

# Remote Worker Grant Program

Annual Report  
October 1, 2019 to October 1, 2020

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## About the Remote Worker Grant Program

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The Remote Worker Grant Program was established pursuant to Act 197 in 2018, and was created, implemented and managed by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's Department of Economic Development. The grant program provided funds to individuals to offset the cost of relocating to Vermont as an incentive to move and work in the state. This program has increased Vermont's population of taxpayers, and has increased the number of children enrolled in Vermont schools. This strategy and incentive also helped strengthen Vermont's employment base, at a time when Vermont faced a workforce shortage and employers were struggling to find workers.

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Act 197, Sec. 1 of 2018

Act 80, Sec. 12 of 2019

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2018 the Vermont Legislature passed [Act 197, Sec. 1](#), creating the Remote Worker Grant Program. The Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD, the Agency) was tasked with the creation and implementation of the program as a tool to address the need for more workers in Vermont, and to promote remote workers and remote work arrangements.

Upon passage the program received an incredible amount of media awareness, and thousands of people called and emailed ACCD for information, The Agency's [ThinkVermont.com](#) website traffic skyrocketed, and thousands of FAQs and applications were downloaded.

Between the passage of Act 197 in 2018 and September 15, 2019, ACCD awarded \$320,834 in grants to 84 new Vermont remote workers which was detailed in an [interim report submitted](#) to the Legislature. By January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 all of the Remote Worker Grant Program funds, totaling \$500,000, had been awarded to 140 new Vermont remote workers.

Act 90 was signed into law on March 18, 2020, and gave the Agency the discretion to utilize funding allocated to the New Worker grant Program to fund any additional Remote Worker Program grants received after funding had been exhausted. However, by the time the Agency received this discretion Governor Phil Scott had already issued an emergency order to ensure that Vermont had all necessary resources to begin responding to the COVID-19 crisis. The Agency became the epicenter for both the State's business closure period and the Restart Vermont initiative. The Agency utilized the discretion given in Act 90 to not move additional dollars to the remote worker program, and all Agency staff were put to work helping mitigate and facilitate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Vermont's businesses and the economy.

## OUTCOMES AS OF OCTOBER 1, 2020

### Totals

Between January 2019 and January 2020, ACCD awarded \$500,000 to 140 new Vermont remote workers. Grants ranged from \$400 to \$5,000; the average grant awarded was \$3,571.

The average grant  
award was

**\$3,571**



**140**

Grants Awarded



**\$500,000**

Total Funds Awarded

Grantees brought with them an additional 134 family members (including 45 children), for a total of 218 new Vermonters.

**298**

New Vermonters from  
grantees and additional  
family members.



**140**

Grantees



**298**

Additional Vermonters Total



**45**

Additional Family Children

## Demographics

### AGE

Of the remote worker grantees, 64% are under the age of 40. The average age for grantees at the time of their award was 39 years.

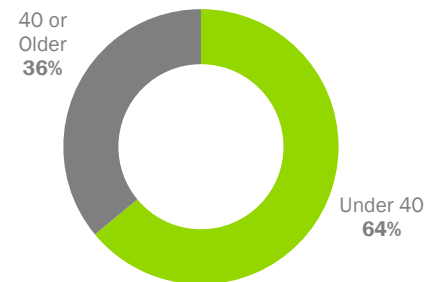
### EDUCATION

Ninety-one percent of the grantees are college graduates. 35% have completed graduate school.

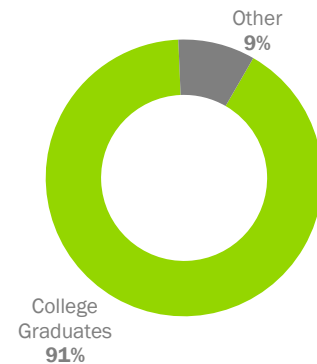
### OCCUPATIONS

The top fields of employment represented by grantees were information technology (20%), management (26%), and writing and editing (5%). Other fields represented included insurance, education, project management, and law.

