



# 05 | Economic Development

## A. State of the Economy in the TRO Region

The TRO Region is largely rural and sparsely populated, as is typical of most of Vermont. Most towns in the Region have a low level of commercial development, typically many small commercial operations in the form of home-based businesses. Regional occupations are diversified across the professional, technical, service, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors, with the Region's economy not dominated by a single business type. Our landscape and scenery form the basis for many place-based businesses in tourism, recreation, food, wood products, and the arts. The Region's economy

began as agrarian and moved to manufacturing. Recent economic trends, both local and statewide, have moved us towards a service-based economy.

The TRO Region's economy is dominated by outlying areas that present significant opportunities for future economic development based on strong job markets, developed infrastructure, extensive services, and proximity to educational/health institutions. Rutland to the west and Montpelier/Barre to the north are within a 30-minute drive of parts of the Region, but the largest of these outlying areas, spanning two states, encompasses the towns of Hartford and Norwich in Vermont and the towns of Lebanon and Hanover across the Connecticut

*Huntington House Inn, Rochester | © John Knox*

River in New Hampshire. This area is the core of what is known as the 'Upper Valley.' Our regional economy is intricately interwoven in the fabric of the greater Upper Valley area.

Internal subregional economic centers include Randolph, Bethel, Royalton, Rochester, Woodstock, and Bradford. These areas continue to expand but have limited suitable locations for growth as well as supporting water and wastewater infrastructure.

Job growth in the Upper Valley and the Region has been modest, and unemployment in the Region has been low. While low unemployment rates have



their positive attributes, there are negative ones as well. Low unemployment can be regarded as a barrier for businesses looking to expand or relocate to the Region because not enough skilled and available workers exist in the area. Wage rates have been growing but still lag slightly behind the State as a whole.

Several smaller towns in the Region are “bedroom communities” that provide housing opportunities for workforces that commute. Many residents in the Region routinely travel outside of their towns for shopping, but also for work opportunities. [With respect to jobs, 72.7 percent of workers in Orange County and 54.8 percent of workers in Windsor County are employed outside of their county of residence](#)<sup>1</sup>. These rates far exceed those rates seen at the statewide level, due to the ease of access from the Region to outside work markets.

Most towns in the Region are close to major interstates (I-89 and I-91), making access to distant employment areas easier and allowing many to live farther from work. This has escalated the trend of extending growth and development away from historical settlement areas throughout the Region, placing strain on the provision of municipal services and businesses. The addition of remote working enabled by the Internet has allowed many residents to work outside of their towns but not commute to work, though they still drive to services.

## B. Workforce Composition

A workforce is defined as all adults aged sixteen years and over who are currently employed and

unemployed but still able to work. Individuals who are held in an institution (for incarceration, mental health, or other health-related reasons), or are in the Armed Forces are not a part of the workforce. The workforce does not typically include those who are full-time students unless they happen to work while in school. For more information about who counts towards the workforce, please read [U.S. Bureau of Statistic’s explanation](#)<sup>2</sup>.

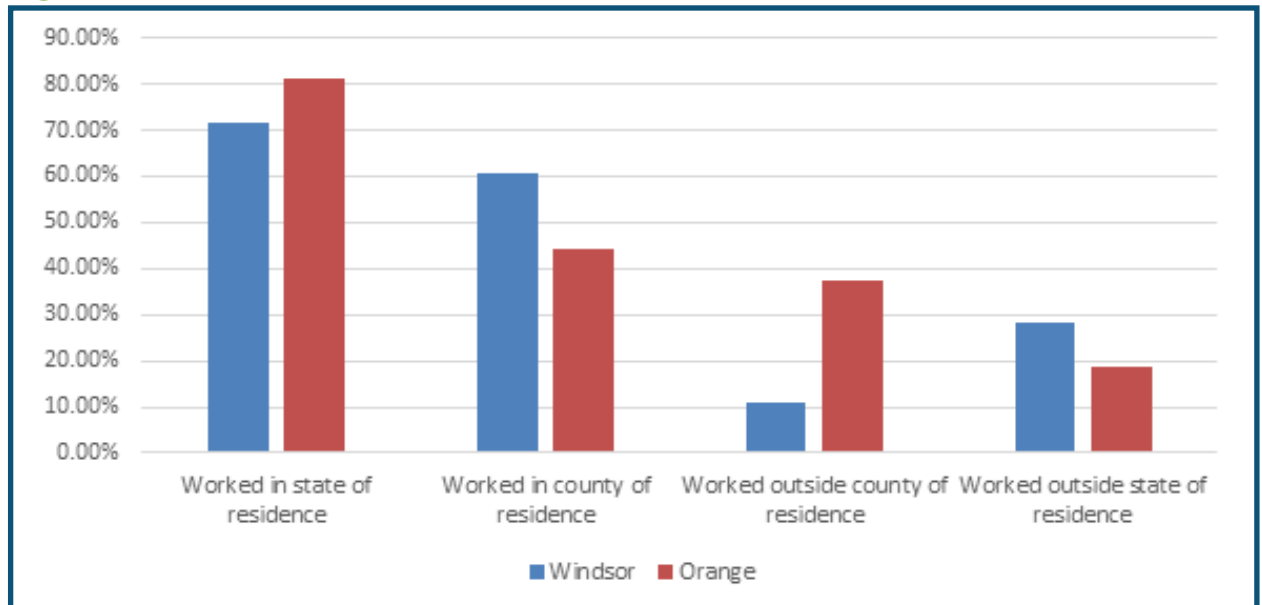
Though our Region includes towns in parts of four counties, using Windsor and Orange Counties’ data is a good proxy for the overall Region and offers the most accurate data. Knowing this, the [2023 Economic & Demographic Profile](#)<sup>3</sup> published by Vermont Department of Labor concludes that our Region’s labor force increased since the COVID-19

