

STAY TO STAY

1

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WEEKENDS, COVID-19, AND RECRUITMENT GOING FORWARD

March 2021 Program Update

2019 Lessons Learned

Over the course of the year, changes were made to the program based on feedback 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 Linked In profile.

In 2019 the team also experimented expanding into other outdoor recreation options, largely due to the success of the Stay to Stay Ski Weekends. 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 their Weekend. 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 planned to try again with mountain biking Weekends in 2020, supported by ample promotional schedules.

Targeted Employment Sectors

Partners sometimes experienced difficulty throughout 2019 attracting employers to attend the receptions and networking events. Often participants in the Weekends were not a match for local employers. To address this, the team planned to offer themed Weekends targeting specific employment sectors: healthcare, manufacturing, and tech. These Weekends were to be scheduled and advertised well in advance and to target specific sectors of potential visitors. Partner organizations planned to 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.

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COVID-19 Necessitates Big Change

After three successful and instructive years, the safety precautions implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 required the entire program to be paused indefinitely. But interest in moving to Vermont has only increased since the pandemic started, and regional partners continued to experience a high volume of inquiries from people looking to relocate.

In response, VDTM worked with partners and the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) to develop a more robust intake system and reinvent Stay to Stay into a virtual experience. In January 2021, this reinvention into a more robust regional recruitment program began with the implementation of a new intake form on [ThinkVermont.com](https://thinkvermont.com).

Information from prospective Vermonters who fill out the form is shared with the regional partners, VDOL, and the state Department of Human Resources. Applicants schedule phone or video interviews to receive information on employment and relocating to Vermont. Since the form went live in late January, over 400 people have submitted requests to meet with a Think Vermont representative.

To manage the increased interest made possible by a virtual experience, we are pursuing a cloud-based software lead management solution to allow all partners to track new recruits and provide more comprehensive reporting.

VERMONT OFFICIAL STATE WEBSITE

thinkVT

Live in Vermont Grow Your Business Work Play Connect With Us Newsroom

CONNECT WITH A VERMONT

Are you interested in learning about how you can live, work, and play in Vermont? We can help you connect with employers, realtors, and community members who can give you an idea of how relocating to Vermont might work for you. Use this sign-up form to provide some basic information about yourself and up to two additional adults relocating with you to help us provide the kind of resources you need to help make your relocation decisions.

Think Vermont Relocate Intake Form

1 Your Information

Your Name *

First Last

2 Additional Adult Information

Your Preferred Pronouns

She/Her/Hers He/Him/His They/Their/Theirs

Other

New Relocate Intake Form from on [ThinkVermont.com](https://thinkvermont.com)

Covering More of Vermont

A benefit of shifting to a virtual program is that more regional partners can participate in the program. Middlebury, Vergennes, and Bristol now participate as the Addison County region. Montpelier, Barre, and Waterbury have joined as the Central Vermont

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region, and St. Albans now represents Northwestern Vermont. Work is underway to add the Springfield and White River Junction areas, so that all of Vermont is included in the program.

Relaunching as a Virtual Recruitment Program

In February, the Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce hosted the first Digital Stay to Stay Networking Lunch. These will happen on the **first Friday of every month**. Almost two dozen potential Vermonters (from all over, including the NYC area, Seattle, Indianapolis, Tennessee, and Colombia) have attended these virtual meetings. They are welcomed by Think Vermont director Elaine Haney and SWVT Chamber director Matt Harrington, who also answer their questions. Mr. Harrington follow-ups with each attendee to offer further assistance with their plans to relocate to the southwestern Vermont area.

The other regional partners are also developing virtual approaches to working with potential Vermonters. Programming will vary by region, with some providing more one-on-one support (like the **Real Rutland** concierge service) and others collaborating for a broader approach, like Burlington's Lake Champlain Chamber and Tech Jam. Each partner will tailor its virtual service to meet its capacity and the needs of their region and local employers.

Focus on Recruitment and Retention

Moving forward, the Stay to Stay program also plans to focus on the retention of new Vermonters. Several regional partners have recently added chapters of the **Vermont Welcome Wagon Project** to their recruitment efforts. These chapters provide new Vermonters with the networks and supports they'll need to set roots successfully and make them feel welcomed and included.

The program as it has been reconstituted will be a part of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's overall recruitment and retention efforts going forward. Other aspects include the **Think Vermont jobs board**, which aggregates job postings from scores of Vermont businesses and other jobseeker resources, and the continuation of **relocation incentives** like the extremely popular Remote Worker Grant Program (2019) and the New Worker Relocation Grant Program (2020). The future of these incentives are currently under consideration by the Vermont Legislature. If appropriated, they and other recruitment efforts—including a completely redesigned **ThinkVermont.com**—will be supported by digital media marketing campaigns implemented by VDTM.