



2017

ANNUAL REPORT



Vermont Council on Rural Development

MISSION STATEMENT

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) helps Vermont citizens build prosperous and resilient communities through democratic engagement, marshalling resources, and collective action.

VCRD STANDS FOR

- ▶ Local Democracy
- ▶ Rural Voice
- ▶ Engagement
- ▶ Patriotism of Place
- ▶ Community Renewal
- ▶ Working Lands
- ▶ Innovation
- ▶ Climate Economy
- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Community



VERMONT COUNCIL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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David Weinstein, *State Director, Office of Senator Sanders*

The VCRD Board said goodbye this year to our wonderful member and former chair **Marie Houghton**, retired from IBM, who served out her full term limit of 12 years. We also said goodbye to **Katherine Sims** who stepped off the board to lead the NEK Collaborative. **Phil Fiermonte** of Senator Sanders' office joined the board as a non-voting liaison for a few months in 2017 and then stepped off upon his retirement as State Director of the Sanders office. We are grateful for their service and wish them all well!

We've been excited to welcome **Jen Kimmich** of The Alchemist, **Kate Stephenson** of HELM Construction Solutions, **David Weinstein**, the new State Director for Senator Sanders, **Darcy Carter**, District Director of the US Small Business Administration, **Anthony Linardos**, NH and VT State Director of USDA Rural Development, and **Dan Smith**, President of the Vermont Community Foundation.



The power of local action

History is more than battles and monuments. In our travels throughout Vermont, we see history in our beautiful downtowns and the working landscape that surrounds them, and we reflect about the dedication, investment and hard work of the generations of Vermonters who built these farms, stewarded these forests, developed our downtowns, and shaped our economy. We see a Vermont built out of blood sweat and tears, by families who took risks and put whatever they had on the line to make a life and a home in this place. They built the place we live in today, and they continue to define us.

At VCRD we are so honored to work as a catalytic agent at the center of efforts for community renewal throughout Vermont. We see veteran, new and emerging leaders step up to take on challenges from putting together a community child care center to redeveloping a downtown building. We see the power of our rural communities, galvanized by the energy of local leaders and given direction by the development of collective goals and commitment. And it gives us faith, that Vermonters are a people who can stand up together to renew the best of this place, in practical action, and in line with the best parts of our rural heritage.

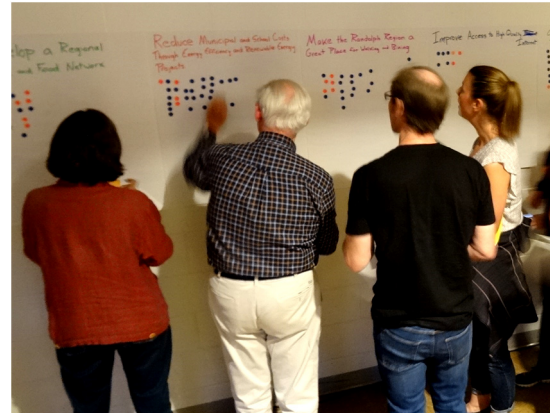
For VCRD, this past year has been a whirlwind of action. We've been supporting grassroots project implementation in Vernon, Hardwick, Craftsbury, and Brighton, and built full-on 6-month Community Visit processes in Lyndon and Burke. We geared up to help Newport residents rally for a renewal in the wake of the collapse of a promised multi-million-dollar investment, and initiated our new Climate Economy Model Communities program in Pownal and Middlebury (with Randolph and Swanton next in line). At the same time we've led the Working Lands Coalition effort to rally support for grants to forest and farm enterprises as seeds for entrepreneurs, business growth, and job creation in rural Vermont.

As we look to the future, we see renewal and revitalization led by local leaders and business innovators who are advancing an economy that can be part of the answer to the threat of climate change. Our Climate Economy Initiative this year included convening the Climate Economy Action Team to promote economic and policy innovation in this sector. We produced the national cc:econ Catalysts of the Climate Economy Summit attracting 500 entrepreneurs, investors and policy leaders from across the country to think with us about the future of this economy, and to consider ways to work or invest in Vermont. We built the Climate Economy Model Communities Program which works with communities who are ready to lead the way in practical action.

