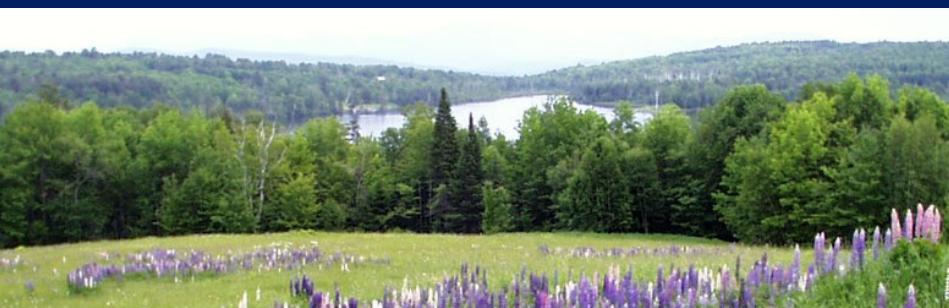




Northern Vermont Economic Development District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

| 2016 - 2020



NVEDD REGION

Caledonia County • Essex County • Franklin County • Grand Isle County • Lamoille County • Orleans County

VISION

Northern Vermont will be a thriving, resilient region with a diverse, sustainable economy.

MISSION

The Northern Vermont Economic Development District exists to provide the opportunity for region-wide development efforts for economic prosperity, sustainability and resiliency.



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Northern Vermont Economic Development District

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

What is the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD)?

The Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD) is comprised of the six northernmost counties in the State of Vermont: Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans counties. It is a federally designated district charged with the development, maintenance, and implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

What is a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?

A CEDS is a strategy-driven locally developed plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity (hard and soft infrastructure) and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. It provides the opportunity for a region-wide effort to strengthen existing key businesses in the region while continuously searching for and capitalizing on new opportunities for growth.

The CEDS takes into account and, where appropriate, integrates or leverages other regional planning efforts, including the use of other available federal funds, private sector resources, and state support which can advance the region's CEDS goals and objectives.

Why does the Northern Vermont Economic Development District need a CEDS?

A CEDS is a prerequisite for designation as an Economic Development District (EDD). It must be updated every five years and serves as a required vehicle through which some federal agencies (especially the EDA) evaluate requests for grant assistance. A CEDS is required for entities in the region to be eligible to receive Economic Development Assistance funding from EDA.

The CEDS' most critical function is to provide an economic development framework for the region. The CEDS process provides the opportunity for individuals, organizations, local governments, educational institutions, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation about what economic





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

CEDS DOCUMENT SUMMARY

The CEDS is developed with broad-based community participation resulting in a document that is readily accessible to regional stakeholders. There are four main elements of a CEDS:

- **Regional summary background**
- **SWOT analysis**
- **Strategic direction/action plan**
- **Evaluation framework**

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

Summary Background on the Regional Economy

The CEDS provides a background summary of the regional economy and the local economic situation, supported by current and relevant data. This section identifies the economic clusters within the region and identifies the region's traditional strengths and emerging industries. It summarizes recent successes and setbacks, as well as past and present economic development investments in the region.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Analysis of Region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS)

Based on the summary background, the CEDS includes an in-depth analysis of the regional economy, including the strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats posed by trends and forces both internal and external to the region.

This S.W.O.T. inventory creates the basis for concrete strategic direction toward the region's economic development goals based on four general actions:

- **Build on strengths**
- **Eliminate weaknesses**
- **Exploit opportunities**
- **Eliminate threats or mitigate their effects**

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Strategic Direction & Evaluation Framework

Informed by the summary background and S.W.O.T. analysis, the CEDS then lays out the goals and actions necessary to achieve the economic vision for the region. The CEDS also provides a framework to evaluate the successful development and implementation of the CEDS and to track the performance of the region on a range of economic indicators. The goals for the Northern Vermont Economic Development District are to:

- **Build Economic Resilience in Northern Vermont**
- **Cultivate Business Growth**
- **Improve and Expand Infrastructure**
- **Develop the Workforce**
- **Promote Quality of Life in Communities**

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

To preserve, promote and advance the quality of life in the region, the concept of resiliency is incorporated into the goals and strategies of the CEDS plan.

A strong regional economy is based on the strengths of individual local communities. The overall goal of the NVEDD CEDS plan therefore is to assist in creating resilient communities in order to reduce the vulnerability of the regional economy to crises of economic shifts, natural disasters, climate change, and other major disruptions or shocks to the region's economic base.





REGIONAL SUMMARY BACKGROUND—POPULATION

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

The Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD) includes the six northernmost counties of Vermont: Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans counties. Bordered by the state of New York to the west, the state of New Hampshire to the east and the province of Quebec to the north, the region is home to nearly 148,000 people in 2015. The population is divided between 49% male and 51% female with a median age of 41.5 years compared to the U.S. median age of 37.9 years.

	Population ¹	% of State	Land Area ² (square miles)	% of State
Vermont	626,630	N/A	9,217	N/A
Franklin	48,294	8%	634	7%
Caledonia	31,157	5%	649	7%
Orleans	27,169	4%	693	8%
Lamoille	25,067	4%	459	5%
Grand Isle	6,987	1%	82	1%
Essex	6,211	1%	664	7%
NVEDD AGGREGATE	144,885	23%	3,181	35%

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS:

Between 2000 and the 2010 United States' Census confirmed a slow rate of growth in the population of Vermont with an annual growth rate of less than 0.3% compared to the United States growth of 9.7%. Vermont's population continues to show a slower rate of population growth than the nation with a change between 2010 and 2013 of only 0.1% compared to 2.4% for the country.

