

**Northern Vermont Economic Development District
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
2016-2020**

YEAR 1

Annual Report 2017

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In 2015, the Northern Vermont Economic Development District undertook a process to develop an economic development roadmap for the northern tier counties in the state of Vermont. The 2016 CEDS Plan identified strategies to be implemented over five years in key areas to achieve this vision for the district's economy. This 2016 Annual Report is the first summary update to describe the strategies, report on project implementation, and reflect the region's evolving needs and opportunities for economic prosperity.

The intended outcome of the Plan is to encourage sustainable job growth and create a more resilient regional economy. The 2016 CEDS Plan and 2017 Annual Report were developed by NVEDD staff under the guidance of the NVEDD Governing Board with input provided by member municipalities, partnering organizations and the public. The Plan was developed in accordance with U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) regulations 13 C.F.R. § 303.7 and under guidance issued on January 21, 2015.

Northern Vermont Economic Development District

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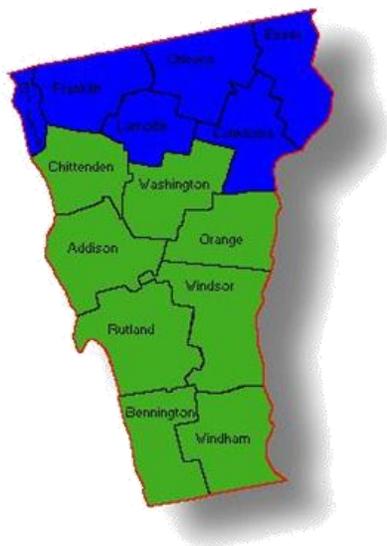
Mike Welch, Senior Project Manager, Northern Community Investment Corporation

THE REGIONAL PROFILE

The following regional profile provides a general background of the economic development conditions in the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD), which includes the six northernmost counties in Vermont.

These communities are faced with challenges common to rural areas, such as lower wages, limited job opportunities and difficulty accessing infrastructure and services that are available in more urban and suburban environments. In addition, capacity and access to resources to move economic development projects forward are more limited. NVEDD's basic approach to creating economic resiliency in the region through the CEDS program are (1) to leverage the area's intrinsic and emerging assets to create sustainable economic opportunities that reflect the character and culture of the communities and (2) to create the capacity needed to take action through collaboration within and outside of the area.

Map 1: Northern Vermont Economic Development District



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

Orleans, Caledonia, and Essex counties are often grouped together and known collectively as the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont.

Geography

Located in Northern Vermont, the Northern Vermont Economic Development District has a predominantly rural landscape, with over 98% of its acreage in forest and open land. 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.

NVEDD SNAPSHOT

KEY FACTS

20,456

Population



2.97

Average Household Size

36.2

Median Age

\$55,650

Median Household Income

EDUCATION

10%

No High School Diploma



20%

High School Graduate



30%

Some College



40%

Bachelor's/Grad/Prof Degree

BUSINESS



11,256

Total Businesses



60,382

Total Employees

EMPLOYMENT



52%

White Collar



30%

Blue Collar



18%

Services

5.7%

Unemployment Rate

INCOME



\$55,650

Median Household Income



\$30,382

Per Capita Income



\$88,548

Median Net Worth

Households By Income

The largest group: \$50,000 - \$74,999 (18.1%)

The smallest group: \$200,000+ (6.8%)

Indicator ▲	Value	Difference	
<\$15,000	9.5%	-1.8%	<div style="width: 9.5%;"></div>
\$15,000 - \$24,999	8.1%	-1.4%	<div style="width: 8.1%;"></div>
\$25,000 - \$34,999	8.4%	-1.1%	<div style="width: 8.4%;"></div>
\$35,000 - \$49,999	13.1%	-0.9%	<div style="width: 13.1%;"></div>
\$50,000 - \$74,999	18.1%	-0.4%	<div style="width: 18.1%;"></div>
\$75,000 - \$99,999	13.2%	+0.1%	<div style="width: 13.2%;"></div>
\$100,000 - \$149,999	15.5%	+1.1%	<div style="width: 15.5%;"></div>
\$150,000 - \$199,999	7.3%	+1.7%	<div style="width: 7.3%;"></div>
\$200,000+	6.8%	+2.7%	<div style="width: 6.8%;"></div>

Population

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%).

The most compelling population statistics involve the aging of Vermont. 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 outcomes.

Income

Across the region, there is significant disparity in household income. Grand Isle exceeds the state levels across all three categories of median, average and per capita, 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.