Sometimes Vermont is seen as a quaint bucolic rural backwater. We value our rural charm, but we also know that Vermont has a long history as a dynamic contributor to and leader of rural innovation. Today we can be a model for a new ruralism, with a renewed economy and energized citizen engagement. We hope you will join with us, and with all the community leaders we work with, to make it so.

Ted Brady, VCRD Board Chair

Paul Costello, VCRD Executive Director



Climate Economy Initiative

cc:econ Catalysts of the Climate Economy Summit

More than 500 entrepreneurs, business leaders, investors, and innovators from across the country came together for the Catalysts of the Climate Economy National Innovation Summit (cc:econ) produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development on September 6-8, 2017 in Burlington Vermont.

VCRD produced the Summit with three goals:

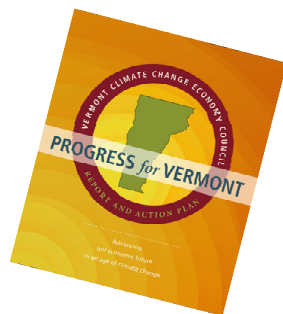
- ◆ Advance the idea of the climate economy as a cornerstone for national leadership and competitiveness;
- ◆ Share promising practices in entrepreneurship, investment, and policy for mutual learning; and
- ◆ Showcase Vermont as a branded leader modeling climate economy development in a rural setting to attract entrepreneurs and investors to work with Vermonters.

Today, VCRD is leading a statewide partnership of individuals, organizations, and businesses to follow the Summit with practical action and pro-active state policies and investments. The partnership is led by the Vermont Climate Economy Action Team (CEAT), which is promoting recommendations from Summit findings for presentation to the Legislature and Governor. Read the Summit report: vtrural.org/programs/summits/ccecon17.

Climate Economy Action Team

In the wake of the work of developing the “*Progress for Vermont Action Plan*” of the Vermont Climate Change Economy Council, VCRD invited key business and policy leaders to serve as the Climate Economy Action Team (CEAT). This group has led in advancing key sections of the action plan through a public information campaign, communications with the Governor and Legislators and strong advocacy to advance the climate economy. The Action Team represents a much larger partnership (the Climate Economy Partnership) of businesses and individuals who are united in their support for the progress of entrepreneurial businesses that advance climate solutions—from working lands enterprises, to energy, efficiency, recycling, and innovative clean transportation operations. In 2017, CEAT built and advocated for proposals to dramatically expand efficiency and low-income weatherization efforts, invest VW funds in electrification, facilitate a shift to electric vehicles through policies and incentives, support built environment solar, and set up a study of the costs and benefits of carbon pricing or cap and trade structures for Vermont. Many of these initiatives have been accepted as policy, advanced by the Legislature or moving forward by non-profit and private sector partners today.

Learn more at vtrural.org/programs/climate-economy.



Model Communities Program

The Climate Economy Model Communities Program is helping Vermont communities build and implement priority actions that increase economic vitality and affordability in a time of climate change. A partnership between VCRD, Efficiency Vermont, and other utilities, the program provides concentrated services to homes and businesses and project development to the community. In 2017 the program worked intensively in Pownal and Middlebury and is committed to Randolph and Swanton in 2018.

In **Pownal** nearly 150 individuals participated in the Empower Pownal process. After lively deliberations, the community focused on recreation and trails, economic development and the re-development of under-utilized properties, creation of an agricultural network, and instituting community-wide green-up activities. This summer the agricultural group is hosting a series of farm visits supported in part by a grant from the Vermont Community Foundation. The recreation task force is documenting area recreational opportunities and developing a recreation trail on town-owned property. The green-up committee has successfully organized multiple volunteer efforts cleaning-up hundreds of pounds of road and riverside waste.

