



**REPORT**



## **CEDS Annual Performance Report**

2020 Annual Update

November 26th, 2019 - November 26th, 2020



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## Southern Vermont in 2020

### RECAP of the Southern Vermont Zone CEDS Partners and Partnership:

The **Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation** is a private, nonprofit economic development organization that serves as a catalyst for industrial and commercial growth throughout Southeastern Vermont, including Windham County and the towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, and Weston. BDCC serves as the State of Vermont's certified Regional Development Corporation (RDC) for the greater Windham County area. BDCC is one of 12 RDCs throughout Vermont. For more information visit: <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/>

**Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies** (SeVEDS) is an affiliate of BDCC that grew from a 2008 grassroots effort, initiated by BDCC, to reverse the economic decline of the Windham Region and plan for the economic impacts from the closure of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. In 2014, after multiple years of regional input, education and data gathering, SeVEDS submitted the Windham Region's federally recognized S.M.A.R.T. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for federal approval. For more information visit: [www.seveds.com](http://www.seveds.com)

The **Bennington County Regional Commission** (BCRC) was created by the seventeen towns and villages it serves and works on behalf of those

municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. For more information visit [www.bcrvt.org](http://www.bcrvt.org).

The **Regional Economic Development Working Group** (RED Group) is a volunteer body committed to increasing the shared prosperity and quality of life for the seventeen municipalities in southwestern Vermont. The group has a diverse membership that reflects the varied community, business, workforce, and demographic characteristics of the region. The RED Group focuses on the internal and external economic development issues that affect the Bennington County region as a whole; the regional implications of local economic development issues; the process of regional economic development from local, state, and federal perspectives; and options for future initiatives.

The [2019 Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) was completed by the partners and submitted for final approval in November of 2019 and accepted by the EDA in January of 2020.

The 2019 plan created by Windham and Bennington County stakeholders is a long term strategy to grow the [Southern Vermont Economy Zone](#) – a region facing significant economic challenges established by the Vermont State Legislature in 2015. The 2019 Zone CEDS is intended to replace the [2014 Windham Region S.M.A.R.T. CEDS](#).

The 2018 Southern Vermont Economy Summit at Mount Snow in May served as a kick off for the overall Southern Vermont CEDS [project which was undertaken](#) from November of 2017 through May of 2019 and a draft document was published for 30 day comment on January 7, 2019 after a public presentation in Wilmington, VT.

All process and focus group materials related to the 2019 Zone CEDS are hosted digitally at [www.SoVermontZone.com](http://www.SoVermontZone.com)

## Zone economics in 2020:

**Windham County:** At the end of 2019 and the beginning of January of 2020 BDCC real estate was fully occupied, with major capital improvements and tenant expansions under way. A high school career development program,

Pipelines and Pathways<sup>1</sup>, was in full swing with classes and field trips, and development of an immigrant and asylum-seeking resettlement program, the Southern Vermont Welcoming Communities project<sup>2</sup> was taking shape across both counties. A community fiber to the premises project in five towns was organized. Small business lending and technical assistance was expanding. The [Southern Vermont Economy Project](#) had recently been funded a second time by the USDA, helping create shared regional technical expertise and the ability to implement more local projects.



Marlboro College’s small size and dwindling enrollment led it to begin exploring merging with another college or university. Discussions advanced with the [University of Bridgeport](#) but were called off in September 2019 as negotiations continued.<sup>41</sup> Two months later, the college announced plans to merge with Emerson College in Boston. As per the agreement, Marlboro would give its endowment to Emerson where all Marlboro students will be admitted, and tenure-track faculty will be able to choose to teach at Emerson. The deal was finalized by the Board of Trustees of Marlboro and Emerson Colleges on July 23, 2020. Marlboro closed its campus at the end of the 2019–2020 academic year and the college ceased operations on August 15, 2020.<sup>3</sup>

And then COVID-19 arrived in Vermont.

