

Agenda

8:00 – 9:00 *Registration* | Coffee and Pastries.....Judd Hall

9:00 **Conference Welcome**

Callum Robechek performing his original composition “Water Buries, Too”
Composer and Montpelier High School Student

9:20 **Presentation of VCRD Leadership and Lifetime Achievement Awards**




9:40 **Forge Forward; Thrive Together**

Moderated by Mitch Wertlieb, *Vermont Public*, with a panel that includes community leaders from across the state reflecting on what it takes for a community to thrive.

10:35 *Break*.....Judd Hall

10:45 **Breakout Sessions**..... Breakout Rooms

Optional Pathways:

-  Climate Resilience and Long-Term Recovery
-  Youth Leadership and Engagement
-  Understanding & Solving Our Persistent Challenges

Session Type Key:

- | Panel
- | Workshop
- | Networking

 P1 – **Dusting Off the Plan: Local Disaster and Emergency Response** (PANEL)

W1 – **Project Management 101: From Vision to Planning to Implementation**
(WORKSHOP)

An introduction to project management for community revitalization projects. Learn how to organize around an initial vision, define goals and priorities, navigate funding considerations, and move your project from idea to implementation.

W2 – **Inspiring Meaningful Action: Building Resilient Teams** (WORKSHOP)

The typical lens of leadership is insufficient to ensure sustainable success for business and sustained resilience for leaders. Based on cognitive research and proven case studies, this approach produces more meaningful understanding and transformed impact. Practice working the A to B Paradigm Shifter model in this highly experiential coach facilitated workshop.

 W3 – **Cultivating Wellbeing and Civic Participation for Rural Youth** (WORKSHOP)

Rural Youth Catalyst along with our Rural Youth Wellbeing policy working group have designed a 9-domain rural youth wellbeing framework and self-assessment tool. Coupled with newly released research from CIRCLE, learn how you can create an eco-system in your community to build the collective wellbeing and civic participation for every young person in Vermont. We will share examples from other rural communities across the country.

P2 – Clean Heat Standard: What Is It Intended to Do and What Does It Mean for Vermonters (PANEL)

Act 18 creates a Clean Heat Standard (CHS) program with financial incentives that promote the adoption of clean heating and cooling technologies. The bill brings the state closer to a more sustainable energy future. However, the success of this program hinges not only on its environmental effectiveness, but also on its prioritization of affordability and accessibility. Hear how you can be a part of shaping the Clean Heat Standard.

 **P3 – Boosting Capacity in Small Towns: Vermont’s Volunteer Reliance Challenge** (PANEL)

Vermont’s towns, villages and communities are reliant on the energy and commitment of volunteers taking on huge, complex and increasingly professionalized tasks. From running municipal government to getting projects across the finish line to responding to emergencies and disasters, Vermont’s amazing volunteers make it happen, and need help addressing their challenges. Come hear from panelists from state, regional and local perspectives on this important topic.

 **P4 – Community Centers and Hubs** (PANEL)

From resource hubs to community spaces to teen centers, hear from a panel of community leaders as they share their experience creating and leading a variety of community centers and hubs across the state.

P5 – Community Health and Wellbeing (PANEL)

Join panelists from a variety of organizations and communities to learn how to support community health and well-being. We’ll hear about how communities can create the conditions where our youth have connection and mental health support, Black artists prosper, people in recovery are supported and more.

 **P6 – Water, Wastewater - Building Community Support, Decision Points, Innovative Solutions** (PANEL)

Many of Vermont’s towns and villages are considering historic investments into the expansion of water and wastewater systems. Come hear from state, regional and local experts about lessons learned, best practices and how to get these projects done!

N1 – Community Project Networking (NETWORKING)

In this activity, attendees will engage with fellow participants to learn about each other’s work, how to use peer consulting tools, and practice them with each other.

12:00 – 1:00 *LUNCH* Judd Hall







1:15 – 2:30 **Breakout Sessions** Breakout Rooms

P7 – Vermont’s Inclusive and Thriving Economy (PANEL)

Vermont is already known for doing things a little differently: come hear from business owners, organizations and others about how capitalizing on those differences has huge economic, social and community benefits.

W4 – Community Engagement: Building Trust and Impact (WORKSHOP)

This workshop delves into impactful community engagement strategies, drawing on the diverse experiences of Vermonters. Participants will gain skills, commitments, and techniques for creating genuine and accessible engagement initiatives. Through facilitated discussions, we will address key themes, including the importance of lived experiences, the influence of organizational history on practices, the role of identity in building trust, and methods for fostering robust community relationships. Additionally, we will explore how community engagement can and should evolve to become more just, inclusive, and effectively serve all Vermonters.

