



2024 Program Year (PY '24)

# Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Annual Narrative Report

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## 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 Program Year (PY) '24 (period covering July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025), VDOL continued to operate a statewide network of American Job Centers in partnership with core WIOA partners and others to deliver high-quality, accessible, flexible services to the job seekers and employers of Vermont. The focus during this period was on strengthening these partnerships, evaluating delivery and service coordination approaches, reviewing and updating policies, and building capacity through VDOL staff training and cross-partner training.

Significant system-level developments occurred during PY '24. The Governor's newly constituted State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) was appointed and seated, and the Governor appointed an Executive Director and Deputy Director to the new Office of Workforce Strategy and Development. VDOL worked closely with the SWDB to provide foundational orientation on WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and statewide performance trends, and to support ongoing one-stop certification activities. The Board is expected to release updated strategic goals that will guide the forthcoming WIOA State Plan modification.

As a result of the Consolidated Compliance Review in August 2024, VDOL actively embarked on a plan to resolve the 15 findings that were cited. By June 20, 2025, we had resolved 7 of the 15, with several others nearing resolution through ongoing training and technical assistance. This effort has included collaboration with the SWDB, numerous staff training sessions, revisiting formal partner agreements, and a full review of VDOL's financial reporting processes and procedures.

Finally, during PY '24, VDOL committed to reviewing and updating several policies. Under new division leadership, a Policy Review Team was established. As a team, we held several meetings to adopt definitions that help us use clearly understood language in this important work. The Workforce Development Division is in the process of moving away from "policies" toward Operational Governance (OG) for any written, structured compliance directives that we create. OGs are approved by the Division Director and are intended to undergo a comprehensive review at least on a biennial basis. The process ensures consistency, compliance with state and federal regulations, and articulated coordination among programs. Some Operational Governance documents are currently being reviewed and refined address data validation, ETPL, dislocated workers, and adult priority of service. Most of these are high priority in order to respond to and resolve a CCR finding, but the Dislocated Worker OG is also under review to allow for more inclusion of underemployed individuals.

Members of the VDOL leadership team have been participating in a National Governors Association Service-to-Career Pathways Policy Academy. This work will leverage national,

state, and community service programs as structured, work-based learning experiences that build the skills, credentials, and professional networks needed for sustained employment and upward mobility. Rooted in the idea that service is both a public good and a talent-development strategy, these pathways translate the competencies gained through AmeriCorps, conservation corps, and other service experiences into recognized, portable skills aligned with high-demand occupations. Vermont is exploring how to integrate service into its workforce strategies—connecting service members to Registered Apprenticeship, CTE, and postsecondary training; aligning supportive services; and partnering with employers to recognize service as meaningful preparation for work. By treating service as an on-ramp rather than a detour, Service-to-Career Pathways strengthen labor force participation, expand access for priority populations, and help states cultivate a work-ready, civically engaged talent pipeline by connecting Vermont employers with workers who are already here.

Finally, in preparation for the changes and requirements of HR.1 that will impact a large number of SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid recipients, VDOL has begun to engage with the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Vermont Department of Health Access to develop strengthened partnerships and systems to support this need. These discussions have centered around our current Individualized Career Advancement Network (ICAN) program and what we have learned from that model, which is Vermont’s employment partnership program with ReachUP (SNAP/TANF). Much work has been done in previous years to expand access and streamline processes for program participants—primarily through alignment with ICAN program requirements to connect the priority populations that receive these benefits with WIOA services. As we move into PY ’25, we expect this active collaboration to continue and to build on the strong foundation that ICAN has demonstrated. Additionally, we are updating current job search workshops and plan to build a more comprehensive set of career development workshops that incorporate digital and AI literacy.

## **VERMONT’S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM**

In PY ’24, as in previous years, growing the workforce in Vermont remained a high priority for the Governor Phil Scott administration, the SWDB, and the core WIOA partners. As the lead partner, VDOL has been working to continuously improve the Vermont workforce system by increasing strategic partnerships, exploring new technology to create more efficiency, and continuing to invest in staff training.

Some key strategic partnerships that you will hear about throughout this report involve collaborating organizations that can support our connections to priority populations. These include youth (especially out-of-school or opportunity youth), individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, and New Americans. While each of these groups requires unique tools and strategies, we aim to deliver employment and training services as consistently as possible.

