

**Organization:** South Burlington Business Association (SBBA)

**Location:** VHB Offices, 40 IDX Dr., Bldg 100, Ste. 200 South Burlington VT 05403

**Date:** January 8, 2018

**Time:** 7:30 am – 9:00 am

### Presentation Takeaways

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce and the Vermont Futures Project presented data to the South Burlington Business Association 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, Chittenden County attendees fell into two general categories: Quality of Life, Community, and the local environmental opportunities. There was also a strong sentiment about VT being a good place to raise a Family.

#### *Specific notes:*

- The community; mountains & lake close by
- Quality of Life
- Wonderful people, culture & food
- The people
- Mountains
- The variety of year-round weather/ Four distinct seasons
- Happy place to live, work, and play (relative to mainstream)
- Quality of Life
- Quality of Life, AND Outdoor recreation
- Great for Families
- Great place to live and work
- Great community of people
- Great place to live and raise a family
- The people, places, and pace
- Grew up here and love it. Beautiful family place.
- Great place to raise a family
- Best quality of life
- Skiing, hiking, woods, and lake
- No better place to raise a family. Lifestyle / commute
- Interesting people
- The people
- Safe environment / Sense of place
- Innovative, Supportive, Leader
- Potential

#### **Focus Areas**

Attendees were prompted to identify populations or potential solutions that Vermont could engage to help to close the workforce gap. Attendees made the following recommendations:

- Conduct a survey of 24 – 35 year olds on what they want.
  - Expand reach into High Schools and/or Colleges
  - Consider survey of those not here, asking them “Why aren’t they choosing VT?”

- Survey results must then actually be considered and implemented.
- Develop a post-undergraduate housing program; similar to a fellowship. Look to control initial housing costs.
- Re-evaluate housing building strategies – engage Millennials desire to move into urban areas.
  - Potentially identify one or two other communities (outside Chittenden?) that we could sell people on its environmentally minded layout/construction.
- Engage 65+ population as they explore 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> careers. Survey of what they want?
- Encourage remote workers to move here. (*How do we sell it?*)
- Improve transportation systems – particularly high-speed rail – to better connect us to urban hubs (Boston, NYC, etc.)
- Establish an “In-State Abroad” program that encourages college students to engage & learn about other parts of the state (e.g. UVM student studies for a semester at Southern VT College). They then might be more willing to find work here after grad.
- Attract “design industries” (e.g. architects, engineers, etc.) that could be based here, but do work anywhere.
  - Match these designers with entrepreneurs in web design to establish designers’ digital footprint.
- What are we really good at as a State? – Need to be careful we don’t try to become everything to everyone. (Sell to all; sell to none.)
- Loan forgiveness expanded to cover Vocational and Apprenticeship program costs.
- Look into offering new professionals or new residents Health Insurance assistance to defray costs.
- Develop a “crime forgiveness” pathway for non-violent offenders so they can engage in expanded employment opportunities.
- Attract new employers, not just new employees. Have established companies that can offer higher wages establish second or third branches here.
- Ensure we evaluate quality of jobs, not just quantity of jobs available.
- Build educational respect for trades within middle- and high-school, and among colleges
- Have businesses mirror college recruiting (Employer Fairs just like College Fairs)