

New Worker Relocation Grant Program

Annual Report
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FROM

Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary

Agency of Commerce and
Community Development
Lindsay.kurrle@vermont.gov
802-828-3080

Joan Goldstein, Commissioner

Department of Economic
Development
Joan.goldstein@vermont.gov
802-272-2399

**Kristen Ziter, New Worker
Relocation Program Manager**

Department of Economic
Development
Kristen.ziter@vermont.gov
802-622-4166

About the New Worker Relocation Grant Program

The New Worker Relocation Grant Program is managed by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's Department of Economic Development. This grant program provides funds to offset the cost of relocating to Vermont which helps Vermonters by increasing the population of taxpayers in the state as well as increasing the number of children enrolled in Vermont schools. It also helps to build the employment base as Vermont faces a workforce shortage and employers are struggling to find workers.

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Act 80, Sec. 12 of 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vermont Legislature in 2019 passed legislation as part of [Act 80, Sec. 12](#) creating the New Worker Relocation Grant Program, which was signed into law by Governor Phil Scott. The Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD) was tasked with the implementation of the program. The purpose of the program is to address the need to grow the population as well as increase the workforce for Vermont employers.

Media awareness of Vermont's relocation programs began with the passage of Act 197 in 2018 and has remained consistently high since the passage of Act 80 in 2019. Thousands of people have called and emailed ACCD for information, [ThinkVermont.com](#) website traffic skyrocketed, and thousands of FAQs and applications have been downloaded. Many state, county, and municipal officials from across the country have inquired about replicating the program to attract residents. Nine months into the second relocation program, interest remains strong.

Between the passage of Act 80 and December 31, 2019, program development by ACCD staff included defining eligibility criteria, creating web content, frequently asked questions, and working with Vermont Information Consortium, LLC to develop an online, end-to-end grant application portal. ACCD staff implemented procedures for awarding grants that included accepting and reviewing applications; notifying applicants of status updates; receiving Form W-9s and applicant surveys; issuing awards; file maintenance; and record retention. As of September 29, 2020, ACCD approved \$227,379 in grants to 51 new Vermont workers.

OUTCOMES AS OF SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

Totals

Between January 1 and September 29, 2020, ACCD awarded \$227,379 to 51 new Vermont workers. Grants ranged from \$537 to \$7,500; the average grant awarded was \$4,458. As of September 29, 2020, the grant program FAQ was downloaded 2,743 times.

The average grant award was
\$4,458



2,743

FAQ Downloads



51

Grants Awarded



\$227,379

Total Funds Awarded

Grantees brought with them an additional 46 household members (including 17 school aged children), for a total of 84 new Vermonters.

84

New Vermonters from grantees and additional family members.



51

Grantees



46

Additional Household Members¹



17

School Aged Children¹

¹ This figure represents only 38 of the 51 grantees who had completed the demographic survey to date.

Demographics

AGE

Of the New Worker Relocation grantees to complete the survey to date², 78% are under the age of 40 and 47% are age 30 or under. The average age for grantees at the time of their award was 32 years.

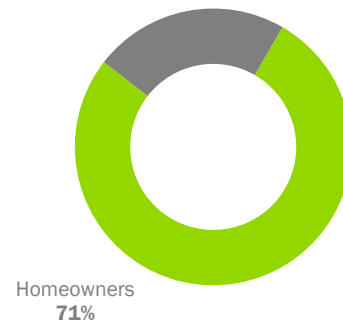
GRANTEE AGE DISTRIBUTION



HOUSEHOLD

Of those surveyed, 79% have already purchased a home or are in the market to purchase a home. The average household size was 2 people and the average income was reported to be just over \$81,000 a year.

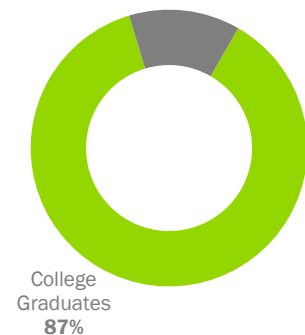
CURRENT OR SOON-TO-BE HOMEOWNERS



EDUCATION

87% of the grantees are college graduates. 47% have completed graduate school.

GRANTEE LEVELS OF COLLEGE EDUCATION



OCCUPATIONS

The top fields of employment represented by grantees were healthcare and education. Other fields represented included business management, finance, engineering, project management, and law among others.