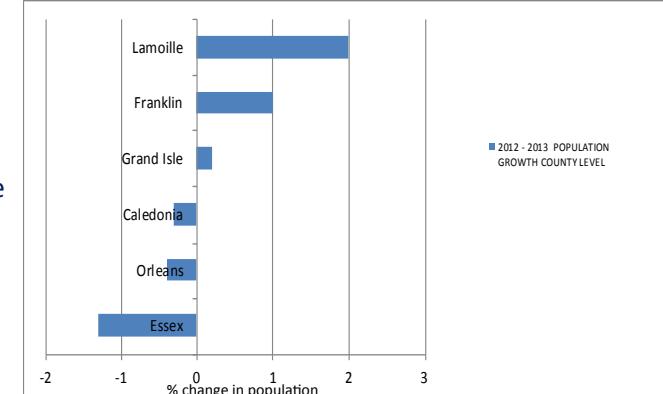
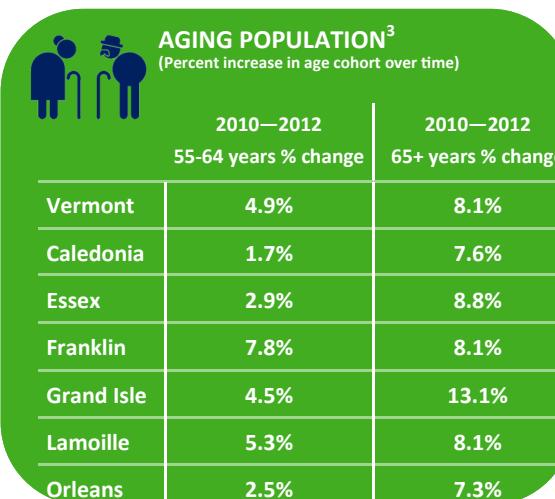
The lack of population growth can be seen in more detail at the county level. From 2012 to 2013, three of the region's counties experienced population declines: Essex (-1.3), Orleans (-0.4%) and Caledonia (-0.3%) while the other counties experienced minimal growth: Grand Isle (0.2%), Franklin (1.0%), Lamoille (2.0%).

AN AGING POPULATION:

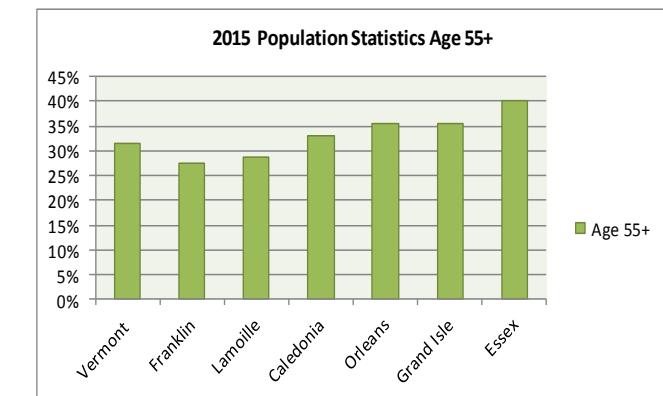
The most compelling population statistics involve the aging of Vermont.^{1,3} The state has one of the oldest populations in the nation.

Between 2010 and 2013, the two age cohorts with the largest percent increase were people 65+ (+12.51%) and people 55-64 years of age (+5.87%).

Of the counties in the district, Franklin county has the lowest proportion of residents over the age of 55 (25.6%) followed by Lamoille (28.7%). The counties of the Northeast Kingdom have some



of the highest proportions of residents over the age of 55 with Caledonia at 33.1%, Orleans at 35.5% and Essex at 40.1%. The slow population growth in the region coupled with higher proportions of an aging population combine to create challenges for the region's workforce and health



¹ Vermont Department of Health (2013)

² U.S. Bureau of the Census. Changed from Total Area to Land Area only

³ Vermont Economic and Demographic Profile Series 2015



REGIONAL SUMMARY BACKGROUND—HEALTH

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

PHYSICAL HEALTH⁴:

As reported by the 2015 Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings, the District exhibits challenges in health outcomes across the population. The region is served by four hospitals (Northwest Medical Center in St. Albans, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital in St. Johnsbury, Copley Hospital in Morristown and North Country Health Systems in Newport) as well as several home health agencies and nursing homes. However, across the region there remain significant barriers to access with the numbers of primary care physicians and dentists per population significantly below state averages.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

	Population per Primary Care Providers	Population per Dentists	Population per Mental Health Providers
VERMONT	922:1	1,567:1	273:1
Caledonia	1,197:1	1,484:1	346:1
Essex	3,113:1	3,106:1	2,070:1
Franklin	1,663:1	2,300:1	653:1
Grand Isle	6,983:1	6,987:1	—
Lamoille	891:1	2,507:1	298:1
Orleans	1,427:1	3,881:1	543:1

MENTAL HEALTH⁵:

Statewide there is a significant need across all counties for mental health services. The aggregated data for the region reflects only clients actually served and is not necessarily a complete picture of need in the communities. Access to mental health providers remains a barrier to services across the region with the number of mental health providers per population well below state averages.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

HEALTH OUTCOME
RANKINGS
out of 14 Counties

Caledonia	9
Essex	14
Franklin	10
Grand Isle	6
Lamoille	4
Orleans	13

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

	Children's Services	Adult Mental Health Outpatient	Community Rehabilitation	Substance Abuse	Unassigned	Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital
VERMONT	10,585	6,685	2,654	5,363	5,205	67
NVEDD	2,896	1,977	568	227	961	12



ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME OF CLIENTS SERVED

INCOME LEVELS (statewide statistics)	Children's Services	Adult Mental Health Outpatient	Community Rehabilitation	Substance Abuse	Unassigned
\$1 – 9,999	19%	35%	62%	40%	28%
\$10,000 – 19,999	26%	31%	26%	32%	26%
\$20,000 – 29,999	18%	12%	7%	14%	16%
\$30,000 +	38%	22%	5%	15%	30%

⁴ The Robert Wood Johnson County Health Statistics, 2015

⁵ Vermont Agency Of Human Services Department Of Mental Health Year 2015 Statistical Report January 2016

The need for mental health services clusters significantly around lower-income populations. People who live in poverty are at increased risk of mental illness compared to more economically stable populations due to stress, increased exposure to violence and trauma and a higher risk of poor general health and malnutrition. The converse is also true: when people are mentally ill, they are at increased risk of becoming and/or staying poor due to higher health costs, difficulty getting/retaining jobs, and the social stigma and isolation of mental illness.



