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WIOA PY2023 ANNUAL NARRATIVE OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), requires each state that receives funding under WIOA Title I (Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs) and Title III (Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Programs) to prepare and submit an annual report of performance progress to the U.S. Secretary of Labor. This narrative provides an opportunity for the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) to describe progress toward its strategic vision and goals for the state's workforce system under WIOA.

In the Program Year (PY) 2023 (period covering July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024), the VDOL continued to offer flexible, relevant services across its statewide network of American Job Centers in coordination with core partners and others in the workforce development ecosystem in Vermont. The VDOL Workforce Development division continues to deliver services to Vermont job seekers and businesses with a focus on flexibility to meet the needs of our customers and their evolving preferences related to employment and training services.

During this program year, the new senior leadership team has become more established in their roles and has been able to shift the division from a place of crisis around staffing to a place of strategic growth and development. As a result, we are pleased to report that the Workforce Development Division has not only made significant strides in reducing the post-pandemic vacancy rate of approximately 20% from the previous program year but is beginning to create capacity that supports strategic goals. Some key roles have been filled to support this growth; a communications and outreach coordinator, an organizational development and training manager, as well as a full-time program specialist to support the WIOA program along with our full-time WIOA program administrator.

During this program year, the General Assembly passed a new law that restructured the governance of the workforce system and established a smaller membership for the Governor's Statewide Workforce Development Board, keeping to the requirements established in WIOA. We look forward in the coming weeks to the announcement of new appointments to the Board and to the appointment of an Executive Director to the new Office of Workforce Strategy and Development. This state level leadership is critical to meeting the goals and objectives of the WIOA Four-Year Strategic Plan, submitted this program year. As the lead agency in the public workforce system, VDOL will continue to provide coordination of the core partners with the priority of increasing labor force participation by supporting individuals with barriers to employment, connecting with soon-to-



graduate high school and college students, upskilling incumbent workers, and highlighting employer practices aligned with the Good Jobs Principles.

In August 2024, the VDOL Workforce Development team hosted a week-long visit from the regional ETA team that conducted a Consolidated Compliance Review. The team provided thoughtful feedback and encouragement. They noted that the VDOL's Workforce Development division demonstrates a growth mindset which helped to boost confidence in our ability to tackle the rebuilding needed to be fully in compliance.

This narrative will outline the achievements and successes gained in PY2023, while recognizing the need for continued leadership, staff development, a continuous improvement mindset, and sustained efforts to deliver integrated workforce services to Vermont job seekers and businesses.

VERMONT'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM

Vermont has one certified comprehensive One-Stop American Job Center (AJC), located in Burlington, and a network of five affiliate centers and five satellite service locations around the state. The VDOL staff provide services for WIOA Titles I & III, Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), Foreign Labor Certification (FLC), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program (RESEA), registered apprenticeship (RA), and other state and federal programs to job seekers and employers through the network. The VDOL staff coordinate with state agency partners, education and training providers, and community organizations to deliver a variety of employment and training services to meet the needs of job seekers and employers wherever they are located.

During this program year, the State Workforce Development Board entered a contract with Education Data Systems, Inc. to provide operation services for Vermont's "One-Stop" system of job centers. The One-Stop operator started on July 1, 2024. We look forward to future reporting on the activities and system improvement work the One-stop operator will provide. Strong interagency partnerships exist and are essential in developing and maintaining a successful workforce development delivery system. The VDOL works diligently at building, improving, and maintaining collaborations so that the workforce development system stays focused on the same goal: to increase the number and skill level of available workers in Vermont.

Vermont's One-Stop service delivery system provides self and staff-assisted services so that workers, job seekers, and businesses can locate and access resources to fulfill their employment needs in easy-to-access ways. Vermont JobLink (VJL) is Vermont's online career, employment, and resource center. It gives job seekers and employers virtual access to many of the services available through the One-Stop network. Services are available at www.VermontJobLink.com or in one of our American Job Centers.

Virtually, and in-person, we help individuals use current labor market information and provide access to assessments of skill level and interests which lead to comprehensive career guidance, we host job search workshops, refer individuals to available training and



employment opportunities, and provide individualized Title I, TAA, and JVSG services. Veterans receive priority referral to jobs and training as well as priority to employment services and assistance. In addition, we work with Vermont's One-Stop network of workforce service providers to deliver specialized services to individuals with specific barriers to employment – including those with disabilities, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, ex-offenders, youth, minorities, and older workers.

VJL users can view current labor market information, research training and education opportunities and resources, explore career pathways, access employment preparation tools, workshops information, and post or explore current job opportunities. VJL also serves as the VDOL's case management system, performance tracker, and reporting tool. Vermont, like other states, continues to experience a lack of walk-in traffic in our job centers. To solve this challenge, job center staff are afforded the flexibility to meet job seekers where they are. This has included being present at public libraries, recovery centers, adult education sites and other partner locations. They have been provided tablets with cellular data connectivity to support this work in the rural parts of the state where broadband is often unreliable.

VERMONT'S WORKFORCE MISSION

Governor Phil Scott remains focused on expanding and strengthening Vermont's labor force as a top priority for his administration. In 2023, Governor Scott reaffirmed, through the work of the State Workforce Development Board, the State's vision to create a workforce development system that is a highly visible and accessible network of programs and strategies designed to increase employment, retention, and earnings for all Vermonters.