Through our certified, comprehensive one-stop American Job Center in Burlington and a network of five affiliate centers and five satellite service locations, we offer services in a manner that meets people where they are and how they prefer to engage with us. In PY ’24,

we maintained our successful “Labor on Location” program. This program involves job center staff delivering services in rural community libraries, recovery centers, secondary schools and CTE centers, and correctional facilities. While “Labor on Location” was founded in the post-COVID years, it has proven effective, and regional teams have developed schedules and tools to travel and deliver services as needed. As we anticipate an increase in the number of job seekers and career advancers needing our services because of changes in federal policy, we will focus efforts in PY '25 on building out and reinforcing our referral tracking and processing systems.

### **Vermont’s Workforce Mission and Goals**

In PY '24, the goals below continued to guide the work of VDOL and the entire system of workforce partners in Vermont. As the State Workforce Development Board continues forming and reviewing these goals, we anticipate receiving refined and updated goals toward the end of 2025 or in early 2026. The newly adopted goals will guide our work as we begin the process of developing the 2024–2028 State Plan modification.

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**

VDOL continues to leverage both state and federal funds to support the WIOA system. In 2022, the General Assembly and the Governor created a two-year pilot called the “Workforce Expansion” program. The purpose of the Workforce Expansion Program is to increase Vermont’s available workforce and better align talent with employer demand, particularly in regions and industries experiencing persistent labor shortages.

At its core, the program is designed to:

- Increase labor force participation by engaging Vermonters who are not currently working or are underemployed, including people facing barriers to employment.
- Help employers fill open positions by improving local coordination, outreach, and connections to the workforce system.
- Strengthen regional collaboration by convening collaborating organizations across workforce development, education, economic development, and human services around shared labor market goals.
- Promote career pathways and quality jobs, with an emphasis on wage growth, advancement opportunities, and clear pathways into in-demand occupations.
- Support place-based solutions, recognizing that workforce challenges and opportunities vary across regions of the state and are best addressed through locally driven strategies supported by state and federal resources.

In practice, the program functions as a catalyst: it invests in regional capacity and coordination so communities can move faster from identifying workforce challenges to implementing solutions that expand the labor pool, improve job quality, and support Vermont’s long-term economic stability.

VDOL was also awarded Year-3 State Apprenticeship Expansion Funds. Building on the funds received under SAEF 1 and SAEF 2, these funds will be focused on developing a Teacher Apprenticeship pathway and strengthening career pathways using apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship in the construction industry.

### **WIOA TITLE I YOUTH**

Engaging youth voice remained a priority, though initial strategies did not yield the anticipated participation. A PY '23 Youth Voice Survey informed subsequent planning and highlighted key findings, including strong perceptions of staff support and common barriers related to financial instability and limited work experience. While a planned focus group did not materialize due to limited participation, these lessons will inform future youth engagement strategies.

### *EmployVT: Youth Career Connector*

In PY '24, VDOL issued an RFP to expand outreach to out-of-school and opportunity youth through the EmployVT: Youth Career Connector initiative. Three projects were approved and will begin operations in PY '25. Outcomes will be reported in the next annual narrative.

### **WIOA TITLE I ADULT / DISLOCATED WORKER**

To support WIOA's mission of serving individuals with barriers to employment, Workforce Development continued to focus on special populations and deliver services through a holistic, barrier-sensitive approach in collaboration with both internal and external partners. Key partnerships included:

- Department of Corrections – providing career readiness, job training, and workforce supports to justice-involved individuals.
- Office of Child Support – working with non-custodial parents to provide career services, support employment readiness, and help them return to the workforce.
- RESEA (Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment) – offering timely guidance, reemployment support, and connections to training for individuals recently separated from employment.
- SNAP/TANF – VDOL has an MOU with ReachUP to deliver the employment and training-related requirements of SNAP/TANF under the “ICAN” referral program. ReachUP also uses our case management system for reporting.

Through these collaborations, Workforce Development was able to connect WIOA participants with a broader range of resources and services, addressing multiple barriers simultaneously and ensuring more comprehensive support. This multi-agency, holistic approach remains a core component of Vermont's workforce strategy, helping participants, including justice-involved individuals, non-custodial parents seeking employment, and recently separated workers—advance toward meaningful and sustainable employment, even in the context of fluctuating enrollment trends

### **Factors Contributing to Declines in WIOA Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Enrollments**

During the program year, Vermont experienced declines across all three WIOA funding streams—Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker—driven by economic conditions, demographic trends, and shifts in the labor market. Vermont's historically low unemployment rate and strong job market created an environment in which job seekers of all ages could readily access employment opportunities without relying heavily on Career Center services. As a result, fewer job seekers sought WIOA-funded training or staff-assisted career services.

