



Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

## ANNUAL REPORT FY19



### Nurturing the Sustainable Economic Development of Vermont's Economy

Business Management Coaching • Value Chain Facilitation • Network Development • Strategic Planning

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, develops creative approaches and innovative models that help transform Vermont's economy in ways that sustain the well-being of people, communities, and the environment.

No single organization, business, or government agency can fully address the economic, social, and environmental challenges within the sectors we serve. That's why we build collaborative relationships with our partners, mission alignment with our funders, and support our clients who create sustainable jobs in communities throughout Vermont. We take the long view by exploring climate change solutions and examining emerging trends, markets, products and industry level opportunities, while working with businesses right now to accelerate a path forward.

#### OUR PURPOSE

We serve the needs and interests of Vermont businesses, organizations, and government partners who are working hard to strengthen our local and regional food system, rebuild the forest products industry, meet Vermont's renewable energy goal, and invent clean technologies that benefit society. We are focused on helping our human and natural environments thrive together now and for future generations in the face of climate change.



#### VSJF STAFF

Front Row: Kelly Nottermann, Christine McGowan, Lydia Pitkin, Janice St. Onge, Sarah Danly, Ellen Kahler; Back Row: Anthony Mennona, Shane Rogers, Jake Claro, Geoff Robertson, Becka Warren





## Business Management Coaching

Tailored to meet individual client needs at their different stages of development.

We provide tailored business management coaching, entrepreneurial support and training to position Vermont entrepreneurs for growth and long-term success. Our clients include Vermont-based, value-added food and agricultural, forest related, renewable energy, waste management, and environmental/clean technology enterprises that are supplying products and services to a diverse marketplace.

Our business coaches combine their expertise by working together intensively as two- or three-person cross-functional teams to help clients through structured monthly sessions over 12-18 month engagements. The teams provide support, advice, leadership training and access to extensive contacts in order to help business leaders recognize ways in which they can improve the effectiveness and profitability of their business. Helping our clients explore and prepare for the right match of growth capital (e.g., debt, equity, royalty financing) for their scale and stage of business helps them not only survive but thrive.

"As small business owners, my wife Karen and I worked with VSJF for a year-long consultancy and business guidance in one-on-one meetings with seasoned business leaders to assist us during a critical time of rapid growth for our company and a major capital expansion. The time spent and the advice gained were excellent and invaluable! VSJF helped us plan carefully as we developed and implemented a new strategic plan, and grew our company from a team of 5 people to well over 40 employees! We will be always grateful for the guidance and coaching offered through VSJF."

**Sean Lawson, Co-Founder at Lawson's Finest Liquids**

► **IMPACT:** VSJF's has completed coaching engagements with 32 farm and food-related businesses between 2011-2019.

### ► FY 2019 Business Management Coaching Clients

Farmers To You  
Fat Toad Farm  
Lawson's Finest Liquids  
Localvore  
Olivia's Croutons  
Peterson Quality Malt



## Agriculture and Food Systems

Expanding jobs and overall economic activity in Vermont's farm and food sector, for the benefit of all Vermonters.

In 2019, Farm to Plate was reauthorized beyond 2020 when Governor Phil Scott signed into law H.275—an act relating to the Farm-to-Plate Investment Program. Reauthorization comes at an important time, as despite Vermont's long history of agricultural production and the strength of our food enterprises, a number of recurring issues, gaps, barriers, and structural problems impact our food system in ways that threaten its vitality and significance to Vermont's culture and economy. Vermont's agricultural sector is at a critically important inflection point, both in terms of the mix of products we produce and in identifying the next generation of farmers and food entrepreneurs.

"We need to help our farms and food enterprises succeed in a time of rapidly changing markets and disruptive climate change, and do so while providing access to healthy local food for all Vermonters in the decades ahead. The Farm to Plate Plan 2.0 will be the first step in articulating how we can do that, and we hope the beginning of what will be not only be coordinated action but robust dialogue in the state for what we want our food system to be in the next 10 years and beyond."

**Jake Claro, Farm to Plate Director at VSJF**

To address the challenges we face in our food system, VSJF began an 18-month process in July 2019 to create a Farm to Plate Strategic Plan 2.0 which will prioritize recommendations for at least the next five years. In the years to come, the Farm to Plate Network, administered by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, will continue to create the space for strategic industry-level conversations and high impact collaborative projects that are building resiliency in our local food system.

► **IMPACT:** From 2007 to 2017, Vermont food system economic output expanded from \$7.5 billion to \$11.3 billion. From 2009 to 2018, net new food system employment increased by 6,529 jobs. Over 64,000 people and 11,500 businesses are now part of Vermont's food system. Access more details in the 2019 Farm to Plate Annual Report.



## Climate Economy

Confronting climate change through innovative economic development initiatives that will build a national reputation, create jobs, and attract youth and entrepreneurship to Vermont.

Rural economies nationwide and around the globe are struggling to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels particularly in transportation and heating. As extreme weather events become more prevalent, the need for innovation in the private sector has never been more real. Vermont is a leader in the incubation and development of forward-thinking energy businesses and is making a concerted effort to attract the next generation of climate-friendly businesses to the state in an effort to accelerate their success.

"I can't recommend this program enough for early-stage pre-seed/seed entrepreneurs. With a small (highly focused) cohort, phenomenal facilitators with decades of experience, and people who truly care about helping to advance your startup in a meaningful way, DeltaClimateVT is an unparalleled program in the accelerator space."

