

STAY TO STAY

A REPORT ON THE STAY TO STAY WEEKENDS

2019 PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT



LIVE GROW

WORK PLAY

THINKVERMONT.COM

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SUMMARY

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The Stay to Stay Weekends program is a targeted economic development tourism program developed by the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing (VDTM). It is part of the overall Think Vermont initiative to attract more working families and young professionals to Vermont to address the challenge of the state's declining workforce.

The three-day networking weekends are specifically designed for visitors interested in living and working in Vermont. Stay to Stay Weekends are jointly administered by VDTM and regional partners who connect participants to community leaders, employers, entrepreneurs, realtors, potential neighbors, and state and local officials to begin building a support network that can help facilitate their relocation to Vermont.

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HOW IT WORKS

Stay to Stay Weekends have three components: a Friday evening welcome reception, Saturday and Sunday exploration, and a Monday morning networking event. Participants are responsible for arranging and covering the cost of their own accommodations, travel, and meals.

Participants arrive Friday evening and attend a welcome reception where they meet representatives from the local community. The local chamber hosts these receptions which include local business owners and entrepreneurs, community residents, and state and local officials. Each participant receives a welcome bag containing travel and relocation information about Vermont.

Participants then can enjoy two unstructured days exploring Vermont's offerings as visitors. They can also arrange additional meetings with realtors or other local professionals. Local chambers serve as concierges as necessary.

As part of the registration process, participants sign up for Monday morning activities designed to give them insight about living and working in Vermont, including:

- Tours with realtors;
- Tours of childcare centers;
- Visits to local maker or coworking spaces to meet entrepreneurs and business owners; and
- Meetings with employers that are hiring. Employers who attend Monday networking meetings are invited based on the type of industry or employer participants indicate on their registration forms.

LOGISTICS

VDTM administers the overall marketing of the program and provides the online registration process. Organizing partners establish collaborations with local groups, handle onsite logistics, and communicate with participants before, during, and after their visits.

- Participants register by visiting the [Stay to Stay Weekends](#) landing page on [VermontVacation.com](#) that describes the program and identifies participating regions.
- Participants fill out an online form indicating their preferred dates, regions, and networking activities.
- Participants receive a welcome reply from VDTM that explains the next steps and connects them with the local organizing partner.
- Organizing partners download lists of registrants in their regions to follow up directly and plan the Monday activities. Follow up can range from a single email to multiple pre-visit conversations to ascertain participants' employment and relocation needs.

PROMOTION

VDTM promotes Stay to Stay Weekends through digital marketing, social media, and owned media (website, newsletters). VDTM has created a toolkit of digital materials for use by partners to leverage their outreach efforts for maximum exposure. The uniqueness of the program continues to earn national and regional media coverage.

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES

Participating communities must include a committed local chamber/young professionals network partner, a maker or coworking space in the community, and employers that are hiring. Additional partners in 2019 included regional economic development corporations, new neighbor groups, lodging accommodations, and outdoor recreation groups, demonstrating a strong commitment for success by participating communities. The program has grown since its first year: in 2019, eight communities hosted Stay to Stay Weekends on fourteen different dates throughout the year.

New Communities

2018 survey results indicated a need for more offerings in more locations. As a result, 20 Stay to Stay Weekends were offered in 2019 in eight communities.

In the summer of 2019, VDTM welcomed the Northeast Kingdom to the Stay to Stay team. In partnership with Northern Community Investment Corporation and the St. Johnsbury Chamber of Commerce, four Weekends were added to the calendar in Newport and St. Johnsbury, including a Ski Weekend in partnership with Jay Peak Resort.

2019 DATES, LOCATIONS & LOCAL PARTNERS

Bennington/Manchester

Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce, Bennington Area Trail System, Northshire Area Trail Systems, Bromley Mountain

- February 22–25 (Stay to Stay Ski Weekend)
- June 14–17
- September 14–16 (Stay to Stay Mountain Biking Weekend)
- October 25–28

Brattleboro

Brattleboro Chamber of Commerce, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, Mount Snow

- February 22–25 (Stay to Stay Ski Weekend)
- June 14–17
- August 9–12
- October 25–28

Burlington

Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce

- April 12–15
- November 8–11

Newport/St. Johnsbury

St. Johnsbury Chamber of Commerce, Northern Community Investment Corporation, Kingdom Trails, Jay Peak Resort

- July 26–29
- September 14–16 (Stay to Stay Mountain Biking Weekend)
- October 4–7
- December 13–16 (Stay to Stay Ski Weekend)

