

Climate Catalysts
Community Leadership
Program

January 2023



Climate Catalysts

Vermont Community Leadership Program

Facing the climate challenge means mobilizing at all levels of human organization. Strong and inspirational leaders are key in unifying and sparking collective action. With hundreds of tight-knit communities, Vermont is a place that can model unique, powerful, and replicable local actions for growing the climate economy.

Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development, the **Climate Catalysts Leadership Program** brings together local leaders from Vermont communities for a year-long process focused on building peer connections, strengthening leadership skills and providing project development support. Participants work on implementation of a local project as a focus of their program participation. The goal is to move projects from concept to reality while investing in leaders who provide multi-faceted service to their communities.

Cohorts include a mix of new, emerging, and experienced leaders from a variety of large and small communities who have ideas for projects that are both ambitious and achievable. Participants receive training, peer connections, and consultative support as they develop and implements their projects.

This 4th cohort launched in January 2023.



Lindsey Berk (she/her) is a local foods advocate, environmental activist and agritourism enthusiast living in Brandon with her partner, two cats and six chickens. In 2015 Lindsey and her partner Matthew founded Origins of Food, a food justice focused agritourism company, working to reconnect people with where food comes from. Lindsey joined the ACORN Food Network in 2015 as the Marketing and Development Director and now

serves as its Executive Director. Lindsey also consults for farms and non-profits, is part of her town's Restorative Justice group, and is on the 350VT Board of Directors. When not working towards food justice, Lindsey can be found playing in the mountains, lakes and rivers of Vermont.

Project: The new ACORN Food Hub, established in 2022, facilitates the sale, aggregation, and distribution of local food in the Champlain Valley in order to increase the supply of local food purchasing. As they move beyond the initial launch of the project, Lindsey is exploring ways to ensure the ACORN Food Hub is developed with a lens of long term financial and environmental sustainability as well as increased equity with regards to local food access.



Marcey Carver (she/her) has previously worked in banking and as a Financial Officer in manufacturing and nonprofit. She has renovated several homes including two 4 units which she owns and manages. She volunteers in her community as a member of the Planning Commission and in other roles. Her current project is the rebuilding of a former store as an energy efficient one- or two-unit building alongside an historic former Firehouse which

she also hopes to renovate. She enjoys gardening, travelling by train, volunteering, and learning new things (she has taken a few Yestermorrow courses).

Project: As a volunteer member of a fledgling group, Bradford Food and Forest, Marcey is working to help this group become sustainable and empowered to achieve its mission of becoming a community leader in education and outreach on locally produced food and forestry products.



Rowland Davis (he/him) is a retired pension consultant now devoting much of his time as an advocate for environmental and climate issues. He is one of the lead members in the Shelburne Alliance for the Environment (SAFE), which stays involved with local government activity and attempts to steer decisions in ways that promote the SAFE mission.

Project: Shelburne currently has no town Energy Committee, but they do have a well-developed set of energy and climate goals in the 2019 Town Plan. In August the Climate Action Working Group reached out to the Chair of the Selectboard to offer support in implementing those energy and climate goals. The offer was eagerly accepted, and they will now develop a detailed implementation work plan to present to the Selectboard in early 2023 and then help manage the implementation process. As a possible second project, Rowland is exploring the viability of soil sequestration options (especially biochar).



Parker Eversoll (he/him) is continuously revitalized by collaborative efforts going on throughout Vermont. He is currently serving with the ECO AmeriCorps program at the Friends of Northern Lake Champlain in St. Albans. Parker contributes to the organization's mission of reducing non-point source pollution in the northern Lake Champlain watershed by supporting water quality sampling, educational programming, and project management. Parker enjoys spending his free time skiing, biking, hiking, or trying any new activity that gets him more time outside with his dog and partner.

Project: Through Parker's service in northwestern Vermont, he plans to effectively communicate the significance of the co-benefits (such as carbon sequestration, habitat enhancement, and soil health) of the water quality projects he and his host site identify and implement. While the projects are typically focused on reducing non-point source phosphorus pollution, there are many overlooked benefits that help improve ecosystems and the well-being of its inhabitants.



Lena Greenberg (they/them) is a big-picture person devoted to this planet. They travel between realms of food and land, climate and transportation, and governance and infrastructure. Currently, Lena is the Food Access Coordinator at the Intervale Center, with a varied background in urban environmental education, climate organizing, media relations, and creative nonfiction writing. You might find them bicycling, climbing a fence, or lying on the floor.

Project: As an extension of Lena's role at the Intervale, they will be crafting new ways to make local food available to people of all income levels year-round, thus decreasing food miles and bolstering our year-round regional food system. OR Lena will be collaborating with Green Mountain Transit and local transit organizers to create an accessible, user-friendly bus map for Burlington.