pandemic (Windsor County by 5%; Orange County by 2%). To see the most up-to-date labor market information by county, please visit State of Vermont’s [Labor Market Data Dashboard](#)<sup>4</sup>.

The TRO Region has seen significant shifts in certain workforce age groups in the past decades. A steadily aging workforce is already upon the State, as many baby boomers have entered retirement. Having a young workforce capable of replacing the established workforce is necessary for economic vitality for the Region.

According to the 2022 American Community Survey, Vermont’s median age was 43 years old—an increase by two years since 2010. Many baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964)

Figure 5-1: Place of Work



Source: Commuting, 2011-2016 American Community Survey



have entered their retirement years, and about 40,000 people from ages 65-79 were added to Vermont’s population since 2010. [In Windsor County, the number of people who are 65+ years old \(typically considered as outside the workforce\) is projected to increase by 61 percent by 2030, while Orange County will expect a 97.3 percent increase](#)<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, the state also saw a decrease in working-age people in the 40 to 54 age group, a trend that is severely pronounced in our Region. The Region will not fill vacant positions while simultaneously driving additional job growth unless this demographic trend is reversed and the Region attracts thousands of younger replacement workers.

In agriculture, this problem is much worse. For instance, the average age of Vermont farmers is 56, with over a quarter 65 and older. While farm operations are often family-owned, there is no guarantee that a family member will take over the farm. Luckily, there are a growing number of young people interested in becoming farmers or starting a food enterprise business. The challenge is that farms are expensive to purchase and operate for new farmers. Most farms also require one or more family members to hold a full-time job to supplement farm income and maintain access to health insurance.

Our well-educated workforce bodes well for having a skilled workforce capable of attracting higher-paying, specialized jobs to our 30 towns. In 2022, many working-age residents had completed, were pursuing, or had pursued higher education qualifications beyond a high school diploma (44.2%); this is higher than the national average of

**Table 5-1: Per Capita Personal Income 2018-2022**

Indicator	2018	2022	Change from 2018-2022
US	\$ 53,309	\$ 65,470	19%
VT	\$ 51,692	\$ 63,039	18%
Orange	\$ 46,315	\$ 56,029	17%
Windsor	\$ 54,823	\$ 67,971	19%

Source: Vermont Department of Labor

35.6 percent. (To see the most current information on Vermont’s education attainment, please visit [this interactive map](#)<sup>6</sup> created by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce).

As previously mentioned, many industries routinely struggle to find qualified workers. This problem is multifaceted in that it reflects a too-small, qualified workforce, an inability to retain and train from within local communities to fill positions, and the struggle employers face to recruit from outside the Region (largely due to our cost of living). According to findings presented in the [2014 Upper Valley Workforce Needs Assessment](#)<sup>7</sup>, developed by the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC), three key industry areas that require skilled workers are the health care and social assistance sector; manufacturing; and professional, scientific, and technical services industries. This assessment still holds true today.

