

Governor's Summit on Pathways to Economic Stability

Work Groups Feedback

Key: VCPCR – Vermont Child Poverty Council Report
HTFR – Governor's Hunger Task Force Report
NGR/WLC – Next Generation Report/Workforce Leadership Committee
WSV – Work Supports in Vermont: An Analysis of the Effectiveness of St. Policies Supporting Work
VICH – Vermont Interagency Council on Homelessness 2008 Report
Consolidated recommendation – indicates a recommendation which draws upon several recommendations contained in the matrix to create a new, more comprehensive suggestion

Immediate Recommendations:

1. (VCPCR)The DCF Commissioner will develop a proposal to adjust VT's benefit programs to end benefits cliffs and move to benefit "step downs" in order to eliminate economic disincentives for wage advancement. (increase child care subsidy)
2. (VCPCR)Benefits analysis to address the cliff problem: Focus on child care; Decide what we want it to look like in VT and pilot with feds re work supports
3. (consolidated recommendation) State government will help families become more stable by enhancing resources to transportation, childcare, trainings/job skills, housing and assist in job development "safety net"
4. Explore Government/House/Senate budget implications in terms of how budgets reflect, support or undermine these recommendations and how they preserve or erode the safety net and people's access to meaningful employment and health care.
5. (VCPCR)Cliffs: Safety net of step-down benefits matrix in order to eliminate economic disincentives for wage advancement (especially during transition along income ladder)
6. Convene a strategic planning process or ask each report committee to undertake a strategic planning process which would involve key players to formulate action planning to move their recommendations forward and plan for how all can contribute
7. (VCPCR)Smooth out benefits cliff so net benefit increases with earned income
8. Simplify the relationships between service providers and those needing services; eliminate the cliff.
9. (VCPCR)DCF Commissioner will develop a proposal for presentation to the next federal administration to have Vermont serve as a demonstration project for adjustment of federal benefit programs to end benefit cliffs and move to benefit step-downs
10. (VCPCR)Establish Vermont as a demonstration project for adjustment of federal programs to end benefits cliffs

11. (HTFR) Use Commission on Hunger and its Director or an entity like the United Way to provide TA to communities and regions as they develop Food Councils and hunger action plans. Services should include:
 - ◆ sharing best practices for how to conduct a community needs assessment, including providing relevant background data and studies on hunger, food access, and risk factors for hunger
 - ◆ Sharing models of best practices, both in Vermont and in other areas of the country, for drafting and implementing an effective food plan
 - ◆ Including access to food for at-risk or marginally at-risk citizens when planning for emergencies – and providing sample materials for how this emergency planning can be done
 - ◆ Adding a food security component to state level planning that can be a reference point for individual communities for example in emergency planning , public transit planning, use of prime agricultural soils in developing regions, etc.
 - ◆ Building and administering a pool of state, federal and charitable funds that communities can access to support effective planning. Examples of expenses include professional facilitators, community forums, accurate survey work and attending trainings/education opportunities
12. Work with Business community to analyze method for developing on site resource coordinators as demonstrated in the Working Bridges project and provide the 17 week course “Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World” for consumers.
13. Housing
14. Childcare
15. (VCPCR)Increase participation in summer and vacation food programs
16. (consolidated recommendation) Maintain safety net and improve access to programs through the adoption of standardized income guidelines
17. (consolidated recommendation)Improve education system, early childhood and K-12, to prepare youth for careers. Allow alternate applied learning, i.e. apprenticeships, dual enrollment, coordinate with higher education and business community to ID needs and to establish work readiness certificates
18. (VCPCR)Resolve the cliff issue, make it easier to access benefits; audit and rationalize income eligibility, develop single application
19. Find dollars to fund people to come into the workplace to help employees find and navigate the community resources needed to be successful at work (onsite Resource Coordinator or existing HR employees)
20. (VCPCR)The DCF Commissioner will develop a proposal for presentation to the next federal administration to have Vermont serve as a demonstration project for adjustment of federal benefit programs to end benefit cliffs and move to benefit step-downs. The goal of the project will be to determine if, over time, step-downs are an effective

alternative to cliffs to help move working parents out of poverty and keep them out of poverty.