Beth Johnson (she/her or they/them) is energized by the economic shift that needs to happen for intersectional climate justice, and is passionate about degrowth and solidarity economies. She is an Americorps VISTA at her local library creating a database of local groups, organizations, social services and resources with the goal of increasing access to community support and connections. She also

works in community outreach for a new economy organization called [Common Good](#), and helps out with tasks at Scott Farm, an heirloom apple orchard. She is a board member of Build Repair Grow, an organization that runs after school programs teaching young people skills like cooking, growing food, mending, and fixing bikes for self/community sufficiency and resilience. Beth lives off-grid-ish on shared land in an old yurt she moved and rebuilt with the help of sweet friends.

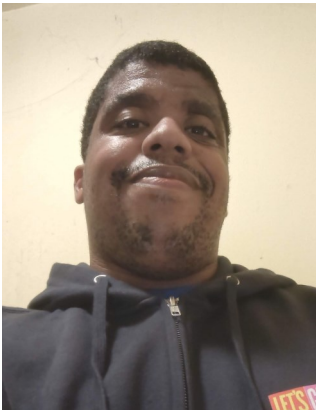
Project: Beth is hoping to organize a series of “swaps” and potentially a repair cafe at local institutions.



Hannah Kornfeld (she/her) is a native Vermonter and recently returned after years of working and living in California, experiencing climate change impacts firsthand. In her current role, Hannah is a climate action planning manager at Ascent, an environmental consultancy, with experience developing and managing climate action and adaptation planning efforts. Hannah was selected as a 2019 Fellow with the Clean Energy Leadership

Institute (CELI), honing her expertise in decarbonization strategies, and currently serves as the National Fellowship Coordinator for CELI. She is seeking a network of changemakers in Vermont who are focused on meaningful climate action and equitable advancement of clean energy solutions.

Project: Hannah will create templates for schools in Vermont to use to develop their own climate action plans that would be consistent with the recently adopted Vermont Climate Action Plan. The project will create a series of templates and a guidance document for a “plug-and-play” model that schools across Vermont could use to adopt and implement climate action plans.



Matthew LeFluer (he/him) offers support, encouragement, acceptance, diversity, sense of understanding and belonging within his community and town. He understands others needs across Vermont statewide and is helping to unite and unity for acceptance and truth for an honest community statewide.

Project: As a planning commission member of Alburgh Vermont and active in many organizations, Matthew and other members, work together collaboratively with a community driven mindset. Accessibility communication is a big part of the puzzle of understanding Vermont's climate, energy and environmental justice goals. Matthew's project will work to identify key components to accessibility focused communication and create a tool for organizations and individuals to ensure messaging and information gets to all Vermonters.



Lizah Makombore (she/her) has over 10 years of experience working in the NGO sector, development sector, public finance institutions and institutions of higher learning. She has worked multiple roles starting off at the Central Bank of Zimbabwe where she started as an intern and ended up as an Investments Analyst responsible for appraising Foreign Direct Investments into Zimbabwe. From there Lizah moved to a United States Agency for

International Development (USAID) project called the South African International Business Linkages (SAIBL) where she took up multiple roles and played a critical role in implementing specific interventions for small to medium sized farmers and businesses to assist them in successful linkages with South African corporations and to the US markets. The role at SAIBL exposed Lizah to farmers from all the provinces in South Africa both commercial and subsistence farmers. From there she moved to the National Business Initiative, an NGO based in South Africa, where she

took up the Project Manager role. At the NBI Lizah contributed to multi-faceted projects at regional level and local level in the following sectors, climate change, water sustainability, regenerative agriculture, public private and partnerships, equity and justice and local economic development. After the NBI, Lizah ventured into academia, and has spent the last 6 years of her life as a research assistant, lecturer, curriculum developer and reviewer of assessments. Currently Lizah is a PhD candidate and fellow at the University of Vermont.

Project: Lizah will be collaborating with the Vermonter for a New Economy group to establish both per-public bank institution as well as the establishment of the public bank itself.



William Marlier (he/him) William spent the majority of his childhood in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom. After attending high school at St. Johnsbury Academy he went south to Philadelphia for college. There he attended first Drexel then Temple University and graduated with a degree in Film and Media Arts. Since then he has worked to gather professional experience in the field of conservation, working at an outdoor nature camp in Cabot, caring for animals at the Philadelphia Zoo, and managing 100+ acres of forests and fields here in Greensboro. He currently resides in Greensboro, where he sits on the local Conservation Commission and balances caring for the land with running the small nonprofit The Wisdom Connection.

Project: William will work with local conservationists, landowners, and foresters to produce a comprehensive biodiversity/conservation status map of the town of Greensboro, Vermont. The final map will serve as an important foundational document for future conservationists as climate change inevitably transforms our local ecology.



Jared Reynolds (he/him) is based in Lyndonville, where he manages Do North Coworking and the Forest Products Accelerator. In this role he has to focus areas to support entrepreneurship and business development in the Northeast Kingdom, and to drive innovation and commercialization in the broader forest industry. Prior to moving to Lyndonville, Jared

worked in economic development for the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension and AECOM.