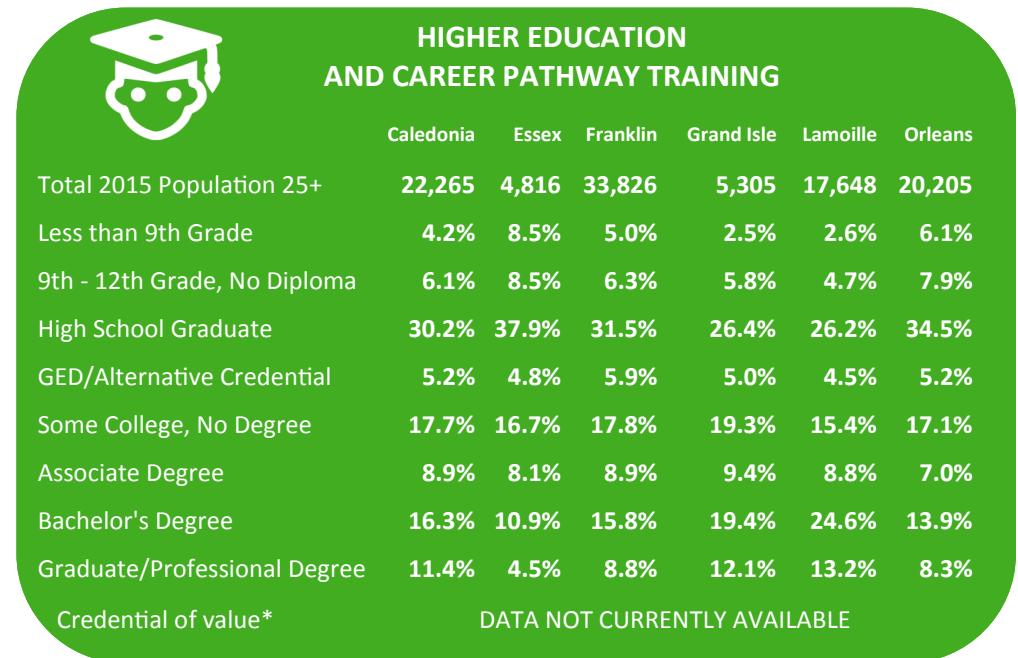
REGIONAL SUMMARY BACKGROUND — EDUCATION

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHWAY TRAINING⁶:

Over the past five years Vermont's high school graduation rate has steadily improved and in New England is second only to New Hampshire. However a significant disparity is evident when rates are adjusted for income levels:

- In 2013, Vermont's high school graduation rate was 86.6%. When adjusted for income levels, the high school graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students dropped to 75.2% .
- Vermont's secondary school dropout rate is the highest in New England at 9.6% . When adjusted for income the dropout rate for economically disadvantaged students is 18%.
- Despite high graduation rates, Vermont faces a gap in college enrollment, ranking last in New England at 52%.



The level of education attainment is one of the defining markers of income inequality. In the NVEDD regional population 25+:

- 26.2% - 37.9% have only a high school diploma (or equivalent)
- 6.1% - 8.5% have no high school diploma (or equivalent)

One promising emerging alternative to college or a degree for employment or career advancement is the credential of value*, which is a credential that

⁶ VSAC Special Report: Vermont's Class of 2012: Highlights and Challenges for Pursuing a Postsecondary Education



REGIONAL SUMMARY BACKGROUND—WAGES, INCOME & UNEMPLOYMENT

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

INCOME

Across the region, there is significant disparity in household income.⁶ Grand Isle exceeds the state levels across all three categories while the three counties of the Northeast Kingdom fall well below state averages. Essex county fares the worst of the counties with a median household income of \$36,627—\$17,640 less than the state level—and a per capita income of only \$20,626, \$8,541 less than the state level. When broken out by gender, the statistics are even bleaker for working women across the state.⁷ In Vermont, median annual income for women working full-time is \$37,000, \$7,000 less than the median annual salary of men. This translates into a wage gap of 16 cents on every dollar earned by a man.

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE	
U.S.	\$1,035
Vermont	\$882
Franklin	\$844
Caledonia	\$753
Lamoille	\$710
Orleans	\$695
Essex	\$692
Grand Isle	\$662

	HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
	Median Household Income	Average Household Income	Per Capita Household Income
VERMONT	\$54,267	\$69,716	\$29,167
Caledonia	\$43,701	\$56,801	\$23,518
Essex	\$36,627	\$45,796	\$20,626
Franklin	\$56,001	\$66,484	\$26,226
Grand Isle	\$61,832	\$81,683	\$34,510
Lamoille	\$53,465	\$68,429	\$28,621
Orleans	\$41,083	\$51,721	\$22,003

The gap narrows somewhat to 14% when a woman holds a college degree, but if a woman has dependent children, the wage gap increases to 23%. With a significant number of women as heads of households in the district, this income gap has critical economic implications for these Vermont families.

WAGES

Vermont's average weekly wage of \$882 falls well below the U.S. average of \$1035. Wages for the counties across the district fall well below the state average.⁸

UNEMPLOYMENT

Since its peak of 7.0% in 2009, the State's unemployment rate has been on a downward trend, averaging 4.1% in 2014. The highest rates of unemployment are in northeastern Vermont with Essex and Orleans Counties at 6.8% and 6.4% respectively. While Franklin county matches the State rate, Grand Isle (4.7%), Caledonia (5.0%), and Lamoille (5.2%) still significantly exceed the state rate. Unemployment rates however do not reflect a complete picture of the economic stress in a region. These rates are measured by the number of jobs that are considered covered employment which is a count of jobs in area establishments that are covered by the Vermont or Federal Unemployment Compensation Law. Excluded in this count are the self-employed, proprietors, most farms, and religious, railroad and unpaid family workers.⁹

^{6,8} Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, VT Department of Labor

⁷ 2016 Status Report: Women, Work and Wages in Vermont

⁹ Vermont Economic and Demographic Profile Series 2015, VT Department of Labor, Economic and Labor Market Information Division

	UNEMPLOYMENT		
	Unemployment (2014)	2014 Covered Employment (jobs)	2014 Covered Employment (%)
VERMONT	4.1%	304,490	100%
Caledonia	5.0%	10,911	3.6%
Essex	6.8%	1,057	0.3%
Franklin	4.1%	17,079	5.6%
Grand Isle	4.7%	1,138	0.4%
Lamoille	5.2%	11,673	3.8%
Orleans	6.4%	10,532	3.5%



REGIONAL SUMMARY BACKGROUND—POVERTY, DISABILITY, FOOD INSECURITY, CORRECTIONS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

POVERTY¹³

Correlating to income levels, the three counties of the Northeast Kingdom have the highest percentage of population below poverty with Essex county the highest at 18.1%, followed by Orleans county at 15% and Caledonia county at 14.3%.