For both the Adult and Youth programs, Vermont's high cost of living played a significant role in declining enrollments. Many individuals prioritized immediate income and work schedules over participation in longer-term training programs. Adults and older youth often worked multiple jobs, making it difficult to attend training, meet regularly with staff, or complete

required documentation. Even when supportive services were available, financial pressures associated with housing, transportation, and childcare limited program engagement.

The state’s demographic realities also contributed to declining enrollments. Vermont continues to face a shrinking youth population and a diminishing working-age cohort, reducing the overall pool of individuals eligible for WIOA services.

For the Dislocated Worker program specifically, many who were affected by layoffs quickly transitioned into new employment due to high demand for labor, reducing the number of individuals seeking WIOA Dislocated Worker services. Additionally, some workers displaced by organizational restructuring or reduced hours chose rapid re-employment in entry-level or mid-skill roles rather than pursuing retraining through WIOA.

Collectively, these factors contributed to declines in WIOA Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker enrollments during the program year, despite ongoing statewide efforts to strengthen outreach, deepen partner collaboration, and support individuals facing significant barriers to employment.

**PY '24 WIOA Youth Program Outcomes**

WIOA Youth Performance	PY '24 Goal	PY '24 Actual
Participants Served	--	115
Employment (2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit)	65.0%	72.6%
Employment (4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit)	65.0%	71.3%
Median Earnings	\$5,065	\$5,566
Credential Attainment	42.0%	53.7%
Measurable Skill Gains	49.0%	54.1%

**PY '24 WIOA Adult Program Outcomes**

WIOA Adult Performance	PY '24 Goal	PY '24 Actual
Participants Served	--	332
Employment (2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit)	70.0%	72.5 %
Employment (4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit)	64.5%	72.3%
Median Earnings	\$7,750	\$9,389
Credential Attainment	66.0%	64.3 %
Measurable Skill Gains	57.0%	63.1 %

## PY '24 WIOA Dislocated Worker Program Outcomes

WIOA Dislocated Worker Performance	PY '24 Goal	PY '24 Actual
Participants Served	--	28
Employment (2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit)	76.0%	75.0%
Employment (4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit)	81%	92.9%
Median Earnings	\$9,350	\$14,052
Credential Attainment	76.0%	80.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	63.0%	76.5%

### TITLE III WAGNER-PEYSER

Over the past year, foot traffic in our career resource centers increased significantly over the previous couple of years. This increase can be largely attributed to our renewed visibility and strengthened presence across Vermont. Social media outreach efforts and consistent community engagement helped “put us back on the map,” ensuring more Vermonters are aware of and connected to our services. Additionally, VDOL’s UI and Workforce Development Divisions have been working on closer collaboration to provide enhanced priority of service to claimants who seek service through the job center network. Job Center staff have access to UI subject matter experts and troubleshooting through a Teams chat and via a direct line to help resolve complicated claimant situations. In PY '24, VDOL replaced all computers in the job centers with new laptop kiosks. The new kiosks now allow us to better understand customer demand by location and reason for visiting the job center. Many visitors are there to access the unemployment system and are generally there because they lack technology at home or are older workers who lack digital literacy skills needed to navigate the claimant portal. Vermont continued to strengthen its outreach to in-school youth by integrating Wagner-Peyser services directly into school-based career exploration events. This approach provided students with early exposure to the workforce system, foundational labor market knowledge, and an understanding of the services available through the state’s Career Resource Centers.

Staff facilitated multiple workshops for 10th graders during the Sophomore Career Summit. These sessions introduced students to the “World of Work,” including basic youth labor laws, work ethics, essential work-readiness skills, job-search fundamentals, and the value of engaging in career pathways. Through this event alone, approximately 240 students received information on employment expectations and available workforce support.

VDOL staff also participated in Financial Reality Fairs, reaching 11th and 12th graders with hands-on career and financial literacy education. Staff contributed to both event planning and facilitation, shared resources, and helped replicate successful elements across sites. These efforts not only expanded youth awareness of the workforce system but also strengthened school and community partnerships that support smoother transitions from school to work.

## **RESEA Program Transition from UI Division to Workforce Development Division**

Over the past several months, VDOL leadership has focused attention and planning on the transition and integration of the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program from the Unemployment Insurance Division to the Workforce Development Division. USDOL partners were consulted, and the two Divisions worked closely to make the best decision for the program.

Because of the mutual employment service focus, the potential for increased collaboration, efficiencies, and better opportunities for program growth, Vermont DOL has decided to make this transition over the next two quarters of FY '25. We are in the beginning stages of discussions to develop the details of the transition; however, we are confident that this transition will be complete by the end of FY '25. RESEA will continue to have access to UI systems and staff to perform eligibility assessments, assist with UI issues in the local offices, and serve as a bridge to greater collaboration for the two Divisions. The transition efforts will be reported quarterly in the 9178 reports.