² Of the 51 approved grantees, 38 had completed the demographic survey at the time of this report.

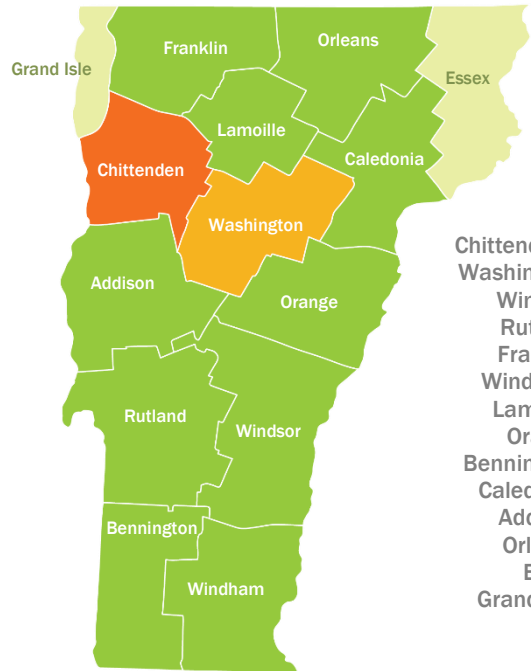
Geographic Distribution of Grantees

Grantees relocated to Vermont from 21 different states across 12 Vermont counties.

WHERE GRANTEEES SETTLED

● 0 ● 1-4 ● 5-9 ● 10+

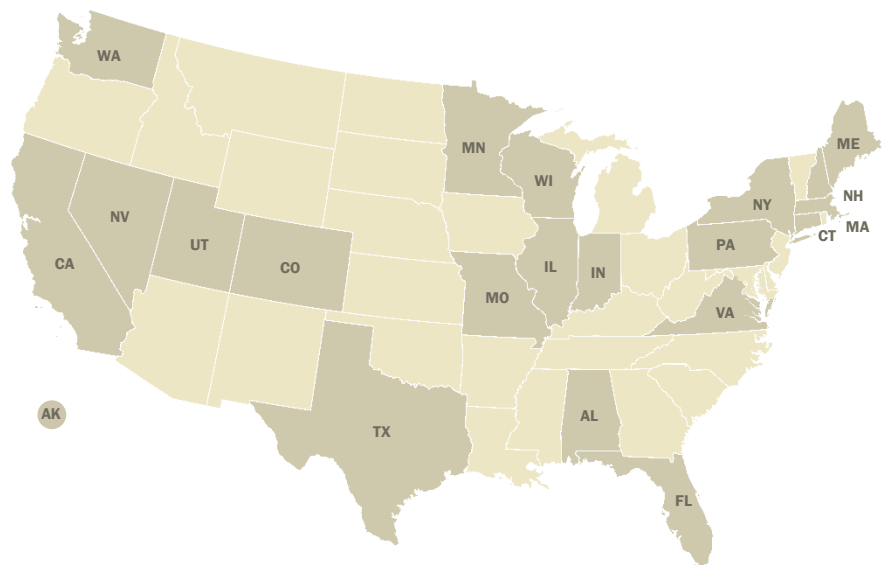
Grantees settled in
12
different Vermont counties.



WHERE GRANTEEES RELOCATED FROM

● Grantee Origin State

Grantees moved from
21
different states.



Prior Vermont Experience

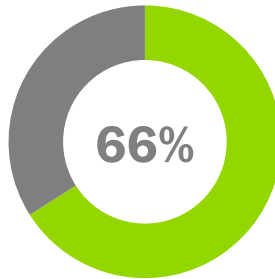
The majority of grantees (97%) had previously experienced Vermont. When asked if they had prior Vermont experience, grantees reported:

97%

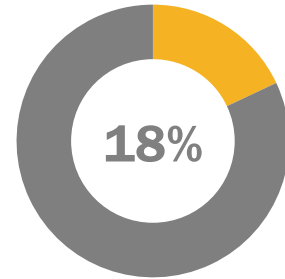
of grantees have previously experienced Vermont.

3%

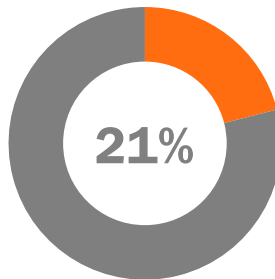
of grantees have no prior Vermont experience.