Rutland

Rutland Regional Chamber of Commerce, Rutland Young Professionals, Rutland Economic Development Corporation, Killington Grand Resort

- March 1–4 (Stay to Stay Ski Weekend)
- April 26–29
- June 21–24
- August 9–12
- October 18–21

Woodstock

Woodstock Area Chamber of Commerce, Woodstock Area Mountain Bike Association, Woodstock Economic Development Commission

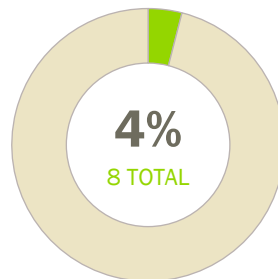
- September 14–16 (Stay to Stay Mountain Biking Weekend)

REGISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION DATA

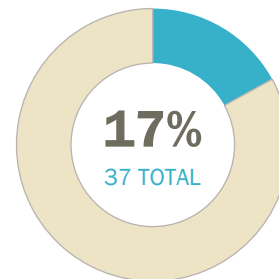
Registration and participation data are collected via submissions to VDTM's online registration form and post-event reporting from organizing partners on actual participation.

2019 Stay to Stay Weekend Outcomes

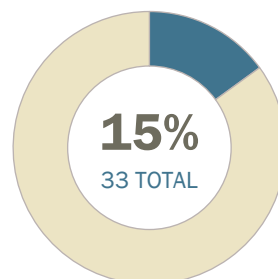
Town	Total Registrations	Total Attendance	# Weekends	% of Registrants Attending
Brattleboro	104	44	4	42%
Burlington	271	111	2	41%
Newport	39	14	2	36%
Rutland	83	31	5	37%
Shires (Bennington/Manchester)	70	24	4	34%
St. Johnsbury	35	23	2	66%
Woodstock	6	0	1	0%
Grand Total	608	247	20	41%



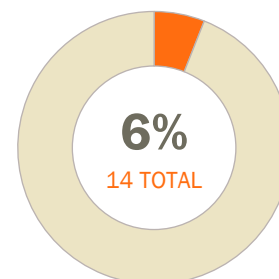
Of Attendees Moved to Vermont



Of Attendees are Job/House Hunting



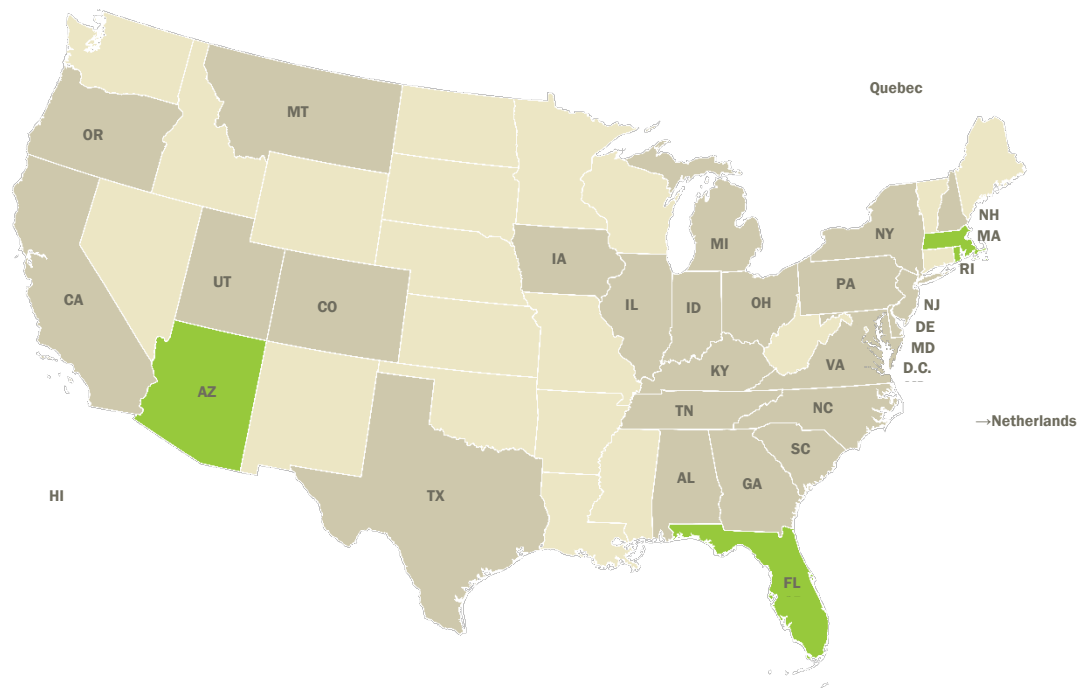
Of Attendees are Planning/Considering Moving to Vermont this Year



Of Attendees are Not Moving to Vermont

Geographic Distribution of Participants

Participants who moved to Vermont in 2019 came from Florida, Arizona, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. The participants came from AL, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, KY, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, Quebec, and The Netherlands.