There are many workforce development and training programs throughout the State that are run through the [Agency of Commerce and Community](#)

[Development \(ACCD\)](#)<sup>8</sup>, the [Department of Labor \(DOL\)](#)<sup>9</sup>, and the [Agency of Human Services](#)<sup>10</sup>. (See Chapter 8 for a list of adult and secondary vocational education centers in our Region).

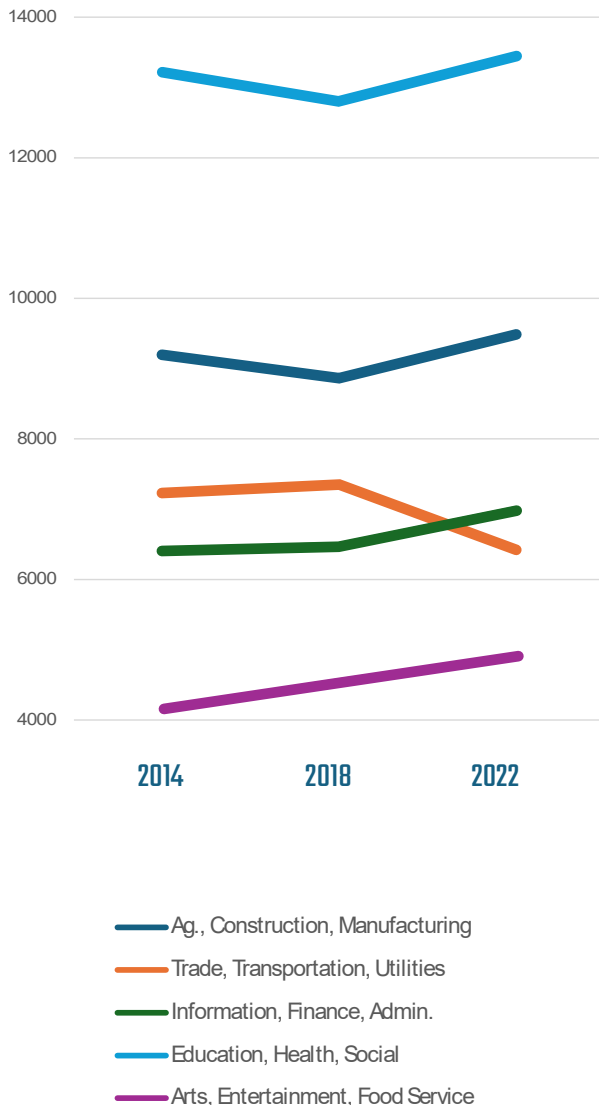
Another way to bolster educational opportunities for the Region’s burgeoning and existing workforces is to promote the creation of continuing adult education opportunities throughout the Region. The workforce needs experience with learning day-to-day job skills but also with more general business and personnel management skills. Training in these areas can be in the form of practical on-site job training opportunities or courses and accreditation programs outside of the workplace that supplement existing job skills.

### Income and Poverty Levels

Windsor County has a higher per capita income than the state average and is the fourth highest out of the 14 counties in Vermont. In contrast, Orange County ranks tenth among Vermont counties. As incomes are increasing in the TRO Region, the



**Figure 5-2: Occupational Sectors and Employment in Orange and Windsor Counties**



Source: American Community Survey (2014, 2018, 2022)

number of households on state public assistance programs is continuing to decrease.

However, an overview of the U.S. gender wage gap demonstrates a decreased but persistent wage gap between women and men. Despite the gender wage gap having closed somewhat since the 70s, the rate at which the gender wage gap has declined has stalled. [Since the early 2000s, the female-to-male earnings ratio has fluctuated between 79 percent and 83 percent](#)<sup>11</sup>. Employers addressing the gender wage gap will help lower the number of disadvantaged women, minimize job loss for all workers, and raise the fixed incomes of elderly people (which tend to skew more heavily female) when they reach retirement.

In January 2018, nearly 5,000 households, representing just above 14 percent of those in Orange and Windsor Counties, were enrolled in Vermont’s cash assistance programs, which assist those below recognized income levels. The communities with the highest percentage of households that receive benefits are Bradford and Corinth. Each of those towns has more than 19 percent of their households involved in public assistance programs.

While our Region has lower rates of poverty compared to other counties, the [Upper Valley Haven](#)<sup>12</sup> suggests that individuals experiencing poverty feel their economic hardships more acutely while living in the Region. The services provided by The Haven have come under increasing demand in recent years, especially from families. This is directly related to the interaction between the Region’s increasing housing costs, as described by

the Vermont Housing Finance Agency in their 2021 [Housing and Wages Report](#)<sup>13</sup>. Without addressing these trends, the Region will continue to see rising numbers in both individuals and families slipping into poverty or increased numbers of residents emigrating to more affordable areas.

