2013 Annual Report

Building Unity for Progress

Charged by federal statute to serve as a neutral facilitator to advance rural policy and to support rural communities in Vermont, VCRD has a wonderful role to play in helping communities line up to set priorities and get things done, and in convening public policy to support their progress.

We are often called to serve as evangelists for community, and as patriots for non-partisan, Vermont unity.

2013 was an exciting year for us. As a small non-profit funded by our members and partners, we strive to make ourselves a catalyst to community action, and a bridge across party lines and organizational structures. We help working groups build common purpose, line up as teams, and galvanize for action for the collective good.

At VCRD we are proud to support local leadership and add up community and regional contributions to strong state rural policies. We’re excited to participate in these dynamic days of sustainable and self-directed progress for rural Vermont communities!

Bob Ackland, Board Chair
Vermont Working Lands Partnership (VWLP)

In follow-up to our Council on the Future of Vermont finding that over 97 percent of Vermonters value the working landscape and its heritage, VCRD created the VWLP made up of individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing the farm, forest and value-added natural resource economy as a vital foundation for the future of Vermont.

We continue to lead the Vermont Working Lands Partnership and coordinate the Working Lands Coalition that advocates for state investment in farm and forest innovation and enterprise development through the Working Lands Enterprise Board.

In 2012, a concerted economic development effort, the “Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Initiative,” was built from language in the VWLP’s Action Plan and signed into law. The bill developed the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Fund to invest in agricultural and forestry based businesses. In 2013 through the Fund, $1M was granted to farm and forest entrepreneurs and another $1M is available in 2014. See how these investments are paying off at www.vtworkinglands.org/tour.

The Working Lands Enterprise Fund:
- Creates JOBS in Working Lands Enterprises
- Keeps YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS in Vermont
- Builds NEW MARKETS for value-added products
- Increases CAPACITY for in-state production
- Leverages MORE INVESTMENT for growing enterprises

The Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium (VHEFSC)

In 2013, VCRD facilitated the foundation of the Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium. Together, the University of Vermont, Vermont Technical College and the State College system, Middlebury College, Sterling College, Green Mountain College, Vermont Law School, and leadership from the Governor and Secretary of Agriculture, are working to make agriculture, food systems and the working landscape key development areas for collaboration.

Today, members of the VHEFSC are designing new ways to collaborate, share students and resources and expand elective opportunities for place-based food systems education where “Vermont is our classroom.” We are advancing an ambitious action plan to make Vermont the epicenter of the food systems movement in higher education in this country. Members will work together to attract students and future working lands entrepreneurs to Vermont. Find out more at http://vtrural.org/programs/facilitation/food-systems.
Community Visit Program

In 2013, VCRD led Community Visits in Manchester and Guilford. These four-month-long strategic action planning sessions set community priorities and build action task forces to move projects ahead. Over 300 community members in Manchester and 150 in Guilford were involved in the process, and task force groups are working to move key priorities forward and connecting with resources from federal, state, regional, local, non-profit, and business leaders who participated in the process.

Manchester teams are working to develop a new small business incubator; develop trails and marketing to make the town a regional biking center and destination; attract higher education opportunities to town; and redevelop the Battenkill riverside and open a riverwalk.

Guilford task forces are working to develop a downtown small business incubator; redevelop the historic Grange building; and advance the development of the church in Algiers as a community and early childhood education center.

In the spring of 2014, VCRD is bringing the Community Visit process to Vergennes and is working to identify towns to work with later in 2014 and beyond.

Visit vtrural.org/program/community-visits to read community visit reports and find out more about the Community Visit program.

NEK Today and Tomorrow

Working with the Northern Vermont Development Association, VCRD produced “NEK Today and Tomorrow,” a summit conference on managing change for the best future for the Northeast Kingdom. With input from the 125 Summit participants, a follow-up session identified working lands as a key area to advance in the Northeast Kingdom. Support for farm, forest and value-added enterprises is crucial to providing an economic foundation that keeps land in production with all the associated benefits for views, recreation, ecological services and quality of life.

Summit on the Future of Vermont’s Working Landscape

Our 2013 Summit on the Future of Vermont’s Working Landscape brought almost 400 people together to consider the progress that has been made, assess the work ahead, and advance the next steps needed for public policy and investment for Vermont’s Working Landscape Renaissance.

Grafton Retreat on the Vermont Forest Products Economy

VCRD partnered with the Windham Foundation to convene the Grafton Retreat on Innovation in the Vermont’s Forest Products Economy — advancing economic development strategies, positive messaging, and a broader unity between the industry, policy leaders, and their partners in the food systems side of Vermont’s working landscape movement.

State Rural Policy Leadership: An Innovation Roundtable

VCRD hosted the National Rural Policy Research Institute and Partners for Rural America in Vermont to highlight Vermont’s working landscape and rural best practices for policy leaders from throughout the country.

Governor’s Workshop

In June 2013, VCRD convened the “Governor’s Workshop on Rethinking Government Operations to Meet Our Changing Reality: Promoting Efficiencies and Defining Priorities.”