AWARDEE AGE DISTRIBUTION



AWARDEE LEVELS OF EDUCATION



TOP FIELDS OF EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTED BY AWARDEES



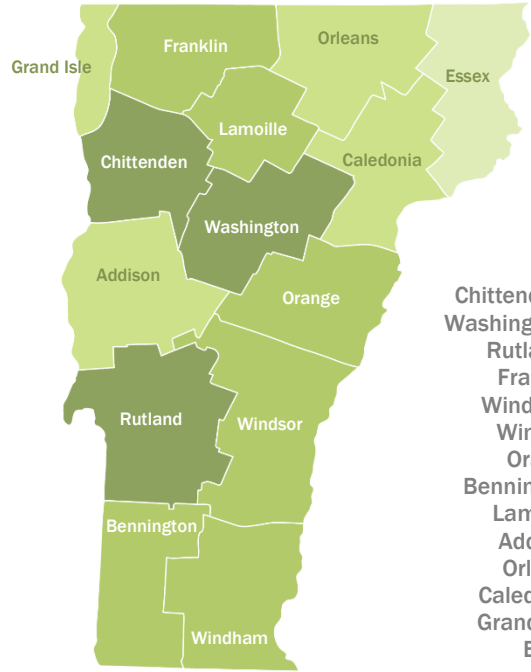
## Geographic Distribution of Grantees

Grantees relocated to Vermont from 38 different states, settling in 65 different towns across 13 Vermont counties.

### WHERE GRANTEEES SETTLED

● 1-4 ● 5-9 ● 10+

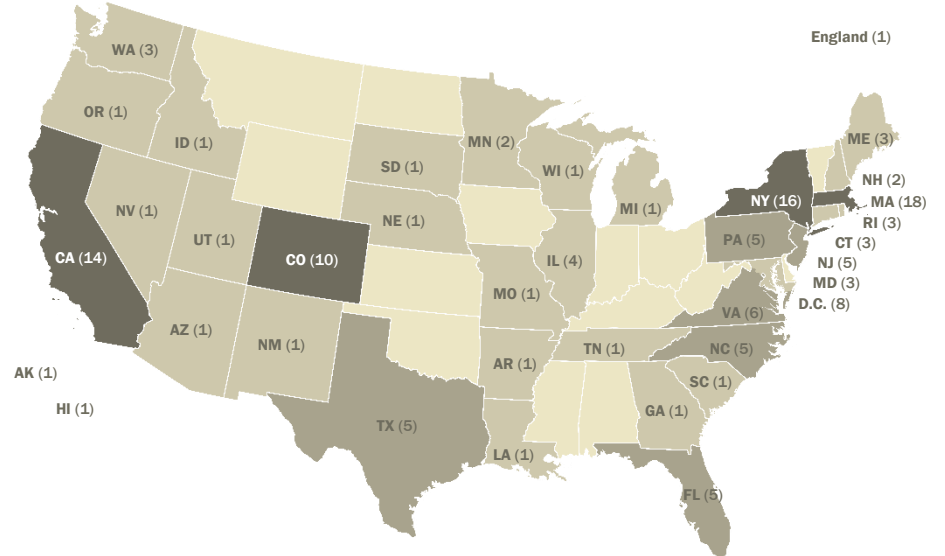
Awardees settled in  
**65**  
 different Vermont cities/towns.



### WHERE GRANTEEES RELOCATED FROM

● 1-4 ● 5-9 ● 10+

Awardees moved from  
**38**  
 different locations.



## Prior Vermont Experience

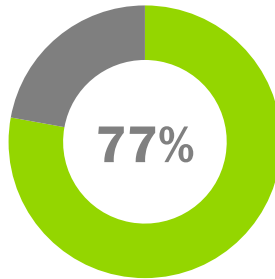
The majority of grantees (97%) had previously experienced Vermont. When asked if they had prior Vermont experience, grantees reported:

**97%**

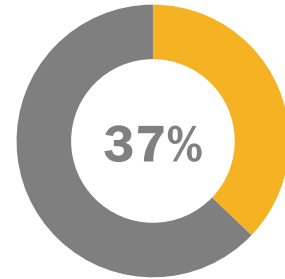
of grantees have previously experienced Vermont.

**3%**

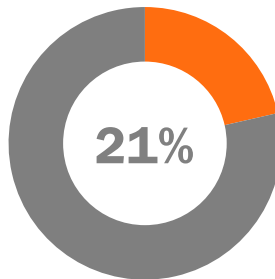
of grantees have no prior Vermont experience.