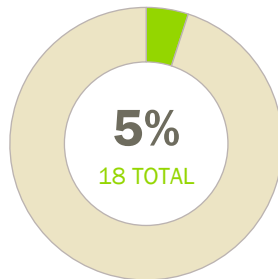


OVERALL PROGRAM RESULTS

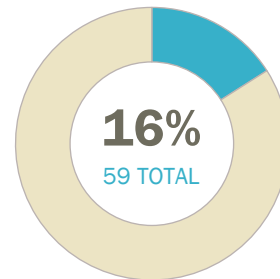
Since its inception in 2018, the Stay to Stay Weekends program has resulted in 57 individuals, representing 18 families, relocating to Vermont. Over 1,250 visitors registered for the program, and 387 have attended one or more Weekends. These results indicate confirmed relocations and registrations. Tracking participants who are in the process of house- and/or job-hunting is ongoing and is reported by local partners when data becomes available.

Stay to Stay Weekend Outcomes 2018–2019

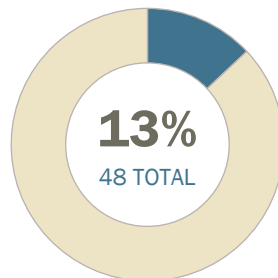
Town	Total Registrations	Total Attendance	# Weekends	% of Registrants Attending
Brattleboro	305	73	7	24%
Burlington	467	181	4	39%
Newport	39	14	2	36%
Rutland	226	53	8	23%
Shires (Bennington/Manchester)	182	43	7	24%
St. Johnsbury	35	23	2	66%
Woodstock	6	0	1	0%
Grand Total	1,260	387	31	31%



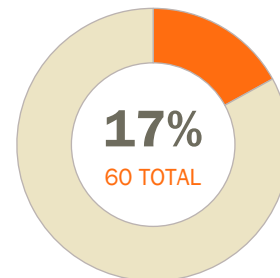
Of Attendees Moved to Vermont



Of Attendees are Job/House Hunting



Of Attendees are Planning/Considering Moving to Vermont this Year



Of Attendees are Not Moving to Vermont

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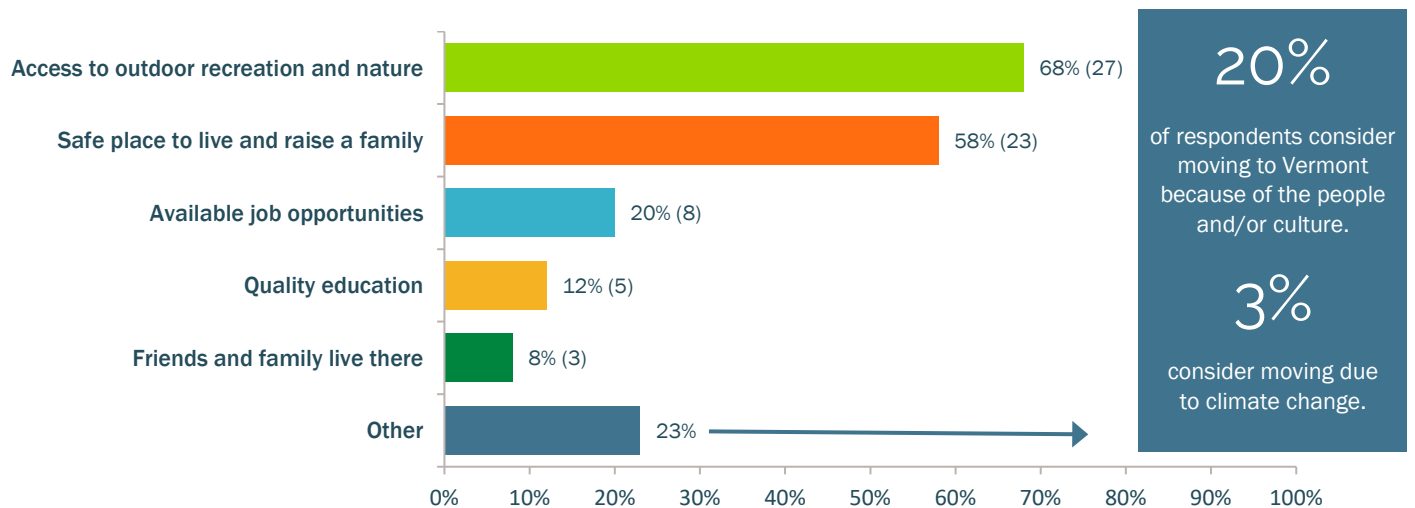
PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Media Coverage Drives Participation and Awareness

