

# **WIOA UNIFIED STATE PLAN: GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

**GOAL 1: Maximize equitable access to workforce development services through a seamless, coordinated delivery system that provides a quality, consistent experience for any jobseeker or Vermont employer.**

*Vermont is a small state with great partnerships between and across the different workforce development networks. Because of its size, most of the partners have known each other and worked together for many years. Due to this familiarity, the different networks have not fully operated in a coordinated manner that is most beneficial to the customers of the Vermont workforce development system. Breaking down this system of silos and creating a true network among the partners will help our customers reach their full potential.*

**Strategy A:** Maintain an inventory of all workforce and education training opportunities across state government and community partners.

- Identify areas of duplication and potential inefficiencies across all partners to focus efforts and message effectively.
- Maximize the successful participation of all Vermonters in available education and training programs leading to employment or advancement in employment.

**Strategy B:** Align core programs and develop cross training of staff at all levels, including:

- Inter-agency training to ensure all staff are familiar with each other's programs.
- Training to recognize, address, and resolve implicit bias and stereotypes to ensure access to all Vermonters.

**Strategy C:** Increase focused communication among all service delivery points and partners. This will include:

- Development of common intake and joint referral processes.
- Exploring strategies for further co-location, driven by local needs.

**Strategy D:** Hold a regular series of workforce development summits or conferences, at least once per year, in order to:

- Foster existing statewide network relationships.
- Discuss best practices happening statewide and nationally.
- Identify areas of improvement and create action plans to assess gaps and leverage resources.

**GOAL 2: Connect individuals to the training and supports they need to enter an occupation and progress on career pathways resulting in a livable wage.**

*Employment is the only reliable route out of poverty for low income Vermonters. The workforce development system must offer Vermonters in poverty opportunities to access pathways to jobs that offer a livable wage (or above) and other benefits.*

**Strategy A:** Develop effective approaches to connect those living in poverty to the workforce development system. This will include:

- The expansion of existing, and development of new, partnerships with state agencies and community programs serving those with the highest economic need and those individuals with barriers to employment, including people with disabilities, new Americans, women in poverty, displaced homemakers, people who are homeless, offenders, lower-skilled adult learners, and Vermonters in recovery.
- Partnership with the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to provide adult education and workforce services for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) beneficiaries, non-custodial parents who owe child support, and Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs).
- Partnerships with state agencies and community programs serving youth who are at-risk and living in poverty, including youth with emotional behavioral disabilities served through the JOBS program.

**Strategy B:** Expand workforce development and training initiatives and programs for Vermonters in high-demand and high-wage jobs. This will include:

- The development and expansion of sector-based training programs.
- The development and expansion of apprenticeships training, certification programs, and industry recognized credentials in high demand sectors.
- The development and expansion of state-endorsed Career Pathways in target sectors, beginning in middle school and culminating in a variety of credentials, degrees and employment outcomes at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.
- Ensuring Career Pathways have entrance points for lower-skilled adults that connect to adult education programs with outreach specific to this population.

**Strategy C:** Explore opportunities to address disincentives to work built into state and federal benefits programs, such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or TANF.

- Seek federal waivers to test alternative benefit structures and work incentives to make work pay.
- Promote state policy adjustments designed to incentivize employment for individuals who receive public benefits.

**Strategy D:** Utilize the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) grant as comprehensive pilot to experiment on how the workforce system can serve beneficiaries effectively.

- The SNAP E&T grant is a partnership between Vermont DCF, Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Community College of Vermont to provide comprehensive return to work services for beneficiaries who are recent offenders, have substance abuse disorders, and/or are homeless. The partnership will test new strategies to support return to work for these populations who have significant barriers to employment.

**GOAL 3: Strengthen the Vermont economy by working with state and private partners to make data-driven changes that increase the number of workers employed in the skilled trades, STEM fields, advanced manufacturing and other Vermont priority sectors, including non-traditional or under-represented populations such as women.**

**Strategy A:** Regularly collect, analyze, and report on labor market, workforce development, and training data by gender.