### C. Employment Sector Characteristics

#### Employment by Occupation and Industrial Sector

Nearly 79 percent of the Region’s jobs fall within the service producing sector (such as information, education, and hospitality), whereas jobs in the goods producing sector (such as natural resources, construction, and maintenance) account for only 21 percent of all jobs in the Region. While most sectors from 2018 to 2022 experienced moderate shifts in their number of employees, some jobs have seen significant growths or declines.

Occupations that experienced a decreasing trend in workforce participants were primarily in wholesale trading (-34.9%), utilities (-12.8%), and the information sector (-8.8%). Unfortunately, the Region saw a drop in health care and social assistance employees, which underscores the need for planning the future of high-quality health care services in our Region. The number of unfilled jobs in the health sector is huge, with local clinics being short-staffed, and Dartmouth-Hitchcock regularly having several hundred job openings. On the other hand, the top three job positions that have seen tremendous growth were managerial positions in businesses (67.7%), mining (45.1%),



and educational services (18.6%).

The educational services continue to have a major impact on the growth of the Region's jobs. This is attributed to the existence of major academic institutions, which include all the municipal and private schools, and higher education institutions like Dartmouth College, Vermont Law and Graduate School, and Vermont State University.

### Agriculture and Silviculture

In 2022, it was estimated that the agricultural economy Statewide had almost 11,500 businesses employing nearly 64,000 Vermonters, according to [Vermont Farm to Plate's 2022 Annual Report](#)<sup>14</sup>. It is estimated that during the same year, the direct agricultural revenue in Vermont was \$781 million.

Dairy remains a multimillion-dollar industry in both Orange and Windsor Counties, accounting for 66 percent of farm revenue for Orange County and 43 percent for Windsor County. Over the years, however, both Windsor and Orange Counties experienced a decline in the number of dairy farms.

[The 2017 Census of Agriculture](#)<sup>15</sup>, published by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, shows that Vermont farms have become fewer in number but larger in size. This trend is also evident in our region; [Orange County](#)<sup>16</sup> experienced a 25 percent decrease in the number of farms but saw a seven percent increase in average farm size, and [Windsor County](#)<sup>17</sup> saw a 12 percent decrease in the number of farms but a 26 percent increase in the average size of farms.

In our Region, the reduction in the number of

farms occurred the most with farms that sold less than 50,000 dollars' worth of products—particularly in mid-sized farms (grossing between 5 to 10 thousand dollars' worth of sales). From 2012 to 2017, the number of mid-sized farms dropped nearly 30 percent (specifically, 241 farms in 2012 to 174 in 2017). While the number of small-scale farms (farms that sell products at \$2,500 or less) comprise nearly 40 percent of our Region's total number of farms, they generate less than one percent of Vermont's total agricultural income.

Farm innovation and diversification is essential to our agricultural landscape. Instabilities in traditional markets have led to farmer embracing direct-to-consumer sales, on-farm events, participation in farmers markets, agritourism, and the production of value-added products. However, farmers must improve consumer education, helping them recognize the broader benefits (social, economic, environmental, etc.) of buying locally and regionally produced food to grow their market. Farming itself is exempt from local land use regulations per Vermont statute, but many of these new types of nontraditional commercial uses can be regulated, at least to a certain extent.

With respect to the silviculture industry and value-added wood products, there are major regional employers that rely on forestland products, such as Copeland Furniture in Bradford and the Pompanoosuc Mills Corporation in Thetford, each with a workforce varying between 100 and 249 people. Numerous smaller operations exist too, such as local sawmills and lumberyards, firewood processors, maple sugaring businesses, Christmas tree farms, and furniture producers. Initiatives like the



Maple Syrup Production | © Kevin Geiger





ShackletonThomas | ©Sarah Tucker Kevin Geiger

Forest Products Value Chain Investment Program (a collaboration between the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, the Northern Forest Center, and the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board) seek to enhance the economic competitiveness of the forest products industry in the Region by exploring ways to access new markets outside the State, developing new products that could be produced using Vermont wood, encouraging innovation, and facilitating collaboration among industry members.

## Tourism

No exact numbers exist to show how many people in the Region work specifically in jobs catering to

tourism; however, if we combine the number of individuals working in entertainment, the arts, recreation, and food services with those working in the retail trade, roughly 21 percent of the Region's workforce directly and indirectly have a part in the Region's tourism industry. Thus, tourism is a key component to the Region's financial success. There is not simply one tourist attraction that is the anchor for the entire Region; rather, there are a multitude of year-round opportunities that visitors flock to the Region to explore and enjoy.