## **MSFW Outreach**

In PY '24, Vermont reached an unprecedented level of staffing coverage by conducting field visits to more than 70 farms, representing nearly the entire network of agricultural worksites in the state. These visits allowed direct engagement with workers who, in many cases, had never previously received information about labor rights, safety standards, workers' compensation, or the complaint process. As a result, the state observed a clear increase in reported concerns, inquiries, and apparent violations, reflecting a growing level of trust and awareness among the MSFW population. The development of multilingual outreach materials, educational videos, and a Vermont-specific farmworker rights brochure further expanded the reach and impact of the program.

These accomplishments were supported by strong partnerships with PathStone (NFJP), the Federal Wage and Hour Division, VOSHA, Workers' Compensation, the Attorney General's Office, local health clinics, housing authorities, the Vermont Language Justice Project, community organizations, and consular representatives. These collaborations ensured quicker referrals, clearer guidance on workplace and housing concerns, and broader access to essential services. Joint efforts following the 2024 flooding, along with improvements to internal procedures and expanded cross-agency coordination, significantly strengthened Vermont's ability to serve agricultural workers. Together, these actions resulted in greater access to information, stronger use of the complaint system, and a measurable expansion of protections and support for MSFWs statewide.

### Title III Wagner-Peyser Program Outcomes

Wagner Peyser Performance	PY '24 Goal	PY '24 Actual
Participants Served	--	2,461
Employment (2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit)	61.0%	64.9%
Employment (4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit)	55.5%	61.9%
Median Earnings	\$7,250	\$8,482

### JVSG PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In PY '24, the JVSG staff had an authorized budget of \$493,642.00 for operational costs and the employment of 4.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs). JVSG was fully staffed for the first time in several years, which improved our team camaraderie and proficiency. The Workforce Development Division moved completely to Consolidated Positions. JVSG staff merged the roles of Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) into the Consolidated Position (CP) to better serve our rural Veteran community. Completing the transition to the CP afforded our JVSG staff a promotion, becoming Job Center Specialists III. This promotion comes with increased responsibility as a DVOP/LVER, including understanding how all WIOA programs and community partners can assist Veterans with employment barriers. Another expectation of the CPs is to complete all training at the National Veteran Training Institute (NVTI). Two of the JVSG staff have completed the training, while the others have training dates reserved.

The move to CPs and the JVSG Program Administrator initiated a transition to guide and support training development and mentoring for CPs, and renewed training focus for WIOA staff. Implementing the NVTI Eligibility Flow Chart and revamping the Veterans' Specialist Services Eligibility Screening Tool ensures that eligible Veterans and spouses are provided with CP services. Improving our Veteran screening tool led to the beginning stages of creating a flow chart for all front-facing staff to recognize CP/DVOP eligibility, correct demographic information, and implement exit tracking guidance to improve the flow of Veterans through each Resource Center. JVSG staff now offer program and process refreshers to job center staff in statewide training twice a year—around Memorial Day and around Veterans Day.

Our JVSG staff continues to recruit Veterans in Vermont and Fort Drum, NY. We promote the SkillBridge program (DOD SkillBridge Program - Program Overview) and Career Skills Program (Career Skills Program (CSP): U.S. Army Installation Management Command). We combine these with Hilton Honors (Hilton Honors™ Military Program) and work opportunities in Vermont and nationally with USNLX Virtual Jobs. We have conducted over two dozen 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 have 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 32 participating states nationwide can use this benefit. A military Veteran or serving military member can use this for any job search activities. In PY '24, the JVSG staff used the benefit on four separate occasions, resulting in training or employment.

“SkillBridge” is a Department of War (DOW) program that authorizes transitioning service members an opportunity to intern at a company partnered with “SkillBridge” for 180 days. The employer incurs no cost, as the service member receives all pay and allowances from the military/DOW. During PY '24, we are helping one service member transition from the Active Army and enter the SkillBridge program.

The “Career Skills Program (CSP)” provides soldiers the opportunity to participate in career and employment skills training during the last 180 days of service. The CSP focuses on transitioning service members with interests in a particular certification or trade. The employer incurs no cost, as the service member receives all pay and allowances from the Army. Our first CSP user, a transitioning service member, wants to intern at a local fire station as an EMT.

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 games, parades, deployment and 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, kayaking, bowling, or attending veteran retreats. Through these engagements, we gain deeper insight into Veterans' employment challenges.