For copies of reports, visit: http://vtrural.org/reports.
VCRD would like to thank the many contributors who support our work in service to Vermont’s rural communities. Annual membership dues contribute to fund all of VCRD’s programmatic activities.


**Rural Champions ($1,000+):** Cellars at Jasper Hill / Mateo & Andy Kehler, Cooperative Insurance Companies, Green Mountain Power, Smith Foundation, Vermont Transco - VELO


**Vermont Digital Economy Project:** US Agency of Commerce Economic Development Agency, Heart of Vermont Productions, IBM

**Digital Economy In-Kind:** Front Porch Forum, Microsoft, Smelling Center for Government, Vermont Small Business Development Center
**Vermont Digital Economy Project**

Vermont’s flooding in 2011 demonstrated the potential of online tools to support community resilience and recovery, but also exposed the vulnerability of businesses and communities that are not making full use of these resources.

VCRD’s Vermont Digital Economy Project (VDEP) is working directly with more than 25 of the towns that were affected by 2011’s floods to help businesses, nonprofits, and municipalities expand their innovative use of online tools that will spur economic development and job growth, and improve community resilience to future disasters.

Providing services together with IBM, the Snelling Center for Government, the Vermont Department of Libraries, the Vermont Small Business Development Center, Microsoft, Front Porch Forum, and the Vermont State Colleges, VDEP is putting technology to work by increasing digital literacy and online workforce training, adding Wi-Fi and other public access points, bringing a community-based social network to every Vermont town, creating town websites and community calendars, promoting the use of “cloud” applications, and providing customized business training.

Expanding the use of online resources has benefits far beyond emergency management. Downtown businesses, service providers, farmers, and the tourism industry are all finding opportunities to reach new audiences and markets. At the same time, the social fabric of our communities is getting stronger as a result, as neighbors share local online conversations. Through this project businesses are improving their bottom line, while government and nonprofit organizations are developing ways to deliver services more effectively. Find out more at vtdigitaleconomy.org.

---

**VCRD Website Redesign: www.vtrural.org**

When you visit vtrural.org, you may notice something new. We recently redesigned our website with improvements to the navigation and a more modern look. The expertise of our Digital Economy Project staff was instrumental in helping lead the redesign.

You can also find us on:
Facebook: facebook.com/vtcrd
Twitter: twitter.com/vtdigitalecon
Youtube: youtube.com/TheVCRD

---

**2013 VCRD Summary Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal Grants</td>
<td>$947,319*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Grants</td>
<td>119,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Contributions</td>
<td>66,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Support</td>
<td>45,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Dues</td>
<td>28,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee for Service</td>
<td>25,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Fees</td>
<td>10,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Kind Contributions</td>
<td>317,995*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$1,561,564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>$378,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Services</td>
<td>665,078*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Grant Subrecipients</td>
<td>233,795*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>1,582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies, Grant Equipment &amp; Inkind</td>
<td>153,135*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility and Equipment</td>
<td>32,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel and Meetings</td>
<td>29,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>$1,497,542</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Vermont Digital Economy Project
A member of the National Rural Development Partnership, the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Vermonters and Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. A dynamic collaboration of federal, state, local, non-profit, and private leadership, VCRD is uniquely positioned to build partnerships to address policy questions of rural import. We welcome your comments, suggestions, membership, and support.

---

**2013 BOARD MEMBERS**

Bob Ackland (CHAIR), Consultant  
Greg Brown (TREASURER), Town of Dummerston  
Paul Bruhn (SECRETARY), Preservation Trust of Vermont  
Megan Camp, Shelburne Farms  
Catherine Dimitruk, Northwest Regional Planning Commission  
Vicky Drew, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Michael Dupee, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters  
Monty Fischer, Center for an Agricultural Economy  
Joe Fusco, Casella Waste Systems, Inc.  
Thomas Hark, VT Youth Conservation Corps  
Marie Houghton, IBM  
Molly Lambert, USDA Rural Development  
Lucy Leriche, Agency of Commerce & Community Development  
Deb Markowitz, Agency of Natural Resources  
Lawrence Miller, Agency of Commerce & Community Development  
Robert Paquin, USDA Farm Services Agency  
Steve Patterson (VICE CHAIR), Northeastern Vermont Development Association  
Wright Preston, Northfield Savings Bank  
Doug Racine, Agency of Human Services  
Chuck Ross, Agency of Ag, Food & Markets  
Ruth Wallman, Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce

**CONGRESSIONAL LIASIONS**

Tricia Coates, Office of Congressman Welch  
Jenny Nelson, Office of Senator Sanders  
John Tracy, Office of Senator Leahy

**STAFF**

Paul Costello, Executive Director  
Margaret Gibson McCoy, Office & Communications Manager  
Sharon Combes-Farr, Director, VT Digital Economy Project (VDEP)  
Rob Fish, Non-Profit Advisor, VDEP  
Caitlin Lovegrove, Outreach & Communications Director, VDEP