21. (WSV) Accelerate child care subsidy rates and hold harmless current recipients
22. (VCPCR) Comprehensive analysis of VT specific and federal benefits cliffs and impact when benefits are changed
23. (VCPCR) DCF Commissioner with the General Assembly to maximize enrollment in Federal Nutrition programs...such as food stamps, the child and adult care meals programs, and others to increase the number of families eligible to participate in the programs. The Department will also work with the General Assembly to ensure eligible families are aware of and enrolled in these nutrition programs.
24. Expand how Next Generation funds are targeted so they can more effectively serve the needs of low income Vermonters.
25. (HTFR) Implement those components of the Hunger Task Force recommendations which have the highest return on investment by 12/31/10
26. Establish Working Bridges and NeighborKeepers to support vehicles for people to gain and maintain employment and stability in their lives
27. (consolidated recommendation) Ensure folks basic needs are met by addressing benefit cliffs by not only continuing to ensure the stability of and access to the existing safety net but by seeking to align application and eligibility criteria across complex benefit programs to create a smooth transition and progressive (“step-down” see NCCP) path towards sustainable employment, self-reliance, and independence through a Vermont demonstration pilot with the federal government that is none the less focused on Vermont issues.
28. (VCPCR) Benefits analysis to address the cliff – focus on child care, decide what we want it to look like in Vermont and pilot with feds re: work supports
29. (WSV) Maintain safety net and improve access with standardized income guidelines.
30. (WSV) Maintain/improve safety net by increasing efficiencies and access and eliminating a benefit cliff

Longer Term Recommendations:

1. (consolidated recommendation) The state of Vermont must recognize in its public policy that schools and education are not solely responsible for the successful education of Vermont's children. The effects of chronic poverty and other social problems will be addressed through comprehensive supports (housing, food, health care, etc.), education (K-12 and beyond), work readiness and strong partnerships.
2. (VCPCR) Universal Health Care
3. (consolidated recommendation) Education: 0-5, K-12: skill training, workforce preparation, reduction in dropout rate
4. (consolidated goal) Strengthen innovate, rural job creation (e-commerce, creative economy) with built in "work supports" (transportation, case/service coordination)
5. Family modeling and educational foundation of life skills required to be a productive and established member of community (in addition to academics)
6. (consolidated recommendation) Think about making programs into work supports that support people being in a job – child care, training, elder care, family leave – staying in a job, and allowing all Vermonters to participate in prosperity
7. Community mobilization, education and awareness to increase capacity and engagement in the action planning
8. (VCPCR) Establish single payer, universal health care in Vermont
9. Develop technical and person skills necessary for employment and advancement
10. Create a logical relationship between success in work and programs that support the ability to work.
11. (VCPCR) DCF and DOL to establish clearly defined connections between Reach Up participants and Next Generation funding. This effort will include recruiting Reach Up participants to enroll in Next Generation funded training programs, working with employers to develop training programs targeted at Reach Up participants, and developing the necessary pre-training programs to enable participants to have the greatest opportunity for successful job training.