To illustrate how important tourism is for the Region, in 2022 the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA) calculated that outdoor recreation (e.g., skiing) generated [\\$1.9 billion](#)<sup>18</sup> for Vermont. A key area of concern within the tourism sector is the need to diversify this part of the economy in the Region, and to attract visitors on a season-to-season basis instead of attracting a niche tourist base at only certain times of the year. Further, ensuring that the tourism industry is equipped to face future impacts from climate change is critical to ensuring business continuity and financial and economic resiliency. This is of particular importance with respect to the winter sport industry, as it is most vulnerable to increasing temperatures and reduced snowpack levels.

## Major Regional Employers

The TRO Region is home to several important economic activities that employ many of our residents. The largest sector in the Region is the education and health care sectors, with academic institutions like Vermont Law and Graduate School

## Snapshot: Workforce & Economic Development Resources

- **Vermont Manufacturing Collaborative (VTMC)** – Opened in 2020 on the Vermont State University Randolph campus, VTMC is a public-private partnership funded by a Department of Defense contract. The collaborative builds the infrastructure and partnerships needed to support business evaluation of advanced manufacturing technology and to help learners become skilled through training and hands-on experience. VTMC hosts the Advanced Manufacturing Center, featuring leading-edge technology that supports the full product lifecycle, from ideation to production and is accessible to businesses and students.
- **Cultivator** – A Randolph-based 501c3, registered in 2024 and with start-up funding provided through an EDA-funded partnership with the Black River Innovation Campus located in Springfield, Vermont. Founded to foster and support innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship in the Randolph region, Cultivator is dedicated to providing resources and cultivating connections for businesses, individuals, job seekers, and members of the community, empowering them to thrive in a dynamic and evolving economy. Programming includes Main Street business networking, legal guidance provided in partnership with VT Law and Graduate School, and targeted business support workshops for creatives, youth, and women.



and Vermont University and medical centers like Gifford Medical Center and the VA Medical Center being among the largest employers in the Region, and Dartmouth-Hitchcock and Dartmouth College being nearby. The second largest sector, leisure, and hospitality, employs 23 percent of our Region's employees. Lake Morey Resort, the Woodstock Inn and Resort, and the Quechee Club are all large employers that contribute to this sector. With almost half of our Region's labor listed under educational, medical or hospitality sectors, these are clear anchor institutions within our local economies.

## D. Regional Challenges and Opportunity Areas for Economic Development

### Telecommunications

Parts of the TRO Region still need access to fast, affordable, and efficient Internet, data, and cellular technologies to promote business growth and attract prospective employees. According to a Vermont Public Service Department January 2018 report, 9,000 buildings in Orange and Windsor Counties are underserved even for basic Internet speeds.

### Housing

Providing ample workforce housing, in both rental and home buyer markets, is key to meeting the needs of the TRO Region's workers. The Region is short several thousand housing units of the type and price needed to attract new workers.

### Sewer and water supply

While some areas in the Region have ample infrastructural capacity to handle any anticipated growth, only small parts of nine of the Region's 30 towns currently have both municipal water and sewer services. Expansion and updates to existing services and the creation of such systems in other village and town centers is needed (where practical) for economic growth and to attract new businesses.

### Workforce

Anecdotal evidence from local employers suggests a labor shortage in the Region. This is due to lack of housing opportunities and essential services, low wages, and inadequate number of qualified workers. The Region's workforce is rapidly aging and needs a more diverse, younger population to live and work here.

### Existing buildings and brownfields

A better understanding of sites suitable for reuse or redevelopment as new business headquarters or for the expansion of existing businesses is needed in core town and village locations. Appropriate grant funding such as [EPA brownfields funding](#)<sup>19</sup> can help communities and businesses advance the revitalization process.