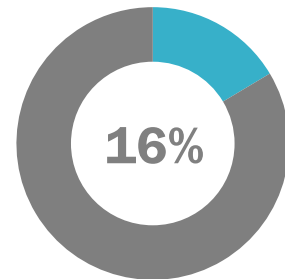
Vacationing in Vermont



Visited Family in Vermont



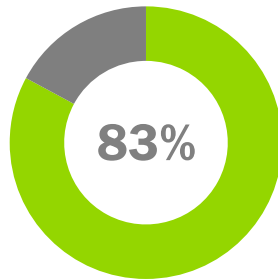
Working in Vermont



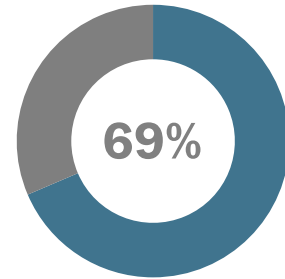
Attending School in Vermont

## Other Motivations

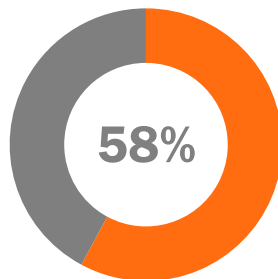
When grantees were asked which of the below factors attracted them to move to Vermont, this is what they shared:



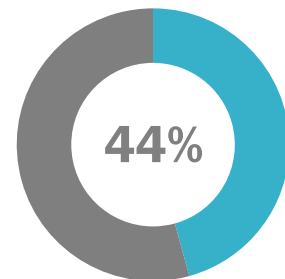
Access to Outdoor Recreation and Nature



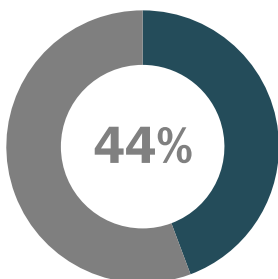
Safe Place to Live and Raise a Family



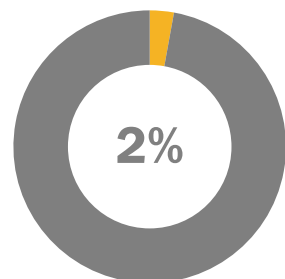
Remote Worker Grant Program



Friends and Family Live Here



Quality Education



Available Job Opportunities

While others noted they were motivated by affordability, previous Vermont residency or school enrollment, environment, quality of life, political climate, leaving urban life, climate-resilient geographical location, and a robust culture of natural/local food production.



## DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

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The grant application process set up by the Agency was incredibly time intensive and manual. The Agency did incur costs related to administering the grant program, and unfortunately the cost of designing and implementing a tech solution and application process was both time and cost prohibitive. The Agency recommends that if funding is to be restored to this program in the future, that additional funds are allocated to developing an IT application solution, and the cost of administration is factored in as well.

The program application process started with a visit to [ThinkVermont.com](https://ThinkVermont.com) or Vermont Department of Economic Development's website ([accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/remoteworkergrantprogram](https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/remoteworkergrantprogram)) for the downloadable [FAQs](#) and [application](#). The application had two parts: one for the remote worker and one for the employer. The applicant was responsible for submitting both parts. Completed applications with supporting documentation were submitted via email and a confirmation of receipt was sent.

Applications were reviewed for program eligibility and evidence of eligible grant expenditures. Staff utilized a checklist to review each application for the following criteria:

- Program Eligibility
- Proof of Vermont residency
- Expense eligibility (relocation, computer software/hardware, broadband access/upgrade, co-working space membership)
- Employer verification
- Supporting documentation

Upon review of an application, the applicant received an email notifying them if further information was needed for approval. If further information was needed, they received a list of the specific items needed to support the application.

When an application was determined to be complete and eligible, the application and supporting documentation received a final review by a second staff member and the applicant received a notification to submit a W-9 and complete a short demographic survey. Once the survey and W-9 were received the applicant was notified they had been awarded a grant and the exact amount of the grant. A risk-assessment was

completed, and the grant agreement was then generated and sent to the grantee outlining the program and the expense types granted. The grantee then signed the grant agreement and returned it for final signature execution by the Commissioner at which point grant funds were disbursed.

Once all funds were awarded, on a first come-first served basis, applicants were notified in January 2020 that no further funds were available. The Agency additionally communicated that if more funds were made available for the program, that more grants would be dispersed.

## APPENDIX: ACT 197, SEC. 1 OF 2018

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No. 197. An act relating to promoting remote work.

(S.94)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

\* \* \* Promoting Remote Workers and Remote Work Arrangements \* \* \*

### Sec. 1. NEW REMOTE WORKER GRANT PROGRAM

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “New remote worker” means an individual who:

- (A) is a full-time employee of a business with its domicile or primary place of business outside Vermont;
- (B) becomes a full-time resident of this State on or after January 1, 2019; and
- (C) performs the majority of his or her employment duties remotely from a home office or a co-working space located in this State.