Vermonters  
adapt We  
continue to

<sup>1</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2019/10/02/pipelines-and-pathways-program-off-and-running-in-windham-high-schools/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.reformer.com/uncategorized/welcoming-immigrants-could-reverse-shrinking-population/article\\_babf16e4-8ce7-5f0c-931f-37377c1a6a4f.html](https://www.reformer.com/uncategorized/welcoming-immigrants-could-reverse-shrinking-population/article_babf16e4-8ce7-5f0c-931f-37377c1a6a4f.html)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlboro\\_College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlboro_College)

## COVID - 19 Response

And with it a true crisis. But this region also has had some experience in disasters, from the sudden devastation of Tropical Storm Irene<sup>4</sup> to the slow retreat of dollars and people after Vermont Yankee's closure<sup>5</sup>. We applied what we have learned from these experiences: the need to act quickly and commit to long-term response, to act together as well as strategically.

We stood up BDCC's COVID-19 regional Business Resiliency Program just days after the governor's first order to close nonessential businesses and schools. We launched weekly webinars to connect the region's community and economic development organizations with state officials and federal delegation staffers and with information on complex regulations and relief. We put in place a BDCC liaison system for every business and all BDCC tenants to have personal support in navigating the crisis. In 10 weeks, we engaged with 444 local businesses and nonprofits who needed reliable information, technical assistance, referrals, and moral support. We continue providing information and support as state and federal relief is in flux.

For long-term recovery we are adapting programs and creating contingencies while reconsidering how best to advance our mission. This rethinking is informed by a recognition that we have an important role to play in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through economic opportunity. Vermonters adapt. This has served us well, navigating a staged reopening while working to keep one another safe. There are more changes to come, and we will rise to the challenge.

### **Bringing Relief to the Windham Region Is Our Top Priority**

During the pandemic, BDCC has focused on ensuring COVID-19 funds reach as many local businesses and nonprofits as possible through education, outreach, and direct technical assistance. By September 2020, Windham County received the second highest level of VT CARES Act relief funds allocated to small businesses and employers – 30% more than the next county. Federal PPP lending is helping 901 organizations in the Windham region, which has 6.8% of the state population but had 8.1% of Vermont's PPP recipients. Awards under \$150,000 totaled \$27.7 million in Windham – 7.4% of the total allocated statewide. PPP awards of \$150,000+ in the Windham region represented 6.2% of awards statewide in that category.

<sup>4</sup> <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/disaster-recovery/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/category/vermont-yankee/>

**Bennington County:** BCIC entered the new decade with well-earned optimism from a series of successes: the mid-2010s ground-breaking for the Putnam Block, Vermont's largest downtown redevelopment project; successful solicitation of Opportunity Zone investments in the region's two designated tracts; support for successful employer-led workforce development programs; the emergence of an innovative multi-municipal partnership for rural broadband connectivity; exploratory development of a regenerative food hub with local institutions working closely with key investors; and momentum around proactive approaches to reversing demographic decline.

“It’s a little uncertain as to be expected,” he said. “I think like

This optimism helped buoy the region as BCIC and its partners learned of new challenges in 2019. Facing the closure of a liberal arts college in May 2019, and the October 2019 announcement of the planned closure of a large manufacturer, constructive dialogues with a range of stakeholders focused on possibilities and practicalities.

The pandemic has certainly reoriented how BCIC approaches day-to-day work, but it has first and foremost been an affirmation of the approach to economic development across Southern Vermont: informed, timely, personal, and persistent. We have leveraged our relationships with state personnel, as well as elected officials in Montpelier and in Washington, to provide answers to the questions of more than 400 businesses within the region. We have drawn on the personal and professional networks of our boards and regional partners to ensure that information reaches the relevant audiences, whether it pertains to federal and state business assistance programs, executive orders for public health, evolving guidance around unemployment regulations, or other time-sensitive matters. We have submitted grant applications on behalf of our region's all-volunteer local broadband connectivity initiative that have brought nearly \$200,000 to this fledgling organization that will deliver fiber where the market will not. And, just as important, we continue to keep attention and energy focused on what is working in our region: ample opportunities for remote work, programming

focused on quality of life to help newer residents form lasting connections with their communities, and new options for student, workforce, and market rate housing in our region's IEDC award-winning revitalization project at the Putnam Block.