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. 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: Franklin (\$844) Caledonia (\$753) Lamoille (\$710) Orleans (\$695) Essex (\$692) Grand Isle (\$662)

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 covered by the Vermont or Federal Unemployment Compensation Law. Excluded are the self-employed, proprietors, most farms, and religious, railroad and unpaid family workers.

Poverty

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%.

Disability

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%.

Food Insecurity

All NVEDD counties show a significant number of food insecure households 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.

Corrections

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.

Housing

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

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.

Physical Health

As reported by the 2016 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.

Mental Health

Statewide there is a significant need across all counties for mental health services. 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. 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.

Education and Career Pathway Training

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 demonstrates completion of a postsecondary academic or professional program that documents a set of skills or experiences as part of a career pathway that leads to employment and/or further educational opportunities.

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 county 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%.

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.

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%) and Grand Isle (+9.2%) counties.

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 nurse 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.

Forestry

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.

INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

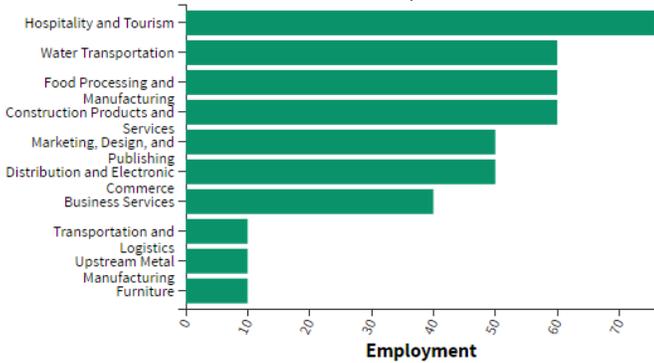
One economic development strategy to create resilience in a region is to grow specific "clusters" in a region. Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected industries and supportive organizations that make regions uniquely competitive for jobs and private investment. A cluster may include businesses from different industry sectors. This cluster economic development strategy is intended to be region-driven with each region leveraging its own unique competitive advantages. The

premise is that a successful cluster will generate job growth and economic activity in the region where it is implemented, while also contributing to a stronger, more diversified national economy.

A high employment concentration in a particular cluster can attract new businesses to the area that want to find skilled labor in that field or may encourage a new start up to fill a niche within that cluster. The clusters that had the highest employment location quotient were mostly manufacturing related. The clusters identified were not necessarily the largest employers, but have a high concentration of employment in that cluster in comparison to the national average.