DISABILITY¹⁴

The three counties of the Northeast Kingdom likewise demonstrate higher rates for the percentage of households with at least 1 person in the household with a disability. Caledonia ranks the highest at 33.1% followed by Essex county at 32.6% and Orleans county at 30.4%.

	POVERTY & DISABILITY RATES					
	Caledonia	Essex	Franklin	Grand Isle	Lamoille	Orleans
% Population Below Poverty Level	14.3%	18.1%	11.8%	9.7%	12.3%	15.0%
% Households With	5.4%	3.7%	4.6%	4.5%	4.0%	3.2%
% Households with 1+ Persons with Disability	33.1%	32.6%	28.3%	23.6%	22.5%	30.4%

FOOD INSECURITY¹⁵

All NVEDD counties show a significant number of food insecure households¹⁶ Where—due to lack of money—adults have decreased both the quality and the quantity of food they consume and are hungry on a frequent basis, or in which children's intake has been reduced to the point that the children are hungry on a regular basis and the adults' food intake is severely reduced.

CORRECTIONS¹⁷

Of the seven correctional facilities in the state of Vermont, three facilities are located in the NVEDD region, with two in the Northeast Kingdom. Nearly 60% of the state of Vermont's incarcerated males are housed in these three facilities.

	FOOD INSECURITY RATES					
	Caledonia	Essex	Franklin	Grand Isle	Lamoille	Orleans
# children food insecure	1 in 4	1 in 3	1 in 4	1 in 3	1 in 4	1 in 3
% of students eligible for	46%	65%	47%	64%	46%	65%
# residents participating in	5,518	1,343	7,841	949	3,381	5,815
% Households With Food Stamps/ SNAP Status	17.2%	16.7%	15.7%	13.3%	11.2%	16.3%

^{13, 14} Source U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing,

¹⁵ Household Food Security in the United States, 2012 (www.ers.usda.gov)

¹⁶ Hunger Free Vermont (www.hungerfreetvt.org)

¹⁷ Vermont Department of Corrections Annual Report FY2015

	CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES	TOTAL INMATES	CAPACITY % GENERAL
	Northern State Correctional Facility (Newport)	413	99%
	Northwest Correctional Facility (Swanton)	219	95%
	Northeast Correctional Complex (St. Johnsbury)	129	117%



REGIONAL SUMMARY BACKGROUND—HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

HOUSING:¹⁷

The geographic distribution of the age of housing stock reflects the growth and movement of the population within the United States. From 2000 to 2013 there is a strong correlation between state growth in the population below the age of 45 and the age of housing stock. The northern counties in Vermont have a significant percentage of its housing stock dating prior to 1974. In addition to being generally less energy efficient, older housing is often not physically accessible and will require remodeling or replacement to meet the needs of an aging population.

TRANSPORTATION:¹⁸

To support business development and improve the quality of life for the region's residents there is a need for a regionally integrated, multi-model transportation system. Rail and airport services are inadequate with no rail service connecting the District east to west or north to south. County airports do not meet Federal Air and Aviation safety standards for nighttime and adverse weather flying. Mountainous terrain, winter snows and mud season increase hazards for driving and contribute to road deterioration and the high cost of maintenance. Of the District's 5000+ miles of roads approximately 50% of them are unpaved. Due to large expanses of rural geography and low population density, public transportation across the District is extremely limited. There is a need for increased services to homebound residents, particularly for households where there is at least one person classified as disabled. The need for public transportation will only increase as the age of the population trends upward over the next two decades.

	HOUSING					
	Caledonia	Essex	Franklin	Grand Isle	Lamoille	Orleans
Median Home Value	\$140,848	\$134,536	\$198,864	\$279,878	\$207,080	\$135,375
Average Home Value	\$161,644	\$156,153	\$214,988	\$370,618	\$261,632	\$160,207
Total Housing Units	16,647	5,246	22,692	5,256	13,832	17,214
Occupied	12,955	2,840	19,303	2,987	10,682	11,678
Owner	9,473	2,255	14,348	2,419	7,548	8,773
Renter	3,482	585	4,955	568	3,134	2,905
Vacant*	3,692	2,406	3,389	2,269	3,150	5,536
Median Year Structure Built	1970	1972	1975	1977	1978	1971

*vacant houses include seasonal/recreational/occasional use dwellings as well as unleased rentals

Workers Age 16+ Years by Means of Transportation to Work	Caledonia	Essex	Franklin	Grand Isle	Lamoille	Orleans
Total	14,983	2,716	24,496	3,651	12,785	12,092
Drove alone	11,340	2,121	19,018	2,752	9,909	9,471
Carpooled	1,619	306	3,108	492	1,221	1,021
Public transportation	68	4	105	49	26	12
Bus or trolley bus	66	4	85	49	13	12
Streetcar or trolley car	0	0	7	0	0	0
Subway or elevated	2	0	13	0	7	0
Railroad	0	0	0	0	6	0
Ferryboat	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taxicab	26	0	15	0	0	9
Motorcycle	3	4	58	3	2	11
Bicycle	1	8	49	8	20	30
Walked	696	138	778	63	589	308
Other means	119	7	146	16	116	361
Worked at home	1,111	128	1,219	268	902	869

¹⁷Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey

¹⁸Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1



REGIONAL SUMMARY BACKGROUND—ECONOMY & INDUSTRY

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The NVEDD economy is a diversified mix of manufacturing, health care, tourism, professional services, education, and public sector employers. Agriculture remains an important component of the region's economy and cultural image.

Between 2010 and 2014, the Vermont economy gained 11,402 jobs (+3.9%). Over this four-year period, three counties in the NVEDD experienced net job losses: Caledonia (-0.5%), Essex (-7.8%), and Grand Isle (-4.7%). The remaining NVEDD counties all reported net job gains: Franklin (4.5%), Orleans (8.6%) and Lamoille (9.5%).

INDUSTRY:

The primary economic engines for the District are retail trade, construction, manufacturing, health care, agriculture, tourism and forestry/wood related products.