For Program Year 2023, the State's workforce goals were:

Goal 1: Connect Vermonters to the education, training, and supportive services needed to enter and advance along a career pathway that leads to greater financial independence.

Goal 2: Increase the number of women, Veterans, minorities, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented people employed in the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, advanced manufacturing, and other priority industry sectors in Vermont.

Goal 3: Increase the number of Vermonters with barriers to employment who complete high school, earn a post-secondary credential - including an industry-recognized certificate, registered apprenticeship, or post-secondary degree program - and become employed in occupations that align with the needs of Vermont's employers.

Goal 4: Improve Vermont's workforce development system by continuously aligning, adapting, and integrating workforce education and training programs and career and supportive services to meet the needs of all customers.

Goal 5: Expand Vermont's labor force by helping more Vermonters enter the labor market and assisting out-of-state workers in securing employment with Vermont employers and



relocating to Vermont.

Goal 6: Connect employers with technical assistance, hiring best practices, and workplace enhancements.

Goal 7: Adapt the current workforce development system to pandemic-era realities, by supporting and enhancing remote options for employers and workers and updating physical locations to address safety and accessibility concerns.

Goal 8: Acknowledge additional elements that impact Vermont's workforce system, including housing, childcare, broadband, education, and affordability, by taking a more holistic approach and better aligning our workforce goals.

RESOURCES IN SUPPORT OF THE VISION & GOALS

During this program year, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed Act 146, an act relating to revising the delivery and governance of the Vermont workforce system. This act created an Office of Workforce Strategy and Development and assigned two FTEs to staff the office. The Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy and Development supports the State Workforce Development Board and coordinates across the public and private sectors to ensure workforce development programs are well coordinated, and to ensure gaps are identified and addressed. Act 146 also re-established a smaller State Workforce Development Board, paring the membership down from approximately 60 members to 26 members, in accordance with requirements established by WIOA.

WIOA TITLE I YOUTH

YOUTH VOICE

Engaging youth voices in the workforce system is a pivotal step toward creating a more inclusive, dynamic, and forward-thinking labor market. Young people bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and firsthand insight into the challenges and opportunities they face as they navigate education, training, and employment. Including their input ensures that workforce policies, programs, and practices are more responsive to their needs and aligned with the realities of a changing economy.

In PY2023, a team was formed to begin planning this initiative, carefully considering how to authentically and effectively integrate youth perspectives into our processes. This involves exploring strategies to involve young individuals in decision-making roles, advisory boards, and program development efforts. By amplifying their voices, we aim to foster a sense of ownership and engagement among youth participants, empowering them to contribute to shaping a system that directly impacts their futures.

This approach will ultimately benefit the workforce system by making it more adaptive, equitable, and relevant. Incorporating youth voices will help address generational challenges, close gaps in services, and build a workforce ecosystem that attracts and



retains the next generation of talent. By investing in this initiative, we are not just preparing youth for the workforce, we are preparing the workforce for the future.

To better understand the needs, challenges, and aspirations of young individuals navigating the workforce system, we are developing a comprehensive approach to gather their feedback. This initiative includes the creation of a youth survey and the formation of youth focus groups.

In addition to the survey, youth focus groups will serve as an interactive space to delve deeper into the experiences and perspectives of young participants. These discussions will explore not only feedback on existing services but also the unique challenges youth face and their aspirations for the future. By creating a space for open dialogue, we aim to foster trust and build a clearer understanding of how to align workforce strategies with the goals of young individuals.

Together, the survey and focus groups will provide invaluable insights, helping us tailor services to meet the evolving needs of youth and empowering them to take an active role in shaping the workforce system.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) places a strong emphasis on supporting out-of-school youth. Reaching and engaging this population presents unique challenges. By integrating youth voice into the development and implementation of strategies, we aim to address these barriers more effectively, meet youth where they are, and ensure inclusivity in every aspect of the program.

Engaging youth in identifying solutions allows us to better understand the obstacles they face, such as transportation, communication gaps, and access to resources. Their insights can inform innovative outreach strategies, ensuring services are designed and delivered in ways that resonate with their experiences and circumstances. Meeting youth where they are—whether that means physical locations, digital platforms, or culturally relevant spaces—helps foster trust and build stronger connections.

Additionally, incorporating diverse youth perspectives ensures that the WIOA program remains inclusive and equitable, addressing the needs of all young individuals regardless of background, ability, or socioeconomic status. By prioritizing their input, we can create a workforce system that not only provides opportunities but also empowers youth to shape their own paths to success.

PY 2023 WIOA YOUTH PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In the Youth Program, Vermont achieved or surpassed the negotiated goals for all five performance measures—a testament to the dedication and effectiveness of our case managers. Their guidance and support are pivotal in helping youth meet these expectations. By embracing a human-centered approach, we empower young people to explore their potential and thrive in every aspect of their development.



Proactive outreach efforts in PY2023, focused on meeting youth where they are, led to a gradual increase in enrollments. This approach allowed young people to experience firsthand the program's transformative benefits—earning valuable credentials, building essential skills, and paving the way toward a successful future.