In **Middlebury** over 150 individual participated in the Greater Middlebury Climate Economy Initiative process and over 70 are serving on task forces to implement 4 key priorities. These include improving the transportation system, assisting farmers in transitioning to more climate-friendly practices, working with homes and businesses to reduce energy use and increase renewable energy generation, and developing an organization to support climate action in the Middlebury area moving forward. Implementation of these priorities is ongoing.

Learn more at <http://vtrural.org/model-communities>.

Community Visits

VCRD's Community Visit Program engages a community through a facilitated structure that helps it identify its priorities, foster local leadership, and connect to state, federal, private, and non-profit resources to get things done.

In 2017, VCRD led Community Visits in Lyndon and Burke, and kicked off a process in Newport. These 5-month strategic action planning sessions set community priorities and build task forces to move projects ahead.

Over 180 **Lyndon** community members worked together in the Community Visit process to build task forces, led by over 62 local volunteers, to support business growth and economic development; establish a unified Lyndon Recreation Program; build a formal school, college, and community partnership, and revitalize downtown businesses and storefronts. Since the Community Visit, task forces have been hard at work to advance first steps towards these initiatives including: partnering with Northern Vermont University to develop plans and apply for funding to develop a co-working space in the old Bag Balm Building in Lyndonville; hold a "Jeezum Crow It's November" Art Walk; update village zoning bylaws to protect working landscapes while encouraging compact village development; expand other arts and events downtown; pursue funding for high speed internet in the community; and develop a business plan for a Lyndon Area Arts and Recreation Department.

In **Burke**, over 150 residents came together through the "One Burke" Community Visit process to develop priorities that would unite East Burke, West Burke, and Burke Hollow in support of economic development, community unity, and a vibrant town for all Burke residents. Over 61 community members volunteered for 3 task forces lined up to: expand education facilities; revitalize village water and sewer infrastructure, and improve traffic and pedestrian safety and build a trail connecting East and West Burke. Since the completion of the community process, task forces have built a www.OneBurke.org website to share updates and community information and events, put in a new stop sign at a problem intersection in town; built a plan for school renewal and expansion; and are applying for grant funding to set a plan build water and sewer infrastructure in West Burke to support the redevelopment of historic village buildings.

In November 2017, VCRD began work with community leaders and stakeholders in **Newport** to identify key issues and ways to invite all members of the community to take part. The "ReNewport" Community Visit process kicked off in December 2017 with a series of community forums and a community dinner attended by over 200 residents. Visits are also planned with the town of **Wallingford** in the Spring of 2018 and with the town of **Montgomery** in the Fall.



VCRD works toward a future for Vermont in which its:

- ◆ **communities** are healthy and resilient;
- ◆ **economy** is innovative and vibrant;
- ◆ **citizens** are engaged in community-building and governance, working closely with their neighbors;
- ◆ **communities** attract youth, entrepreneurs, and healthy diversity;
- ◆ **youngest citizens** are fully prepared to contribute to their communities and participate successfully in a changing economy;
- ◆ **rural character and open lands** are conserved and managed productively and profitably;
- ◆ **communities, businesses and citizens** prosper by designing and building economic solutions to climate change; and
- ◆ **communities** serve as models for other communities throughout rural America.



VCRD is so grateful for our partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) in our Community Visit program as part of their "Closing the Opportunity Gap" initiative. VCF is devoted to the progress of Vermont Communities and provides significant resources to community projects throughout Vermont.