VDTM surveyed all individuals who registered for and/or attended a Stay to Stay Weekend in 2019 to learn about their experiences with the program and opportunities for improvement. Roughly 40% of respondents learned about the program via news articles or stories and 28% Googled it.

Most respondents found the local connections offered by the program and the inspiration to visit or explore Vermont more thoroughly were its most beneficial aspects. The perception of Vermont as a safe place to live and access to the outdoors are the primary motivators for Stayers to consider moving to Vermont.

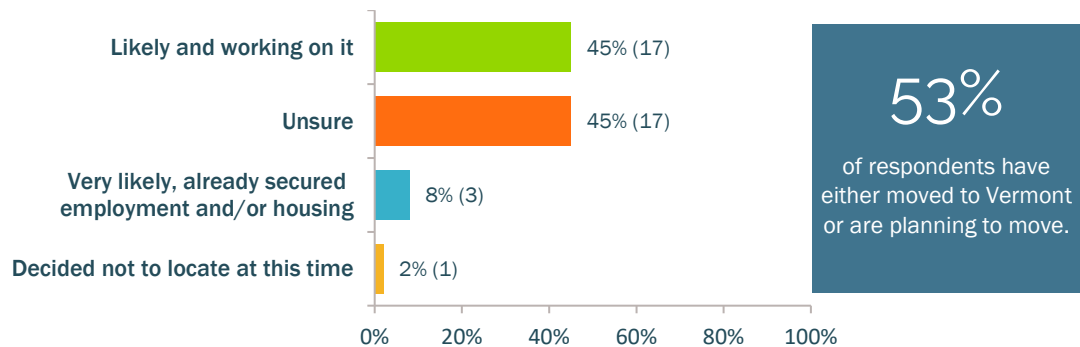
Why are you considering a move to Vermont?



Stayers are Likely to Become Vermonters

Sixty-one percent of 2019 respondents said they are likely to move or planning to move to Vermont as a result of their experience attending a Stay to Stay Weekend. Fifty percent are working on or have already secured employment and/or housing in Vermont. These findings align with data reported directly by local partners.

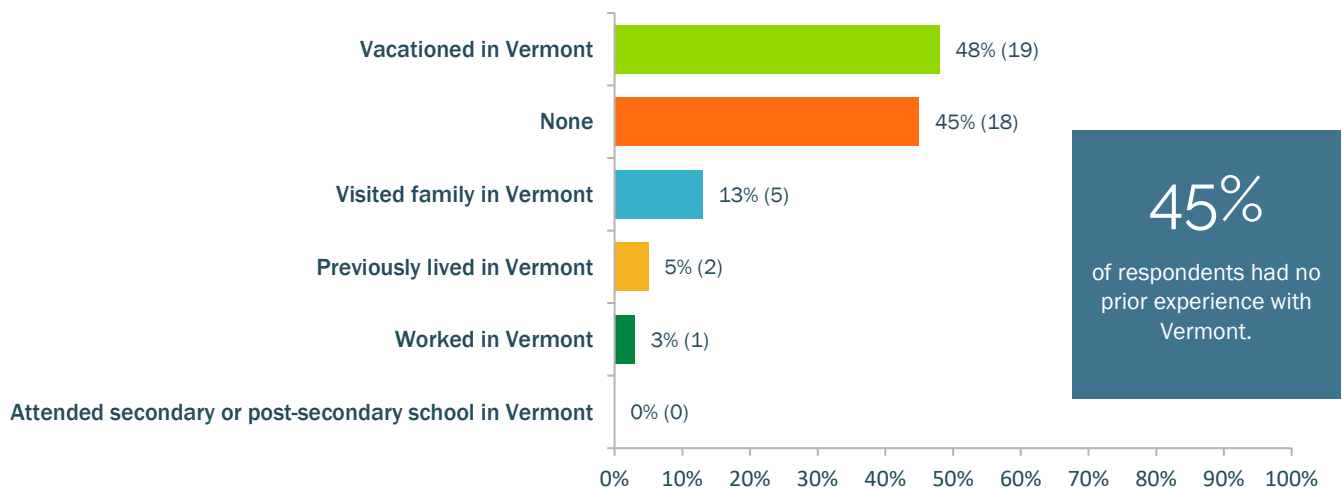
On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to move to Vermont specifically as a result of Stay to Stay Weekends?



