



State of Vermont  
Department of Labor  
Workforce Development Division  
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Dustin Degree  
Executive Director  
State Workforce Development Board  
109 State Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Montpelier, VT 05601

December 31, 2019

Dear Mr. Degree,

Pursuant to your letter to the Vermont Department of Labor on June 28, 2019, this letter serves as a status update on changes and improvements that have been made to the Burlington One-Stop American Job Center since the State Workforce Development Board's Policy Committee re-certified it in June.

As the One-Stop Operator for the Vermont's American Job Center Network, the Department of Labor is responsible for working with one-stop partners to ensure that services provided under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are both physically and programmatically accessible.

As a condition of the Board's 2019 recertification of the Burlington One-Stop American Job Center, you requested a progress update on several key areas related to the service delivery and accessibility in the Burlington location. Outlined below are the elements you had requested updates for, with our responses based on work to date:

- 1. The One-Stop operator and required partners shall collaborate with partners including the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Vermont Assistive Technology Program and Advisory Council to continue to improve the physical and programmatic accessibility of the One-Stop.*

The Vermont Department of Labor has been working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the Vermont Assistive Technology Program (AT), and the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) to make the Burlington One-Stop fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. While there are tools for accessibility already in the One-Stop, VDOL is pursuing replacements and upgrades. Our working plans for improvements to physical and programmatic accessibility are as follows:

#### **Physical Accessibility**

The interior and exterior of the building have been assessed for physical accessibility, with several recommendations for improvement including:

- By fall 2020: Adding an additional handicapped parking space with clear designation that it is for One-Stop customers. Repaint spaces.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$4,000**

- By fall 2020: Updated Braille signage on elevators, restroom doors etc.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$1,000**

- For future consideration: Make the upstairs bathrooms ADA-compliant. The public restrooms on the first floor are fully accessible for both staff and customers. Upstairs bathrooms are not fully accessible, and the recommendation would be to make them accessible in the event additional community partners and staff will occupy that upstairs space.

### **Programmatic Accessibility**

Working with experts in accessibility from VR, DBVI and the AT program, VDOL staff have identified several technologies that would make the One-Stop more accessible to individuals with disabilities. By creating 2 distinct accessible workstations\*, one focused on accessibility for Blind and Visually Impaired customers, and the other equipped with tools for individuals with hearing impairments, VDOL is committed to making programs and services accessible to ALL Vermonters:

- Workstation\* for individuals with visual impairments would include:
  - ZoomText Software integrated with JAWS screen-reader software
  - Text-to-speech (Microsoft)
  - Braille reader
- Workstation\* for individuals with hearing impairments:
  - Large screen monitors for Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) American Sign Language
  - “Induction Loop” for resource room (allows for hearing in large areas using digital hearing aids)
  - Hands-free speaker phones with large keys & options for the hearing impaired
- Universal Accessibility (both workstations):
  - Multiple input devices including trackballs, trackpads, and vertical mice
  - Large print keyboard
  - Noise-cancelling headset with volume controls
  - Fully adjustable electric workstations that allow for wheelchair users
  - Word prediction software such as Lightkey
  - Dictation, MS Word built-in or Dragon

We estimate that the workstation for visually impaired would be available functional by March 2020 and the workstation for hearing impaired would be available by April 2020.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$15,000-\$25,000**

### **Overall One-Stop upgrades**

While VDOL's resources for capital improvements are limited, we recognize that the Burlington One-Stop facility is in need of upgrades. After completing an assessment involving our Facilities Manager, Tom Tomasi, Regional Manager, Danielle Kane, Assistant Director of Workforce Development, Hugh Bradshaw, and Planning and Support Administrator, Rose Lucenti, we have identified the items to be addressed:

- Move reception desk to front of the Resource Room to create a more welcoming atmosphere-greet customers at the door
- Establish a customer feedback mechanism to get "real-time" feedback on our services in the One-Stop
- New paint and carpeting in common areas
- Upgraded tables and chairs
- Elevator painting, replace carpet
- Create private office spaces on top floor for prospective new partners
- Upgrade upstairs meeting space, including new induction loop for hearing impaired
- Add safety stripes to stairs for visually impaired
- Alternative formats available for all materials (possibly digital)

**ESTIMATED COMPLETION OF ONE-STOP UPGRADES:** Ongoing and incremental based on funding availability, with completion possible by December 2022.

**ESTIMATED COST:** \$100,000 (not including private office space renovation)

2. *The Committee recognizes the efforts of all One-Stop required and non-required partners to train and cross-train staff to share program/service information and best practices, however, the Committee understands that these trainings and cross-trainings are necessary on an ongoing, cyclical basis. The One-Stop operator and required and non-required partners shall develop and implement a plan to ensure that trainings and cross trainings are scheduled on a cyclical basis to ensure that all staff regularly receive up-to-date information.*

Cross-training of One-Stop staff and community partners has begun. Over the fall of 2019, One-Stop partners attended a VDOL and SWDB sponsored Regional Summit. Part of the event was dedicated to training service providers about other partner programs. Additionally, VDOL and VR regional managers and leadership have started day-long bi-annual meetings to better coordinate delivery of services, understand program eligibility and braid funding streams. Future trainings will be on a quarterly basis starting in March of 2020, with each partner program having a revolving opportunity to showcase their services and target population(s). A full calendar of trainings is under development and will be made available to all One-Stop partner programs by July 2020. Vermont Job Link cross training of ICAN staff working with SNAP participants has also been completed, with instructional videos and a user guide available to all users.