While our primary mission is to assist Veterans in 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 2024.

## EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS

The Business Services Manager continued to strengthen the partnership between VDOL and the Vermont Department of Economic Development (DED). In Vermont, DED has an established network of Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) that provide economic development and regional planning support around the state. In PY '24, staff from VDOL and the RDCs around the state scheduled joint employer visits to increase employer engagement and raise awareness of VDOL Business Services. These employers are then connected to a regional staff person who can assist them to establish or reactivate a Vermont Job Link account, post job openings, learn about job fairs and hiring events, and connect to training services and apprenticeship.

To enhance security and trust within the Vermont Job Link website, we continue to perform thorough vetting of all employers prior to approving an employer account. This process increases trust in VJL by its users by ensuring that jobs in the system are only posted by verified Vermont employers or fully remote out-of-state employers.

In PY '23, we launched our VDOL Employer's Edge newsletter. This year, we expanded the content to not only focus on individual employers, but also include resources for employers. An example of a resource recently shared was the Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction (VAMHAR). VAMHAR seeks to support employers in implementing the practices and culture of a Recovery Friendly Workplace. VDOL leadership and the Business Services Team have actively engaged in learning about this model and helping to promote it with employers around the state.

As part of our holistic approach to Business Services, we launched Discovery Calls with employers to better understand their unique needs and best align them with VDOL services. This included calls with the Business Services Manager, our WIOA Program Administrator, and the State Apprenticeship Director. After needs and challenges are identified, VDOL staff are assigned clear follow-up action steps.

PY '24 marks the first year that the Retention with the Same Employer performance indicator is officially implemented under TEGL 11-19, Change 2, effective January 6, 2025. This measure combines data from Titles I, II, III, and IV to produce a single statewide result. PY '24 serves as the first year of data collection for this newly instituted performance metric. However, at least two years of baseline data are required to build a statistical adjustment model capable of producing reliable estimates for future performance negotiations and state performance assessments.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers (Titles I, II, III & IV combined)		
Performance Measure	PY '24 Goal	PY '24 Actual
Retention with the Same Employer in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarters After Exit Rate	Baseline	68.8 %

## WIOA PROGRAM EVALUATION

Vermont participated in the USDOL Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort and selected the EmployVT Youth Career Connector as its capstone evaluation focus, with plans to public this evaluation in PY '25.

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Vermont recognizes that customer satisfaction and continuous improvement are crucial, and that surveys help to measure and improve service quality. VDOL offers a link to a short survey to all customers in every staff member's email signature. Since responses may be related to any division of VDOL, the VDOL Business Office monitors all responses and forwards each one that is received to division leadership. In partnership with the State Workforce Board and the One-Stop Operator, VDOL will continue to explore ways to engage customers and measure customer satisfaction.

## REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The Registered Apprenticeship Program continues to serve as a vital workforce development strategy in Vermont, bridging the gap between education and employment through earn-while-you-learn opportunities. Over the past year, the program has expanded its reach across key industries, strengthened partnerships with employers and training providers, and supported the development of skilled workers to meet Vermont's evolving labor market needs.

In PY '24, the following is an overview of the program's progress and an outline of ongoing efforts in specific sectors to ensure apprenticeship remains a cornerstone of Vermont's workforce development system.

As of June 30, 2025, Vermont had 110 Registered Apprenticeship Programs in 27 occupational areas and 1,569 registered apprentices.

The following table outlines the number of new programs registered, new apprentices registered, and completions in PY '24 (period covering July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025):

	New Programs Registered	New Apprentices Registered	Apprentice Program Completers
7/1/24 - 9/30/24	5	358	55
10/1/24 - 12/31/24	3	136	39
1/11/25 - 3/31/25	0	123	83
4/1/25 - 6/30/25	3	191	137

## Pre-Apprenticeship

An important area of growth for our Registered Apprenticeship Program was the certification of our first three Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. Vermont law defines a Pre-Apprenticeship Program as a training model or program that prepares individuals for acceptance into an apprenticeship program and that is certified by the Vermont Department of Labor. There are requirements around inclusion of technical and employee-readiness skills, career exploration, a formalized agreement with at least one registered program, and awarding of credit for prior learning.

Name of Pre-Apprenticeship Program	Sponsoring Organization	Date of Certification	Connected Registered Apprenticeship Program	Connected Occupation
Carpentry Boot Camp	Associated Builders & Contractors of NH/VT (ABC)	5/28/2025	ABC of NH/VT	Commercial Craft Professional
HVAC 101	ReSOURCE	5/28/2025	VHV Company	Environmental Control Systems
Timber Framing Pre-Apprenticeship	VT Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)	6/11/2025	Timber Framers Guild	Timber Framing

VDOL supported the Associated Builders and Contractors of NH/VT with their launch of the Vermont Construction Academy and certified the first Construction Boot Camp Pre-Apprenticeship Program, which served over twenty youth who completed the program and moved directly into employment in the industry or returned to finish their last year of high school.