Project: Jared will focus on an impactful forestry accelerator program that supports a sustainable forest industry, increases the use of renewable energy, and develops technology that improves industry operations. To achieve this he'll work to strengthen program partnerships and build connections for emerging forestry startups.



Mike Roy (he/him) has worked in higher education for over 30 years, working in academic technology, IT, digital humanities, and libraries. Currently the Dean of the Library at Middlebury College, he is planning for a “next chapter” career in climate, and doing so by getting involved in local climate organizations in Addison County. As such, he has joined the town of Middlebury Energy Committee, the board of the Climate Economy Action Center of

Addison County, as well as the energy committee at Middlebury College. He lives with his wife and dog, and is at times visited by his three grown children, and enjoys skiing out his backyard, kicking a soccer ball around at noontime soccer, and jogging at an ever slower pace around the Trail around Middlebury.

Project: As part of his work on the energy committee for the town of Middlebury and as a member of the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County, Mike is exploring the creation of a Vermont Climate Observatory that will provide the Vermont climate community an

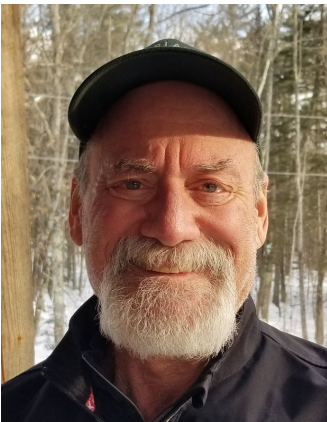
information hub for sharing news, events, announcements, funding opportunities, and a directory of climate-oriented organizations in VT.



Melinda Scott (she/her or they/them) is seeking ways to leverage existing social infrastructure – community groups, service organizations, programs and places where people gather – to build community resilience and effect positive change. Her current work as a local planner in Williston encompasses energy, climate change adaptation and mitigation, housing, community development and long-range comprehensive planning. Prior

work includes conservation planning, GIS mapping, analysis and visualization, residential construction and renovation, and organic farming. Melinda enjoys getting outside in wild places by foot and by ski, biking to work in the warmer months, and growing vegetables in a community garden plot.

Project: The IRA and other existing programs in Vermont provide huge opportunities to reduce thermal emissions through financial incentives for weatherization and electrification. My project seeks to conduct outreach targeted towards low- and moderate-income households, leveraging existing social infrastructure, to spread the word about these programs and facilitate people's participation in them.



Robert Small (he/him) After retiring nearly six years ago, Robert has become involved with activities focused on addressing the climate crisis. He is currently serving on the Coordinating Committee of Third Act Vermont, to assist in developing and organizing this new group of Vermonters over 60 years old that will engage in several climate related activities. Before retiring, Robert worked as marine mammal research biologist in Alaska. His work

involved leading diverse groups of biologists in remote field environments, as well as participating on several committees that developed conservation and management plans for state and federal agencies. He enjoys timber framing and fine wood working, and lives with his partner in the Northeast Kingdom where they hike, ski, snowshoe, bike, and kayak, and work with their large draft mule to harvest fire wood for their home.

Project: Robert wants to explore developing a community solar project for the Town of Stannard, as well as other opportunities to reduce carbon emissions and use more clean energy in the town.



Gabriella Stevens (she/her), in her current AmeriCorps Service, strives to divert waste from landfill and bring awareness to the ongoing recycling programs and policies in Addison County, VT. While working on her graduate degree, she studies the relationship between businesses, governments, and the natural environment to design more sustainable markets. Because of her work and education, Gabriella's background covers the entirety of the supply chain from product development to waste management. She hopes to use her diversified experiences to start a conversation about where products come from and how individuals can harness their influence and make a difference in their community.

Project: To develop an informative series on manufacturing and farming in VT, through the lens of one or a few consumer products. The goal is to encourage visitors and residents to think critically about where the things they buy are made and what conditions they are made in.



Jean Terwilliger (she/her) believes that it is imperative to the future of the planet to renovate, electrify, and build low-carbon homes and other buildings, and is searching for new and innovative ways to get people excited about scaling up this work. Jean enjoys thinking about residential design at all levels – from understanding clients’ individual characters so that their homes reflect their lives, to digging into the details of building envelope, windows, and mechanical systems as an architect with Vermont Integrated Architecture in Middlebury, and serves on the board of the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County, focusing on residential decarbonization. When not working, Jean enjoys biking, hiking, skiing, and gardening out her back door, and hanging out in the draft-free sun-drenched rooms of her net-zero home.

Project: As a board member of the Climate and Economy Action Center of Addison County, Jean is developing a county-wide program for residential electrification and weatherization/energy retrofits that works to strengthen contractor and supplier networks, reaches out to all homeowners including low income and under-served populations, and ramps up to facilitate over 1,000 decarbonization projects per year in Addison County.



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