## CEDS Implementation Activities

# SVHC makes \$3.2 million offer for Southern Vermont College property

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Fri, 11/13/2020 - 4:19pm --

### Related Company:

Southwestern Vermont Health Care

**Vermont Business Magazine** Southwestern Vermont Health Care (SVHC) has submitted an offer to the bankruptcy trustee overseeing liquidation of assets of the former Southern Vermont College. The signed offer is for \$3.2 million and includes the real estate property and facilities of the main campus. The leadership of the health system, through the direction of its Board of Directors, is committed to developing a long-range plan to maximize the use of this valuable community asset as well as how the property could enhance community and health-related services for the southern Vermont region.

### SVC Mansion. Courtesy photos.

The intent is to keep the property locally owned, with a goal to make the athletic fields and its myriad trails accessible for the community. Before submitting its offer, SVHC contacted the leadership of the Town of Bennington to explore opportunities and develop together strategies for the former college campus and associated assets.



The topline goals of the Southern Vermont CEDS are to strengthen business and support people. Five objectives were identified to meet those goals: increase our population, improve our physical infrastructure, enhance our social infrastructure, expand our business infrastructure, and develop our economic development infrastructure. Annually projects are submitted to help achieve this goal and they may be found in this report's appendix.

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Highlights from regional implementation activity from November 2019 - November 2020 are summarized below by objective including, when available, estimated costs associated with each of the CEDS activities, including identification of integrated funding sources (public, private, and non-profit) scope and timeframe when applicable .

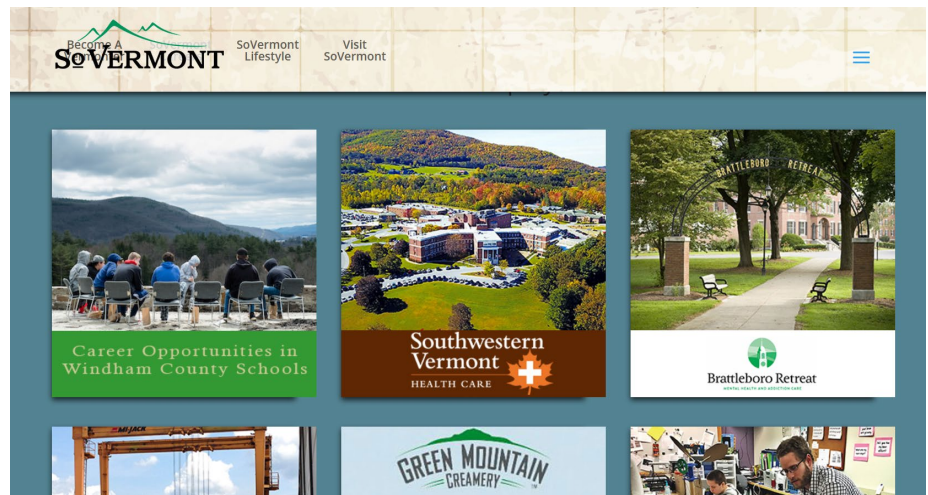
**Funded CEDS Activities in 2020**  
Windham, Bennington, Zone -wide

**Increase our Population:**

Attract more people to live in Southern Vermont, to participate in the community, the workforce, and support the business and civic environment.

**Scope:** Zone wide

**Key stats:** The Windham region employers helped by the programs below in FY20 provide 6,626 of the region's jobs.



- BDCC Talent Recruitment & Retention programs
- BDCC and BCIC SoVermont.com Recruitment Website
- BDCC & BCRC (with additional partners) pursued Boston Fed funding for Welcoming Communities to attract immigration
- Creation of a Southern Vermont chapter of the Vermont Welcome Wagon program.
- P3 Highschool Workforce Development Program
- Careqd, Southwestern Vermont Health Care
  - \$100,000 annual costs to deploy an on-demand urgent care platform.
    - Mobile access to board-certified physicians for urgent, non-life-threatening issues, for \$70 flat rate.

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- Launched July 2020.

### Improve our Physical Infrastructure:

Make the critical infrastructure improvements so that Southern Vermont is resident and business ready.

#### SCOPE: County Specific

The CEDS highlighted the need for investment in broadband infrastructure. Southern Vermont has capitalized on major legislation Vermont Legislature passed in May 2019 supporting the development of community fiber projects and CARES Act Relief Funds to the State of Vermont.