**Strategy B:** Work with Vermont State agencies, departments and community partners to identify and support education, training, or economic development initiatives to reduce occupational segregation in priority sectors.

**Strategy C:** Support employer efforts to improve gender balance in priority sectors.

**Strategy D:** Work with 7-12 education, Career Technical Education (CTE), postsecondary education and employer sectors to ensure that student personalized learning plans are informed by broad exposure to a full range of careers, including non-traditional careers for women.

**GOAL 4: Ensure all students who graduate from high school are able to pursue and complete post-secondary education, training, apprenticeships or career opportunities, with the education and skills necessary to keep Vermonters competitive in the economic sectors critical to the Vermont economy.**

*The effort to increase college and career readiness for high school graduates has remained a priority for the State of Vermont, from the Governor's Strategic Plan in 2012 through the recent Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD).*

*Vermont has one of the nation's highest high school graduation rates, with a long history of flexible pathways to graduation for learners of traditional age and for adults (Act 77, 2013). Vermont has defined and adopted college and career readiness standards. These standards are being implemented to guide instruction throughout the local education systems across the state and are a key component of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act state plan. (Education Quality Standards, State Board of Education Rule 2000, 2014).*

**Strategy A:** Support emergent partnerships among K–12, including Career and Technical Education, adult education, higher education, employers, state agencies and other workforce development partners, in order to:

- Establish and promote Career Pathways, focusing on priority pathways and in-demand industries and occupations.
- Establish transition to post-secondary education and training programs in all regions to prepare underskilled out-of-school youth and adult learners for successful entry into and progress within post-secondary education and training programs within a career pathway.
- Connect skills learned in school with their application in the workplaces of the future; become a resource for students and schools in addressing Personalized Learning Plans and other career aspirations.
- Reach out to youth who are leaving school to engage them in workforce development opportunities, specifically WIOA youth and adult activities.
- Maximize effectiveness of the Pre-Employment Transitions Services (PETS).

**GOAL 5: Align the workforce development system to the needs of employers, as well as job seekers, through systematic and ongoing engagement and partnership.**

*The workforce development system must serve two customers with equal energy, the job seeker/employee and the employer. In order to be in alignment with the workforce needs of employers, the workforce development system must be engaged at the state and local level with employers on an ongoing basis.*

**Strategy A:** Establishment of protocols for VDOL and DVR to coordinate outreach and candidate referral to employers.

**Strategy B:** Promote the coordination of services from VDOL and DVR offered to employers to support a successful placement.

**Strategy C:** Expand existing and develop new joint VDOL and DVR marketing and outreach efforts to the employer community. This may include:

- Jointly sponsored career fairs and business recognition events.
- Regular meetings between VDOL and DVR employment staff to share contacts and local outreach activities.

**Strategy D:** Expand partnerships with the local workforce development leaders to identify skill gaps and develop training programs to meet the staffing needs of local businesses.

**Strategy E:** Expand the use of work experiences (progressive employment; on-the-job-training (OJT), internships, pre-apprenticeship, etc.) to help job seekers build skills that meet the local employer workforce demand.

**Strategy F:** Ensure that K-12 and Adult Education and Literacy providers are aware of State workforce needs, high-priority industries and employment sectors, and sectors with high employer demand so that they may incorporate this information into their ongoing work on personalized learning plans and career development with adult learners.

**GOAL 6: Expand Vermont's labor force by helping more Vermonters enter the labor market and relocating out-of-state workers to meet employer's needs.**

**Strategy A:** Education and employment service delivery providers will increase attention to at-risk youth, ex-offenders, individuals in recovery, and other individuals with barriers to employment to support their initial, continuing, and extended participation in the labor market.

**Strategy B:** Work to retrain and retain older workers in the labor force after traditional retirement or temporary exit from the workforce.

**Strategy C:** Working with VDOL, ACCD and Tourism and Marketing to create strategies to convert visitors, tourists, out of state college students and Vermonters living outside of the state to full time residents and workers.