WIOA Youth Performance	PY 2023 Goal	PY 2023 Actual
Participants Served		175
Employment (2 nd Quarter after Exit)	63.5%	73.1%
Employment (4 th Quarter after Exit)	60.0%	67.2%
Median Earnings	\$ 3,811	\$ 3,850
Credential Attainment	45.5%	56.8%
Measurable Skill Gains	42.0%	51.0%

WIOA TITLE I ADULT / DISLOCATED WORKER

Investing in Special Populations Enhances the Workforce System

Vermont realized that engaging special populations—such as individuals with disabilities, veterans, individuals with low incomes, and those facing other barriers to employment—is essential for building a workforce system that is inclusive, diverse, and adaptable to the needs of all job seekers. Reaching these populations ensures that every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances, has an opportunity to contribute to the workforce and benefit from economic mobility.

In PY2023, Vermont focused on reaching individuals where they were by using targeted outreach strategies, collaborating with community organizations, schools, and advocacy groups, especially in underserved areas. The state ensured resources were accessible to people with disabilities and language needs, and provided support services like childcare, transportation, mentorship, and financial literacy to reduce barriers. Case management was a key component, offering personalized support to help individuals from special populations transition into the workforce. By including these groups, Vermont aimed to strengthen the workforce, address labor shortages, boost productivity, and promote a more equitable economy.

In PY2023, Vermont implemented strategies to improve Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN [SNAP/TANF]) co-enrollment with WIOA, prioritizing expanded access and streamlined processes for participants. A key update was the integration of Job Search Training into Invest EAP's employment plans for most ICAN enrollees, providing a clear pathway for the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) to connect priority populations with WIOA services and promote stronger alignment and participation. Additionally, VDOL introduced a new electronic partner referral form to strengthen communication with partner agencies referring individuals for services. This innovative tool significantly increased the



volume of referrals from community partners, especially refugee resettlement agencies, while enabling effective tracking and ensuring timely service delivery. Together, these enhancements fostered greater collaboration, expanded access, and delivered impactful support to Vermont's most vulnerable populations.

In PY2023, VDOL strengthened its presence in correctional facilities to deliver basic career services, individualized support to build trusting relationships with incarcerated individuals. This growing partnership between the Department of Corrections and Workforce Development reflected our commitment to supporting successful reentry. Building on efforts from PY2022, VDOL staff expanded their physical and virtual engagement within correctional facilities, fostering trust and establishing meaningful connections with individuals before release. This proactive approach allowed staff to develop Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) tailored to each person's unique circumstances, creating a realistic and actionable path forward. By establishing these connections early, VDOL enhanced the likelihood of continued engagement post-release, providing a foundation for successful reentry and workforce integration.

PY 2023 WIOA ADULT PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Adult enrollments saw a significant surge in PY2023, driven in part by an influx of refugees & immigrants in several regions. Case managers coordinated with refugee resettlement agencies, and provided intensive case management, delivering tailored support services, work experiences, and on-the-job training (OJT). Through a human-centered approach, they ensured comprehensive wraparound services, empowering participants to build pathways to success.

The adult program fell short of meeting the credential measures, primarily due to some enrolled participants securing employment independently and not completing their training. Additionally, mental health challenges prevented others from continuing their training. Despite these setbacks, we remained committed to providing the support and resources necessary to help participants overcome these barriers and achieve their goals.

WIOA Adult Performance	PY 2023 Goal	PY 2023 Actual
Participants Served		409
Employment (2 nd Quarter after Exit)	69.5%	74.2%
Employment (4 th Quarter after Exit)	60.5%	72.2%
Median Earnings	\$ 5,665	\$ 8,880
Credential Attainment	69.0%	67.6%
Measurable Skill Gains	56.5%	71.4%

PY 2023 WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Dislocated Worker enrollments remained low in PY2023, despite numerous layoffs across Vermont. Many displaced workers quickly found new opportunities as local companies



stepped in to hire. To ensure that services were fully leveraged, the VDOL staff worked closely with the RESEA team to secure referrals and strengthen this critical partnership moving forward. In PY2024, we intend to continue this collaboration to maximize the support available to those affected by layoffs and enhance their transition to new employment opportunities.

WIOA DLW Performance	PY 2023 Goal	PY 2023 Actual
Participants Served		28
Employment (2 nd Quarter after Exit)	74.5%	80.0%
Employment (4 th Quarter after Exit)	68.5%	76.9%
Median Earnings	\$ 9,270	\$ 12,158
Credential Attainment	80.5%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	62.0%	87.0%

TITLE III EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Although foot traffic remains low, our staff continue to make the most of every interaction by building trusting, credible relationships with all job seekers. The majority of those who visit are unemployment claimants, and staff work to provide immediate assistance, ensuring they leave with tangible support. Additionally, staff take the opportunity to introduce these individuals to the full range of services available, helping them transition from temporary relief to long-term reemployment solutions. This approach ensures that every job seeker receives the guidance and resources needed to successfully reenter the workforce. Staff were deeply engaged in strengthening relationships within communities by meeting job seekers where they were at. By embedding themselves in key local settings—such as correctional facilities, recovery centers, and schools—they played a critical role in supporting individuals at pivotal points in their lives. Through a human-centered approach, combined with a wide range of basic and personalized career services, staff helped individuals envision and pursue new possibilities for their future, guiding them toward meaningful opportunities and long-term success.

