

BIPOC Business Development Final Report Contract N°43429

Prepared by CRJ Consulting Group, L3C d/b/a Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Executive Summary	5
Preface	5
Acknowledgements	6
Lexicon	7
Voices	8
Overview	9
Numbers	13
Findings & Recommendations	25
Annex	30 31 35

Table I	Comparison between 2012 SB0 and VPFD Database
Table II	Number and Percentage of Global Majority Businesses the Vermont
	Partnership Database by County
Table III	Database Overview
Table IV	Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications Amongst all 301 M/WBE businesses
Table V	Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications Amongst M/MW/MTP Businesses
	(Inc. Multiple Identifications)
Table VI	Race/Ethnic Group Self-Identification Amongst All M/MW/MTP Businesses
Table VII	Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications Amongst M/MW/MTP Businesses
	Based in Vermont
Table VIII	Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications Amongst Businesses with State
	Contracts in Vermont
Table IX	Geographic Distribution of the 301 M/WBE Self-Certified Businesses
Table X	Geographic Distribution of Vermont Domiciled Self-Certified M/WBEs
Table XI	M/WBE Self-Certified Businesses by State
Table XII	Geographic Distribution of Vermont Domiciled Self-Certified M/WBE
Table XIII	Geographic Distribution of Vermont Domiciled Global Majority Businesses
	with State Contracts in 2021
Table XIV	Word Cloud of Business Category of 301 Vermont-based Minority &
	Woman Owned Businesses
Table XV	Word Cloud of Business Category of Vermont-based BIPOC Businesses
Table XVI	Email Blasts
Table XVII	Owner by Age Group and Percentage
Table XVIII	How long have you been in business? By Percentage
Table XIX	How old were you when you opened your business? By Percentage
Table XX	What best describes your economic status? By Percentage
Table XXI	Race/Ethnicity of Owner?
	Technical Assistance Provider Survey (TAP)
Table XXII	TAP Racial and/or Ethnic Identity
Table XXIII	TAP: Sex/Gender Identity
Table XXIV	TAP: Member of LGBT Community
Table XXV	TAP: Age
Table XXVI	TAP: County when business/organization headquartered
Table XXVII	TAP: In what counties does business/organization maintain physical sites
Table XXVIII	TAP: Geographical service areas
Table XXIX	TAP: Legal structure of business/organization
Table XXX	TAP: Business/organization workforce size
Table XXXI	TAP: Years business/organization has been offering services
Table XXXII	TAP: Pro bono services
Table XXXIII	TAP: Types of business/organization formation services offered
Table XXXIV	TAP: Types of legal services provided
Table XXXV	TAP: Types of financial assistance services offered
Table XXXVI	TAP: Types of consulting or other professional services offered

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 09 March 2022, the State of Vermont (Agency of Administration) entered into Contract N° 43429 with CRJ Consulting Group, L3C d/b/a Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity. The Contractor, Vermont Partnership, was to engage BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) businesses in both the formal and informal sectors to inform a set of recommendations to the State of Vermont and technical assistance providers on how best to support these businesses.

This contract responded directly to H.439 Act 74 (section H.14), signed into law by Governor Scott on 08 June 2021, to "convene BIPOC businesses, organizations, and community leaders; other business organizations; and representatives from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and other State agencies and departments as necessary, to create a set of recommendations on how to support BIPOC business development, which may include the creation of a BIPOC business network, the creation of minority business development center or authority, or one or more other similar entities or organizations."

This document satisfies the contract benchmark for a Final Report of activities, challenges, findings, and recommendations due by 01 November 2022. This Final Report covers the period beginning on 09 March 2022 and ending on 18 October 2022.

PREFACE

The Contractor has over two decades of experience as a Global Majority business owner/executive bidding on, negotiating, and managing contracts with the State of Vermont. Over the last fifteen years, the Contractor has put forth an argument that Vermont-owned businesses with state contracts would park and spend their profits in Vermont communities unlike businesses whose profits serve economic interests beyond Vermont's borders. Furthermore, and the topic of this report, the Contractor believes in the growth potential of Vermont-domiciled Global Majority businesses doing business under contract with the State of Vermont. This report examines the relationship between Vermont-domiciled Global Majority businesses and the State of Vermont, including what it takes to increase the number of Global Majority business in general, as well as what it takes for state government to cultivate Vermont-domiciled Global Majority businesses to bid on and eventually win both state and federal contracts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The CRJ Consulting Group, L3C d/b/a Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity operates on land which serves as a site of sustenance, community, meeting, and exchange among Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. The Western Abenaki are the traditional stewards of these forests, lands, and waters, which they call Ndakinna, or "homeland." We respect their connection to this region and remember the violence they have endured at the hands of white supremacy and colonialism. We give thanks for the opportunity to share in this place and to protect it.