According to 2014 data, Vermont had a net decline in manufacturing employment of 1.6% compared to the prior year. Caledonia showed a decline of -2.6% and Grand Isle showed no change, while the rest of the counties showed an increase in manufacturing: Orleans (2.8%), Franklin (3.1%) and Lamoille with the highest at 13.3%.¹⁹

Between 2013 and 2014, construction employment increased by 681 (4.8%) to the statewide level of 14,772. This remains well below the industry high level of employment reached in 2006 of 17,334. The District ranged from a low of -1.8% in Orleans County to a high of 11.1% in Essex County.¹⁹

The state's accommodation and food service employment increased by 2.0% which equals 613 jobs between 2013 and 2014. On a county level, employment in this sector declined in Franklin county (-7.9%). Twelve counties experienced gains, with the largest increases coming in Essex (+43.3%), Grand Isle (+9.2%) and Orange (+9.0%) counties.¹⁹

NAICS Codes	Largest Industry Sectors by Number of Employees ²⁰		Employees NVEDD REGION		Businesses NVEDD REGION	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Accommodation & Food Services	10,867	17%	501	7.0%		
Retail Trade	8,221	12.8%	1,110	15.5%		
Health Care & Social Assistance	8,154	12.7%	485	6.8%		
Educational Services	7,022	11%	221	3.1%		
Manufacturing	5,326	8.3%	252	3.5%		
Public Administration	5,315	8.3%	535	7.5%		
Construction	3,286	5.1%	664	9.3%		

NAICS Codes	Largest Industry Sectors by Number of Businesses ²⁰		Businesses NVEDD REGION		Employees NVEDD REGION	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Retail Trade	1,110	15.5%	8,221	12.8%		
Other Services (except Public Administration)	885	12.3%	3,219	5%		
Construction	664	9.3%	3,286	5.1%		
Public Administration	535	7.5%	5,315	8.3%		
Accommodation & Food Services	501	7.0%	10,867	17%		
Health Care & Social Assistance	485	6.8%	8,154	12.7%		
Finance & Insurance	394	5.5%	1,279	2%		
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	374	5.2%	1,631	2.5%		
Food Services & Drinking Places	324	4.5%	3,686	5.8%		
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	292	4.1%	1,149	1.8%		

¹⁹ Vermont Economic and Demographic Profile Series 2015, Vermont Department of Labor, Economic and Labor Market Information Division

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey



SUMMARY BACKGROUND—WORKING LANDS AND CLIMATE

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

WORKING LANDS

The working landscape is a defining asset of northern Vermont, integral to its history and identity, culture, and economic foundation. The working landscape includes viable and diverse farming operations, food businesses built on local products, wood products operations, logging and forestry businesses as well as land and water settings for recreational opportunities. The working landscape also helps to preserve the beauty and panoramic scenery that draws visitors and tourists to the region. About 20% of Vermont's land is used for agriculture while approximately 78% of Vermont's land is forested.²¹

AGRICULTURE: DAIRY AND MAPLE SYRUP

Northern Vermont has a strong agricultural economy.

In terms of revenue generated, its top five agricultural products are: dairy products, beef cattle and calves, greenhouse and nursery products, hay and maple products. While only 34% of Vermont's farms are in the District these farms account for over 52% of the state's milk production and almost 63% of Vermont's maple syrup production.

FORESTRY²¹

- The forest-based industry (forest products, maple syrup products, and Christmas trees) contributes \$861 million in sales to the state economy annually and provides direct employment for about 6,600 people.
- Forests also provide a backdrop for the Vermont tourism industry. Forest-and-farm-related recreation and tourism, provide an additional \$1,936,000 per year to the state's economy. The state's forest industry decreased total production between 2011 and 2010 – with both hardwood and softwood harvests reporting declines during this time period.

	# FARMS ²¹		FARM ACREAGE		# HIRED WORKERS		UNPAID WORKERS	
	2012	% Change 2007-12	2012	% Change 2007– 2012	2012	% Change 2007—2012	2012	% Change 2007—2012
VERMONT	7,338	5.1%	1,251,713	1.5%	9,216	10.5%	8,623	N/A
Caledonia	560	5.5%	81,828	-0.1%	399	7.5%	638	N/A
Essex	93	-1.1%	25,491	-4.6%	94	-12.1%	97	N/A
Franklin	736	-0.5%	186,294	3.5%	1,149	-7.6%	710	N/A
Grand Isle	121	6.1%	19,020	11.0%	251	23.6%	197	N/A
Lamoille	349	16.3%	52,093	4.7%	382	46.4%	505	N/A
Orleans	638	0.5%	130,445	0.1%	807	32.3%	583	N/A

	Agricultural Products ²¹ Value Sold			Milk from Cows Value Sold			Maple Syrup Value Sold		
	(000's) 2012	% Change 2007-12	(000's) 2012	% Change 2007– 2012	% of State	(000's) 2012	% Change 2007—2012	% of State	
VERMONT	\$776,105	15.2%	\$504,884	65.1%	100%	\$32,419	4.2%	100%	
Caledonia	\$3.9%,245	18.1%	\$25,677	68.9%	5.1%	\$900	2.4%	2.8%	
Essex	\$11,651	-4.1%	\$6,701	57.5%	1.3%	\$191	1.6%	0.6%	
Franklin	\$184,366	14.8%	132,031	71.6%	26.2%	\$11,386	6.2%	35.1%	
Grand Isle	\$19,067	42.4%	\$11,509	60.4%	2.3%	\$5	0.0%	0.0%	
Lamoille	\$21,334	-1.2%	\$9,194	43.1%	1.8%	\$5,195	24.4%	16.0%	
Orleans	\$99,308	20.6%	\$77,547	78.1%	15.4%	\$2,678	2.7%	8.3%	

²¹ U. S. Department of Agriculture; 2012 Census of Agriculture



S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

A *S.W.O.T. analysis* highlights those factors both within and outside of the region which are likely to influence the success of the project. The *S.W.O.T. analysis* provides guidelines by linking the project to its environment. Based on an inventory of strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats the four general strategies to reach the region's goals are to:

- Build on strengths
- Exploit opportunities
- Eliminate weaknesses
- Eliminate threats or mitigate their effects

<p>A strength = a resource or capacity that the region can use effectively to achieve its objectives</p> <p>S</p>	<p>A weaknesses = a limitation, fault or defect in the region that will keep it from achieving its objectives</p> <p>W</p>
<p>An opportunity = any favorable situation in the region's environment</p> <p>O</p>	<p>A threat = any unfavorable situation the region's environment that is potentially damaging to its strategy.</p> <p>T</p>