TITLE III EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM OUTCOMES

All three outcomes for the Wagner-Peyser program in PY2023 exceeded the negotiated goal. Staff are continually focused on converting cases into WIOA Youth, Adult, or Dislocated Worker programs through assessments, career exploration, and planning meetings. This proactive approach ensures that every job seeker is fully supported and able to maximize their potential, connecting them with the right resources and opportunities to achieve their goals and build a successful future.

Wagner Peyser Performance	PY 2023 Goal	PY 2023 Actual
Participants Served		2242
Employment (2 nd Quarter after Exit)	60.5%	69.4%
Employment (4 th Quarter after Exit)	60.5%	61.3%



Median Earnings	\$ 6,600	\$ 9,064
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JVSG PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In PY2023 the JVSG staff had an authorized budget of \$500,363.00 for operational costs and the employment of 4.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs) but experienced a shortage with only 3-4 FTEs for the year, due to retirements. We will merge the roles of Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) into a Consolidated Position (CP) to better serve our rural Veteran community in the next program year.

Vacancies within our team haven't hindered the JVSG staff. Our JVSG staff continue to recruit veterans in Vermont, and our scope has expanded to include Fort Drum, NY. We promote the SkillBridge program ([DOD SkillBridge Program - Program Overview](#)) and pair that with Hilton Honors ([Hilton Honors™ Military Program](#)), and [Onward Ops](#), as well as work opportunities in Vermont and nationally with [USNLX Virtual Jobs](#). We have conducted over two dozen virtual and in-person job fairs this year. We visit all veteran housing communities (four) throughout the State. The JVSG staff embeds themselves in the veteran community by serving on committees and boards, volunteering with veteran-based organizations, and joining the local/State VFW and American Legion. This allows us to find veterans in need of employment services.

The JVSG staff has a few tools to create impactful and positive outcomes. The Hilton Honors Program offers up to three nights of free lodging at any Hilton property on an “as-needed lifetime” basis. The participating Veteran or spouse seeking employment in the State or any of the 31 participating states nationwide can use this benefit. A military Veteran or serving military member can use this for any job search activities. In PY2023, the JVSG staff used the benefit on five separate occasions, leading to employment.

“Skillbridge” is a Department of Defense (DOD) program that authorizes transitioning service members an opportunity to intern at a company of their choosing for up to 180 days. The employer incurs no cost as the service member gets all pay and allowances (medical included) from the military/DOD. During PY2023, we helped two service members. One service member retired from the Active Guard and Reserve entered the SkillBridge program, garnered an internship, and parlayed the internship into a full-time position allowing his family to stay in Vermont.

Work with Onward Ops a nonprofit organization that uses our staff as a connector to provide veterans with services in the state of Vermont. This can be employment services, a POC with in the Vermont College system, Veteran Ventures within Vermont Adaptive, places to live with “Think Vermont” or any issue a veteran may have transitioning to Vermont. Our first veteran family, retired from the military in Colorado, and decided to live in Vermont. We provided all the services and POCs to make the transition easier.

The JVSG staff takes pride in connecting with veterans in the environments where they feel most comfortable and at ease—places where veterans gather, relax, and engage in activities



they enjoy. These locations include specific veteran-oriented events like football and hockey games, parades, deployment, redeployment ceremonies, Veteran Townhall meetings, Josh's House, or Vermont Adaptive for Veterans. We establish personal connections beyond surface-level interactions by actively participating in these events and engaging in activities such as skiing, mountain biking, climbing, hiking, frisbee golf, kayaking, bowling, or attending veteran retreats. Through these engagements, we gain deeper insights into veterans' employment challenges.

While our primary mission is to assist veterans in finding employment, our impact extends beyond job placement. The scope of our influence often proves to be life-changing for the veterans we serve.

WAIVERS

Vermont had no waivers in place during Program Year 2023.

EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS

In PY2023, the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) continued to prioritize supporting employers. Although Vermont had largely overcome the challenges of the pandemic, a shift in how workers view work, pay, and benefits created new pressures for employers to stay competitive in the labor market. This change in workers' expectations led employers to realize that the pre-COVID way of doing business was no longer effective. To remain appealing to today's workforce and reduce turnover, employers continued to rethink their hiring practices, wages, benefits, and growth opportunities.

To help employers adjust, the VDOL Business Services Team has been providing statewide education on the Good Jobs Principles established by the U.S. Department of Labor. These principles promote good jobs as essential to building an equitable economy, which benefits workers, families, and businesses. A good job provides stability and security, and all work deserves respect. Many companies now understand that offering quality jobs makes them more competitive in attracting and retaining talent and advancing their business goals.

To help employers adopt these principles, the VDOL launched its first employer-focused newsletter, *Employer Edge*. The newsletter offers valuable resources and highlights businesses that exemplify the Good Jobs Principles. It has been successful, and the VDOL plans to continue spotlighting Vermont employers who provide good jobs.

In addition to the usual services offered to employers—such as posting job openings, reviewing job descriptions, matching job seekers with positions, and hosting job fairs—the VDOL Business Services Team has also introduced innovative strategies to promote employers and their job opportunities.