In addition, we registered 77 youth apprentices who participated in the first year of the Electrical or Plumbing Apprenticeship Program while in their junior or senior year at a Vermont CTE center.

## **SECTOR STRATEGIES**

### **Manufacturing**

In Vermont, the manufacturing sector contributes over \$3 Billion to the state GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and approximately 9 percent 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 continued its partnership with Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC) using state funds to grow apprenticeship programs in the manufacturing sector.

VMEC serves as an industry expert and intermediary to provide technical assistance to 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, and then refers the company to VDOL to begin the program registration process.

Two examples of new Registered Apprenticeship Programs in the manufacturing sector include Weidmann Electrical Technology and Vermont Aerospace Industries.

### **Construction**

Construction contributes over \$1.7 Billion to the state GDP, with 5.2 percent of all jobs in Vermont in the construction industry. Vermont has a housing crisis and needs to invest in workforce development activities that enable increasing housing stock over the next decade.

One area of critical need is for licensed electricians and plumbers. The Registered Apprenticeship Program for these occupations continued to expand, with over 480 Vermont employers participating in the program. In May 2025, our largest class—104 electrical apprentices and 81 plumbing apprentices—completed their related technical instruction portion of the program and were recognized at a graduation ceremony at Vermont State University in Randolph.

In addition, we registered 77 youth apprentices who participated in the first year of the Electrical or Plumbing Apprenticeship Program while in their junior or senior year at a Vermont CTE center.

As mentioned previously, in PY '24, we registered five new programs in the construction and carpentry fields. Through grant funding, VDOL supported the Associated Builders and Contractors of NH/VT with their launch of the Vermont Construction Academy and certified the first Construction Boot Camp Pre-Apprenticeship Program, which served over twenty youth who completed the program and moved directly into employment in the industry or returned to finish their last year of high school.

Finally, a strategic partnership with Associated General Contractors of Vermont (AGC) was strengthened by providing a state-funded grant for the purchase of a Heavy Equipment

Operation simulator. This simulator will be used by employers and other training providers on a flexible schedule at locations throughout Vermont. It will support entry-level learning for CTE students, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeships. It will also support upskilling of current employees to maintain and increase qualified employees in civil construction, commercial construction, and residential construction occupations.

## **Education**

In PY '24, VDOL continued work that began in PY '23 through federal State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula funding to launch the State's first Registered K-12 Teacher Apprenticeship Program. Through partnerships with the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and Vermont Rural Education Collaborative (VREC), we developed, registered, and launched programs for seven school districts and twenty-seven apprentices. These were individuals who had bachelor's degrees and were working on provisional or emergency teaching licenses. All these individuals have now earned, or are close to completing, their programs and becoming licensed Vermont educators. This work will continue in PY '25 as we expand the program for school staff members who do not yet have a bachelor's degree but want to become a licensed teacher through an Associates-to-Bachelors, 2 + 2 model in partnership with CCV and VTSU.

## **PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

In PY '24, VDOL, HireAbility, and the Agency of Education began development of an automated tool that will identify co-enrollments across the Title I-IV programs. This team is simultaneously designing the tool and revising the data-sharing agreements between the three organizations. The end goal is to return to each organization the quarterly co-enrollment data needed to report to the federal government.

The VDOL Analytics and Insights (AI) team continues to run 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 reviews active and dormant employer accounts with job postings to ensure that all postings are publicly viewable as intended. The team also reviews 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 GOVERNOR'S RESERVE FUNDS**

State reserve funds were used to pay for a portion of the salary and benefits of the workforce system's EO Compliance Manager, who 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.

## **CRM PROCUREMENT UPDATE**

During PY '24, Vermont launched an RFP process to modernize VDOL's customer relationship management systems. This initiative aims to create a more efficient and user-friendly platform that improves how job seekers, employers, and staff access and share information. Five vendors were invited to demonstrate their solutions in summer 2025, and the state is now moving toward contracting with the preferred vendor. The new system will deliver a dynamic online job board that better connects Vermont job seekers with employment opportunities and helps employers find qualified candidates. It will also provide an adaptable case management system and a powerful reporting platform to support data-driven decisions that strengthen workforce programs statewide.