Other Programs

Working Lands Initiative

VCRD's Vermont Working Landscape Partnership unites over 1,000 farm, forest, value-added businesses and individuals working together to advance investment in the enterprises that conserve Vermont's land in practice and serve as a key foundation for the culture and economy of rural Vermont. Working with the partnership, its leadership council—the Working Lands Coalition—we framed and supported the passage of Act 142 in 2012 that built the Fund of the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) to invest in the Renaissance of agriculture and innovative entrepreneurship in the natural resource economy. WLEB is a key rural Vermont economic development success story. The fund is spurring start-ups, supporting growing businesses, and building infrastructure to support jobs, communities and the landscape of Vermont. After five years of the program:

- ▶ **149** agriculture and forestry projects have been funded
- ▶ **\$4.5 million** in Working Lands funds were distributed
- ▶ **\$9 million** in matching funds were leveraged
- ▶ **485** new FTE jobs were created
- ▶ **98%** of grantees entered new markets and increased their customer base
- ▶ For every **\$10,000** invested: additional sales increased by **\$59,000** and **1.08** new jobs are created.

Visit the WLEI website at workinglands.vermont.gov to learn more.

2017 Lifetime Leadership Award: Paul Bruhn



In 2017, VCRD presented its annual *Vermont Lifetime Leadership Award* to Paul Bruhn, the Executive Director of Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) for his transformational leadership in historic preservation and community development. The award was presented at the Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference by Paul Costello, VCRD Executive Director, and Ted Brady, Board Chair and Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Paul Bruhn helped to found PTV which has led over 1,500 community and historic preservation projects throughout Vermont, from the Grand Isle Lake House and the Putney General Store to the Marble Museum in Proctor, Richmond's Round Church, and the Single Chair at Mad River Glen. For many of us, Bruhn is the touchstone to Vermont's living heritage and the catalyst for the vital future of Vermont's special places.

2018 Leadership Summit: Save the Date

A graphic with a dark blue background and green wavy lines on the left. The text is white and green. It says "SAVE THE DATE" in large white letters. Below that, "Making it Happen" in green, followed by "Local Leadership for the Future of Vermont Communities" in white. At the bottom, "October 1, 2018" and "Castleton University" in white. There is a circular logo with "COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT" around a central graphic.

SAVE THE DATE

"Making it Happen"
Local Leadership for the
Future of Vermont Communities

October 1, 2018
Castleton University

Join local leaders working to improve life in their communities at the Vermont Community Leadership Summit!

- ◆ Skills Workshops for Community Initiatives
- ◆ Community Success Story Panels
- ◆ Leadership Resource Fair
- ◆ Group Dialogues on the "Future of Community Leadership in Vermont"

In democracy, all citizens are called upon to lead - where leaders step up, towns achieve great things.

Local Citizens Make it Happen!

Visit vtrural.org/summit18 for more.

