

Vermont Council on Rural Development

The Vermont Council on Rural Development helps 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.

2014 Annual Report

Adding Up for the Future

So much good is done by folks lining up for collective action in the towns we work with throughout Vermont. Together, they set a unifying direction for getting things done.

As a policy board, the Vermont Council on Rural Development takes a hard look at the priorities identified by Vermont communities, and evaluates the intersection of the issues they wrestle with as areas for non-partisan policy development and opportunities for action.

Over the last several years we have seen the conjunction between the towns' desire to build the digital economy and attract youth and entrepreneurship, to expand opportunities for strengthening working lands, to lead in building the jobs of the future through downtown business incubation, to tell a local brand story of community vitality and innovation, and to advance Vermont's resilience and economic leadership in confronting climate change. Seen together, these issues are connected as parts of a development pattern for the future strength and prosperity of Vermont.

In 2014 VCRD led community organizing efforts in Vergennes and Cambridge, completed the work of the Vermont Digital Economy Project, managed the Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium, led the Vermont Working Landscape Partnership, and facilitated the Vermont Working Lands Coalition. At the same time, the Council also added up our findings to frame a new strategic planning effort, the Vermont Climate Change Economy Council, designed to build a platform to advance business opportunities and jobs for the future, helping Vermont prosper while answering the fundamental challenge to our time.

By its very nature as a facilitative organization, VCRD is always changing. We're proud of our efforts to be a catalyst for the progress of the communities we serve. We welcome partnership, and invite all Vermonters to contribute their ideas and energy for the future of Vermont's rural communities. We see a bold trajectory ahead, where the collective contributions of Vermonters add up to a renewed economy and re-energized Vermont way of life.

Greg Brown, *VCRD Board Chair*

Paul Costello, *Executive Director*



VCRD in 2014

WORKING LANDS

VT Working Landscape Partnership

In the last four years, VCRD built and led the efforts of the **Vermont Working Landscape Partnership** that unites over 1,000 farm, forest, value-added businesses, and others in advancing investment in the enterprises that conserve Vermont's land and serve as the foundation for its future. Working with the partnership, its leadership council, and a coalition of organizations, we framed and supported the passage of Act 142 in 2012 that built the **Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI)** to invest in the Renaissance of agriculture and innovative entrepreneurship in the natural resource economy. The fund is spurring start-ups, supporting growing businesses, and building infrastructure to support jobs, communities and the landscape of Vermont.

After the first year two years of the program:

- ▶ **74 agriculture and forestry** projects have been funded
- ▶ **\$2.1 million** in Working Lands funds were distributed
- ▶ **\$3.1 million** in matching funds were leveraged
- ▶ **All 14 counties** were impacted

From the 23 projects completed from first year investments, we see:

- ▶ **25 new jobs** created
- ▶ **\$880,831** aggregated gross income increase
- ▶ **25%** average increase in business product output
- ▶ **91%** increased their capacity to fulfill add'l contracts

See the list of 2014 Grant Recipients on the center page of this report, and look for more information on the WLEI website at workinglands.vermont.gov and join the Working Lands Facebook page at: facebook.com/VtWLP.

VCRD Action Planning to Advance Vermont's Climate Economy

In 2014 the VCRD board planned for a February 2015 Rural Summit to bring together leaders from science, business, non-profits, planning, public policy, environmental organizations, and the public to consider the impacts of climate change on Vermont, and to propose ways to advance the prosperity of the state while confronting them. VCRD believes that Vermont can mitigate carbon impact and conserve energy while building business opportunities, contributing to community resilience, and creating jobs that support the prosperity of Vermont communities for the future. The conference will focus on the emerging climate change economy and how Vermont can build or advance key business sectors, clusters, infrastructure, and solutions.

The Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium (VHEFSC)

In 2014, VCRD continued to lead and expand the **Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium**, and in framing, fundraising, and implementing a national marketing campaign to bring more students to Vermont. Together, the University of Vermont, Vermont Technical College and the Vermont State College system, Middlebury College, Sterling College, Green Mountain College, Vermont Law School, the New England Culinary Institute and the Secretary of Agriculture, are working to make agriculture, food systems and the working landscape key development areas for collaboration.