CRJ Consulting Group, L3C appreciates the time, energy, and support of the following individuals, agencies, and institutions in the production of this report.

State of Vermont

- Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Agency of Transportation
- Bob Flint, Springfield Regional Development Corporation
- Bor Yang, Executive Director Vermont Human Rights Commission
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- Department of Buildings and General Services
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- Erika Hoffman-Kiess, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation
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- Trevor R. Lewis, Office of Purchasing and Contracting
- Xusana Davis, Executive Director, Office of Racial Equity

Statewide Non-profits

- Vermont Professionals of Color
- Faye Longo, Center for Women and Enterprise Vermont

Federal Agencies

- United States Census Bureau
- United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development
- Vermont Small Business Administration

Private Sector

Vermont Global Majority business owners

LEXICON

AoA	Agency of Administration
BGS	Department of Buildings and General Services
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
DBE	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
Foundational Black	People of African heritage descendant of enslaved persons
Americans	
	A collective term that refers to people who are Indigenous, Black, Asian,
Global Majority	Brown, dual-heritage, and or have been racialized as 'ethnic minorities'.
	U.S. Census designation for Black/African American, American Indian
Minority	and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander,
	Hispanic/Latino
MTP	Minority Transgender Person Enterprise
MW	Minority Women Enterprise
M/WBE	Minority/Women and Business Enterprises
New Americans	Recent foreign immigrants to Vermont
OPC	Office of Purchasing and Contracting
RDC	Regional Development Corporation
SBO	Survey of Business Owners
SOV	State of Vermont
USDA-RD	United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development
VTPoC	Vermont Professionals of Color
Vermont Partnership	Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity
VT-PTAC	Vermont Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) i

VOICES

Since before the founding of Vermont, persons of African and Indigenous heritages served as engines of local economic growth in their multiracial communities as loggers, bootmakers, restaurant owners, tailors, crop farmers, dairy farmers, maple sugar producers, educators, and inn keepers, among many other types of small businesses. An unbroken line of self-determination runs from these early entrepreneurs to contemporary entrepreneurs from the Global Majority who reside in Vermont.

Far less agrarian than their forebearers, our contemporary Global Majority entrepreneurs provide goods and services in economic sectors as varied as, just to name a few: the hospitality industry; information technology; real estate; wealth management; sanitation; transportation; agricultural processing (liqueur, hemp, cannabis); security; organizational development; and the creative economy (writers, musicians, visual artists).

The voices of Global Majority business owners weave an intricate tapestry of hope, vision, trauma, tenacity, and refuge from predominately White toxic work environments. The threads of this tapestry include Global Majority business owners who suffered, and continue to suffer, the indignities of racial harassment and discrimination from inconsiderate White people in both the public and private sectors.

Some of those voices experience trauma induced by the lack of digital or financial literacy skills. On the one hand, Global Majority business owners have limited, if any, access to the social networks where actionable business intelligence circulates (e.g. country club, church, civic groups, town hall, etc.). On the other hand, some have been intentionally denied access to timely actionable business intelligence. Starting a business is not for the faint of heart, and oftentimes the learning curves are too steep without a mutual support network or technical assistance provider attuned to the Global Majority experience in Vermont.

The collective voice of Global Majority business owners includes the humiliation and intentional sabotage by some White public or private officials who knowingly withhold information or create bureaucratic bottlenecks that ultimately result in lost time and resources and slow business mobilization or growth.

In spite of it all, Global Majority business owners moved here and/or decided to stay in Vermont first and foremost because of Vermont's intrinsic qualities and values: beautiful landscape; clean air and water; access to farm fresh food; healthy lifestyles; living on a human scale; and relative safety from physical violence. They start businesses as a means to increase income, buy property, and provide financial security for their families. Global Majority owners firmly believe in the promise of prosperity that undergirds the American dream.

Threads of passion and aspiration shimmer throughout the tapestry. Global Majority business owners time and time again demonstrate the tenacity and creative problem solving necessary to just survive. For nearly a third of these businesses, the business itself falls short as the primary source of income for the owner, yet some business owners subscribe to an ethos of "doing a really, really good job for fewer clients rather than doing an 'okay' job with a lot of clients."