(2) “Qualifying remote worker expenses” means actual costs a new remote worker incurs for one or more of the following that are necessary to perform his or her employment duties:

- (A) relocation to this State;
- (B) computer software and hardware;
- (C) broadband access or upgrade; and
- (D) membership in a co-working or similar space.

(b) (1) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall design and implement the New Remote Worker Grant Program, which shall include a simple certification process to certify new remote workers and certify qualifying expenses for a grant under this section.

(2) A new remote worker may be eligible for a grant under the Program for qualifying remote worker expenses in the amount of not more than \$5,000.00 per year, not to exceed a total of \$10,000.00 per individual new remote worker over the life of the Program.

(3) The Agency shall award grants under the Program on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to available funding, as follows:

- (A) not more than \$125,000.00 in calendar year 2019;
- (B) not more than \$250,000.00 in calendar year 2020;
- (C) not more than \$125,000.00 in calendar year 2021; and
- (D) not more than \$100,000.00 per year in each subsequent calendar year, to the extent funding remains available.

- (c) The Agency shall:
  - (1) adopt procedures for implementing the Program;
  - (2) promote awareness of the Program, including through coordination with relevant trade groups and by integration into the Agency's economic development marketing campaigns; and
  - (3) adopt measurable goals, performance measures, and an audit strategy to assess the utilization and performance of the Program.
- (d) On or before October 1, 2019, the Agency shall submit a report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs concerning the implementation of this section, including:
  - (1) a description of the procedures adopted pursuant to subdivision
    - (c) (1) of this section;
    - (2) the promotion and marketing of the Program pursuant to subdivision
  - (c) (2) of this section; and
  - (3) any additional recommendations for qualifying remote worker expenses or qualifying workers that should be eligible under the Program, and any recommendations for the maximum amount of the grant.

## APPENDIX: ACT 80, SEC. 12 OF 2019

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### Sec. 12. NEW WORKER RELOCATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

- (a) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall design and implement a New Worker Relocation Incentive Program to award incentive grants to new workers as provided in this section and subject to the policies and procedures the Agency adopts to implement the Program.
- (b) Incentives for new workers. A new worker may be eligible for a grant under the Program for qualifying expenses, subject to the following:
  - (1) A base grant for a new worker shall not exceed \$5,000.00.
  - (2) The Agency may award an enhanced grant, which shall not exceed \$7,500.00, for a new worker who relocates to a labor market area in this State in which:
    - (A) the average annual unemployment rate in the labor market area exceeds the average annual unemployment rate in the State; or
    - (B) the average annual wage in the State exceeds the annual average wage in the labor market area.
- (c) The Agency shall:
  - (1) adopt procedures for implementing the Program, which shall include a simple certification process to certify new workers and qualifying expenses;
  - (2) promote awareness of the Program, including through coordination with relevant trade groups and by integration into the Agency's economic development marketing campaigns;
  - (3) award grants on a first-come, first-served basis beginning January 1, 2020, subject to available funding; and
  - (4) adopt measurable goals, performance measures, and an audit strategy to assess the utilization and performance of the Program
- (d) On or before October 1, 2020, the Agency shall submit a report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs concerning the implementation of this section, including:
  - (1) a description of the policies and procedures adopted to implement the Program; and
  - (2) the promotion and marketing of the Program.
- (e) As used in this section:
  - (1) "New worker" means an individual who on or after January 1, 2020:

- (A) becomes a full-time resident of this State;
  - (B) becomes a full-time employee of a business domiciled or authorized to do business in this State;
  - (C) (i) is employed in an occupation identified by the Department of Labor in its 2016–2026 Long Term Occupational Projections as one of the top occupations at each level of educational attainment typical for entry; or  
(ii) who the Agency determines should otherwise receive an incentive grant under the Program because the worker possesses exceptional education, skills, or training or due to other extraordinary circumstances; and
  - (D) whose gross wage for the position equals or exceeds:
    - (i) 160 percent of the State minimum wage; or
    - (ii) if the employer is located in a labor market area in which the average annual unemployment rate is higher than the average annual unemployment rate for the State, 140 percent of the State minimum wage.
- (2) “Qualifying expenses” means the actual costs that a new worker incurs for one or more of the following:
- (A) relocation expenses, which may include closing costs for a primary residence; rental security deposit; first month’s rent payment; and other expenses established in Agency guidelines; and
  - (B) expenses necessary for a new worker to perform his or her employment duties, including connectivity costs, specialized tools and equipment, and other expenses established in Agency guidelines.