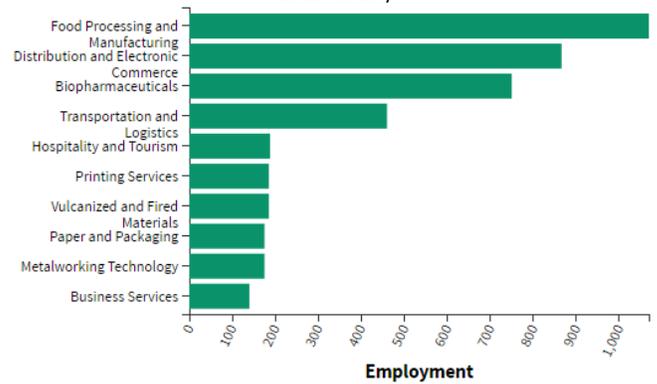
Top Clusters by Employment

Grand Isle County



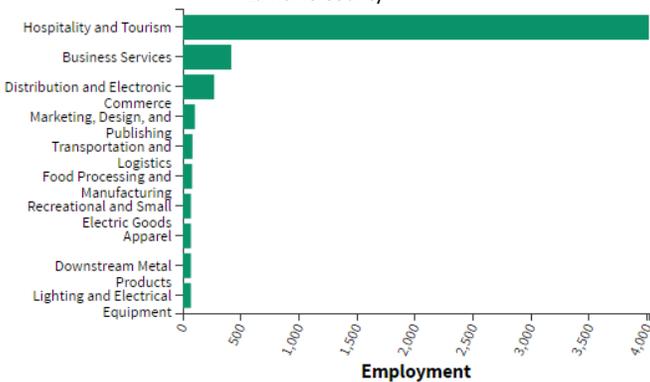
Top Clusters by Employment

Franklin County



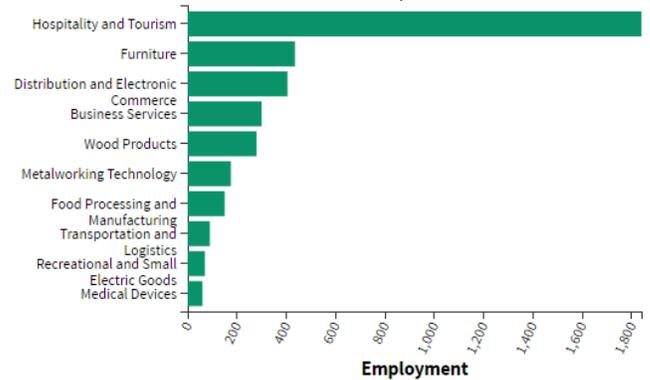
Top Clusters by Employment

Lamoille County



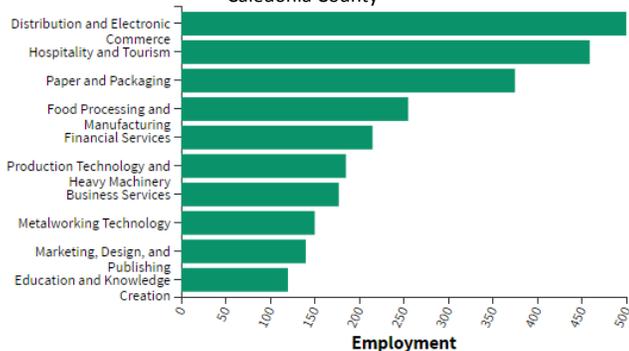
Top Clusters by Employment

Orleans County



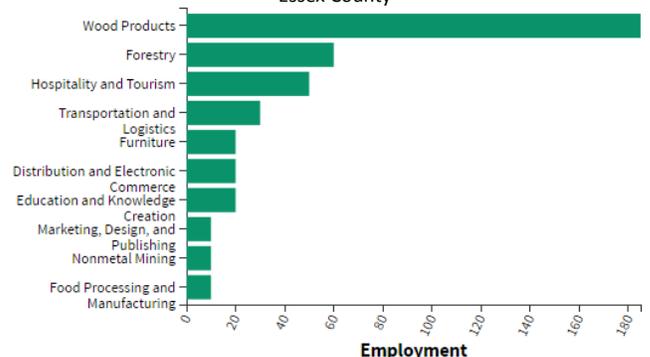
Top Clusters by Employment

Caledonia County



Top Clusters by Employment

Essex County



As these tables of individual counties indicate, the top clusters of employment reflect the natural environmental characteristics of the region: hospitality and tourism, food processing and manufacturing, wood processing, forestry, furniture, and distribution and electronic commerce.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The EDA describes economic resilience in terms of economic development and includes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. As stated by the EDA, a region's economic prosperity is linked to its ability be economically resilient.

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. NVEDD's basic approach to creating economic resiliency in the region through the CEDS program are:

1. to leverage the area's intrinsic and emerging assets to create sustainable economic opportunities that reflect the character and culture of the communities and
2. to create the capacity needed to take action through collaboration within and outside of the area.

There are 3 basic 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;

Based on an 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).

GOALS TO CREATE ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

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

It should be noted that building economic resilience in the region is both an outcome and a strategy that informs the development of the other four goals. The table below summarizes the potential relationships between the goals and elements of economic development that need to be involved for the strategies of 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			

YEAR 1: The following is a summary of accomplishments within each goal outlined by the NVEDD CEDS.

GOAL 1: BUILD ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN NORTHERN VERMONT

ACTION	OUTCOME	ELEMENT
Thorough review of CEDS with Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors. Group consists of 9 business owners from the region.	Explain the importance of regional CEDS to future projects and how CEDS is a common tool for local, regional, and state funding opportunities.	 AGENTS
Vermont Council on Rural Development used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to provide technical assistance for community and economic development.	Vermont Council on Rural Development awarded NBRC grant of \$28,667 to support a “Community Visit” project that will assist a Northeast Kingdom community to set priorities, construct action plans, and advance community and economic development projects.	 AGENTS
NVDA Presentation of CEDS to inform strategic planning of Orleans/Northern Essex (ONE) Culture of Health Team	Use of CEDS data and prioritized actions assist ONE Culture of Health Team in developing projects to increase accessibility to healthcare to underserved populations in Orleans and Northern Essex Counties.	 AGENTS
NVEDD leadership collaborated with USDA-RD and EDA about Northeast Kingdom Collaborative adopting CEDS for use as the organization’s strategic planning document. NEK Collaborative adopted CEDS in December 2016.	Use of CEDS data and prioritized actions by the NEK Collaborative more effectively aligns the REAP Zone priorities in the three Northeast Kingdom counties (Caledonia, Essex, Orleans) with both USDA and NBRC initiatives for economic and community development;	 INSTITUTIONS
LCIEDC presented the approved CEDS document to each of its five municipalities at a Select board meeting. The towns are: Alburgh, Grand Isle, Isle La Motte, North Hero and South Hero.	Introduce municipalities to district process and how to use CEDS to think about and plan for future projects in Grand Isle County.	 AGENTS