**Natasha George, SomEV Inc., Energy<sup>2019</sup> Participant**

In FY20, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, renamed the climate economy business accelerator Accel-VT to **DeltaClimate<sup>VT</sup>** to better align with the program's mission of finding climate change solutions. Delta meaning change. Clime meaning climate. DeltaClimate<sup>VT</sup> is change for the better. DeltaClimate<sup>VT</sup> will conduct the next accelerator program in 2020 with entrepreneurs focused on reducing fossil fuel use in buildings.

► **IMPACT:** In FY19, **DeltaClimate<sup>VT</sup> Ag & Food Tech<sup>2019</sup>** graduated climate change innovation entrepreneurs from eight companies focused on technological advancements in the agricultural value chain. **DeltaClimate<sup>VT</sup> Energy<sup>2019</sup>** kicked off during FY19 and graduated climate change innovation entrepreneurs focused on reducing fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions in the heating and/or transportation. As of June 2019, the program has graduated three cohorts totaling **53 climate economy entrepreneurs from 23 companies**, bringing energy thought leadership to Vermont.



## Forest Products

Telling the story of the role Vermont's forest economy plays in keeping our forests as forests.

The **Vermont Forest Industry Network**, managed by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, is working to create and retain quality jobs, open additional markets for locally produced forest and wood products, and improve economic development in the forest and wood products industry.

Vermont's forest and wood products industry generates \$1.4 billion in annual economic output and supports 10,500 jobs in forestry, logging, processing, specialty woodworking, construction and wood energy. And forest-based recreation adds another \$1.9 billion and 10,000 jobs to our economy.

"There is not a complete understanding of what good forest management looks like. In recent years, forest industry leaders have worked hard to raise awareness about the working forest landscape, demonstrating the impact on Vermont's rural economy, a clean environment, wildlife habitat, recreation, and overall well-being. A good story helps connect Vermonters to the human side of our work, and allows them to picture themselves as an active part of our forestry community."

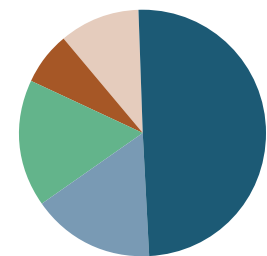
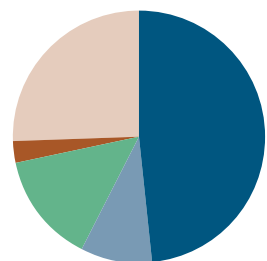
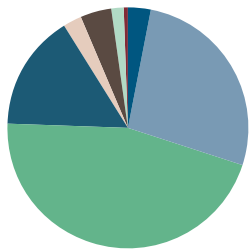
**Danielle Fitzko, Vermont Director of Forests**

Our communications strategy continues to show positive results. In FY19, we produced 10 original stories featuring businesses all across our forest and wood products industry. The series is aimed at reminding Vermonters and visitors of the importance of Vermont's forest economy to our state's economic, environmental, and social well-being. The stories reach thousands of people via our website and social channels, as well as through placements in local and regional media.

► **IMPACT:** This year, more than 150 industry professionals attended the **Second Annual Vermont Forest Industry Summit** at Burke Mountain Resort, where discussions ranged from exploring potential new wood products that can utilize low-grade material to how to develop a successful business transition plan, and much more. The Network also hosted industry meet ups to explore biochar and embodied carbon in Building, and opportunities for mass timber from wood produced in New England to transform the built environment.



# Financials



\* Federal Grant Revenue Sources include US Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC).

\*\* Foundation grants represent private philanthropic foundation funds received in FY18 or FY19 but expensed in FY19.

\*\*\* Professional Services include accounting, audit, and legal expenses as well as special projects conducted by consultants which are related to specific market development initiatives and/or are connected to specific grantee and/or business client support services.

## FY19 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Andrea Cohen**, Vermont Electric Cooperative, *Chair*

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**Nathan Hausman**, Clean Energy Group

**Allison Hooper**, Formerly of Vermont Creamery

**Nick Richardson**, Vermont Land Trust

## FY19 VSJF STAFF

**Ellen Kahler**, Executive Director

**Janice St. Onge**, Deputy Director

**Anthony Mennona**, Finance Director

**Kelly Nottermann**, Communications Manager

**Geoff Robertson**, Business Assistance Director

**Jake Claro**, Farm to Plate Director

**Christine McGowan**, Forest Products Director

**Sarah Danly**, Farm to Plate Network Manager

**Shane Rogers**, Rooted in Vermont Project Manager

**Lydia Pitkin**, Office Manager & Program Coordinator

## VSJF FY19 FUNDING SOURCES

VSJF could not continue without the generous support of our many funding partners including:

Angell Foundation

Anonymous Foundations & Individuals

Canaday Family Charitable Trust

Henry P. Kendall Foundation

High Meadows Fund

Holburn Foundation

Jane's Trust

Jane's Trust Foundation

John Merck Fund

Northern Border

Regional Commission

Sandy River Charitable Trust

Sustainable Future Fund

US Economic Development Authority

Various Corporate Sponsors supporting VT Farm to Plate and DeltaClime<sup>VT</sup>

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (General Fund)

Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (General Fund)

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

Vermont Training Program (General Fund)

Vermont Community Foundation  
VLITE

VSJF also provided fiscal sponsorship services for Energy Action Network and the Hunger Mountain Food Coop Fund in FY19.

## VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND

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