- WRC Windham County DVFiber
  - 16 towns
  - \$165,000 in state and regional grants
  - Completed Business Plan<sup>6</sup>
  - Preparing for RFP solicitation to build/ operate



- BCRC Bennington County Southern Vermont Communications Union District/ Catamount Fiber<sup>7</sup>

\$195,000 in state grants and philanthropy, \$15,000 in federal grant and municipal support for BCRC staff assistance,



service area covering 13 towns.

- \$60,000 grant for completion of feasibility study and business plan.
- \$100,000 grant for pole survey in most-underserved towns.
- \$25,000 for deployment of WiFi hotspots around the region for telehealth, remote learning, and remote work access, and lendable equipment for at-home connectivity.
- \$10,000 for general expenses.

### Other infrastructure projects

<sup>6</sup> <http://windhamregional.org/broadband>

<sup>7</sup> <https://sovtcud.net/>

- Applejack Stadium, Town of Manchester
  - \$75,000 to expand seating, renovate grandstand, and improve access and circulation at Southern Vermont’s highest-rated soccer facility.
  - Upgrades required as an element of new partnership with Black Rock FC, a professional soccer team that will play home games at the stadium.
  - Part of Town’s intentional pivot from retail-based economy to sports tourism and outdoor recreation.

### Enhance our Social Infrastructure:

#### Improve quality of life and stability for residents.

- **BDCC Community Facilities Technical Assistance Program**  
**SCOPE: Windham Region** is designed to help qualified projects and applicants with project development and management, and with becoming successful applicants to the USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Programs. This program has helped fire departments, childcare projects and the Vernon Homes nursing home facility get into the pipeline for USDA funding last year.



- Southern Vermont Working Communities Project - **SCOPE zone wide** project proposed a project to Boston Fed to expand existing regional asylum seeker relocation assistance and support. Though the project was ultimately not funded, the region anticipates seeking other means of moving the project forward in 2021.
- Old School Community Center<sup>8</sup> - **SCOPE: Wilmington** Prior to the pandemic, gym and meeting room were bustling with activity.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.osccvt.com/news>

Pickleball, volleyball, Valley Youth Sports, Cub Scouts, and the Wilmington Firefighter's training all took place in the gym.

- 10,000 grant utilized to renovate the cafeteria
- \$15,000 fundraising campaign
- 10 full time tenants
  
- 219 Pleasant Street, **SCOPE Bennington**
  - \$800,000 project refurbishing and renovating dilapidated structure in downtown Bennington, awarded \$112,500 state Historic Tax Credit.
    - 11 units: five market-rate units, six units for low-to-moderate income families.
  
- Pownal Town Office, **SCOPE: Pownal**
  - \$775,000 project will triple square footage of the existing 1,100 sf town office, incorporating a town-owned former school, built in 1812, that will be relocated to the project site.
    - \$175,000 in reserve fund, and \$600,000 bond approved by voters.

### **Expand our Business Infrastructure:**

Create an environment that will encourage more jobs and opportunities in Southern Vermont.

- Both Bennington and Windham provided direct support to businesses through the RDCs of Vermont Restart Vermont program <https://benningtonrpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=ee0f599553304238917213a1c2fac218>
- BDCC administered, but it also helped Bennington County, CDBG CV assistance <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/05b95fa750dc4477b1361ad89042bd8e>
- Pandemic relief **SCOPE Windham Region** By September 2020, **KEY Metric:** Windham County had received the second highest level of VT CARES Act relief funds allocated to small businesses and employers – 30% more than the next county. Federal PPP lending is helping 901 organizations in the Windham region. Awards under \$150,000 totaled \$27.7 million in Windham. PPP awards of \$150,000+ in the Windham region represented 6.2% of awards statewide.

