

Organization: Rutland County Chamber of Commerce and the Rutland Economic Development Corp.

Location: REDC Office - 67 Merchant's Row, 3rd Floor, Rutland, VT 05701.

Date: December 4, 2017

Time: 8:15 – 10:15 am

Presentation Takeaways

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce and the Vermont Futures Project presented data on the workforce challenges experienced by Vermont employers and showed the attendees that about 11,000 more people are needed in the workforce.

Why Vermont?:

Attendees were asked "Why Vermont?" as they entered the room and were instructed to write their answers on post-it notes. When answering this question, Rutland County attendees fell into two general categories: Quality of Life, and Community.

Specific notes: Beautiful and central to lots of opportunity; Great combo of lifestyle and career; Good questions – aspires to be business friendly and government on a personal scale; Lifestyle; For the lifestyle; Safe, beautiful, friendly, green, environment, brains, innovations, collaboration, and family atmosphere; Family; Lake Champlain; Mountains - green – clean environment, safe outdoors; To help stop socialism; Scenic, quality of life; Why Vermont? Safe, welcoming, sense of community; Quality of life, strong community and collaboration; Quality of life, community, I can make a difference; Quality of life; Because it's a great place to raise a family and provides a real "community" feeling; My family has lived here since 1780. It's traditional.

While the presentation was geared more towards legislative issues, the attendees made the following recommendations to solve the workforce gap:

- Improve access to the Vermont training fund and ensure that all communities can access these funds.
- Improve the Act 250 process to make more predictable and easier to navigate.
- Take advantage of the baby boomer populations and establish an interim workforce of skilled individuals that could be accessed to fill in temporary positions created by paid family leave, and do other fill-in, part-time, or project specific positions.
- Improve the requirements for child care providers which prevents the hiring of even a temporary worker and instead forces an organization to shut down instead.
- Interview the for-profit professional staffing groups to determine what is needed right now to utilize the skill of a baby-boomer or to better target training programs.

- Allow renewals of certifications with little or no fee involved if they satisfy other continuing education requirements to keep these individuals in the workforce.
- Create a statewide work visa portal which allows state reciprocity for use of individuals with specialized skills to act as a visiting professional and filling needed or temporary positions.
- We really have two Vermonts and not sure how to resolve this, but real estate prices and economic development priorities are dramatically lower throughout the rest of the state compared to Chittenden county.
 - Stop pumping all the money and incentives into Chittenden county and spread the money throughout the rural economies to improve those towns as well.
- We need to dispel the national statements that Vermont has the highest taxes because we have a lot of our wealth leaving and going to five states mainly: Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Texas, and New Hampshire.