Vermont Is Our Classroom

Working with leaders in each institution, we designed an innovative 21-day Vermont Food Systems Study Tour to be held in June of 2015 with stays at each school, common coursework, symposia, and tours to attract new students to Vermont while sharing what makes the Vermont food system one of the most unique case studies in the nation. Visit vermontfoodeducation.org for more information.

VERMONT FOOD & FARM EDUCATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS VERMONT STUDY TOUR: SUMMER 2015 LEARN IN VERMONT CONTACT GREAT FOOD AND FARM RE

REAL PEOPLE. REAL FOOD. REAL CHANGE.

VERMONT FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMER STUDY TOUR!

Three Weeks. Six Schools. Discover the Future of Food.

May 31-June 20
Find out more and apply today!

VCRD will found and charge a business and policy leadership team, the Vermont Climate Change Economy Council with a one year mission to develop a structured plan for practical action to reduce carbon emissions and to stimulate green economic development in Vermont. With VCRD facilitation, research and management, the VCCEC will build a bold action plan to boost prosperity, and to create jobs while reducing carbon impacts and advancing efficiencies.

To see up-to-date information on this initiative, go to: vtrural.org/programs/climate-economy.

Working Lands Enterprise Board Investments in 2014

VCRD is proud of our work in framing and supporting the passage of Act 142 that created the Working Lands Enterprise Board, now in its 3rd year of granting funds to Vermont Working Lands enterprises and service providers. WLEB is an independent board, managed and staffed by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture. In 2014, WLEB funding was granted to:

- **Doolittle Farm, Shoreham**, for egg washing equipment
- **Windfall Orchard, Cornwall**, for cider presses and equipment to expand business
- **Wilcox Ice Cream, Manchester**, for a manufacturing facility
- **Snug Valley Farm, East Hardwick**, for improving delivery of pigs and pork products
- **Jericho Settlers Farm, Jericho**, for heated tunnels with biomass furnace to expand winter vegetable production
- **North Williston Cattle Company, Essex Jct.**, for equipment to reclaim prime agricultural land.
- **Bouchard Farm, St. Albans**, for equipment and materials for organic dairy cow housing
- **Elmore Roots Fruit Tree and Berry Nursery, Elmore**, for kiosks to expand accessibility to product
- **Fat Toad Farm, Brookfield**, for more efficient caramel equipment to expand production
- **Bonnieview Farm, Albany**, for cheese aging cave to double production
- **Cate Hill Orchard, Greensboro**, for an on-farm processing facility for value added products and to begin producing farm farmstead sheep cheese
- **Kingdom Brewing, Newport**, for a retail bottle/cannery and growler fill station
- **Lazy Lady Farm, Westfield**, for a solar array to secure energy requirements for an off-grid dairy
- **Rogers Farmstead, Berlin**, for equipment to expand grainery capability
- **Big Picture Farm, Townshend**, for materials for caramel production and cheese production facility
- **Boyd Family Farm, Wilmington**, to renovate existing barn
- **Green Mountain Hardwood, Ripton**, for a portable sawmill and materials for solar-assisted lumber kiln
- **NorthWoods Stewardship Center, East Charleston**, for forwarding trailer and implementation of low-impact timber harvests in the Northeast Kingdom
- **Rockledge Farm, Weathersfield**, for website development and marketing

For more information, visit workinglands.vermont.gov and facebook.com/VtWLP.

COMMUNITY VISITS

In 2014, VCRD led Community Visits in **Vergennes** and **Cambridge**. These four-month-long strategic action planning sessions set community priorities and built task forces to move projects ahead. Over 200 community members in Vergennes and 225 in Cambridge 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.

Vergennes teams are working to improve transportation & parking; to advance the Vergennes economy & expand the community and economic development capacity of the city; and to redevelop the Vergennes falls basin & open a riverwalk.