- In January, after many small businesses in and around Chittenden County closed, the regional team realized we couldn't keep up with providing Rapid Response services to everyone who lost their jobs. To address this, we decided to host the first-ever county-wide Rapid Response event. The event included sessions on important topics



like Unemployment Compensation, Vermont Health Connect, and Re-Employment Strategies. We also worked with key partners such as HireAbility VT (WIOA Title IV), Age Well VT, Invest EAP, Vermont Adult Learning (WIOA Title II), and VT Economic Services. Nearly 50 employers were present, offering job opportunities and conducting on-site interviews.

- Vermont was hit by severe flooding for the second summer in a row, and the Business Services Manager, along with the Regional Economic Development Director and regional Job Center staff, went to the affected area to support local businesses. We offered resources and assistance, even helping businesses with issues outside of our usual services. Business owners were thankful for the support, as it helped them work through financial challenges.
- In September, VDOL hosted a NEK Workforce Partners Job Fest at Fenton Chester Arena in Lyndonville. Over 50 employers participated, and 521 people attended. Several employers mentioned that it was one of the best hiring events they had attended, with many saying they had hired people from the event. We also provided flood resources and answered questions for businesses affected by the flooding. Having a dedicated “Communication and Outreach Coordinator” to plan and manage all aspects of communication prior to the event was a major factor in this event’s success.
- Our dedicated Communication and Outreach Coordinator revamped the Weekly Jobs Newsletter, which now goes out to 20,000 people. The newsletter highlights five jobs from each of Vermont’s five regions. In addition to the blue-collar jobs we’ve traditionally featured, we now include one white-collar/professional job from each region. The updated newsletter also highlights unique features of each job, like sign-on bonuses, paid benefits, or even free ice cream at the end of each shift. These changes are designed to align with the Good Jobs Principles and support the goals of the State Workforce Development Board, which focuses on ensuring that everyone, including women, veterans, minorities, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups, can thrive in high-demand careers that are critical to Vermont’s success in areas like housing, broadband, climate resiliency, transportation, childcare, education, and healthcare.

To better monitor employers using Vermont JobLink we’ve been focused on a more consistent and thorough vetting process last year. This process requires Business Services Team members to reach out to employers when they create a new account or reactivate an old one. This extra step has helped us build stronger relationships with employers. While the goal was to reduce fraud and misuse on the job board, it has also increased employer engagement and strengthened our performance in serving employers. We continue to train staff on the vetting process, which has helped reduce errors and minimize employer frustration.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ALL WIOA TITLES)			
WIOA Performance Measures	PY2022 Actual	PY2023 Goal	PY2023 Actual



Employer Services Provided	3778		3973
Retention with the Same Employer in the 2 nd and 4 th Quarters After Exit Rate	70.3%	Baseline	69.3%
Repeat Business Customer Rate	46.3%	Baseline	41.9%

The performance results above reflect a slight drop in Repeat Business Customer rates while our overall Employer Services provided went up. We attribute this slight drop in staff turnover. Additionally, as we are building a more focused Business Services Team, we should see an uptick next year.

WIOA PROGRAM EVALUATION

Vermont was recently accepted into the 2024 Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort (EPLC) with 5 other states. We’ve established a small team to participate in the learning cohort that includes the Workforce Development Director and both Assistant Directors, the WIOA Program Administrator, and a Business Process Analyst. Our plan will follow this timeline:

Date	Milestone/Activity	Status
10/24/24	EPLC Meeting 1: Establishing an Evaluation Capacity Baseline	Completed
12/12/24	EPLC Meeting 2: Discussing and Exploring the Essentials of Evaluation Plans	
1/15/25	EPLC Meeting 3: Discussing and Exploring the Essentials of Evaluation Plans	
2/20/25	EPLC Meeting 4: Discussing and Exploring the Essentials of Evaluation Plans	
3/27/25	EPLC Meeting 5: State Capstones, Reflections, and Next Steps	
4/15/25	Submit Evaluation Conducted as a Result of the Learning Cohort	
5/31/25	Establish & Submit Annual Evaluation Plan	

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Vermont recognizes that customer satisfaction and continuous improvement are crucial and that surveys help to measure and improve service quality. The Workforce Board’s One-Stop Operator contract includes some requirements for the operator to survey customers for their satisfaction with services of all partners. VDOL’s Analytics and Insights Team was created in early 2024 and is tasked with spearheading, supporting, and evaluating change and



improvement efforts. We anticipate dedicating more resources to measuring and improving customer satisfaction.

SECTOR STRATEGIES

Manufacturing

In Vermont, the manufacturing sector is responsible for approximately 10% of the Gross State Product (GSP) and approximately 10% of all Vermont workers are employed in manufacturing. The challenges for the industry around recruitment, training and retention have never been more significant. During this program year, VDOL entered a partnership with Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC) using state funds to grow apprenticeship programs in the manufacturing sector.

VMEC is a part of the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Program network and provides technical assistance to manufacturers to build consensus among small and medium sized manufacturers across the state, and to leverage the registered apprenticeship model so that manufacturers of all sizes can build their workforce. VMEC meets with companies, helps them determine if registered apprenticeship is an appropriate strategy, then refers the company to VDOL to begin the program registration process.

