

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE WEST CENTRAL VERMONT COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) FROM 1st DRAFT (6/17/22) TO 2nd Draft (11/1/22)

Executive Summary

- Added primary purpose of the CEDS: “to improve the economic wealth and well-being of the region’s residents”;
- Added note about the increase in the racial diversity of the Region;
- Added note about the economic development-related planning efforts in the Region in the last several years. These efforts will guide the work of the CEDS partners to fortify the Region’s rural economy;
- Note added about the results of the Vermont Professionals of Color focus groups which indicated the challenges faced by the Region’s BIPOC community;
- Note added about the Region’s housing shortage and skyrocketing costs which are relevant to economic development.

I. Introduction to West Central Vermont

CEDS Components

- Added language addressing the intent of the CEDS to facilitate equitable economic development, including benefitting historically under-served populations. To achieve this, the CEDS Economic Profile includes information about the differences in wealth and education between white and non-white residents.

II. Economic Profile

- **Race** – Added data on racial demographics in the Region;
- **Poverty, Homelessness, and Substance Misuse** – Added discussion about substance misuse to this section, noting that this misuse increased in Vermont during the Covid 19 pandemic and has had a significance impact on the workforce;
- **Commuting Patterns** - Added a note indicating that the increased commuting times result in decreased air quality and increased amounts of time spent idle, which contribute to incidences of obesity and chronic disease;
- **Regional and Sub-Regional Economy** - Added a note that the Region accounts for 59% of the State’s GDP. Chittenden County alone accounts for 35% of the State’s GDP;
- **Employment by Supersector** - Added a note indicating that as of 2018, 9.3% of all jobs in Vermont are in the creative economy (arts, culture, media, design, artisan crafts, and food). 9.7% of jobs in Chittenden County and 8.4% of jobs in Addison and Rutland

County were in the creative economy. Specific data for Washington County are unavailable. Jobs in the creative economy in Addison and Rutland counties grew by 11% between 2010 and 2018 with most growth in Artisan Foods and Performing Arts;

- **Location Quotient** - Added a note indicating that the Region has very high Location Quotient scores for several categories of specialized manufacturing and working lands-related industries. The Region should continue to capitalize on the strength of existing industry clusters and pursue any competitive advantage it may have within these specific industries;
- **Labor Force Participation Rate** - Added a definition of Labor Force Participation Rate;
- **Exports** - Notation added to indicate that Canada is the largest market for Vermont exports (\$826 million in 2021). Expanding exports to Canada is a key strategy to support continued economic development in the Region.
- **Infrastructure** - Notation added to reflect the new Amtrak service from Burlington, through Vergennes and Middlebury, to NYC and back;
- **Broadband and Telecommunications** - Mention made that mobile phone coverage remains a challenge in some parts of the Region. The Vermont Department of Public Service is conducting mobile wireless drive tests to determine “dead spots” along major Vermont Roads;
- **Municipal Water and Wastewater Treatment** -Added a note that the Region has several wastewater systems that have issues with complying with the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for phosphorus set for Lake Champlain;
- **Electricity** – Added a note that VELCO, Vermont’s electric transmission utility, has a 2021 Long- Range Transmission Plan which notes that the regional transmission system adequately serves existing needs, yet may require substantial upgrades in the future;
- **Childcare** – Comment added that early childhood education is a key determinant of future economic earning potential as well as general health and well-being;
- **Working Lands and Outdoor Recreation** – Notation made that per the U.S. Agricultural Census, between 2012-2017, 18% of the land in farms in Addison County and 13% of the land in farms in Chittenden County, were converted to another use or were no longer in production;
- **Brownfields** – Notations were made that re-use of historically productive properties supports infill development and promotes community and economic growth;
- **Resilience/ Covid** – Added comment that there are many reasons why the workforce has not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Early retirement, lack of accessible childcare, risk of Covid-exposure, and increased rates of substance abuse are among the many reasons that have contributed to the demographic drought in Vermont and nationwide. Health care worker burnout is a problem nationwide.

III. Strategic Direction, Action Plan and Evaluation Framework

- **Goal #1 Attract New Workers and Expand Labor Force Housing** - Added action about the need for agricultural worker housing;

Childcare - Added comment about the need for programs designed to provide childcare for students enrolled in post-secondary education (e.g. Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program);

- **Goal #2 Equity**

Added a comprehensive section on equity, informed by a report by the Vermont Professionals of Color Network, to facilitate equitable economic development planning and the delivery of services and programs that advance opportunities for the traditionally under-represented populations in the regional economy.

Actions will include: **1)** Continued engagement and intentionally connecting; **2)** Advancing diversity, inclusion, and belonging; **3)** Rules and practices restricting access to capital; **4)** BIPOC business basics; **5)** BIPOC business support; **6)** Hiring and Retention; **7)** Women-owned businesses; **8)** Just transitions; **9)** Funding; and **10)** Data.

Existing and planned programs to assist the BIPOC Business community in Vermont were identified and listed within the section.

- **Goal #3 Business Development and Job Creation**

High Wage Employers - Actions were added to add high wage employment, attract businesses with high location quotients and encourage the growth of those businesses already located in the Region.

Economic Gardening - Added an action on “economic gardening” which supports creating jobs by supporting local entrepreneurs and existing companies, especially those with local ownership, including employee ownership, and other connections to the community.

Access to Capital - Added an action on access to capital which supports working with partners to develop and administer programs that provide low-barrier access to capital for start-up small businesses, particularly BIPOC and women-owned small businesses.

Innovation and Entrepreneurial Development - Added an action on innovation and entrepreneurial development which encourages the promotion and expansion of support systems for entrepreneurs from every sector, including resources that are easily available at all stages of the innovation and entrepreneurial continuum.

Entrepreneurship Ecosystems - Added an action on entrepreneurship ecosystems which includes working with partners to seek funding to establish, support, and expand entrepreneurship ecosystems in in sub-region. This includes strengthening export relationships with Canada.

- **Goal #4 Workforce Development and Employee Retention**

Example Short-term and Long-term Business Recruitment and Retention Practices -

Added recommended practices to improve short-term and long-term business recruitment and retention practices, including pursuing talent from previously untapped pools; adjusting wages and benefits and offering non-wage incentives; and identifying best workers quickly and having career paths ready for them. Other practices include developing partnerships that build pathways to promising careers and improving career center education.

Learn as You Earn Programs - Added an action to support partner efforts to create “learn as you earn programs” where workers receive ongoing training leading to certifications and credentials that are pathways to well-paying jobs and essential jobs;

Reskill Workers in Fossil-Fuel Based Industries - Added an action to work with the Vermont Climate Council, Community College of Vermont, and other partners to assist workers in fossil fuel-based industries to obtain the skills and job sectors.

- **Goal #5 Infrastructure and Resilience**

Streets - Added an action that supports universal access to a range of safe and affordable transportation modes when commuting to work;

Underutilized Sites – Added an action that supports efforts to develop master redevelopment plans for currently underdeveloped sites within the Region, particularly closed college campuses and public schools, that could be used to support housing, commercial development; municipal uses; or community uses;

Investment in Historic Structures – Added an action that supports partner efforts to secure funding to rehabilitate and reuse historic structures in our regional downtowns and villages;

Funding - Added an action that supports working with municipalities interested in leveraging ARPA funds to invest in economic development.

- **Goal #6 Quality of Life**

Act 250 – Removed an action related to Act 250 permitting reform.

Creative Economy - Added an action about continuing to strengthen the recognition of the economic impact of, and support for, the creative economy;

Tourism - Added an action about cooperating with the Downtown Organizations to support the growth of the tourism economy in the Region.