Cambridge task forces are working to plan and develop a senior living center and expand senior services; to advance a Cambridge community center; to expand communications, capacity, and efficiency for community and economic development; and to evaluate municipal structure.

In 2015, VCRD is bringing the Community Visit process to **Swanton, St. Johnsbury, Craftsbury, and Hardwick**.

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



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.

Individuals: Alice & Richard Angney, Anonymous (7), Jill Arace, Robert Bast, Helen Beattie & Brendan Buckley, George Bellerose, Berlejung family, Putnam Blodgett, Jeff & Michelle Bower, Darby Bradley, Ted Brady, Greg & Carolyn Mayo-Brown, Megan Camp & Alec Webb, Sandal & Paul Cate, Susan Clark, Vaughn T. Collins, Sharon Combes-Farr, Peter Condayis, Paul Costello, Matthew Allen Derr, The Dupee-Negron Family, Tony Elliott, Chip Evans, John Ewing, Peter Falion & Elizabeth Tannenbaum, Frank & Julie Hanes, Harry Frank, Peter & Caroline Fritzinger, Charlotte H. Gibson, Peter Gilbert & Cindy Char, Steve Gold & Irina Markova, Lucy Gratwick, Vernon Grubinger & Tracey Devlin, Shannon & Melissa Haggett, William Haynes, Roberta Harold & Wayne Fawbush, Darren Higgins, Paul & Vicki Hill, Susan Houston, Bob & Cora May Howe, Nancy Wayne Jaffe, Nancy Jones, Bob Justis, Kathleen C. Keenan, Tony Klein, Candy Koenemann, Stephanie Lahar, Hank & Molly Lambert, Lucy Leriche, Michael & Sandra Levine, Christine Lilyquist, Bruce Lisman, Robert A. Lloyd, John W. Malcolm, Travis Marcotte, Anne Margolis, Deb & Paul Markowitz, William Marks, Roger Marshall, Dave Mayette, Bob McDonald, Christy & Marc Mihaly, Ron Miller, Patricia Moulton, Tino O'Brien, Robert & Theresa Paquin, Scudder Parker & Susan Sussman, Nancy Patch & Kevin Conneely, Steve Patterson, Andrew Pearce, Philip Petty, Andrew & Jilda Pomerantz, Carl Powden, Martha Reid, Janet Ressler, Shirley Richardson, Andy Robinson, Ryegate Associates, Laury Saligman - Conservation Collaborative, Buzz & Betsy Schmidt, Bill & Kate Schubart, Gregory L. Sharrow, Sean & Jennifer Sheehan, Michael & Nancy Sherman, John D. Shullenberger, Katherine Sims, Sydney Lea & Robin Barone, Vicky Tebbetts, Maida F. Townsend, April Tuck & Ron Carter, Emily Wadhams, Ruth Wallman, Alex & Allison Weinhausen, Richard White, Wolcott/MacClausland Family, Enid Wonnacott

Organizations: Addison County Regional Planning Commission, Alteris Renewables, Inc., American Flatbread Co., Kristofer Anderson, Anonymous (2), Bradford Community Development Corporation, Cabot Creamery Cooperative, Capstone Community Action, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Digital Wish, EC Fiber, Town of Fairfax, Farm & Forest Productions, Flywheel Communications, Franklin County Industrial Development Corp., Gilman Housing Trust Inc., Global-Z International, Harry Hunt Architects, Pixley Hill - The Tyler Place, Hunger Mountain Cooperative, Town of Swanton, Lamoille Economic Development Corporation, David Raphael - Landworks, Lyndon State College, Marlboro College, PW McCoy Corp., Nan Jenks-Jay, National Bank of Middlebury, Northeastern Vermont Development Association, Northfield Savings Bank, Northshire Bookstore, Northshire Information Inc, Northwest Regional Planning Comm., Andrew Brewer - Onion River Sports, Orton Family Foundation, Richford Economic Advancement Corp., Rutland Regional Planning Commission, South Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, Society of American Foresters - Green Mountain Division, Springfield Housing Authority, Stark Mountain Woodworking, TD Bank, Town of Johnson, Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission, Union Bank, US Small Business Administration, Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, Vermont Department of Labor, Vermont Performance Lab, Vermont Realtors, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition, Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies, Vermont Community Loan Fund, Vermont Precision Tools Inc., Vermont Woodlands Association, Thomas Hark, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Washington Electric Cooperative Community Fund