Once a program is registered, the collaborative work continues with our regional job center staff. Staff help the company navigate braiding of WIOA funding using on-the-job training and support services to incentivize employers to adopt the registered apprenticeship training model in their organizations.

One example includes the support of second round of manufacturing technician apprentices with an employer in southern Vermont. VMEC staff assisted the company to evaluate their internal training needs, outline required competencies, breakdown the cost per trainee and access training providers. As a trusted, well-known partner, VMEC was able to engage with the company and assist them in accessing multiple resources to fund their training needs.

Construction

In PY2023, VDOL continued to play a key role in addressing the shortage of skilled trades talent in the state needed to build new housing stock and repair the many buildings and homes that were damaged during catastrophic summer flooding.

One area of critical need is for licensed electricians and plumbers. Homeowners and landlords as well as commercial property owners have reported long wait times to get an electrician or plumber to do installation or repair work.

One solution that was developed was to align the electrical and plumbing programs being delivered in Perkins Act funded career technical education programs to registered apprenticeship programs, by allowing teachers in full-time secondary CTE electrical and



plumbing programs to have access to the standard related technical instruction (RTI) associated with registered apprenticeship programs for Year 1 of their four-year program. This offers opportunities for secondary students to graduate from high school with the first year of their apprenticeship RTI completed and in many cases also get credit for on-the-job experiences that had while in the CTE program's work-based learning (co-op) placements. The contractor community is welcoming these youth apprentices into work-based learning and co-op jobs knowing that they will be available to hire full time and come with a solid foundation of learning.

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

In PY2023, Vermont conducted thorough on-site monitoring across all offices and regions, delivering a robust analysis of compliance, performance, and innovation within Title I and Title III WIOA programs. This process not only ensured alignment with regulations, policies, and strategic goals but also highlighted innovative practices that are driving success in workforce development. Exemplary strategies were highlighted in the areas of customer service and performance, along with identifying challenges requiring immediate action. Clear, actionable recommendations were provided to address these concerns, reinforcing a commitment to continuous improvement across the workforce system.

Effective workforce practices emphasized hands-on learning, collaboration, and a deep understanding of available services. Shadowing opportunities allowed new workforce development employees to learn directly from experienced colleagues, gaining practical insights and building confidence in their roles. A culture of collaboration was fostered through regular team discussions on challenging cases, collective problem-solving, and consistent check-ins with supervisors, ensuring a supportive and solutions-oriented environment. Additionally, a comprehensive understanding of the full range of services offered under labor exchange had significantly improved and was being strategically leveraged to better meet customer needs, enhancing both service delivery and outcomes. The PY2023 monitoring revealed critical areas for improvement that demand immediate attention:

- Ineffective case transitions led to participants being unintentionally soft-exited from the system without contact, depriving them of vital support and undermining program outcomes and performance metrics.
- lack of consistent oversight in reviewing Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) and Individual Service Strategies (ISSs) was identified, with no clear evidence of the required monthly reviews. This oversight gap stalled participants' progress, left action plans unaddressed, and impeded accurate documentation of outcomes.
- the absence or ambiguity of key WIOA policies created inconsistencies in service delivery and caused confusion among staff, complicating compliance and reducing effectiveness. Addressing these challenges through targeted training and enhanced guidance for case managers will be a top priority moving forward.

In PY2020, the Vermont Department of Labor signed a data sharing agreement with Vocational Rehab for co-enrollment activities. The VDOL and HireAbility Vermont continue to share data on a quarterly basis.



The VDOL Analytics and Insights (AI) team runs weekly reports to track, monitor, and ensure that employer and job seeker activity in the MIS, Vermont JobLink, is as complete as possible. To verify employers and job seekers are receiving timely and appropriate job matching opportunities, the AI Team looks at active and disabled employer accounts with job postings to ensure that all job postings are publicly viewable as intended. The team also looks at pending enrollments to ensure job seekers are enrolled in a timely manner as appropriate.

The state has had a common exit policy in place for several years. The DOL-administered programs included in the common exit process are the Title I and III programs as well as the Trade Adjustment Assistance program.

STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

State Reserve funds were used to pay for a portion of the salary and benefits of the workforce system's EO Compliance Manager, which establishes and administers the WIOA Non-Discrimination Plan. The funds also pay for a portion of the salary and benefits of various staff engaged in provision of technical assistance to State entities and one-stop partners, or who are engaged in improvement of coordination of activities in the workforce system, or who are engaged in development of staff working in the system. The Workforce Board's One-stop Operator contract is also paid out of these reserve funds.

PROCUREMENT FOR NEW CRM -ONGOING

Vermont completed a request for information (RFI) and request for proposal (RFP) process during PY 2021 to solicit proposals from vendors who could improve the VDOL's information management system, including its case and customer management system, job board, financial tracking system, and information display platform. The state's reserve funds aided in the identification of system requirements and the articulation of an improved future state for the VDOL's management information system. This system will disseminate information about eligible and non-eligible training providers, work-based learning and training experiences. These include registered apprenticeship opportunities, best practices in employer recruitment, hiring, and retention. Additionally, it includes toolkits for employers and training providers to ensure accessibility, both physical and programmatic, for individuals with disabilities.

