



October 11, 2016

Fred Kenney, Executive Director
Vermont Economic Progress Council
VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development
1 National Life Dr. 6th floor
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501

Dear Fred,

I am writing in response to your request for comments on the VEGI program and the types of assistance most useful for small businesses at start-up and growth phases in Vermont. We do see the VEGI program being used by small businesses and have heard from VtSBDC clients that the incentives were significant.

To take the benefit a bit deeper, perhaps some section of the VEGI program could assist micro-businesses, where the owners are hiring their first employee and aren't yet at the scale of most of the VEGI participants we see. If it was some type of VEGI-lite, with simpler application requirements, and a bundle of service components that included advising and professional assistance with first-employee issues, it could possibly assist additional small businesses in Vermont.

I have read the letter provided by Darcy Carter, Vermont's District Director of U.S. Small Business Administration. We receive similar requests for assistance, and agree with the needs listed by SBA. Those areas outlined are **exactly** the issues VtSBDC works on with businesses to strengthen them and move them through their growth stages. While we work to advise businesses, there's always room for more assistance to actually provide direct services to them, such as legal, accounting, web development, HR, etc. Programs that provide some grant funds (matching money can be an effective way to go about it) to support young, growing businesses' access to these critical services could be very helpful. Naturally, there would be procedural issues to work out, and requirements to put in place. We appreciate the invitation to provide input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda Rossi".

Linda Rossi, State Director
Vermont Small Business Development Center
P. O. Box 188
Randolph Center, VT 05061