Leadership Donors (\$500-\$999): Bob Ackland, Casella Waste Systems, Chroma Technology Corp., Greater Burlington Industrial Corp., Rosanne Greco & Higley Harmon, Marie & Richard Houghton, Housing Vermont, Main Street Landing, Morris & Bessie Altman Foundation, Northfield Savings Bank, Passumpsic Savings Bank, Pomerleau Properties, Preservation Trust of Vermont, St. Albans Cooperative Creamery, Bob & Susan Titterton, Town of Killington, Vermont Economic Development Authority, Vermont State Employees Credit Union

Rural Champions (\$1,000+): Mateo & Andy Kehler / Cellars at Jasper Hill, Concept2, Inc., Co-operative Insurance Companies, The Lintilhac Foundation, Merchant's Bank, Union Mutual of Vermont, VT Transco - VELCO, Yankee Farm Credit

Foundations and Special Project Funders: Anonymous (2), Community National Bank, Craftsbury Community Fund of the VCF, The Evslin Family Foundation, Inc., FairPoint Communications, Green Mountain Fund of the VCF, The High Meadows Fund, Johnson Family Foundation Fund of the VCF, Lyman Orton Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, Main Street Landing, Middlebury College, National Life Group, Northeast Kingdom Fund of the VCF, Riverledge Foundation, G. Joseph Rogers, Vermont State Colleges, Smugglers' Notch Resort, Sterling College, Sustainable Future Fund of the VCF, USDA Rural Development, The Vermont Community Foundation, Town of Cambridge, University of Vermont, VCF Innovations & Collaborations, Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development, Vermont Law School, Vermont Mutual Insurance Company, Windham Foundation, Wyckoff Electric PLC

Working Lands Donors: Kristofer Anderson, Anonymous (3), Blittersdorf Family Foundation, Putnam Blodgett, Darby Bradley, Jack Byrne, Kathleen Carriere, Alison Clarkson & Oliver Goodenough, Paul Costello, Paul Gambill & Joy Worland, Goodridge Lumber, Inc., George Hall, Cheryl & Ward Heneveld, Nancy Jones, Allen Karnatz, Lamoille Economic Development Corporation, Langrock Sperry & Wool, Christine Lilyquist, Andrea Morgante, Jenny Nelson, Northern Forest Center, Northshire Information, Inc, Robert & Theresa Paquin, Albert Perry, Dave Potter, Will & Lynette Raap, Shirley Richardson, William Roper, Bill Schmidt, Will & Judy Stevens, Stowe Land Trust, Sydney Lea & Robin Barone, Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission

Vermont Digital Economy Project Supporters: Front Porch Forum (in-kind), IBM (in-kind), Microsoft Corporation (in-kind), Snelling Center for Government (in-kind), Vermont Small Business Development Center (in-kind), US Agency of Commerce Economic Development Agency

DIGITAL ECONOMY

Vermont Digital Economy Project (VDEP)

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

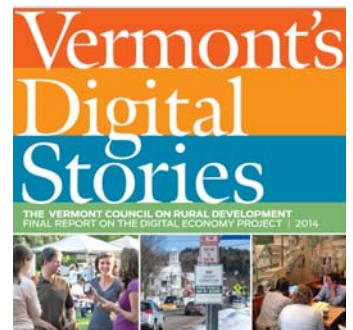
With investment from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, VCRD and partners had just 2 years to provide 50 of Vermont's most flood-damaged towns with services to help speed recovery, spur economic development and job growth, and improve disaster preparedness.