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 (\$50): J. Riley Allen, Kristofer Anderson, Anonymous (10), Jill Arace, Laura Arnesen & Bob Meany, Laura Asermily, Rebecca Balint, Robert Bast, Helen Beattie & Brendan Buckley, George Bellerose, William D. Benton, Alan Betts, Julia Blake, Putnam Blodgett, Michael Bosworth, Tabitha Bowling & Alyssa May, Darby Bradley, J Mark Billian & Anne Brin, Trudi Brock & Paul Kristensen, Jack Byrne, Megan Camp & Alexander Webb, Scott Campbell & Mary Ready, Jeff Carr & Patricia Bunt, Sandal & Paul Cate, Rich Clark, Susan Clark, Alison Clarkson & Oliver Goodenough, Hal & Shelley Cohen, Nancy Colby, Vaughn T. Collins, Chip Conquest, Martha Davies, Lauren-Glenn Davitian, David Deen, Gregory Dennis, Matthew Dodds, Sally Dodge & Dale Gulbrandsen, Matthew Dodds, Bill & Olene Doyle, Jared Duval, William & Marilyn Edgerton, David Ellenbogen, Tony Elliott, John Endicott, Peter Falion, Margaret Farabaugh, Don Faulkner, Mike Flynn, Harry Frank, Thomas Franks & Katherine Hayes, Ben Freeman, Peter & Caroline Fritzing, Kenneth Gaertner, Newt Garland, Marsha Garrison, Elizabeth Gibson, Ernest & Charlotte Gibson, Peter Gilbert & Cindy Char, Steven M. Gold, Wayne & Deborah Granquist, Charles & Catherine Miles Grant, Lucy Gratwick, Susan Green, Vernon Grubinger & Tracey Devlin, Glen Gurwit, Geordie Hall, Thomas Hark, Roberta Harold & Wayne Fawbush, Richard & Emily Hausman, Cheryl & Ward Heneveld, Des Hertz, Darren Higgins, Paul & Vicki Hill, Rob Hinrichs, Suzy Hodgson, Peter Hopkins, Susan Houston, Bob and Cora May Howe, James & Cynthia Hunt, Nancy Wayne Jaffe, Lauren Jarvi & Lenny Gerardi, Thomas Johnson & Ina Smith, Ken Jones, Nancy Jones, Ben Joseph, Sarah Judd, Michael Katzenberg & Linda Prescott, Michelle Kaufman, Kathleen C. Keenan, Rep. Warren Kitzmiller, Candy Koenemann, Kathleen Kolb, Jenna & Ryan Koloski, Lee Krohn, Stephanie Lahar, Hank & Molly Lambert, Christine Lilyquist & William Barrette, Robert A. Lloyd, Katherine Lutz Coppock, John Malcolm, Steve Maier, Anne Margolis, Linda Markin & Marie LaPre Grabon, William Marks, Rep. Jim Masland, Dave C. Mayette, Robert McBride, John McClaughry, Bob & Faith McDonald, Timothy & Betty-Jane, Susan McKnight, Neil Mickenberg, Christy & Marc Mihaly, Brett T. Morrison, Jenny Nelson, John Nelson, Phyl Newbeck, Nicole Carpenter & Eric Coker, Lori Neiderer, David Paganelli & Judith Falk, Robert & Theresa Paquin, Scudder Parker & Susan Sussman, Carolyn Partridge, Andrew Perchlik, Albert & Marcia Perry, Philip W. Petty, Dave Potter, Dorigen Keeney & Carl Powden, Fran & Spence Putnam, Doug Racine, Janet Ressler, Shirley Richardson, Tom Roberts & Lorie Loeb, Andy Robinson, Ben Rose & Lori Fisher, Laural Ruggles, George Schenk, Fred Schmidt, Alyssa Schuren, Tom Scrodin, Brian R. Searles, Michael & Nancy Sherman, Shari Siegel, Katherine Sims & Jeff Fellinger, Todd Smith, Susan & Jeb Spaulding, Emily Stebbins-Wheelock, Greg & Jennifer Stefanski, Kate Stephenson, Valerie A. Stuart, Susan & Bob Titterton, Maida F. Townsend, Todd Tyson, Frederick Wackernagel, Emily Wadhams, Anne Watson, Frederick & Karen Weston, Justin Wheating, Richard White, Alex & Jerelyn Wilson, Sanford and Margaret Camara/Witherell, Wolcott/MacCausland Families, Enid Wonnacott, Bronna Zlochiver, David Zuckerman