### Plans and permitting

Lack of clarity in municipal plans makes it difficult for town officials, residents, and developers alike to properly discern which locations are most desirable for new business growth as well as what types of growth is preferred. Further, inconsistencies between some municipal plans and their

## Snapshot: Workforce & Economic Development Resources (continued)

- **Space on Main (SOM)** – A Bradford-based 501c3 founded in 2017 to support entrepreneurship, innovation, the arts, education, health, and recreation in order to increase opportunity for personal and collective growth in the Cohase Region of Vermont and New Hampshire. SOM provides a creative facility with access to affordable equipment, workspaces, and classes. Opened to the public in 2018 and hiring the first employee in 2022 the goal at SOM is to ensure the prosperity of the community by leveraging talent in the region and creating pathways to outside individuals, services, and technologies. Programming covers everything from co-working space and youth coding camps to the Civics Supper Clubs, a monthly, interactive potluck dinner featuring themes of skill building, participatory government, volunteer service, or civic engagement.

Source: Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation, 2024

corresponding implementing bylaws also confuse those making investment decisions.

### Public transit and transportation

There is a distinct lack of public transit routes in most of the Region's towns and within the regional growth centers, which makes commuting to jobs or for services difficult for people who are elderly



or disabled. Many towns in the Region lack even a single transit stop (for policies addressing this issue, please refer to Chapter 4 of this Plan). Only the area of Hartford near the state line has good transit service.

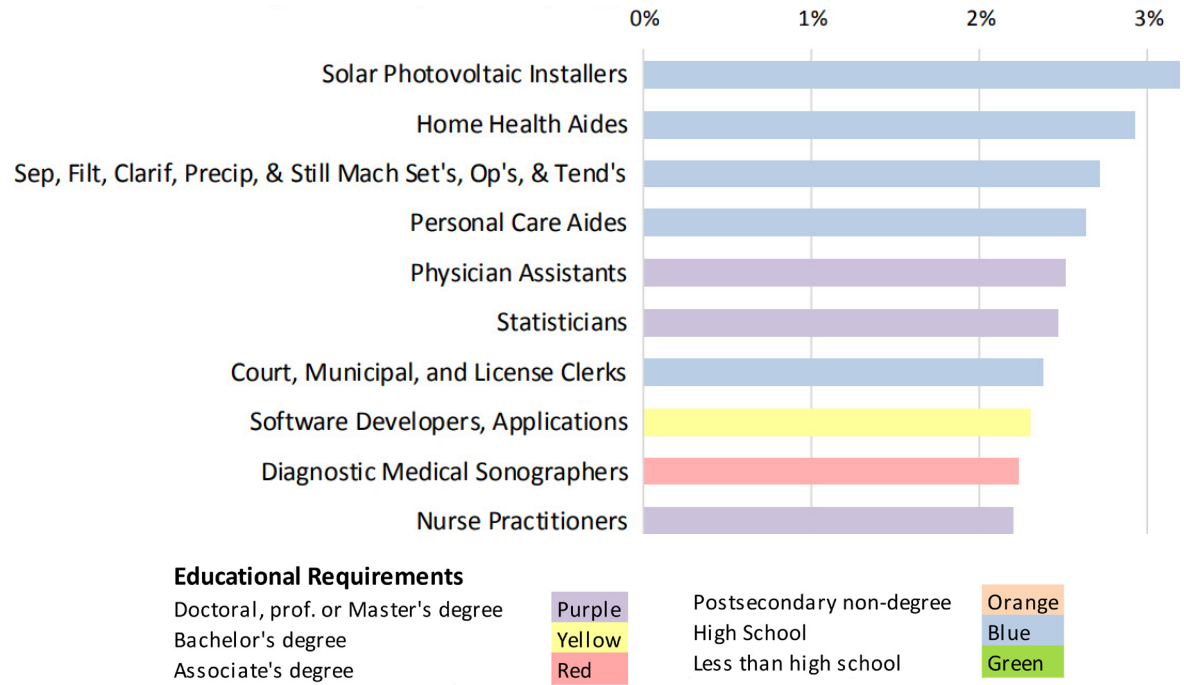
### Creative Economy

The creative sector is made up of people employed in creative industries, and those employed in creative occupations that are not in creative industries. The [CreateVT Progress Report](#)<sup>20</sup> and the [Action Plan](#)<sup>21</sup> produced by the [Vermont Creative Network \(VCN\)](#)<sup>22</sup> found that creatives face limited higher end venues for professionals, lackluster educational programs in the arts, and small networking opportunities. [Cornerstone Creative Community of Vermont \(3CVT\)](#)<sup>23</sup> aims to boost economic prosperity and networking for creatives in east central Vermont.

### Value-added agriculture

While Vermont-based dairy and maple products have successfully reached national, and even international markets, our Region’s value-added food products have room to grow. As identified in the [Vermont Agriculture and Food System Plan 2021-2030](#)<sup>24</sup>, opportunities include teaching entrepreneurial skillsets to young farmers, increasing collaboration with restaurants, and supporting on-farm processing facilities for small-scale producers.