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, the Vermont Digital Economy Project put technology to work by increasing digital literacy and online workforce training, adding Wi-Fi and other public access points, bringing Front Porch Forum to every Vermont town (making Vermont the only state in the nation with ubiquitous community-based social networks), creating town websites and community calendars, promoting the use of "cloud" applications, and providing customized small-business and nonprofit training.

The result of the Digital Economy Project is an extensive resource of field-tested ways to adapt today's digital tools to settings throughout the Green Mountain state. The project wrapped up in December 2014.

VDEP Services Delivered	# Served
Flood-Impacted Towns Served	50
Counties Served	14
Town Websites	25
Town Wi-Fi Zones & Hotspots	26
Front Porch Forum Towns	250
New Front Porch Forum Members	41,300
Community Calendars	250
Libraries w/ Internet Interns	24
Nonprofit 1:1 Digital Advising	127
Nonprofit Workshops Conducted	63
Nonprofit Workshop Attendance	554
Total Volunteers Served	635
Small Business 1:1 Digital Advising	266
Agricultural Businesses Advised	123
Business Workshops Conducted	103
Business Workshop Attendance	651
Risk Plans Created	266
Total Businesses Reached	1,058

Visit <http://vtrural.org/programs/digital-economy/reports/VDEP-digital-stories> for a summary report on our efforts with stories of Vermont resilience, renewal, and creativity.



VT Connected: Envisioning the Future of VT's Digital Economy

VCRD's Vermont Digital Economy Project completed and celebrated its work in the fall of 2014 with a statewide conference on "Envisioning the Future of Vermont's Digital Economy." The event brought together over 300 participants (including 50 speakers) to consider the critical issues



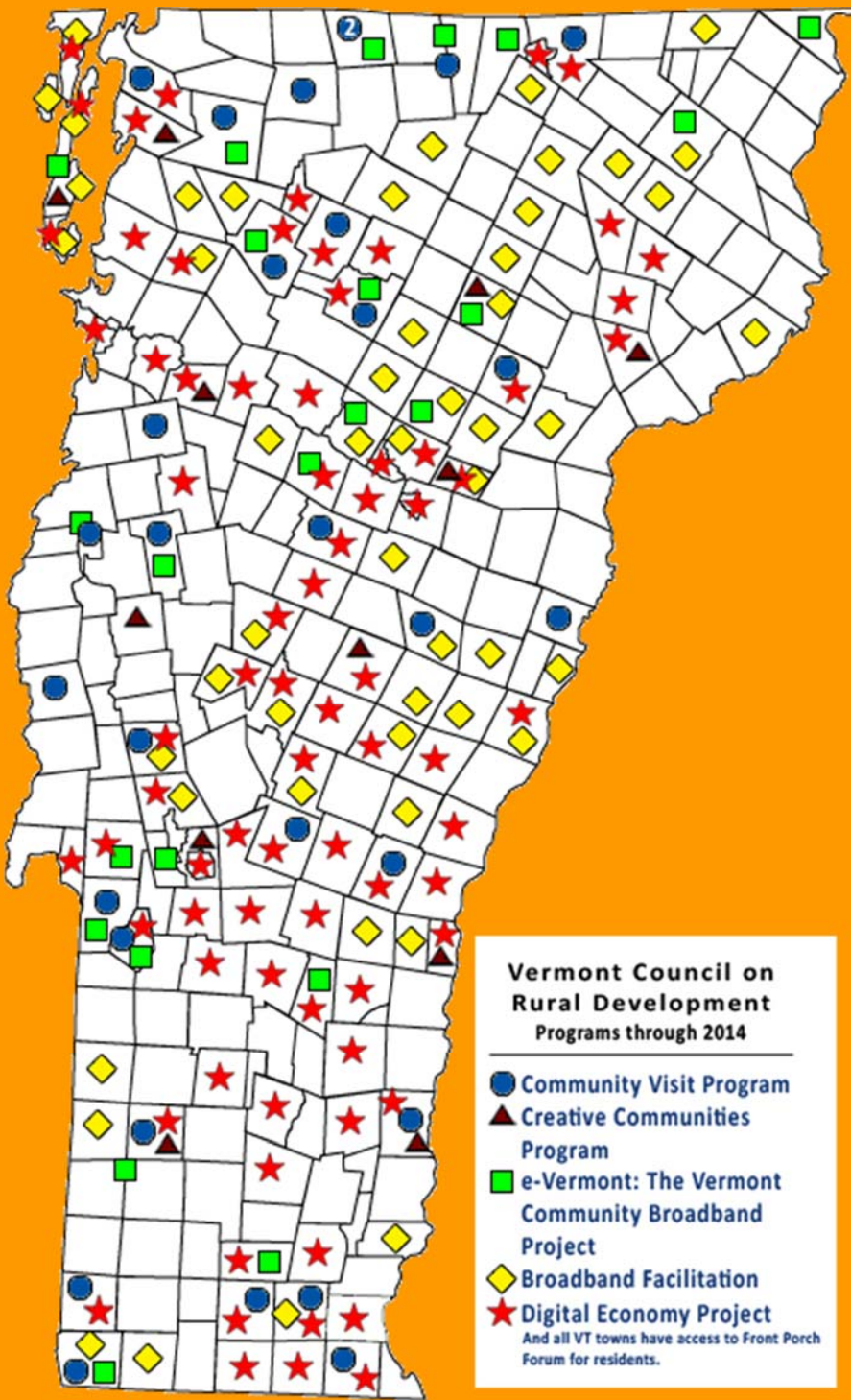
affecting the future of Vermont's digital economy. At this day-long summit, participants reflected on best practices for small businesses, nonprofits and towns in Vermont to effectively use digital tools to further community, and boost economic enterprise. This summit looked forward, asking questions about the role the internet and other advances in technology can play for the future of Vermont's economy. The ideas for action that came out of the summit's afternoon discussions can be found on our website at: <http://vtrural.org/programs/digital-economy/conference>.