Organizations (\$150+): Addison County Regional Planning Commission, Alice & Richard Angney, Anonymous (4), Bardill Land & Lumber Co., Joss Besse, Bill & Ruth Botzow, Bourne's Energy, Bradford Community Development Corporation, Ted & Erin Brady, Capstone Community Action, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Peter Conaxis, Conservation Collaborative/Laury Saligman, Jon & Rebecca Copans, Craftsbury General Store/Emily Maclure, Davis & Hodgdon Associates CPAs, DEW Construction Corp, Matthew Dodds, EC Fiber, Flywheel Communications, Foley Services, Forest Savers LLC, Frank & Julie Hanes, Franklin County Industrial Development Corp., Paul & Ingrid Gallo, Goodridge Lumber Inc, Linda Gray, Green Lantern Group (Solar), Shannon & Melissa Haggett, Harry Hunt Architects, Nate Hausman, Don & Allison Hooper, Irene & Jeffrey Horbar, Marie Houghton, Housing Trust of Rutland County, Hunger Mountain Cooperative, Integrity Energy, Jamieson Insurance, Carolyn Kehler, Rob & Sandy Kilburn, Pam Knights Communications, Lamoille Economic Development Corporation, Landvest Timberland, Landworks, Thomas & Charlotte Macleay, Robert McBride, PW McCoy Corp, Middlebury College, Miller Farm, Rob & Karyn Miller, Ron Miller, Mountain Goat North, Tim & Susan Murray, Northeastern VT Development Association, Northshire Bookstore, Pay It Forward Fund of the VCF, Andrew & Jilda Pomerantz, Robert & Nancy Pope, Wright Preston, Putney Food Coop, Renewable NRG Systems, Richford Economic Advancement Corp., Nick Richardson, Patrick Robins & Lisa Schamberg, Chuck Ross, RuralEdge, Rutland Economic Development Corporation, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, Ryegate Associates - Engie, Bill & Kate Schubart, Leigh Seddon & Ann Aspell, Brian Shupe & Valerie Capels, Society of American Foresters - Green Mountain Division, Springfield Housing Authority, Springfield Regional Dev. Corp., Stark Mountain Woodworking, Stevens & Associates, P.C., Strolling of the Heifers, Sunrise Manor Senior Living, William Throop, Town of Brighton, Town of Canaan, Town of Colchester, Town of Coventry, Town of Craftsbury, Town of Fairfax, Town of Fairfield, Town of Hardwick, Town of Lyndon/Village of Lyndonville, Town of Swanton, City of Vergennes, Town of Woodstock, April Tuck & Ron Carter, Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission, Union Bank, VT Affordable Housing Coalition, VT Association of Snow Travelers, VT Community Loan Fund, VT Environmental Consortium, VT Housing Finance Agency, VT Interfaith Power & Light, VT Land Trust, VT Precision Tools, Inc., VT Public Power Supply, VT Woodworking School, VT Youth Conservation Corps, Wheeled Hand Tool Systems, Inc., Christopher Wing