A Suite of Programs is a Strong Approach

Forty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they have vacationed in Vermont in the past, while 45% indicated they had never been to Vermont before. This large percentage of respondents who experience Vermont for the first time demonstrates how, in 2019, Stay to Stay Weekends complemented Vermont's other popular relocation program, the [Remote Worker Grant Program](#). That program resulted in the relocation of 140 remote workers (plus 158 family members, for a total of 298 new Vermonters), 97% of whom had prior Vermont experience. The programs together appeal to a wide variety of individuals with the potential to move to Vermont. The new emphasis on employment sectors for 2020 Stay to Stay Weekends coupled with the recently launched [New Worker Relocation Grant Program](#) for full-time workers should strengthen the effectiveness of the state's relocation initiatives as a whole.

What prior experience do you have in Vermont?



PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

"We had been talking about moving back to the northeast from Florida to be closer to family, and always had Vermont in mind...A move to Vermont would bring us closer to our New York and New Jersey relatives, and allow us to fulfill a dream of buying land and having a small farm. As this thought process was taking place, both of our adult children independently sent us links to Vermont's Stay-to-Stay program."

**Phyllis Ershowsky, relocated to
Pittsford, Vermont**

"Through Stay to Stay, we instantly found a group of parents who were also new to the area, all with kids around the same age. Without missing a beat, we had a playgroup going (and) we were going to the kids museum, library story hour, and kid-centered nature trails."

**Calista Budrow, relocated to
Rutland, Vermont**

Responses from Stay to Stay Weekend participants to the question: "What were the most useful aspects of the Stay to Stay Weekends program?"

"Meeting people around my age that already lived in Vermont."

Kate McGraw, visiting from MD

"Talking with others who had moved or considered moving to VT. And also it's just really cool that the state is so interested in attracting new residents that it has this program!"

Sara Johnson, visiting from MO

"Access to employers. Finding work in a higher level corporate job is difficult with an out of state address."

Deb Shugard, visiting from NJ

PLANS FOR 2020

Lessons Learned

In 2019 the team experimented expanding into other outdoor recreation options, largely due to the success of the Stay to Stay Ski Weekends. A trio of partners offered Stay to Stay Mountain Biking Weekends on September 14-16. Bennington, St. Johnsbury, and debut partner Woodstock collaborated with local mountain biking organizations and trail operators to offer free or reduced rate rides for all skill levels during the visits. Unfortunately, registration was low for most of these themed events, primarily due to the very small window of time available for promotion. Promoting the Weekends requires significant lead time; organizing partners plan to try again with mountain biking Weekends in 2020, supported by ample promotional schedules.

Based on partner organizations' feedback, over the course of the year changes were made to the program to ease the workload for local partners and increase commitment by participants. Content on the website, language in the registration form, and follow up communications were updated to indicate more clearly that registrants have committed to traveling to Vermont on the date they indicate. The registration form also now requires the registrant's cell phone number and includes an option to upload a resume or link to a LinkedIn profile.

Targeted Employment Sectors

Partners sometimes experienced difficulty throughout the year attracting employers to attend the receptions and networking events. Often participants in the Weekends were not a match for local employers. To address this in 2020, themed Weekends will be offered targeting specific employment sectors: healthcare, manufacturing, and tech. These Weekends will be scheduled and advertised well in advance and will target specific sectors of potential visitors. Partner organizations will arrange for sector specific job fairs and networking opportunities both to attract larger numbers of participants and to make the Weekends more valuable for attending employers.

New Communities

Addison County organizations, including the Addison County Economic Development Corporation, Addison County Chamber of Commerce, and several lodging businesses, have expressed interest in joining the Stay to Stay Weekends team. Planning is underway for a fall 2020 Weekend in the Middlebury-Vergennes-Bristol region. VDTM is also exploring the possibility of a Central Vermont Stay to Stay Weekend focusing on Montpelier and Barre.