12. (consolidated recommendation) Restructure “Social Safety Net” to turn cliffs into slopes – with full wrap-around services all along the way and reduced paperwork/forms for recipients to fill out
13. (consolidated recommendation) Increase access to higher Education: improve success rate, improve retention rate and decrease financial barriers to entry
14. (VCPCR) Benefits cliff issue
15. Education and workforce training
16. (VCPCR) Restructure benefits programs so that as Vermonters earn more, they have more resources (with special attention to the restructuring of child care subsidy)
17. (NGR/WLC) Develop work readiness credential statewide within as well as beyond the K-12 system; use it to develop specific strategies that benefit underachievers
18. (NGR/WLC) Increase priority of job readiness
19. (VCPCR) Develop strategies to end benefit cliffs and move toward benefit step downs in order to eliminate economic disincentives to employment and career advancement with emphasis on child care supports/subsidies as one of the most critical barriers to employment.
20. (VCPCR) DOE Commissioner and AHS Secretary will develop models for the integration of family services into Vermont schools to provide the supports that children who are performing at lower levels need to catch up to their higher performing peers. The objective being equality of high level education outcomes and work readiness in addition to access to higher education.
21. Assure connectivity of databases to allow seamless awareness of programs that recipients would be eligible for
22. Safety net for those not eligible for programs but still financially vulnerable
23. Invest in career planning and workplace development supports for Pre-K through and beyond high school
24. (WSV) Add health insurance for children and parents: consider further expansions so that families who lack employer-based health benefits can access a subsidized plan, with premiums that rise with income
25. (WSV) Treatment of child support income: increase the TANF program’s child support disregard and change Renter Rebate calculations to disregard at least a portion of the child support payments that families receive
26. Implement a common system of eligibility for benefits and ensure an alignment of service programs across the Agency

27. (consolidated recommendation) State needs to address benefit cliffs. Restructuring of childcare subsidy program so it can be fully funded.
28. To expand capacity of schools and community to assure access to high quality Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start Programs
29. State funded emergency food assistance program for charitable food sector
30. To radically change the current education system, to attain sustainable employment for all Vermonters by ensuring education of all types beginning at birth through life targeted at the needs of all employment sectors through a fully-integrated, public-private planning process that uses all possible supports, specifically noting barriers to continued employment such as childcare, transportation, family leave, as needed including front-end and ongoing services and specific tools such as IDAs, HSAs, income advances, micro-business.
31. Education – 0-5, K-12, adult training or skill training for workforce preparation and reduce dropout rates
32. Integrate work supports and engage public/private to engage all seekers – strategic planning, universal health care.
33. State government will continue its efforts to ensure universal access to high quality, affordable, physical, dental and mental health care, and to promote healthy communities
34. Vermonters will have access to education and training that will enable them to not only gain, but sustain viable employment.

Action Planning:

Recommendation:

The state of Vermont must recognize in its public policy that schools and education are not solely responsible for the success of Vermonters. The effects of chronic poverty and other social problems will be addressed through comprehensive supports (housing, food, health care, etc.), education (k12 and beyond), work readiness and strong partnerships.

Action Plan:

The education system K-12 will experience 0% drop out rate:

- Change drop out age to 18
- Milestones at different grades
- Variety of options to complete school
- Expansion of dual enrollment (college)

Community and Business Role:

- Mentoring
- Work experience, internships, and apprenticeships
- Work awareness

Provide an alternative school schedule

Multiple systems so everyone can succeed

Incentivize reduction in dropout rate to communities

Encourage a collaborative community approach to lowering the dropout rate, eg. Courts, business, schools etc.

Incorporate work readiness credentials with K-12 curriculum, put benchmarks from work readiness credentials: mentorships, work experiences

Government

Housing, create incentives for affordable and supported housing

Small groups within schools- build relationships, talk about work readiness issues

Identify other ways to incorporate work readiness informally and formally

All schools receive Bridges (out of Poverty) training- repeat on a regular basis; hold trainings that includes community and business

Early intervention – AHS and education work together

Look at how each sector will support work readiness; both the concept and the certificate

Define work readiness to include access to healthcare, housing and nutrition

Change “work readiness” to “work success” that would include work support once you have a job

The “who” should be all 3 sectors represented equally

Recommendation:

Increase priority of job readiness

Action Plan:

Within 3 months (June) hold a 1-2 day forum; the Dept of Economic Development to convene a group of Business/employers to create state-wide standards that document measurable job readiness skills. Skills that are measurable, documentable and valued by employers

Within next 6 months, take those standards to a work group consisting of DOL, DOE, DCF and DED to design and implement training programs; programs could be stand alone or embedded into existing training through RFP grants.

