Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Building a Local Economy
- Burlington Young Professionals
- Center for New Leadership at Marlboro College/
Common Good VT
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- Change the Story Vermont
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Energy Action Network
- Genuine Network / The Presence Point
- Governors Institute of VT
- Hunger Free Vermont
- Justice For All
- Leadership Champlain
- Leadership Southeast Vermont/Springfield Area
Chamber of Commerce
- NEK Collaborative
- NEK Young Professional Network
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- NVDA
- Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Rise VT
- Rutland Economic Development Corporation
- Rutland Young Professionals
- Southern Vermont Young Professionals
- Southern Windsor Regional Planning Commission
- Two-Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission
- United Ways of Vermont
- Up For Learning
- UVM Center for Rural Studies
- UVM Extension 4-H Program
- VECAN/Vermont Natural Resources Council
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community
Development
- Vermont Arts Council
- Vermont Change Makers Table
- Vermont Commission on Women
- Vermont Community Development Association
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Vermont Community Loan Fund
- Vermont Downtown and Village Program
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Vermont Land Trust
- Vermont Leadership Institute at the Snelling Center
for Leadership
- Vermont State Colleges
- Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund
- Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
- Vital Communities
- Windham Regional Planning Commission

Other Acknowledgements

VCRD deeply appreciated having our friends Dave Gram and Bill Sayre from WDEV broadcasting live from the Summit, and to have documentation from filmmakers from ORCA, WPTZ, Bob the Green Guy, and Steven Pike, and photos from Maria Blais Costello. Their work can be viewed at www.vtrural.org.



Thanks also to Ben & Jerry's for providing ice cream for the end of day networking social!

Financial Sponsors

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- Vermont Economic Development Authority

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The 2nd Vermont Community Leadership Summit is produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development. From local citizen-led efforts to policy councils that build collaboration between state, federal, nonprofit, and private sector leaders, VCRD brings Vermonters together across political lines and organizational boundaries to create a better future.

For links to the Summit Program, Participants, Video, and Photos visit: vtrural.org/Summit19. And Summit tweets can be found at #MakingItHappenVT.



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