There have been many challenges related to the selected vendor. The VDOL is currently in the recovery phase of the project and is actively working toward securing a vendor to advance the initiative. We will continue to use America's Job Link Alliance until a replacement system is procured and implemented.

RAPID RESPONSE AND LAYOFF AVERSION

In PY2023, the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) provided Rapid Response services to nine major layoff events, affecting nearly 350 workers. We offered information sessions and organized targeted job fairs to help those impacted. Due to Vermont's low unemployment rate and other economic challenges like limited housing, most laid-off individuals have had



an easier time finding new jobs. In some cases, the high demand for workers helped shorten the time people were unemployed. Many workers quickly found new employment in or near their communities, thanks to outreach from local businesses.

As businesses adjust their operations in response to uncertain global and national conditions, layoffs increased toward the end of PY2023. In response, we partnered with our core Rapid Response partners to develop new tools and resources for a more effective approach to support impacted workers.

One key initiative was adding representatives from VT Health Connect (Vermont's Health Care Exchange) to Rapid Response sessions. Since many workers lose their health insurance when they lose their job, we included presentations from VT Health Connect, followed by Q&A sessions, to help workers understand their options. This collaboration has been successful, and workers have found the participation of VT Health Connect very helpful.

VDOL has also started hosting smaller monthly job fairs aimed specifically at those affected by layoffs or business closures. These events create direct connections between job seekers and employers. Right now, we can support impacted workers well, as many Vermont businesses are hiring, but we will continue working closely with our unemployment insurance and economic development partners to offer additional resources as needed.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Establishment of an Analytics and Insights Team

In early 2024, the Analytics and Insights Team (AI Team) was formed to drive continuous improvement within the Workforce Development Division. Its mission is to enhance the division's programs, processes, and the staff who deliver them. The team started with three members. One member's focus is to identify opportunities for business process improvement across the division. Through comprehensive data collection and quality initiatives, two other members provide analysis and actionable insights to support decision-making and drive progress. Later, a fourth member was added to the team, dedicated to advancing staff development by creating a comprehensive onboarding program for new hires and offering ongoing training opportunities for all staff. Collectively, the AI Team plays a pivotal role in spearheading, supporting, and evaluating change and improvement efforts. They are also key advocates for best practices in knowledge sharing, communication, and change management.

CHALLENGES

The State of Vermont is not without challenges. Specifically, the state has an aging housing stock, a lack of affordable housing, access to transportation in rural areas, an aging workforce, a declining school-age population, and a low unemployment rate.

- The housing market in Vermont has continued to be a challenge as we seek to recruit college students, exiting military members, and people looking to relocate.



Conversations with core partners have time and time again provided a response indicating lack of housing opportunities results in individuals seeking relocation elsewhere. The imbalance between housing supply (low) and housing demand (high) has led to increases in home values. In addition, Vermont experienced catastrophic flooding in both the summer of 2023 and 2024. These events have had a further impact on home and rental availability in throughout the state.

- Transportation continues to be a challenge for our primarily rural state. Individuals who do not possess their own mode of transportation or who do not have access to public transportation struggle to find ways to get back and forth to work but also to appointments. Many of the hardest to serve individuals, with whom state and federal funding programs are designed for, fail to meet goals and expectations due to this lack of access. There continues to be a growing demand for driver's education funding for adults, and specifically New Americans and high school students are not able to access the traditional school funding because they weren't able to take the course while in school. This poses a challenge in Vermont as funding is limited to support this, though we encourage partners who are submitting applications from various funding sources to plan for and request funds to pay for driver's education for vulnerable populations.
- In 2024 Vermont's unemployment rate continues to hover around 2.0% which remains well below the national unemployment rate. Vermont has also been impacted by baby boomer retirements, and declining birth rates.
- Changing expectations and interest around degree programs among high school graduates has also cause some changes in the post-secondary environment in Vermont. As colleges and universities work to right size offerings and to adjust to new financial realities, it has resulted in fewer opportunities. There is greater interest in registered apprenticeships as a result.
- A goal of the Vermont workforce system continues to be encouraging employers to be more willing to consider candidates they may not have previously considered, such as justice involved individuals, or even encore workers who are re-entering the workforce after retirement and who are interested in part time employment.
- The removal of 33 training providers and 110 programs from the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) in Program Year 2023 due to unmet reporting requirements has had a significant impact on our customers. This reduction has narrowed the range of training options available, limiting opportunities for individuals to access programs that align with their career goals and local labor market needs. For many customers, especially those in rural areas or seeking specialized training, fewer choices mean added challenges in finding accessible, high-quality programs. This reduction may also create longer wait times for enrollment in remaining programs and increase competition for limited slots, further complicating the path to employment for job seekers. Ensuring program accountability is critical, but these challenges highlight the need for balanced solutions that uphold quality standards while supporting a robust and diverse array of training opportunities for all customers.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

- Vermont understands the importance of having policies in alignment with federal guidelines, but that are responsive to Vermont's unique needs. As Vermont reviews current Title, I & Title III policies and procedures, technical assistance may be needed.
- The Eligible Training Provider requirements continue to be a concern for the VDOL, its customers, and our training providers. Vermont may seek technical assistance to improve the ETP process and performance reporting.
- Improving coordination of services and leveraging funding across state partners has continued to be a focus for Vermont in every program year. There may be a benefit in technical assistance to help us capitalize on the significant funding opportunities.
- There may be a technical assistance need for the State Workforce Development Board in building a framework around roles and responsibilities.
- There is technical assistance need for guidance around the procurement of youth service providers and establishing written agreements with current youth service providers.