S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Safe/low crime ratesIncreasingly vibrant town centersGood quality of lifePartnerships - public & private		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revitalization of downtown/village centersIncrease in local pride /interaction at community arts and creative events	
POPULATION			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Embrace and promote “aging” demographic lifestylesIdentify and market life-styles (second homeowners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Aging population = declining workforce/higher health costsLow to no population growthDeclining student population/ Youth flight
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) CentersIncreased art awareness, education and opportunities (such as those presented by the Swanton Arts Council, the St. Albans Arts Council, and the Catamount Arts in St. Johnsbury)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Significant % of population with less than high school diploma or equivalent;Low % of high school graduates going on to college/ higher educationSignificant drop in graduation rates for low-income studentsInconsistent access to public libraries (access to internet/ information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">greater collaboration between schools, communities, and businesses to identify the skills necessary to thrive in the region’s workforce.Expand the link between schools and career opportunities in manufacturing and agriculturecontextualize the region’s economy in relation to globalization, and integrate existing community resources into educational delivery system.Technical and marketing assistance through community arts groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Education and training levels not sufficient for emerging high-tech jobs in manufacturing, research, biotechnology, health care;
HEALTH		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Poor health indicatorsInadequate access to dentists, primary care physicians, and mental health providers;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">improve health outcomes by connecting to local food options (farm to plate/school) and recreational opportunities;Increased opportunity for healthy, Low-cost, family events at local arts organizations	
UNEMPLOYMENT		<ul style="list-style-type: none">High unemployment ratesLack of childcareInsufficient transportation options to job sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce DevelopmentConnect schools with career opportunitiesIncrease transportation options	



S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
WAGES		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of good-paying jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Further diversification of place-based food and value-added industries to support a wide variety of job types;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wages fall well below both the state and national average weekly wages;Wages for women significantly lower than for men ;
INCOME				<ul style="list-style-type: none">disparity in household income with significantly lower incomes in the Northeast KingdomIncome for women significantly lower than for men ;Aging population /low income
POVERTY		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deep persistent, multi-generational poverty is the result of decades of economic declinepoverty not concentrated in neighborhoods but spread across miles of landscape making efforts inefficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Job creationTransportation options to job sitesImproved access to health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Significant % of population in all counties below poverty levelHighest rates of poverty concentrated in the Northeast KingdomSignificant % of households with public assistance income
DISABILITY		Significant % of households with at least 1 disabled person	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Transportation to job sitesImproved access to care	
FOOD INSECURITY			improve health outcomes by connecting to local food options (farm to plate/school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All counties show a significant # of food insecure households.
HOUSING		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inadequate housing availability and affordability across a range of income levels		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Housing stock is old , energy inefficient, and inadequate for workforce development as well as aging population;



S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
TRANSPORTATION		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of systematic comprehensive public transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand public transportation to ensure choice and affordabilitySupport innovative modes of transportation, carpooling, telecommuting, use of electric vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increasing border security impedes trade/tourists
INFRASTRUCTURE		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Aging or absent infrastructureLack funds to develop infrastructureInconsistent access to broadband / telecommunicationsLack of space to show/store art and art supplies may hamper growth of arts community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Infrastructure development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of infrastructure/failing infrastructure affects business growthInconsistent access to broadband /telecommunications affects business growth
ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strong regional economic development partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of capital to develop/improve infrastructureLimited capital available for business start-ups and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop “local economies”Cross-border business developmentInnovative capital for business development (EB-5)Promote local artists to increase individual incomePromote community art events to increase traffic to downtowns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Economic gap is increasingCanadian exchange rate affects border economiesIncreasing drug trade
INDUSTRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Innovative businessesEntrepreneurial supportForeign Trade Zone designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Insufficient stock of turn-key industry space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bio-technology developmentVermont-Quebec business partnershipsSmall business expansion	
WORKING LANDS and CLIMATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tourism based on natural assetsStrong “Vermont” brandRecreation opportunitiesNatural beauty		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Value-added agricultural product developmentTourism – new markets based on natural local assetsImport youth to the area by appealing to working landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Climate change (impact on traditional seasonal tourism businesses such as skiing, foliage; impact on forestry/agriculture)

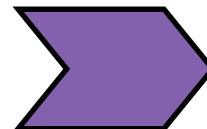
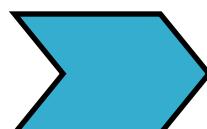


GOALS FOR CREATING RESILIENCY

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

Based on the S.W.O.T. analysis of the regional demographics and economic indicators, it is clear that the path to achieving economic resilience in the Northern Vermont region requires improving the income demographic through the creation of jobs that pay livable, equitable wages (business growth). This in turn means creating an environment to support business expansion and recruitment (infrastructure improvement), preparing a workforce for these opportunities (workforce development) and promoting developments that make communities attractive, affordable, vibrant places to live, work and play (quality of life).

Therefore, the five goals to create resiliency in Northern Vermont are:

-  **Build Economic Resilience in Northern Vermont**
-  **Cultivate Business Growth**
-  **Improve and Expand Infrastructure**
-  **Develop Workforce**
-  **Promote Quality of Life in Communities**



Building economic resilience in the region is both an outcome and a strategy that informs the development of the other four goals.



GOALS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

GOAL 1

BUILD ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN NORTHERN VERMONT

The Northern Vermont Economic Development District faces many challenges that are rooted in the economic decline that has been the slow-rolling crisis of economic recession over this region for several decades.

Poverty and vulnerability are highly correlated, with low income people more susceptible to loss and damage and less able to recover from economic downturns or other challenges. Therefore, the underlying strategy that informs this plan for Northern Vermont is a focus on creating risk-informed growth to alleviate poverty and achieve more resilience to economic upheavals.

There are 3 elements involved in developing resiliency across the Northern Vermont region: systems, agents and institutions. Resiliency is created by:

- Strengthening systems to reduce their vulnerability in the face of major disruptions (climate impacts, economic downturns, etc.) and to reduce the risk of cascading failures;
- Building the capacities of social agents to anticipate and develop adaptive responses, to access and maintain supportive systems;
- Addressing the institutional factors that constrain effective responses to system vulnerability or undermine the ability of agents to take action

The table below summarizes the potential relationships that need to be involved for the strategies in each goal to create a resilient region.

