

## Workforce Development Council

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**Focus:** The Workforce Development Council advises the governor on the establishment of an integrated network of workforce education and training for Vermont and coordinate planning services for this task as well as oversee its implementation. It shall also oversee and establish workforce investment boards.

The Workforce Development Council (WDC) was established in State law in 2006 as the successor to the Human Resources Investment Council, originally established in 1993. The mission of the Council is to ensure that Vermonters have the skills they need to get and keep good jobs, and that Vermont employers have the skilled workers they need to compete in a rapidly changing world economy. The Council advises the Governor on the development and implementation of a comprehensive, flexible and responsive workforce education and training system. The Council is also designated as the State Workforce Investment Board under the Federal Workforce Investment Act.

**Geographic Area Served:** All geographic regions of the State and all sectors of the economy are represented on the council and are served by the services provided by the council.

**Participant Age Level:** Students are served from ages 14 to graduation as allowed under the WIA and adult workers are also served by the various services provided by the Council.

**Funding Sources:** The Council identified a number of strategies common to many partner organizations designed to respond to the aging of the Vermont workforce, the shrinking cohort of younger workers, and the escalating skill requirements and technology applications in the workplace. Act 46 was drafted to address these challenges by linking training and economic development efforts with a range of immediate and longer term strategies. During FY '09 Next Generation Legislation Act 46 provided eight million dollars to be distributed from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. Included were funds for college scholarships, a targeted student loan repayment program, increased funding for the VSAC Non-Degree Grant Program, and expanded dual enrollment opportunities, as well as increases in funding for the Workforce Education and Training Fund, and the Vermont Training Program that provide grants to assist employers to meet their needs for training new and incumbent workers. The Act also established new programs for secondary and postsecondary internships, adult programs at the regional technical centers, career awareness programs, alternative secondary vocational/academic programs, and funds to be used for two regional pilots of workplace readiness credentials.

**Key Services Abstract:** The WDC is charged in State law with authorizing Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). These twelve regional volunteer boards are the local component of the

system, working closely with employers, schools, colleges and community organizations to identify needs and implement training solutions. The Regional WIBs continued to address the workforce needs of specific employment sectors in their regions that are experiencing shortages of skilled workers. These include construction, manufacturing, healthcare, information technology and others.

The Council has undertaken several new initiatives in partnership with the Department of Education (DOE) during 2008-2009. First, recognizing the need to create more effective pathways from secondary career and technical education programs to further education and to better meet needs of employers, the WDC and DOE have formed a partnership with the State Chamber of Commerce and the New England Culinary Institute. This partnership will develop the first Industry and Education Center of Excellence (IECE) which will focus on the Hospitality sector. If successful, this approach will be expanded to other sectors in the future. Second, discussions are underway with DOE to explore the potential for utilizing the Department of Labor's Next Generation secondary programs, including the WETF Internship Program, the Career Awareness Program and the Alternative Technical Education Program in support of DOE's School Transformation initiative.

Act 46 also established a new committee of the WDC, the Workforce Leadership Committee, as a standing committee of the Council chaired by the Commissioner of Labor. The Committee includes the Commissioners of Education and Economic Development as well as the Secretary of Human Services, the Chancellor of the State Colleges, the Chair of the WDC, and three business members of the WDC. The committee was charged with "developing a limited number of overarching goals and measurable criteria for the workforce development system", and "reviewing reports from each entity that receives funding" to determine the contribution made to accomplishment of the goals. The committee completed its first full report in December 2008. It identified four broad goals supported by recommended strategies and performance measures. Copies are available on the Workforce Development Council website.

**Summary of Key Benefits and Results:** 2008 was the second year of implementation of the High School Completion Program by the newly established Learning Works statewide adult education system (formerly Adult Basic Education). The development of such a program was part of the WDC's strategic plan and was supported by the Council throughout its development. It is estimated that between 1,000 And 1,200 students leave Vermont's public schools each year without a diploma. This is an important workforce development issue because Vermont has a shortage of young workers, and those lacking basic skills are often unable to meet entry level job requirements. This new program, the first of its kind in the nation, has enrolled 522 students and graduated 258 students through June of 2008. To date 84% of participants are successful in earning their high school diploma. The program targets out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 and 21 who can participate through the Learning Works Centers across the state where they develop an individualized learning plan in partnership with their home high school. Under the supervision of the Learning Works instructors, students can access classes at the high school or regional technical center, enroll in adult education programs, take college courses, or participate in a wide range of educational options that meet their individual needs. Once the goals in their plan are completed, students may participate in graduation ceremonies at their high school and receive a diploma. This program has received national attention for its innovative approach.

The Council continues to respond to the workforce needs of the Healthcare sectors with new and innovative training solutions.

Developing an Industry and Education Center of Excellence in hospitality as a pilot for the concept of forming close partnerships with employers to create comprehensive career pathways that improve student success and that provide employers with fully prepared workers.

**Lessons Learned:** Vermont's workforce is older than the average in most other states, and as these baby boomers retire, a large number of skilled workers will leave the workforce. Census data continues to show a decline the 20-34 year old population. There will be an 18% decline in Vermont's high school population over the next ten years.

The aging-out of current workers is not being offset by a sufficient number of new entrants into the workforce, creating a shortage in most sectors.

Much higher skills are required to get and keep a good job than in the past, and skilled workers are increasingly difficult to find.

Of the top ten fastest growing jobs in Vermont, seven require two year college degrees or more for entry, and two others require specific post-high school training.