SUCCESS STORIES & TESTIMONIALS

CDL Success

Sawyer began his journey with VDOL, facing challenges in completing his school credits. Through determination, he entered a work experience program that not only helped him earn those credits but also to develop foundational workplace skills. His dedication, resilience, and enthusiasm impressed his employer, leading to an on-the-job training (OJT) opportunity with the same organization. This transformative experience boosted his confidence and self-esteem, enabling him to thrive. Sawyer proudly earned his high school diploma, secured full-time employment, and achieved a major milestone by acquiring his CDL-B license.

Testimonial: Overcoming Addiction and Rebuilding a Life

"If you would have asked me a couple of years ago how I saw myself in the future, I would have said dead or in prison. Because eventually, that is where most drug addicts like me wind up. It's a harsh reality most people in my situation don't want to admit. That all changed when I entered the VFOR program, which helps people like me who struggle with addiction. Not using is not enough. They helped me reset my life. Making plans and setting goals for a more productive life is one way in which they do that. It was recommended to me to set up an appointment with Vermont Department of Labor. I met with the Vermont Dept. of Labor and HireAbility of Vermont. It was life changing! I had no real training or trade experience. My jobs up to this point were mostly dead-end jobs with no real future. But with the help I got from VDOL, HireAbility and ICAN, I was able to get my CDL and look forward to having an actual career, not just a job. They enrolled me in a scholarship program which not only paid for my



schooling but helped me with clothing and transportation costs as well as financial help to pay for housing while I attended school. These are all things I could not have afforded on my own. They helped me not only with finances, but with their guidance, encouragement, and emotional support. By the time an addict finally reaches out for help, they are usually at the end of their rope. Their life's in a dark pit. The Department of Labor together with HireAbility made a way out of that pit for me! I am forever grateful for their help. I graduated in Nov 2022 with my CDL. Within a few weeks I was employed for seasonal work driving a tri-axel truck for an excavating company. Before the season ended, I landed a job driving for a long-haul waste removal company. I now take home more money in a week than I used to in a month! I am happy with my career choice and have a great future to look forward to thanks to their help! It is wonderful to know that opportunity is out there, even for people in situations like me!"

Sean's Journey to Employment Through Community Support and Training

Sean, a disabled veteran and father of six, was referred to the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) by the Unemployment Division after being laid off from his job as a laborer. Living in a rural area without a valid driver's license due to multiple infractions across several states posed a significant barrier to his employment prospects.

To address this challenge, Sean worked closely with his VDOL Employment and Training Consultant, who coordinated a collaborative effort with multiple partner organizations, including the Department of Motor Vehicles, Community Restorative Justice Center, veteran support organizations, and the Vermont Judiciary and County Court. Through their collective support, Sean successfully had his driver's license reinstated.

While participating in the WIOA program, Sean pursued three occupational skills trainings: Small Engine Repair, Introduction to Automotive, and Broadband Network Construction. He also gained hands-on experience through a work placement with a local auto mechanic's shop.

Today, Sean has overcome his barriers and is thriving in unsubsidized employment with a local HVAC and plumbing company, exemplifying the transformative power of dedication, training, and community partnership.

Empowering Dreams: Skyler's Path to a Bright Future as an Electrician

At just 19 years old, Skyler had a clear goal: he wanted to become an electrician. With a high school diploma earned and some summer work experience as a dishwasher and supermarket cashier, Skyler's determination was evident. However, turning his aspirations into reality required guidance and support.



Skyler was referred to the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC). Recognizing his eligibility for WIOA as a member of a priority population from an economically disadvantaged household, VDOL quickly stepped in to help Skyler take his first steps toward a promising career.

With VDOL's assistance, Skyler secured an apprenticeship with a local electric company. This opportunity marked the beginning of a hands-on journey in the electrical trade. Skyler excelled in his first year of apprenticeship training. Now, he continues to be an apprentice with the same company and is enrolled in his second year of apprenticeship classes.

VDOL provided critical support along the way, helping Skyler with essential resources such as books for his coursework and car repairs to ensure reliable transportation to training and work.

Skyler's journey is a testament to the power of determination, the value of community support, and the impact of personalized workforce development. His future in the electrical trade shines brightly, thanks to his hard work and the resources and guidance he received through VDOL.

In Skyler's own words:

"I'd like to say that VDOL has been very helpful, and I am glad for the year that VDOL has been working with me! They put a lot of effort and time into your success! They also help you when you don't have the time for certain things—they put in the extra effort and time for you! When you have your mind set on something, VDOL does not disappoint and will put you on the right track, no matter the circumstances!"

Testimonials

*"At probably one of my life's most critical moments, and when other systems were failing, Vermont Workforce Development counselors, stepped up and truly helped me. Both of the counselor's sincerity of care and consistent follow through, despite the pressure of present day challenges, deserves recognition." – **WIOA Adult Participant***