3. *The Committee recognizes the work of the One-Stop operator and required partners to complete its memorandum of understanding (MOU) last year. Though this is an important step, the Committee found that the co-location of required partners remains only partially implemented due to several barriers as indicated by One-Stop leadership. The One-Stop operator and required partners shall convene to discuss co-location, including:*

- *The necessity and feasibility of physical collocation*
- *The potential benefits of virtual collocation*
- *The short-term and long-term steps to implement co-location*

### **Physical Collocation**

Collocating workforce service providers at 63 Pearl Street, Burlington has been a longstanding challenge. The building itself is co-owned by the federal government and the Vermont Department of Labor, and is thus not managed like other state buildings. VDOL manages all aspects of the facility and its operation.

WIOA requires all required one-stop partners to be (physically or virtually) collocated in the state's comprehensive One-Stop American Job Centers (Vermont's only comprehensive center is in Burlington). While Vermont does indeed meet this collocation requirement, the lack of substantial physical collocation is seen as missed opportunity to further integrate delivery of all employment and training focused services by some. VDOL agrees that promoting and facilitating physical collocation of some programs will improve outcomes for customers. However, for roughly half of the required one-stop partners, collocation of their programs and services would have a significant financial and programmatic impact that is likely to outweigh the benefit of a physical move. VDOL encourages the Board to further explore those considerations with the partners directly if there is interest in learning more.

Barriers to increasing collocation include: the overall condition of the facility, breaking current leases (particularly challenging in BGS leases), scarcity of personal office spaces, and parking. Advantages to collocation include: a relatively low per square foot cost, proximity to public transportation and downtown Burlington, availability of space, proximity of partners, ease in access to building oversight officers.

In our review of the physical space, we discussed the possibility of creating private offices around the perimeter of the second floor, with common cubicles available for workers who don't need the privacy to conduct business. We believe that by creating private offices on the second floor, we would incentivize the move of a large partner (not to be named at this point) who is interested in collocation. If this partner joins us at the Burlington One-Stop, we feel others would soon follow, as we would be at a critical mass to truly create a One-Stop in every sense.

Any changes made to the 63 Pearl Street facility are completely within the discretion of VDOL as owner of the building. However, as roughly a quarter of the building serves as the location of the state's comprehensive One-Stop American Job Center, VDOL will keep the Board apprised of any significant developments or changes that occur.

### **"Virtual" Co-Location**

Several partner programs have both an occasional presence and a full-time "virtual" presence via technology. Vocational Rehabilitation is a good example. A VR Counselor spends a few hours each week at the One-Stop, where they can assist any individual with a disability, often in partnership with their VDOL counterparts. In cases where a VR counselor isn't available in person, there is a mechanism to Skype over to the Burlington VR office, where the customer can interact face-to-face with a live person at VR, arrange for an initial meeting with a Counselor, or

find out more about services VR can offer. We have found that this “warm” handoff between programs is a best practice.

4. *In order for the Committee to fulfill its charge to establish universal workforce system performance measures and identify necessary program data to be regularly collected for the purposes of maintaining a workforce program inventory, the One-Stop operator shall regularly report data and performance metrics to the Committee. As the Committee continues to develop a workforce performance "dashboard" by which it may evaluate the effectiveness of the system as a whole, it may choose to include some or all of the reported One-Stop performance data as a metric.*

5.

All performance data for the One-Stop system is captured in Vermont Job Link and can be made readily available to the committee upon request. VDOL’s recent Program Year 2018 reports are attached for the committee’s information.

6. *The One-Stop operator shall develop and implement an improved mechanism for collecting client feedback. This feedback shall inform the continuous improvement of the One-Stop and shall be reported to the Committee on a regular basis.*

We are currently exploring several options for collecting customer feedback, ranging from real-time feedback “buttons” a person could select after receiving services, written customer feedback cards, to online surveys of customers to get more detail on their experiences. One initial tool we are exploring to bring a basic level of customer feedback into the One-Stop is the commercially available “happy-or-not” survey tool. We expect to have a preliminary feedback tool in place by March 2020.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$3,000**

We at the Department of Labor are proud to be making progress in the areas outlined above and very much appreciate the Board and Committees interest in and support of this work. We look forward to an informal review with the Committee again in the summer of 2020.

Thank you again for your continued support. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [Sarah.Buxton@vermont.gov](mailto:Sarah.Buxton@vermont.gov) or (802) 828-4343.

Sincerely,



Sarah Buxton  
State Director of Workforce Development  
Vermont Department of Labor

Cc: Adam Grinold, SWDB Chair  
Michael Harrington, Acting Commissioner,  
Vermont Department of Labor and Chair, SWDB Policy Committee  
Sophia Yager, Deputy Director, SWDB

Attachments: VDOL PY 2018 WIOA Reports