2014 VCRD Summary Budget

Revenue:	
Federal Grants	\$786,107*
Foundation Grants	141,500
Private Contributions	73,750
State Support	44,670
Membership Dues	36,449
Fee for Service	15,389
Registration Fees	7,537
In-Kind Contributions	258,322*
Other Income and Interest	500
Total Revenue	\$1,364,224
Expenses:	
Personnel	\$381,552
Contract Services	415,509*
Federal Grant Subrecipients	341,617*
Board of Directors	2,155
Supplies, Grant Equipment & Inkind	107,752*
Facility and Equipment	30,491
Travel and Meetings	29,601
Other	3,840
Total Expenses	\$1,312,517

*Vermont Digital Economy Project

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.



2014 BOARD MEMBERS

- Bob Ackland** (CHAIR EMERITUS), Consultant
- Ted Brady** (VICE CHAIR), USDA Rural Development*
- Greg Brown** (CHAIR), Town of Dummerston
- Paul Bruhn** (SECRETARY), Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Megan Camp**, Shelburne Farms
- Catherine Dimitruk**, Northwest Regional Planning Commission*
- Vicky Drew**, USDA NRCS*
- Monty Fischer**, Center for an Agricultural Economy*
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- Thomas Hark**, VT Youth Conservation Corps
- Marie Houghton**, IBM
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- Alex MacLean**, Jay Peak*
- Colleen Madrid**, GMFL National Forests*
- Deb Markowitz**, Agency of Natural Resources*
- Robert Paquin**, USDA Farm Services Agency
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- Doug Racine**, Agency of Human Services*
- Chris Recchia**, Department of Public Service*
- Chuck Ross**, Agency of Ag, Food & Markets
- Andrew Savage**, AllEarth Renewables*
- Brian Searles**, Agency of Transportation**
- Katherine Sims**, Green Mountain Farm-to-School*
- Tim Smith**, Franklin County Industrial Development Corps*
- Ruth Wallman**, Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce

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- 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
- Jenna Whitson**, Community and Policy Senior Associate (starting in January 2015)

* term ended during 2014
 ** joined in 2014



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