Recommendation:

Increase participation in summer and vacation food programs

Action Plan:

Look at data around increases in eligibility through the proxy of usage of free and reduced lunch data

Government identify community and non-profit business to take on the project; DOE, resources to Campaign to End Childhood Hunger

Access is key – model must be driven by the community

Recommendation:

Maintain safety net and improve access to programs through the adoption of standardized income guidelines

And

Implement a common system of eligibility for benefits and ensure an alignment of service programs across the Agency.

Action Plan:

What: Move toward connectivity between databases to make it easier to determine eligibility for multiple programs and ensure knowledge among workers in different programmatic areas and to better provide information and services; a common or simplified application

Define safety net to ensure a common understanding of what it comprises which meets basic needs (establish what will happen to those individuals/families not currently connected to that net)

Safety net must be premised on a standard of living below which no Vermonter should go with details for various programs; use of a sliding fee scale and an understand of what the special needs are

Keep the need in mind; regardless of any specific improvement to the overall system, catastrophic needs must be met

Study the population and identified risks gaps above current eligibility for benefits programs which still leave people financially vulnerable

Broaden the system improvements to include approaches such as “NeighborKeepers” that ensure community ties and relationship building (connotes ownership vs. reciprocity)

Get Federal permission to partner with Vermont for a demonstration project to simplify eligibility criteria

When: Safety Net exploration through the summer of ‘09
Federal permission and approval in summer of ‘10

Recommendation:

Housing

Action Plan:

What: Keeping what housing we have – loan landlords resources to maintain existing housing stock

Helping people to stay in housing they have:

- Supportive housing assistance

- Expand employer-based short term loans

- Develop state subsidy program/voucher system to help supplement families’ housing budgets

Create more integrated housing system/organize a new statewide system

- Identify core services (keep people in housing, provide shelter for homeless, help people get into permanent housing)

- Have coordinator to oversee system

- Address transition housing

Housing “social workers” to help people navigate the system (getting into and maintaining housing)

Foreclosure assistance

Expand IDA (individual development accounts); involve employers: match contributions and use employer tax credit for contribution to IDAs

Who: Landlords, Deputy Secretary of AHS, Field Directors, housing developers including non-profits, housing authorities, local housing coalitions, landlords association, credit unions,

employers, VT Business for Social Responsibility, business organizations, community action groups

When: Consider stimulus # (2 year timeline); Next two years are key; some conversations already happening locally regarding the stimulus

Timeline for new statewide system? Language required and possibly legislation

Recommendation:
Childcare

Action Plan:

What: Stimulus \$ being increased (facility dollars, block grants, Head Start)

Bring subsidy up to current standards and market rate

Create system that does not require co-pays

Recognize 24 hr/7 day + summers nature of childcare need

Decide how much of Next Generation dollars should go to childcare

Encourage employers to consider flex schedules and work based childcare

Government support for childcare infrastructure

Alternative workplace locations for parents

Employers offering cafeteria plans with an option for childcare

Involve young parents in conversation

Connections with senior citizen community

Consider quality of childcare options

Look at child tax credits – are they working?