			
	SYSTEMS Includes physical infrastructure, technical infrastructure, energy, communications and ecosystems	AGENTS Individuals, households, communities, businesses, government organizations, etc.	INSTITUTIONS Rules and social conventions that guide interactions of agents with each other and access to systems
Build Economic Resiliency			
Cultivate Business Growth			
Improve /Expand Infrastructure			
Promote Quality of Life in Communities			



GOALS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont



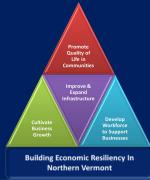
CULTIVATE BUSINESS GROWTH

ACTIONS to cultivate, attract, nurture, and grow businesses and enhance economic competitiveness in the Northern Vermont region include:

1. Support the development of innovation-based industry clusters that create high-wage jobs
2. Help communities implement economic development strategies that grow existing, locally-owned businesses and attract new companies
3. Support the formation and growth of export-oriented businesses
4. Support business attraction and retention efforts of local and regional economic development entities
5. Support programs that encourage people of all ages to consider becoming entrepreneurs
6. Encourage and support the development of entrepreneurship education
7. Identify resources that entrepreneurs and small businesses need to start and grow and help facilitate access to these tools
8. Support efforts to improve access to capital for entrepreneurs
9. Support efforts to improve awareness of, and access to, regional Small Business Development Centers
10. Support efforts to assist local artists and networks of artists

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

- Number of full-time jobs created, as well as retained, in the region
- Amount of new private investment in the region
- Number of business formations and expansions in the region
- Number of new business start-ups assisted through regional SBDCs
- Number of banks in the region that are SBA lenders



GOALS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

GOAL 3

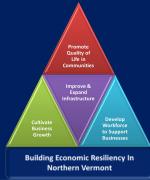
IMPROVE AND EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE

ACTIONS to promote comprehensive planning solutions to ensure that regional transportation and public infrastructure meet the needs of employers and citizens in the Northern Vermont region include:

1. Inventory of existing status of infrastructure in region, including age and capacity
2. Support and convey watershed initiatives that support strategic conservation of open spaces, provide a network of improved ecosystem benefits, provide recreational opportunities and encourage efficient water use
3. Create and implement a master, multi-modal regional transportation infrastructure plan
4. Support development of community/county land use, transportation and economic development plans
5. Support local efforts to replace and upgrade aging infrastructure throughout the region
6. Support regional water quality initiatives to accommodate future growth
7. Identify planned projects/status
8. Support municipal efforts to improve/add/remove infrastructure
9. Offer capital budget training to municipalities
10. Create opportunities for cooperative buying across the region
11. Identify funding to develop/improve regional infrastructure including broadband and cellular service
12. Explore and develop a master, multi-modal regional transportation infrastructure plan
13. Support efforts to assist local arts organizations to develop and/or secure space

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Inventory of infrastructure in region created | • Amount of road upgrades/paving on regional roads |
| • Amount of CDBG infrastructure grants awarded | • Number of presentations and meetings held for budget training |
| • Amount of state and federal dollars spent on highways and bridges in region | • Creation of multi-modal transportation plan for region |
| • Number of local projects for improvements completed | |



GOALS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

GOAL 4

DEVELOP WORKFORCE

ACTIONS to develop a competitive skilled workforce in order to encourage businesses to start, locate, and expand in the Northern Vermont region include:

1. Conduct collaborative planning activities with regional partners to promote alignment of economic and workforce development goals, including emphasis on postsecondary education and skills training to support high-growth, high-wage jobs, including skilled trades
2. Encourage and identify industry-led certification training programs to train existing and future workers for a more competitive economic environment
3. Pursue funding opportunities with workforce partners to expand the availability of training programs for targeted industries and occupations
4. Make labor market information accessible to school districts/higher education institutions so students can make informed choices about career options
5. Partner with local colleges within the region to increase production of knowledge-based workers in science and technology sectors
6. Partner with local industry, Workforce Solutions Career and Technical Education Centers and Community Colleges in the region to identify and provide a skilled-trade workforce
8. Establish strategic partnerships, which include a combination of social services, community and faith-based organizations, and educational providers to ensure a successful support system is developed.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

- Number of people receiving job training in the region
- Number of post-secondary degrees awarded by regional colleges
- Number of students receiving information about careers in the region
- Number of events providing workforce development services for employers and communities
- Total job seekers educational achievement
- Number of employer job openings filled



GOALS

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

GOAL 5

PROMOTE QUALITY OF LIFE IN COMMUNITIES

ACTIONS to promote the quality of life through comprehensive community development throughout the region:

1. Determine housing needs in the Northern Vermont region across a range of income levels
2. Increase accessibility to post-secondary education and training opportunities in the region
3. Increase accessibility to healthcare to underserved populations
4. Align regional healthcare industry strategies with regional economic development strategies in the region
5. Partner with local organizations to support healthy lifestyles by expanding bicycle/pedestrian/recreational opportunities, exercise programs, and healthy food options etc
6. Promote infill and redevelopment to enhance the region's downtowns, and surrounding areas, as one of the priorities for business development.
7. Support revitalization of downtown/village centers and encourage communities to apply for designated downtown/village center status
8. Encourage the establishment of diversified attractions that expand the tourism and recreation opportunities
9. Encourage the promotion of the arts and cultural opportunities

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number and type of housing units added to region• Number of new parks/recreation facilities developed• % increase in enrollment rates in higher education | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of trail miles developed• Number of eligible downtowns/village centers granted designated status• Improvement in health outcomes rankings |
|---|--|



APPENDIX - RESOURCES

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

REGIONAL PLANNING

Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation

Home page: <http://www.fcidc.com/>

Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation

Home page: <http://www.champlainislands.com/>

Lamoille County Planning Commission

Home page: <http://www.lcpvt.org/>

[Regional Plan](#)

Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Home page: <http://nvda.net/>

[Regional Plan](#)

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Home page: <http://www.nrpcvt.com/>

[Regional Plan](#)

Northeast Kingdom Collaborative

Home page: <http://www.nekcollaborative.org/>

[Rural Economic Action Partnership \(REAP\) Strategic Plan](#)