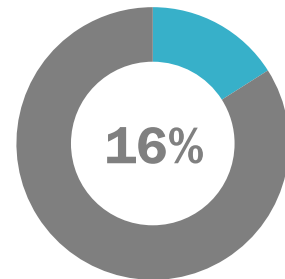
Vacationing in Vermont



Visited Family in Vermont



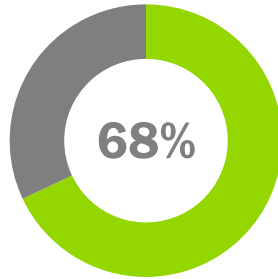
Working in Vermont



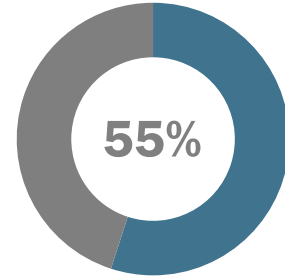
Attending School in Vermont

Other Motivations

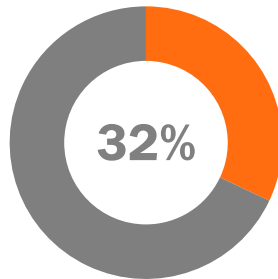
When grantees were asked which of the below factors attracted them to move to Vermont, this is what they shared:



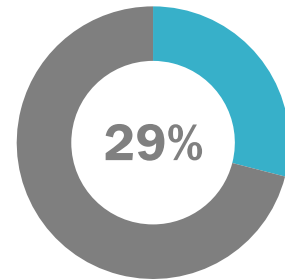
Access to Outdoor Recreation and Nature



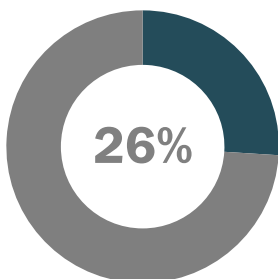
Safe Place to Live and Raise a Family



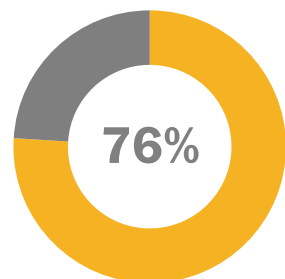
Relocation Grant Program



Friends and Family Live Here



Quality Education



Available Job Opportunities

Others noted they were motivated by previous Vermont residency or vacation experiences, environment, quality of life, geographical location, friendly people, and the natural beauty Vermont has to offer.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

The program application process starts with a visit to [ThinkVermont.com](https://thinkvermont.com) (thinkvermont.com/new-worker-relocation-grant-program) for the downloadable [FAQs](#) and [application link](#). The application has two parts: one for the new worker and one for the employer. Completed applications with supporting documentation are submitted via the application portal and a confirmation of receipt is sent.

Applications are reviewed for program eligibility and evidence of eligible grant expenditures. Staff utilize a checklist to review each application for the following criteria:

- Program eligibility
- Proof of Vermont residency
- Expense eligibility (relocation, specialized tools and/or equipment, connectivity charges, co-working space membership)
- Employer verification
- Supporting documentation

Upon review of an application, the applicant will receive an email notifying them if further information is needed for approval. If further information is needed, they will receive a list of the specific items needed to support the application.

When an application is determined to be complete and eligible, the application and supporting documentation receive a final review by a second staff member. When the application is approved upon final review, the applicant receives an electronic notification to complete a short demographic survey and to fill out forms W-9 and VT-8821. Once the survey and forms are received, the applicant is notified they have been approved for a grant and the exact amount of the grant. The grant agreement is then generated and sent to the grantee outlining the program and the expense types granted. The grantee must sign the grant agreement and return it for final signature execution by the Commissioner, at which point grant funds are disbursed.

New Worker
Program website
visits since launch:

21,658

61%

of grantees learned
about the program
through
the media.

PROMOTION AND MARKETING

National and international media coverage of the Remote Worker Program has sustained high interest in Vermont's relocation efforts. When the New Worker Program was announced, media outlets picked up on it, providing another bump in coverage.

ACCD leadership continues to conduct national media interviews about both programs. The Remote Worker program generated a dollar value of program media coverage equivalent to over \$7 million. The New Worker program has increased this amount. With such continued media coverage, additional paid promotion by ACCD has been unnecessary.