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W5 – Addressing Digital Equity and Broadband Expansion: A Case Study from the NEK (WORKSHOP)
 Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA) and Northeast Kingdom Broadband (NEK Broadband) have partnered together to bring The Northeast Kingdom Digital Equity Project (NEKDEP) pilot to their region of the state to close the digital divide. Learn what digital equity means for communities and how NEKCA and NEK Broadband are implementing this life-changing program in the Northeast Kingdom.
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W6 – Increasing Housing Options in Your Community (WORKSHOP DISCUSSION)
 Learn about housing challenges and community-based solutions and connect directly with individuals, professionals and municipalities working to increase housing opportunities in their communities.
- W7 – Moving Through Conflict: Difficult Conversations in Complex Situations** (WORKSHOP)
 Gain the tools to engage in challenging topics with multiple or conflicting perspectives. Basic skills in complex systems analysis and conflict resolution will be introduced and practiced.
- P8 – Community Trusts for Locally Led Revitalization** (PANEL)
 Hear from organizations and towns who have created community trust organizations and discuss the advantages and outcomes of using this model to accomplish local revitalization projects.
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P9 – What Can Youth Teach Us About Civic Engagement? (WORKSHOP)
 What do Vermont youth see as the strengths and concerns about their own civic engagement? This year Vermont will join 35 states in completing a state Civic Health Index, a report from the Secretary of State’s office on indicators related to voting, civic participation, and engagement with government. Vermont’s report will stand out, in that it is the first report to engage youth in analyzing and reporting on their own data. In this youth-led session, we will explore and reflect on the process and outcomes of youth analyzing their own civic survey data: From what they see as strengths and concerns to their insights on deepening youth civic engagement. This session is led in partnership by youth and adults from UP for Learning and the Vermont Secretary of State’s office.
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P10 – Act 250 Modernization - Collaborating to Create Livable Communities (PANEL)
 Review Act 250 reform Bill H.687 with a diverse coalition of stakeholders. Discuss the enacted changes and how they will affect Vermont communities.
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P11 – Planning, Adaptation, Action! Strategies for Community Implementing Resilience (PANEL)
 State and Regional plans exist to advance aspects of resilience from climate, food security, regional economic development and many more. These plans create foundational stepping stones and identify actions communities can take to move toward a thriving future. This panel will explore how those plans adapt to better fit the needs that arise, get implemented at multiple levels, and explore what local leaders can do to take action in their towns.
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N2 – Persistent Problem Networking Session (NETWORKING)
 A World Café style session where participants will have the opportunity to engage in deeper discussion around the persistent problems faced by communities today.

2:45 - 4:00 **Breakout Sessions**..... Breakout Rooms

 W8 – **‘Barre’d Alive: Grassroots Volunteer Coordination and Creating Resilient Community in Time of Need** (WORKSHOP)

W9 – **Effective Meetings and Facilitation/Facilitation 101** (WORKSHOP)

Strong facilitation skills can be a key to successful meetings and community conversations. In this workshop, we will share key facilitation skills and strategies and give participants a chance to try them out. Walk away with strategies you can put to use in your next meeting or convening!

 W10 – **Finding “Both/And” Solutions to Your Community’s Hard Questions** (workshop)

Attend this workshop If you have ever left a local meeting feeling discouraged about how the conversation went and wanting more inclusive, productive, and empowered community dialogue. Learn about why things often go wrong, and gain a powerful tool that can help groups work towards outcomes that honor diverging viewpoints.

P12 – **Universal Accessibility in Your Community** (PANEL)

This panel will discuss current systemic barriers in Vermont and explore the many dimensions of accessibility and universal access. Panelists will share information on accessibility and combating physical, communication and attitudinal barriers and share how to create a welcoming community including linguistic accessibility.

 P13 – **The Community Schools Model** (PANEL DISCUSSION)


Several schools in Vermont are implementing a model called Community Schools. These schools aren’t just about classes—they serve as hubs for the whole community. They offer extra support and services for students and families, like health care, counseling, and after-school programs. In this session, hear from a panel of community school experts and practitioners to hear the challenges, successes, and opportunities of this model in Vermont.

P14 – **The Role of Arts in Community Resilience** (PANEL)

Learn how arts organizations and practitioners build community resilience and mitigate the impacts of disasters through artistic practice and expression.

 P15 – **Resilience Hubs for Rural Communities** (PANEL)

Resilience Hubs are gaining traction as physical spaces that hold everyday functions within a community and can pivot to provide critical support and infrastructure during a disaster. Many national examples occur in densely populated areas, but with Vermont’s unique landscape and rural character this panel explores opportunities to think creatively around what, and how, critical community resources can be provided for in rural resilience hubs.

 P16 – **Small Towns, Big Challenges: Exploring Regional Collaboration** (PANEL)

Meeting the moment of rural capacity challenges will require exploring scaled, cross-community approaches to collaboration and problem solving. Hear panelists from a variety of backgrounds dig into the big “what if “and “what’s right for Vermont” questions about scale and collaboration.

 N3 – **BYOI - Connecting with Resource Leaders to Discuss YOUR project** (NETWORKING)

A networking opportunity to share your community project/initiative/idea with peers and resource providers and ask for advice, resources, and strategies to move your idea forward.

4:00 **Reflections of the Day**..... Judd Hall

4:15 *Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream Party!* Judd Hall



Vermont Council on Rural Development

Unleashing the power of Vermonters to create a better future