Expand school-based pre-K and K options

Who: DCF Commissioner, legislators, non-profits, parents with children, businesses (groups of employers already talking about this), Building Bright Futures Council, Parent/Child Centers

When: \$18 million would address subsidy issue

Recommendation:

Restructure benefits programs so that as Vermonters earn more, they have more resources (with special attention to the restructuring of child care subsidy)

Action Plan:

What	Who	When
Child care Subsidy – restructure	DCF and Legislature	May, 2010
Collaborate with community groups/colleges on additional opportunities for child care	Colleges, DCF, Community Groups	July, 2010
Modify rules to reduce diminishing returns and require federal waivers	AHS, Legislature, DCF, Federal Delegation	May, 2010

Recommendation:

Implement those components of the Hunger Task Force recommendations which have the highest return on investment by 12/31/10

Action Plan:

What	Who	When
Tax department notify individuals about how to apply for benefits, EITC, other forms of communication	Tax Dept and other Community Partners	Immediate: December, 2009
Identify entity to oversee implementation of recommendations	State Government (report to Governor); Secretary of Administration	December, 2009
Maximize the Federal Nutrition Program (benchmark) Private and Public Sectors	Secretary of Administration	November, 2011
Vermont Nutrition Day: integrate with community and schools campaign	Non Profits, Business, Schools, Community	

Recommendation:

Expand how Next Generation funds are targeted so they can more effectively serve the needs of low income Vermonters.

Action Plan:

What	Who	When
Designate a target amount of Next Generation funds for low income, minimum skilled Vermonters	Legislature	May, 2010
Determine effective programs for Next Generation funding	Legislature, DOL	May, 2010

Recommendation:

Develop strategies to end benefit cliffs and move toward benefit step downs in order to eliminate economic disincentives to employment and career advancement with emphasis on child care supports/subsidies as one of the most critical barriers to employment.

Action Steps:

Contact Congressional delegation to develop a demonstration project – immediately

Revisit Reach Up study to explore recommendations – immediately

Prep Legislature for a summer study – April 2009

Explore feasibility of a pilot

Contact and explore state plans

Public/Private partnership for resource coordinator for job development and retention (standard and universal)

Include employers at start as part of the team

Recommendation:

Establish Working Bridges and NeighborKeepers to support vehicles for people to gain and maintain employment and stability in their lives

Action Steps:

To establish Working Bridges statewide:

Recruit employers/outreach – use of United Way and VT Business Roundtable
Funding needed to support Resource Coordinator for all employees; cost share between S
State and employers; could be linked to VT 211; explore the use of Peer Navigators
Fund/Appoint an intermediary between the human services and business community, a
convener to host community forums, educational events, facilitate follow through and
resource development
Link to State Chamber of Commerce

To establish NeighborKeepers statewide:

Outreach – utilize/tap into existing resources
Re-capture a sense of community – for all of us; create motivations for families to join
social networks/participate in circles of support
Build relationships across class, age and race
Train allies
Funding needed for core staff in each community (can we use staffing in present
partnering agencies?)
Statewide Advisory Council in formation
Elders, People with Disabilities and local Businesses are indispensable partners
AARP, VT Foodbank, Food Distributors are also important partners
In-kind support re: food, location, etc.
Consider transportation component; transportation equity

Recommendation:

State government will continue its efforts to ensure universal access to high quality, affordable, physical, dental and mental health care, and to promote healthy communities

Action Steps:

1. Family community health centers available to all – parenting classes, counseling, preventive care, substance abuse treatment nutrition. (FY11-FY15)
2. Consolidation of services at 14 hospitals in Vermont ((FY11 – FY15)
3. Public financing of a single insurance pool through broad and equitable fees and taxes (FY 10 – FY11)

Who: Vermont healthcare report committee; Vermont Department of Health; DMH; BISCA

Recommendation:

Vermonters will have access to education and training that will enable them to not only gain, but sustain viable employment.

Action Steps:

How:

Improve the mechanism for teen parent education funding to promote sustainability -

Expand comprehensive apprenticeship programs for all trades

All work targets employer needs training

Reduce financial barriers to higher education, technology and alternative education

Supporting communities to value education and removing barriers to higher technology and alternative education

Who:

PCC

Department of Education

Legislature

Community Action Agencies

Department of Labor

Local Education

Auth. Employers

Job corps

Employers

When:

teen parent education funding – FY 2009-10

remainder – FY 2011-2012