Figure 5-3: Top 10 Occupations by Average Growth Rate in Vermont



Vermont Department of Labor: 2016-2026 Long Term Occupational Projections

## E. The Future of Economic Development

### A Vision for the Future

The [2020-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#)<sup>25</sup>, updated every five years, is an economic roadmap designed to diversify and strengthen our economy by helping to guide growth throughout the 40 towns of the [East Central Vermont Economic Development District](#), which includes the TRO Region. The plan contains workforce development strategies through education, housing infrastructure, and quality of life improvements. A CEDS is required

by the [U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration \(EDA\)](#) for districts to be eligible for planning and construction funds. TRORC has used funding made available by the preparation of a CEDS to support work around the creative economy as well as health and wellness planning throughout the Region. The dynamic process of developing a CEDS is heavily dependent on the coordinated efforts of regional planning and economic development organizations, town governments, interest groups, and private industries that are concerned about the economic development of a Region. The most recent CEDS contains an increased focus on resilience to





both economic shocks as well as climate related disasters.

TRORC recognizes that the Region has a few unique characteristics that provide the opportunity for a high quality of life. Like other parts of Vermont, it is blessed with mountains, lakes, open fields, and villages. The Region's residents have ready access to the natural environment, yet they also have good access to culture, technology, transportation, and other characteristics typically associated with urban life.

Building on the assets of our place is the cornerstone of our economic strategy. While some believe that enticing large new employers is the preferred means of promoting economic development, this approach does not focus on the best source of jobs in our region: small business growth from existing employers. Enticing large new employers also usually involves public subsidies and creates vulnerability in the event of future closure.

TRORC advocates that the region focuses on development based on our local assets and existing small businesses, including cottage industries, which will enable a more stable economy that can grow and flourish. We can also grow local entrepreneurs and attract workers who can telecommute remotely for employers outside of the Region. Given the current shortage of housing, training employees from amongst our current workforce may be easier than attracting outside employees in some cases. However, we also need a concerted effort to attract new working-age adults to augment our aging population.

As noted within the “Major Regional Employers” section of this chapter, higher education and health institutions comprise two of the most significant sectors of our regional economy. Instability of any of these institutions, be it Vermont University, Vermont Law and Graduate School, Gifford Medical Center, or Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, would trickle down to communities throughout our Region, prompting job loss and adverse financial impacts to the towns and businesses that depend on their continued existence.

In 2022, the Vermont Department of Labor published a [long-term projection of occupations](#) that are anticipated to see job growth and decline across the State. However, it is important to note that the projections are not absolute, as many factors constantly influence employment trends (such as the COVID-19 pandemic and emergence of new occupations). It is worth noting that, of all the major occupation groups that are set to see the most growth, many do not pay high wages. For instance, restaurant cooks are predicted to grow by 5.5 percent—more than any other jobs—but the median pay is \$17.73 dollars per hour. Looking at the state-level data, it is highly likely that occupations that require less educational or professional qualifications will have the highest growth in our Region.

While providing jobs is important for both attracting and retaining residents, our Region needs to ensure that there are ample services and housing in place. Childcare services contribute to the regional economy as a business and employer and as a service industry that provides crucial

support to employers and employees. Ample supply of childcare services and facilities allows parents in the regional economy to work, and their importance to the local economy cannot be overstated if we wish to see an influx of workers to the Region. Further, providing increased housing opportunities is critical, especially near job centers.

A more robust transit system will increase people's access to both work and services, and increased high-speed Internet and cell coverage will increase the area's viability for prospective residents to the Region. Multimodal opportunities influence diverse settlement patterns, as [vehicle ownership is due to demographics and life choices](#). Similarly, [a 2015 study by the Vermont Transportation Board](#) conducted eight forums at various college campuses, and found that young Vermonters believe that the state would be a more attractive place to settle for young adults if there were alternative means of transportation. Regional infrastructural improvements will lead to lower costs of living, increased community vitality, and a wider array of professional opportunities for residents.



## Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Economic Development

### Goals

1. Economic development, community development, and land use policies and plans improve the Region's unique quality of life.
2. Essential elements for attracting new younger residents are in place.
3. Agriculture and forestry continue to preserve, reinforce, and revitalize the best characteristics of the Region's landscape and communities while also improving soil and forest health.