- Southwestern Vermont businesses received 679 PPP disbursements, with 610 businesses receiving a total of \$22.3 million in awards under \$150,000. At least \$20 million more went to the 69 organizations receiving grants above \$150,000. **SCOPE Bennington County**
- Chroma Expansion Completed - **SCOPE Rockingham** expansion project begun in 2016
  - 22.3 Million and 25 of new jobs
- Pipelines and Pathways **SCOPE Windham County**
  - 120 students went on field trips
  - 500 received classroom training.
- Bennington Area Makers **SCOPE Bennington**
  - Maker space in Bennington launched in fall 2019, raising over \$9,000, securing in-kind donations for space and equipment, and launching event programming in-person and virtually
    - Included series of video workshops on mask-making in early response to calls for PPE.
  - Recipient of funding from FIRST's 2020 STEM Equity Community Innovation Grant award, via partnership with UVM College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, Generator Makerspace (Burlington, Vt.), and 4-H of Bennington and Rutland Counties.
    - Three teams from Bennington County are participating in FIRST Tech Challenge, for kids in grades 7-12.
- Putnam Redevelopment Phase 2 **SCOPE Bennington**
  - \$500,000 EPA Brownfields grant to clean up the entire parcel, Phase 1 and Phase 2.

**Develop our Economic Development Capacity** : Enhance the ability for economic development professionals and partners to play a role in implementation.

- Windham Economic Recovery Team: launched and continue to sustain weekly bimonthly webinar to engage legislators, federal delegation, regional community development partners and local EDOs
- Southern Vermont Economy Project
  - Facilitated solicitation, ranking and 59 projects submitted to be included in the five-year plan for growing the southern Vermont economy (see appendix)
  - 22 Regional Town Meeting Updates

- Visiting team for Advancing Rockingham Community Development VCRD 150 attendees
- 2020 SVEP Project Development Series
  - Project Stewardship 16 attendees
  - Financial Management, June 26 44 attendees
  - Funders Roundtable webinar 30 attendees
- 4th Annual Southern Vermont Economy Summit typically welcomes over 200 participants. At the end of May, due to uncertainty of COVID-19, the decision was made to cancel the Summit for 2020.
- Planning underway for EDA 2021 Economic Development District

## Pandemic addendum

Southern Vermont CEDS SUPPLEMENT – COVID-19 WORKING GROUP  
May/ June 2020

**This Group's Charge:** The Southern Vermont COVID Workgroup reviewed CEDS goals, objectives, and strategies to identify any new objectives or strategies that should be considered for further development to address known and projected challenges or opportunities to the economy due to the pandemic.

Overarching Concepts from the work:

- We are striving to understand this crisis, but it is still evolving.
- We face a worsening of existing problems.
- To make change, we must address our resistance to it.
- Implementing change requires resources.
- We must overcome fear COVID has brought.
- We need to tell our story (to ourselves as much as to others).

## Appendix

Link to Southern Vermont CEDS Supplement:

<https://brattleborodevelopment.com/sovt-ceds-supplement-compilation-final/>

Link to FY'20 BDCC & SeVEDS ANNUAL REPORT

<https://brattleborodevelopment.com/bdcc-seveds-annual-reports/>

Link to Link to Bennington Opportunity Zone Prospectus:

<https://www.acceleratorforamerica.org/s/Bennington-VT.pdf>

Link to Southern Vermont CUD Annual Report:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13tq9R1dGenUw9gGDDGtmJgFVsQaSjzyQ/view?usp=sharing>

Links to Southern Vermont College closure, discussion, and intent to purchase:

- Closure: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/03/05/southern-vermont-college-says-it-will-shut-its-doors>
- Discussion: [https://www.benningtonbanner.com/uncategorized/officials-meeting-in-response-to-svc-closure/article\\_c34c7fbe-b0a1-5dd3-97eb-8dd35221b577.html](https://www.benningtonbanner.com/uncategorized/officials-meeting-in-response-to-svc-closure/article_c34c7fbe-b0a1-5dd3-97eb-8dd35221b577.html)
- SVHC Purchase Bid: <https://vtdigger.org/2020/11/16/health-care-group-bids-for-southern-vermont-college-campus/>

Link to Energizer closure: <https://vtdigger.org/2019/10/25/energizer-plant-closure-is-a-blow-in-bennington/>

Link to Bennington County 2020 Regional Perspective

<https://vermontbiz.com/news/2020/october/18/bennington-county-real-estate-manufacturing-float-economy-tourism-waits>

