



Department for Children &  
Families

**Economic Services  
Division**

**Strategic Plan 2024-2026**





ESD Community and Statewide Partners,

I am pleased to share with you the Economic Services Division (ESD) 3-year strategic plan. This plan reflects the themes and priorities identified by ESD staff through a series of Listening Sessions that took place in the fall of 2023. Staff's feedback also helped create our new mission, vision, and values.

This plan encompasses both high-level aspirational key intentions and practical applications that will soon be implemented as a part of the Economic Services Division's path forward. The plan is focused on delivering improved outcomes for ESD Staff, Customers, and Community Partners. Each strategy outlined in this plan has specific next steps and an assigned lead to hold us accountable and help us achieve our goals.

This plan will act as the Division's roadmap over the next 3-years, and we look forward to updating you on our progress.

Sincerely,

Miranda Gray  
Deputy Commissioner

# Economic Services Division

## Vision

Vermonters thrive with a sense of independence and connection to their communities.

## Mission

To provide high quality service while administering programs to improve economic well-being for Vermonters.

## Values

We Believe...

- ◀ the **PEOPLE WE SERVE** deserve to:
  - be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion
  - have accurate benefits that are accessible and timely
  - reach their full potential
  
- ◀ our **WORKFORCE** is our greatest strength and essential to our mission  
To provide high quality service, we strive to support staff to be:
  - Innovative
  - Dedicated
  - Adaptable and sustained in their work
  - Able to embrace differences and diversity
  - Continuous learners
  - Physically and emotionally safe
  
- ◀ our **PARTNERSHIPS** are essential to achieve our vision and mission.
  - We value the voices and different perspectives of our local and statewide partners.
  - We recognize that collaborating with our partners allows us to better meet the needs of our communities

# What We Do

## Economic Services administers the following programs:

### Fuel and Utilities



- Fuel Assistance: supplements home heating bills, whether an individual owns a home or rents, pays for heat directly or as part of the rent.
- Energy Assistance: assists lower income Vermonters afford energy for their homes, by reducing their monthly bill. (VT Gas and Green Mountain Power)

### Food and Nutrition



- 3SquaresVT: helps people buy food (Arrows List) Item two
- Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN): Vermont's SNAP Employment and Training Program
- Vermont's Farm to Family: provides coupons for eligible households to purchase fresh produce at farmers' markets and farm stands

### General and Emergency Assistance



- General and Emergency Assistance Program: provides state-funded assistance to Vermonters without other means to meet their emergency need in the following categories:
  - ▶ Emergency Housing
  - ▶ Rent/Mortgage assistance
  - ▶ Fuel/Utilities assistance
  - ▶ Dental Benefits
  - ▶ Prescription assistance
  - ▶ Cash assistance to families with children and adults unable to work
  - ▶ Burial expenses
  - ▶ Transient assistance

## Essential Person Program



- Essential Person Program (EP): helps low-income Vermonters stay in their home by paying part of the cost to have someone live with them and provide essential care.

## Reach Up



- Reach Up/Reach First: provides cash benefits to Vermont families and children, to help meet their needs while working on goals for their family's financial, physical, and emotional wellbeing.
- Reach Ahead: provides transitional assistance and job support for about 200 families, including coaching, support services, childcare subsidy, and a food benefit.
- Post-Secondary Education (PSE): provides coaching and advisory support to student parents who are pursuing a 2- or 4-year degree, in addition to cash assistance grant to help students purchase books, transportation and childcare subsidy.



## Goal 1: Provide high quality customer service.

### Strategies

- A. Support staff to be curious, innovative, and willing to try changes that could create improvements.
- B. Promote workforce flexibility to improve customer service.
- C. Address inefficiencies with existing or new technology and equipment.
- D. Provide customer service focused training to develop and sustain competencies.
- E. Review and share data to inform decision making and improve outcomes.
- F. Identify and advocate for changes that correct historic, systemic inequities.

## Goal 2: Support a resilient workforce and improve retention.

### Strategies

- A. Support professional development opportunities for staff.
- B. Deepen peer connections, team building and leadership development.
- C. Improve recruitment efforts and hiring practices.
- D. Strengthen the division's onboarding process.
- E. Improve retention by supporting staff and their professional goals.

## Goal 3: Develop effective communication strategies for staff and community.

### Strategies

- A. Continue to refine and improve how we engage and deliver information to staff.
  - B. Identify ways to highlight the positive work and stories of the division.
  - C. Improve how partners agencies are updated and informed of the division's services and programs.
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