GOAL 2: CULTIVATE BUSINESS GROWTH

ACTION	OUTCOME	ELEMENT
Assistance to Forestille Foundation, used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission in order to support business development in the town center.	Forestille Foundation awarded NBRC grant of \$250,000 to renovate an iconic building into co-working and office spaces as well as space for a restaurant	 AGENTS
Northeastern Vermont Development Association used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to enhance and expand business opportunities.	Northeast Vermont Development Association awarded NBRC grant of \$150,000 to assist Quebec businesses seeking to create operations into Vermont by expanding the Vermont-Quebec Enterprise Initiative to the Northeast Kingdom.	 AGENTS
Northeast Organic Farmers of Vermont in Richmond used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to provide technical assistance for business growth.	Northeast Organic Farmers of Vermont in Richmond awarded NBRC grant of \$54,985 to provide technical assistance to small and medium size dairies that are seeking to transition to organic production.	 AGENTS
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to provide technical assistance to “Working Lands” businesses.	Vermont Housing & Conservation Board Project awarded NBRC grant of \$164,558 to provide technical assistance services to up to 26 “Working Lands” businesses. The assistance will help businesses to create or retain 75 jobs, help increase sales by 50%, and over \$1.6 million in capital accessed for participating businesses.	 AGENTS
Vermont Employee Ownership Center used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to provide capital for businesses.	Vermont Employee Ownership Center awarded NBRC grant of \$40,000 to further capitalize the Center’s revolving loan fund that provides loans to employee ownership conversions.	 AGENTS
Vermont Dept. of Public Service and the Northern Forest Center used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to provide capital for businesses.	Vermont Dept. of Public Service and the Northern Forest Center awarded NBRC grant of \$76,667 to capitalize DPS’s Clean Energy Development Fund to assist public serving institutions to convert to wood pellet boilers. The conversion will help grow Vermont’s nascent modern wood heat sector.	 AGENTS
Exploration of joint grant application possibilities between LEDC and LCPC for possible economic development possibilities in Lamoille County.	Enhanced collaboration between LEDC and LCPC and further exploration of ideas and projects that could create jobs and support the working land economy.	 AGENTS
<p>VERMONT/QUEBEC INITIATIVE</p> <p>a. Map creation w/ Canadian Colleagues</p> <p>b. Partnered with consultant to do outreach in Southern Quebec</p> <p>c. Met with a Canadian - leads Generator Company, based out of Montreal</p>	<p>a. Create a map showcasing 3 regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Franklin-Grand Isle Counties, USA * Brome-Missisquoi, Quebec, CA * St. Jean-Sur-Richelieu, Quebec, CA <p>b. Created 2 potential leads of Canadian businesses looking to expand to U.S.</p> <p>c. Information to be used to submit a Northern Borders Regional Comm. Grant application in conjunction with Aroostook County Maine</p>	 AGENTS
EDA Planning & Technical Assistance for Hardwick Business Accelerator planning effort to conduct needs assessment of businesses growing/expanding in the Hardwick area including next stage food businesses graduating from the VT Food Venture Center	Develop a business plan for a multi-tenant production and storage facility; and conduct an assessment of possible sites in the Hardwick area for a new facility	 AGENTS
Interaction with major employers going through capital expansions: Ben & Jerry’s, Peerless Clothing, Vermont Precision Tools, BMTM;	Capital investment in the region and job growth. Current unemployment rate 3.5%	 AGENTS
Completed Business Visits with major employers	Educate businesses about resources and programs to assist them in being stronger	 AGENTS