## **RAPID RESPONSE AND LAYOFF AVERSION**

In PY '24, the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) provided Rapid Response services to support seven major layoffs, affecting nearly 400 workers. The primary industries impacted included manufacturing, healthcare, and retail. The statewide Business Services Manager continued to be the primary contact for employers needing Rapid Response, and the delivery of on-site and virtual Rapid Response sessions was provided in coordination with regional job center staff. The sessions continued to include presentations by Unemployment Insurance and Vermont Health Connect partners.

Additionally, the team tracked and developed Rapid Response services for federal workers and contractors impacted by DOGE and other federal directives. To capture workers receiving unclear notifications and those with general interest in understanding available services at the time of layoff, the Business Services Manager worked with the Workforce Development Division Communications Specialist to design and offer bi-weekly virtual sessions, which were consistently well attended.

The Business Services Manager continued to strengthen the partnership between VDOL and the Vermont Department of Economic Development (DED). In Vermont, DED has an established network of Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) that provide economic development and regional planning support around the state. In PY '24, staff from VDOL and

the RDCs around the state scheduled joint employer visits to increase employer engagement and identify employers in distress in order to offer solutions as early as possible.

## **PROMISING PRACTICES**

The Workforce Development Division's Analytics and Insights team continues to enhance the division's programs, processes, and the staff who deliver them. 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.

### **Promising Practice: Operational Governance Committee**

Vermont established an Operational Governance Committee to strengthen collaboration, consistency, and accountability in workforce program policy development.

The committee is comprised of the following contributors and their respective responsibilities:

#### Workforce Development Director

- 90-day prioritization ensuring policy review/revision/development aligns with department and public needs
- Coordinate with the DOL Commissioner as required
- Final approval/signature for all Operational Governance documents
- Provide feedback and support to Program Administrators, when requested

#### Assistant Directors

- Collaboration with Program Administrators on development of new Operational Governance
- Execute 90-day prioritization through meeting cadence with the Committee
- Coordinate with WFD Director as required
- Provide feedback and support to Program Administrators, when requested

#### Program Administrators

- Monitor federal program requirement changes (TEGLs) to understand impact on existing Operational Governance
- Evaluate Operational Governance needs to maintain federal compliance
- Author new policies · Review and update existing policies that are outdated due to recently released federal guidance (TEGL)
- Provide feedback and support to other Program Administrators, when requested

- Evaluate effectiveness of current processes/templates and recommend continuous improvement enhancements
- Promote consistency through standardized approach and tools/templates
- Provide feedback and support to Program Administrators, when requested
- Provide implementation and training support to Program Administrators, when requested

The committee meets at a regular cadence to ensure ongoing oversight and progress. This structured, collaborative approach supports more efficient policy management, facilitates cross-program alignment, and strengthens staff understanding and compliance across Vermont’s workforce development system.

### **Promising Practice: Bi-Weekly Program Administrators Meeting**

Vermont has implemented a bi-weekly program administrator’s meeting to strengthen collaboration and information-sharing across workforce development programs. The meetings are attended by program administrators representing WIOA Title I and Title III, Apprenticeship, JVSG, RESEA, MSFW, and Business Services.

The purpose of these meetings is to:

- Share updates and information on respective programs,
- Identify opportunities for internal collaboration across programs, and
- Facilitate external connections to enhance coordination with partners, including employers.

Through regular dialogue and joint problem-solving, the meetings support the development of a more comprehensive and seamless service system for both staff and external customers. This collaborative approach allows Vermont’s workforce system to improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and ensure that participants and employers receive coordinated, high-quality services

### **Workforce Development – UI Collaboration**

Through close tracking and communication with leadership in the regional Job Centers in PY ’24, it was determined that a high number of customers walking into the Job Centers were there to gain information on their UI claims and assistance in completing their weekly claims. Staff shared frustration that they had limited knowledge of the UI system and limited resources to support these requests. Working closely with leadership in the UI Division, we developed three resource options to support Job Center staff and the UI claimants they were working with. These solutions were relatively simple to implement, and regular monitoring of their use is being tracked.

Job Center staff have access to a MS Teams chat that is monitored by experts in the UI Division who can quickly research a situation and offer guidance that can be provided to the claimant.

The UI Division has created a dedicated phone line that can be used exclusively by Job Center staff, bypassing the otherwise long wait times that claimants might experience when trying to resolve issues and questions.

RESEA staff in the Job Centers have been made available, as schedules allow, to share limited information with Job Center staff that can quickly be relayed to claimants

Job Center staff have reported that they feel much better able to assist UI customers with this enhanced access to the UI system, and much more able to provide effective customer service.