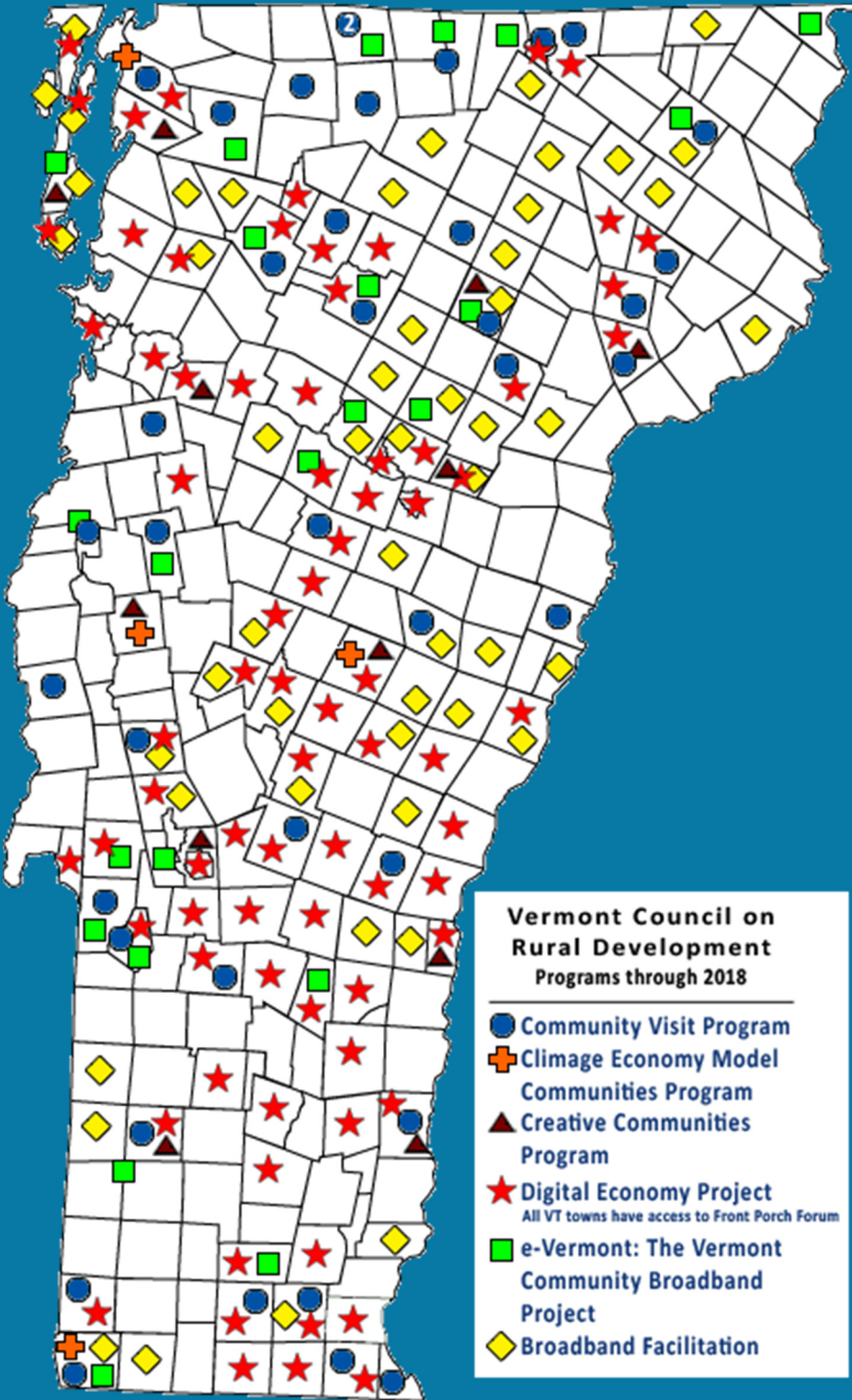
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Rural Champions (\$1,000+): Anonymous, Greg and Carolyn Mayo-Brown, Mateo & Andy Kehler/Cellars at Jasper Hill, Co-operative Insurance Companies, Peter Fairweather, Judy Geer & Dick Dreissigacker, Green Mountain Power, Key Bank of VT, Merchant's Bank, Enrico Pallazzo, People's United Bank, Buzz & Betsy Schmidt, Grace Jones Richardson Trust/E.W. Stetson III, Union Mutual of VT, VSECU VT State Employees Credit Union, Yankee Farm Credit

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Inkind: The Alchemist, CCTV Productions, Champlain College: Laura Fillbach, Jenna Misra, and Kirsten Potts; Climate Home, Front Porch Forum, Keurig Green Mountain, Sapl, Shelburne Farms



VCRD at a Glance

- ▶ 21 years of Strategic Engagement for Action through 60 Community Visits creating over 225 community projects with thousands of volunteers.
- ▶ Led Broadband and Digital Economy Development Projects with 92 Vermont towns.
- ▶ Helped bring Front Porch Forum to every town in Vermont (the only state with community based social networks in every town).
- ▶ Developed 40 Downtown Wi-Fi Zones, supported the development of 40 municipal websites, and helped hundreds of businesses and non-profits enter the digital age.
- ▶ Led the development of VT's Working Lands Enterprise Fund that has increased business income by \$26.5M and created over 485 new jobs.
- ▶ Built over 21 Vermont Conferences and Rural Summits engaging over 5,000 people working together to spearhead rural progress.
- ▶ Developed 9 policy councils to unite Vermont efforts for the working landscape, in-state energy development, planning, the creative economy, the climate economy, and in setting vision through the Council on the Future of Vermont.
- ▶ Leading new initiatives to make Vermont a national leader for small business creation in the Climate Economy.



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