### Policies

1. Public and private infrastructure shall be planned and funded to support our economy and the natural environment.
2. Regional development activities should support the diversity of the Region's economic base by encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting local businesses, and attracting new businesses that are consistent with the Regional Plan.
3. New workforce housing development is supported in villages and downtowns.
4. Economic development strategies between TRORC, ECVEDD, and other regional economic development consortiums should align to support a diverse and resilient regional economy.
5. Efforts should be made to engage and assist anchor institutions with community dialogue and business continuity planning.
6. Businesses that are sited and designed in accordance with this Plan and promote the local processing, sale, and distribution of native raw materials and products are encouraged. Planning and regulatory review at the state and local levels should not unduly restrict the development of such commercial operations, which complement farming and forestry

### Recommendations

1. TRORC will assist towns with Act 250 support, zoning bylaw revisions, and grant and loan management to further the development of desired job growth and workforce housing close to our Region's core economic areas.
2. TRORC will assist towns in asset management, capital budgeting, and shared services/purchasing to lower costs and stabilize taxes.
3. TRORC will participate in discussions to improve the regulatory system at the state level and improve permitting coordination between local and state levels of government.
4. TRORC will work with Vermont state agencies, regional and local development groups, trade associations, Chambers of Commerce, planning commissions, and other groups to integrate land use planning with economic planning and development programs based on our Region's assets.
5. Public agencies, schools, and private businesses should expand workforce training and education that aligns with the strategic needs of our Region's current and future employers.
6. TRORC will work with the Vermont Arts Council to support regional and statewide creative zones.
7. TRORC will work with towns and development organizations in the Region to identify and undertake brownfields assessments to rehabilitate underutilized sites and buildings most suitable for near-term commercial and residential development in existing downtowns and villages where water, sewer, power, Internet, and roadways have capacity.



## Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Economic Development

### Recommendations (continued)

8. TRORC should work with local producers, development corporations, educational programs, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, and other organizations to study, identify, and create needed processing, storage, and distribution capacity for locally made food and forestry products; and other types of incubator/maker spaces.
9. TRORC should work with land trusts and local conservation commissions to inventory farm and forest lands to understand where parcels are available that could provide opportunities for new farm and forest businesses and to assist towns in crafting regulations to reduce fragmentation and leave land available for farming, forestry, and other land-based businesses.
10. TRORC strongly supports property tax reform efforts at the local and state levels that would reduce the costs of land ownership for farming and forestry, while protecting against the Current Use Program's use as a low-cost vehicle for speculative holding of property for future development.
11. The Natural Resource Conservation Service, Conservation Districts, University of Vermont Extension, and others should continue efforts to educate landowners on the benefits of maintaining and improving the health of forests.

### Economic Development Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.labor.state.vt.us/profile2023.pdf>
- 2 [https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps\\_htgm.htm#nilf:~:text=The%20basic%20concepts%20involved,the%20labor%20force.](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm#nilf:~:text=The%20basic%20concepts%20involved,the%20labor%20force.)
- 3 <http://www.labor.state.vt.us/lmi/profile2023.pdf>
- 4 [https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps\\_htgm.htm#nilf:~:text=The%20basic%20concepts%20involved,the%20labor%20force.](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm#nilf:~:text=The%20basic%20concepts%20involved,the%20labor%20force.)
- 5 <http://www.labor.state.vt.us/lmi/profile2023.pdf>
- 6 <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-vermont-labor-market?state=vt>
- 7 [https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B7fGuPMC\\_Sk6RUdDYU1Jc002V1RpM0pGS2ImNIZzaGx1RW9z/edit?resourcekey=0-PKGV59dQV6WekQj4Y5p3Yg](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B7fGuPMC_Sk6RUdDYU1Jc002V1RpM0pGS2ImNIZzaGx1RW9z/edit?resourcekey=0-PKGV59dQV6WekQj4Y5p3Yg)
- 8 <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/doing-business/workforce>
- 9 <https://labor.vermont.gov/workforce-development>
- 10 <https://humanservices.vermont.gov/our-work/programs-services/financial-employment-security>
- 11 <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/quick-facts-gender-wage-gap/>
- 12 <https://uppervalleyhaven.org/>
- 13 <https://www.vhfa.org/news/blog/vhfa-releases-2021-annual-report>
- 14 [https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/sites/default/files/2023-01/farm-to-plate-annual-report-2022\\_final\\_hires.pdf](https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/sites/default/files/2023-01/farm-to-plate-annual-report-2022_final_hires.pdf)
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Economic Development Endnotes (continued)

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