### **Promising Practice: Talk Tues (to) Me Tuesdays – Professional Development**

During PY '24, the Workforce Development Division launched a recurring learning series for all staff called “Talk Tues (to) Me: Professional Development.” The sessions covered not only WIOA-specific topics but also a wide range of learning opportunities, including community resources, training programs, self-care, and veteran services. The sessions are informational and interactive, with the goal of consistent participant engagement via polls and open discussion. Between September 2024 and August 2025, 23 sessions were held, averaging 51 attendees each. All sessions were recorded and added to the training resource library, making them accessible to staff at any time. The series featured 11 guest speakers and provided a total of 19 hours and 25 minutes of professional development. Including additional program-specific trainings, total staff training time during this period reached 41 hours and 30 minutes.

### **CHALLENGES**

Maintaining providers on the ETPL continues to be a challenge for Vermont. Many training providers struggle to supply the required performance data, even with the state’s efforts to offer extensions, technical assistance, and individualized support wherever possible. As a result, ensuring ongoing compliance and keeping programs active on the list remains an area of continued focus and improvement.

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

We hope to actively engage with our FPO and regional subject matter experts to explore areas of continued concern. One need is guidance on operating as a Single Area State, and support and understanding from USDOL when it comes to the unique challenges that we face.

### **Success Story: Rebuilding Confidence and Finding the Right Fit**

Y visited the American Job Center after unexpectedly losing her job of 10 years, seeking assistance with unemployment insurance, job search support, and resume updates. From the beginning, she was open to any resources that could help her regain stability. Her weekly visits to the center to file her unemployment insurance claim created an opportunity for Workforce Development (WFD) staff to build a strong connection with her, learn about her skills, and understand her career interests.

During these conversations, Y shared that she wanted to improve her computer skills to be more competitive in the job market. WFD staff referred her to the Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NEKLS), where she quickly began a self-paced digital skills training program. As she continued building her skills, WFD staff helped her explore potential career pathways, learning that she enjoyed caretaking but preferred working with adults rather than children.

Y later attended a Job Fest hosted by the AJC. Upon arrival, she was greeted by WFD staff, who introduced her to a local residential senior care facility recruiting for a Resident Life Coordinator. With her updated resume in hand, Y confidently connected with the employer, who scheduled an interview for the following week.

Shortly after, Y shared the exciting news that she had been offered the position. She quickly settled into her new role, reporting that she loved the work and felt she had found the right fit. Y has remained employed with the organization and even returned to the Spring Job Fest—this time as an employer representative alongside the facility’s owner.

Y’s journey demonstrates the power of personalized support, consistent encouragement, and strong workforce partnerships in helping individuals rebuild confidence, enhance skills, and reenter the workforce in a role that aligns with their strengths and interests.

### **Success Story: Rising Strong: H.’s Journey from Recovery to Leadership**

H. began their journey with the Vermont Department of Labor through the WIOA program while actively engaged in a residential substance-use treatment program. Even in the early stages of recovery, H. embraced every opportunity for growth. During a work experience placement at a local retail store, they quickly distinguished themselves through consistent reliability, a strong work ethic, and an undeniably positive attitude. Their dedication was so impressive that the business hired them immediately after the work experience concluded.

Starting as a retail associate, H. steadily worked their way up to a team lead role—an advancement earned through determination and natural leadership. Their potential continued to stand out, and the store’s affiliated café invited H. to take on additional responsibilities. H. balanced both positions gracefully while remaining committed to treatment, navigating significant anxiety, and attending classes to complete their GED.

Today, H. proudly serves as the full-time Manager of the café. Their achievements extend far beyond the workplace: they have maintained sobriety, graduated from Jenna's Promise, secured stable housing, and earned their GED.

H.'s story is a testament to what is possible when resilience, hard work, and meaningful support come together. It demonstrates the life-changing power of employment and training opportunities—and the extraordinary strength individuals carry within them as they build a new future.

#### **Testimonials:**

##### **Words from a DLW enrolled in CDL Class A Training.**

*"You and your department have done me a huge favor. I can't thank you enough. I will tell everyone I can about how the Vermont Department of Labor is there to help and what wonderful people work there. I hope you can tell how much I appreciate it."*

##### **Providing exceptional customer service in the AJC:**

*"I was greeted by an Incredibly kind person. I had previously forwarded her my resume, and she had reviewed it and was ready to "hit the ground running" to see how she could assist me! She shared with me how my skills could be transferable in several different industries and just made me feel Hopeful, Inspired and Empowered! I left feeling so good about myself and looking forward to hearing from her again as well!"*