FOOD SYSTEMS PLANNING

Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Home page: <http://nvda.net/>

[Regional Food System Plan for the Northeast Kingdom](#)

Vermont Community Foundation

[Report Local Food for Healthy Communities](#)

POPULATION—AGING

Vermont State Plan on Aging FY 2015- 2017 Plan

Housing America's Older Adults

[Report from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University](#)

Vermont Department of Labor, Economic & Labor Market Information Division

[Vermont Economic and Demographic Profile Series 2015](#)

An Aging Nation: The Older Population in the United States

[Report](#)

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

The Robert Wood Johnson County Health Statistics, 2015 Report

Vermont Agency Of Human Services Department Of Mental Health Year 2015 Statistical Report January 2016

[Report](#)

NAMI State Advocacy 2010: Vermont

[Report](#)



APPENDIX - RESOURCES

NVEDD—Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans Counties of Vermont

EDUCATION & CAREER PATHWAY TRAINING

Vermont's Class of 2012: Pursuing a Postsecondary Education

[VSAC Special Report](#)

Vermont: A Call to Action

[Report](#)

Vermont High School Graduates Postsecondary Enrollment Rate

[Report](#)

New England Secondary School Consortium Common Data Project

[Report](#)

The Lumina Foundation

[Report](#)

Vermont Community Foundation

[Report: Understanding Vermont: Postsecondary Education](#)

CORRECTIONS

Vermont Department of Corrections Annual Report FY2015

[Report](#)

NAMI State Advocacy 2010: Vermont

[Report](#)

INCOME, WAGES, UNEMPLOYMENT

Vermont Department of Labor

[Report](#)

Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, VT

2016 Status Report: Women, Work and Wages in Vermont

[Report](#)

Public Assets Institute: State of Working Vermont 2015

[Report](#)

Vermont Department of Labor, Economic & Labor Market Information Division

[Vermont Economic and Demographic Profile Series 2015](#)

POVERTY, FOOD INSECURITY, DISABILITY

U.S. Census Bureau: State and County

[QuickFacts](#)

Household Food Security in the United States

[Report](#)

Hunger Free Vermont

[Report](#)

Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR)

[Report](#)



APPENDIX—PLANNING FOR RESILIENCE

Each year across the United States, communities experience disasters and major disruptions to their ways of life. Severe weather events such as floods, hurricanes, and violent storms; outbreaks of infectious or foodborne illnesses; financial collapses and the closures of major employers; the increasing threat of terrorist events; all impact regions and local economies in ways that take a tremendous toll on the financial, social and environmental resources of communities, businesses, and government entities.

While the human needs that such disasters and disruptions create require an immediate emergency response, recovery from such events requires a different strategy. Advance planning and organization help to anticipate risks, limit negative impacts of adverse events, and promote rapid recovery within a coherent framework of information, communication and strategies for intervention. (NADO 2015)

Resilience is the capacity to prepare for such disruptions, recover from shocks and stresses, and adapt and grow from a disruptive experience (Rodin, 2014). To preserve, promote and advance the quality of life in the region, NVEDD is incorporating the concept of resiliency into the goals and strategies of its CEDS plan.

Resiliency is both a process and an outcome. As such acquiring resiliency requires on-going assessment of risks, and an understanding of the capacity of resources for response in relation to the impact or magnitude of the disaster or disruption.

A strong regional economy is based on the strengths of its individual local communities.

Communities able to withstand a critical event without significant loss of function are said to demonstrate resilience to that type and magnitude of event.

A strong regional economy is based on the strengths of individual local communities. The goal of the NVEDD CEDS plan therefore is to create resilient communities in order to reduce the vulnerability of the regional economy to crises of economic shifts, natural disasters, climate change, and other major disruptions or shocks to the region's economic base.

Building resilience across the region will include development and use of both steady-state and responsive initiatives.

Steady-state initiatives are long-term planning and implementation efforts designed to bolster the community or region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock in order to promote the long-term economic durability of the region.

Responsive initiatives are efforts to establish the capabilities of NVEDD to be responsive to the region's recovery needs following an incident. This includes establishing information networks among various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors. NVEDD can also serve as a source of information to deal with an economic challenge and be a convener of regional stakeholders to gather data and encourage collaboration in the post-disruption stage.

The goal is to create resilient communities in order to reduce the vulnerability of the region to crises of economic shifts, natural disasters, climate change, and other major disruptions or shocks to the region's economic health.



APPENDIX—ELEMENTS OF ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Building economic resilience takes place through interactions across and between three main elements: systems, agents and institutions. The table below provides a brief overview and summary.

		
SYSTEMS Includes physical infrastructure, technical infrastructure, energy, communications and ecosystems Systems are the underlying processes needed to organize and operate community life. They include transportation, physical infrastructure, energy, communications, ecosystems etc. Systems can be strongly affected by factors at multiple scales and at long distances.	AGENTS Individuals, households, communities, businesses, government organizations, etc. Agents, unlike systems, are capable of deliberation, independent analysis, voluntary interaction and strategic choice in the face of new information. Agents behave in ways that reflect their location and role within society (i.e. as businesses, individuals, government entities, households, etc.).	INSTITUTIONS Rules and social conventions that guide interactions of agents with each other and access to systems Institutions structure human behavior and exchange in social and economic interactions. They are created to reduce uncertainty, maintain continuity of social patterns and social order, and to stabilize forms of human interaction in predictable ways.
In each element, building regional resilience means:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening systems<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ to reduce their vulnerability in the face of major disruptions (climate impacts, economic downturns, etc.)◦ to reduce the risk of cascading failures;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building the capacities of social agents<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ to anticipate and develop adaptive responses;◦ to access and maintain supportive systems;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addressing the institutional factors that<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ constrain effective responses to system vulnerabilities;◦ undermine the ability of agents to take action;
Sample steady-state and responsive initiatives:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks to protect commerce and public safety in the event of natural or manmade disasters; (steady-state initiative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake efforts to diversify the industrial base by targeting the development of emerging clusters or industries that (a) build on the region's unique assets and competitive strengths; and (b) provide stability during downturns that disproportionately impact any single cluster or industry; (steady-state initiative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish information networks among the various stakeholders in the region to facilitate active and regular communications between the public, private, education and non-profit sectors to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges ; (responsive initiative)