GOAL 3: IMPROVE AND EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE

ACTION	OUTCOME	ELEMENT
Assistance with Georgia Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) \$2 million Water Plant Upgrade	Industrial park expansion/business growth opportunities; higher water production and cleaner water.	 SYSTEMS
St. Albans Town Industrial Park Installed \$550,000 of additional infrastructure	Received Northern Borders Regional Commission Grant and leveraged \$350,000 of private funds. Eight lots are ready for sale.	 SYSTEMS
A draft energy plan was completed for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. Public meetings scheduled in October. The draft plan is available at www.nrpcvt.com	Planning for future energy needs supports economic and community development.	 SYSTEMS
Assistance to Town of Craftsbury, used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission in order to improve and expand infrastructure for community.	Town of Craftsbury awarded NBRC grant of \$212,403 to help install 15 miles of broadband fiber optic cable lines in Craftsbury as well as “lighting up” an additional 19-mile section of existing fiber through Craftsbury, Greensboro, Albany, and Hardwick.	 SYSTEMS
Assistance to Burke Mountain Academy’s Burke Racing organization, used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to replace aging infrastructure.	Burke Racing awarded NBRC grant of \$240,000 to help replace a 61-year-old POMA lift with a new state of the art high speed “T-bar” that will more than triple the uphill capacity of skiers and support the mountain’s vision to become an official U.S. Ski Team Development Site.	 SYSTEMS
Energy Planning Regional Workshop in Lamoille County	About 30 attendees resulted in widespread interest in Energy Planning and follow up inquiries from municipalities.	 SYSTEMS
Presentation on Energy Planning to Johnson Select board	Johnson is interested in enhanced energy planning	 SYSTEMS
Preparation of formulas to calculate municipal current energy use and targets	Poised to provide technical assistance to towns.	 SYSTEMS
A draft of the Lamoille County Regional Energy plan was prepared and presented to LCPC Boards and LEDC representatives.	Close collaboration between LEDC and LCPC on a range of projects.	 SYSTEMS

GOAL 4: DEVELOP WORKFORCE

ACTION	OUTCOME	ELEMENT
Umbrella Inc. of St. Johnsbury used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to support workforce development partnerships for at-risk population.	Umbrella Inc. of St. Johnsbury awarded NBRC grant of \$163,760 to support workforce development partnerships with local foodservice and hospitality employers that will assist up to 45 women in transition (including survivors of domestic violence).	 AGENTS

GOAL 5: PROMOTE QUALITY OF LIFE IN COMMUNITIES

ACTION	OUTCOME	ELEMENT
Catamount Film & Arts in St. Johnsbury used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to support the development of the creative economy.	Catamount Film & Arts in St. Johnsbury awarded NBRC grant of \$176,665 to purchase a mobile stage for multiple community festivals in coordination with municipal and nonprofit partners as well as Lyndon State College’s music industry program.	 AGENTS
Lamoille Housing Partnership used CEDS for grant application to Northern Borders Regional Commission to improve housing conditions.	Lamoille Housing Partnership awarded NBRC grant of \$48,847 to install solar PV panels on the rooftops of 11 high efficiency manufactured homes in Hardwick that will be owned by Lamoille Housing Partnership and rented to low income individuals and families.	 AGENTS

SUMMARY

In its first year of implementing the strategies of the CEDS program, the Northern Vermont Economic Development District has made significant progress toward all five of its stated goals. The NVEDD CEDS document has been well-advertised and presented across the District to municipalities, downtown development organizations, health institutions, community action agencies, and non-profits, as well as to businesses and agencies responsible for economic and business development activities.

Of note, the adoption of the NVEDD CEDS as the strategic plan of the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative represents an alignment of critical resources for the 3 northeastern counties of the district. The Northeast Kingdom Collaborative maintains the designation of Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zone by USDA Rural Development (RD), an arm of USDA focused on helping rural communities thrive. The REAP Initiative was established to address critical issues related to constraints in economic activity and growth, low density settlement patterns, stagnant or declining employment, and isolation that has led to disconnection from markets, suppliers, and centers of information and finance. The REAP Zone designation gives applicants access to a reserved set of funds only available to REAP Zones through some of USDA RD's 40 grant and loan programs. Use of CEDS data and prioritized actions by the NEK Collaborative more effectively aligns the REAP Zone priorities in the three Northeast Kingdom counties (Caledonia, Essex, Orleans) with both USDA and NBRC initiatives for economic and community development. This approach can serve as a model for aligning other funding in the district to amplify the effect and outcomes of available resources.

The strategies implemented in year 1 of the NVEDD CEDS Program reflect the District's two goals of leveraging the area's intrinsic and emerging assets to create sustainable economic opportunities that reflect the character and culture of the communities as well as creating the capacity needed to take action through collaboration within and outside of the area. In Cultivating Business Growth, several of the strategies are focused on the cluster of agriculture and forestry, as well as the related clusters of recreation and tourism. Infrastructure needs, particularly around energy and broadband needs are two key attributes to create an environment for cost-effective business development and the District is making good strides toward addressing those needs.

The NVEDD board and collaborating partners anticipate economic growth across the District as these strategies and activities move forward in Year 2. Many of the projects pursued are multi-year in nature, making an accurate annual account of the number of jobs and amount of private investment leveraged a challenge. While it is challenging to have an due to the long-term nature of some CEDS Program initiatives. Nevertheless, to evaluate the progress of 2016-2020 CEDS Plan goals and strategies, performance measures will be tracked and presented annually.