Link to Windham County 2020 Regional Perspective

<https://vermontbiz.com/news/2020/may/25/windham-county-economic-report-businesses-face-short-term-and-long-term-risks>

## 2020 Southern Vermont CEDS Projects List

Vital Projects (Alphabetical Order by Submitting Organization)

- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Leveraging the Vermont Brand
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Pipelines & Pathways Program
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Southern Vermont Economy Summit
- Building a Positive Community: Quality Youth Development Certification
- Bellows Falls ADC: Robertson Paper Site Redevelopment
- Food Connects: Developing New Markets & Infrastructure to Support Vermont Farmers
- M&S Development: Brattleboro Museum & Art Center
- Putnam Community Health: Putnam Block Redevelopment Phase 2
- SoVT Task Force: Southern Vermont CUD
- Southern Vermont Museum of Natural History: Museum Expansion
- Southwestern Vermont Chamber: Shirenomics
- WRC: Village Water/ Wastewater Feasibility

### **CEDS Projects (Alphabetical Order by Submitting Organization)**

- BDCC/ Diverse Workforce Development Committee: Bridge to Brattleboro
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Southern Vermont Workforce Center of Excellence
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: SoVT Connectivity Summit/ Breakfast
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Knowledge Bites Webinar Series
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Working Communities of Southern Vermont
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Hiring Needs Assessment
- BDCC/ SeVEDS: Targeted Expertise Recruitment and Retention
- Bellows Falls Area Development Corporation: BFADC - Island St
- Bennington Area Arts Council: Gateways to Bennington Downtown Artist Charrette
- Bennington Area Makers (BAM): Bennington Area Makers (BAM)
- Bennington County Regional Commission: SoVermont Workforce Recruitment Upgrade
- Broad Brook Community Center, Inc.: Broad Brook Community Center
- Community Collaborative for Guilford: Early Childhood Education Center
- Friends of Vernon Center: Vernon Center: A new 21st-century New England village
- Hale Resources: 219 Pleasant Street
- Living History Association, Inc.: Historical & Recreational Park of the Deerfield Valley
- M&S Development: Omega Optical - OPTIC
- Marlboro Committee for Universal Broadband (MCUB): Universal Broadband for Marlboro
- NeighborWorks of Western Vermont: Bennington Rental Rehab
- Old School Enrichment Council, Inc.: Old School Community Center
- Pownal Economic Development Committee: Pownal Town Office
- Public Liberation Unions: Municipalities Data Currencies Matrices
- Retreat Farm: Retreat Farm
- Rich Earth Institute: Rich Earth Institute
- Strolling of the Heifers: Farm Food Innovation Center



- Sustainable Valley Group: SVG - Green Island Project-Great Falls Food Hub
- Sustainable Valley Group: SVG - TLR Master Plan
- Sustainable Valley Group: Bellows Falls Vacuum Coating Training Center
- SVMC: Careqd-Urgent care on phone or computer anywhere, anytime
- Town of Manchester, VT: Main Street Manchester VT sewer expansion study
- Town of Manchester, VT: Black Rock FC / Applejack Stadium Improvements
- Town of Rockingham: BF Historic Train Station purchase and renovation
- Town of Rockingham: TOR - Vilas Bridge
- Town of Rockingham: VofSR Water Supply
- Town of Rockingham: TOR -Bellows Falls Opera House Lower Theater
- Town of Rockingham: TOR -Frank Adams Grist Mill
- Town of Rockingham: TOR -Trails and Outdoor Recreation
- Town of Rockingham: TOR- Area Wide Plan
- Town of Whitingham: Flood Hazard Mitigation in Jacksonville Village
- Town of Whitingham: Whitingham Sewer Infrastructure
- Town of Wilmington: Route 9 Infrastructure Improvement
- Vermont STEMcorps LLC: STEMcorps
- Village of Bellows Falls: VofBF Public Safety Building improvements and ADA
- West River Community Project: Timber Frame Workshop & New Pizza Pavilion
- Wilmington Works: Wilmington FiberWiFi Project
- Windham Regional Commission: Extending Massachusetts Rail Expansion to Vermont
- Winston Prouty Center: Winston Prouty Campus Develop