Here is some of the more recent coverage of Vermont's innovative relocation grant programs:

[Boston Globe](#)

[NECN](#)

[The Economist](#)

[Associated Press \(AP\)](#)

[MSN.com](#)

[CBS Boston](#)

AMENDMENTS

The New Worker Relocation Grant Program was originally appropriated \$1,195,000 in Fiscal Year 2019 to begin January 1, 2020. Due to budget cuts, the FY2019 appropriation (\$1,195,000) was reduced by \$525,000, resulting in \$670,000 available to award New Worker Relocation grants.

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

In the spring of 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. Many states, including Vermont, enacted lock downs as a measure to prevent the spread of the virus. As a result, the number of applications received in the spring and early summer was low, likely due to the travel restrictions.

Many Agency staff, including those assigned to the New Worker Relocation Grant Program, were redeployed to direct efforts and resources to administer federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding received by the State of Vermont. This redeployment of Agency staff to work on the Vermont economic recovery and relief programs resulted in a delay of administering the New Worker Relocation Grant applications while priority was given to pandemic recovery efforts. Many program applicants were also delayed in obtaining a Vermont ID due to the closure of in-person operations at the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles. Therefore, applicants were allowed to submit their applications with their current ID.

As the pandemic continues, Vermont has been nationally recognized as a safe place to live due to the state's handling of the health emergency and the resulting low rate of infections statewide. The number of applications received increased in August and September 2020.

As of 9/29/20 a total of 140 completed applications were submitted:

- 51 Approved
- 12 Final Review
- 3 Review
- 16 More Information Needed
- 49 In Queue
- 9 Denied

APPENDIX: ACT 80, SEC. 12 OF 2019

Sec. 12. NEW WORKER RELOCATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

- (a) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall design and implement a New Worker Relocation Incentive Program to award incentive grants to new workers as provided in this section and subject to the policies and procedures the Agency adopts to implement the Program.
- (b) Incentives for new workers. A new worker may be eligible for a grant under the Program for qualifying expenses, subject to the following:
 - (1) A base grant for a new worker shall not exceed \$5,000.00.
 - (2) The Agency may award an enhanced grant, which shall not exceed \$7,500.00, for a new worker who relocates to a labor market area in this State in which:
 - (A) the average annual unemployment rate in the labor market area exceeds the average annual unemployment rate in the State; or
 - (B) the average annual wage in the State exceeds the annual average wage in the labor market area.
- (c) The Agency shall:
 - (1) adopt procedures for implementing the Program, which shall include a simple certification process to certify new workers and qualifying expenses;
 - (2) promote awareness of the Program, including through coordination with relevant trade groups and by integration into the Agency's economic development marketing campaigns;
 - (3) award grants on a first-come, first-served basis beginning January 1, 2020, subject to available funding; and
 - (4) adopt measurable goals, performance measures, and an audit strategy to assess the utilization and performance of the Program
- (d) On or before October 1, 2020, the Agency shall submit a report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs concerning the implementation of this section, including:
 - (1) a description of the policies and procedures adopted to implement the Program; and
 - (2) the promotion and marketing of the Program.
- (e) As used in this section:
 - (1) "New worker" means an individual who on or after January 1, 2020:

- (A) becomes a full-time resident of this State;
 - (B) becomes a full-time employee of a business domiciled or authorized to do business in this State;
 - (C) (i) is employed in an occupation identified by the Department of Labor in its 2016–2026 Long Term Occupational Projections as one of the top occupations at each level of educational attainment typical for entry; or
(ii) who the Agency determines should otherwise receive an incentive grant under the Program because the worker possesses exceptional education, skills, or training or due to other extraordinary circumstances; and
 - (D) whose gross wage for the position equals or exceeds:
 - (i) 160 percent of the State minimum wage; or
 - (ii) if the employer is located in a labor market area in which the average annual unemployment rate is higher than the average annual unemployment rate for the State, 140 percent of the State minimum wage.
- (2) “Qualifying expenses” means the actual costs that a new worker incurs for one or more of the following:
- (A) relocation expenses, which may include closing costs for a primary residence; rental security deposit; first month’s rent payment; and other expenses established in Agency guidelines; and
 - (B) expenses necessary for a new worker to perform his or her employment duties, including connectivity costs, specialized tools and equipment, and other expenses established in Agency guidelines.