This tapestry, however, hangs in the built environment of systemic and structural racism that are entrenched not only in our nation's history and culture, but also in policies and practices. The environment built by the state more often denies Global Majority owners access to the benefits of

public resources. English-only service delivery in a rapidly growing multilingual populace serves as chief among these barriers. Some voices wonder if particular public and private sector officials perceive themselves and the procedures and policies they represent as being engaged in a zero sum game. They serve as protectors of White supremacy culture from the rising tide and ambitions of Global Majority residents.

Global Majority business owners isolate the threads of microaggressions or individual racist acts from structural racism in the tapestry. For example, individual negative outcomes due to the singular act of voice profiling versus state government's inability to inform Global Majority businesses of COVID-19 funds in a timely manner. As a consequence, Global Majority businesses received a relatively smaller share of COVID-19 relief funds.

The social, political, and economic views of Global Majority business owners span the ideological spectrum. That diversity of thought and practice fuels creative tension most pronounced along generational lines, educational attainment, and life experience. Some older Global Majority business owners believe business practices and not race are determining factors of success. As one owner puts it, "If I don't have the right product, at the right price point, and the most convenient point of sale, I don't deserve to be in business."

This report synthesizes those disparate points of view through the lens of the Contractor and offers the public policy recommendations contained herein.

OVERVIEW

The Contractor met multiple challenges in the preparation of this report, notably: updating its database of Global Majority business owners; understanding the various databases of Global Majority businesses managed by the state; deciphering United States Economic Census data; and battling the tyranny of small numbered data sets. In addition, social identity served up a veritable minefield of hazards, as many business owners debated the utility and relevancy of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) label. This report uses Global Majority as a social identity descriptor except in cases where data sources for Tables and Charts have been labelled otherwise.

Project analysts cross referenced three state databases containing Global Majority business owners: SOV Contractors 2021 (3,172); Agency of Transportation DBE (193); and Buildings and General Services (301). The Contractor had included the ThinkVT database among those to examine. However, earlier this year ThinkVT substituted its drop down menu filter for BIPOC businesses with a link to a crowd sourced database at the Vermont Professionals of Color (https://www.vtpoc.net/bipoc-business-directory/). Allied VT (www.alliedvt.org) contained a crowd sourced database; however, the Allied VT web portal has been inactive for the better part of this year.

The Contractor did not have access to the back end of the Vermont Professionals of Color (VTPoC) crowd-sourced database of 269 businesses to conduct an analysis. In lieu of direct access, the Contractor offered to compensate the VTPoC to analyze their database and inform the project of their results.

Project personnel gleaned information from forty-five (45) Global Majority business owners through Roundtables, individual interviews, and surveys. Project personnel had to figure out how to communicate the stories of racism and sexism experienced by this small number of these highly visible Global Majority business owners without revealing their identities. For example, some Global

Majority business owners are the only Global Majority entrepreneurs in their business sector. If the Contractor revealed the agency with which one business owner found problematic, that owner feared some civil servants within that agency may decide to retaliate in subtle or not so subtle ways.

The Contractor assembled a seven member team consisting of one Database Manager (Gemma Seymour), a four member Rapid Research Team (Alan Blackwell, Alexandra Hilliard, Shawn Pratt, Sung-Hee Chung), one Qualitative Data Analyst (Alana Harte), and Curtiss Reed, Jr. as the Chief of Party. Reed serves as President and CEO of the CRJ Consulting Group, L3C.

The Research Team undertook two major tasks. First, to generate a list of Global Majority-owned business enterprises domiciled in Bennington, Rutland, and Windham counties, and the Northeast Kingdom. These Global Majority businesses may have formal legal status (i.e. LLC, L3C, S-Corporation, C-Corporation, etc.) or exist as "side hustles" operating in the informal sector without the benefit of legal status. The second task promoted the BIPOC Business Roundtables to these businesses previously unknown to the Contractor.

The team focused on the aforementioned counties because of the relatively small number of minority businesses in those counties reported by the 2012 U.S. Economic Census. The project wanted to determine what, if any, disparities might there be between the U.S. Economic Census algorithm relative to the actual numbers of minority businesses per county. For example, the census indicates there are 154 minority businesses in Rutland County; however, businesses neither declare the race or ethnicity of the owner(s) when registering with the state, nor do they declare their race or ethnicity when filing state or federal income taxes.

In 2012, the U.S. Economic Census reported 2,354 Minority Owned Businesses in its Survey of Business Owners (SBO). Our analysis of that data a decade ago revealed that 14% of White adults over 18 years old owned businesses while 23% of minority adults over 18 years old owned businesses. While the U.S. Census Bureau has issued updated general population data since then, it has not issued updated Survey of Business Owners' reports. The United States Census Bureau conducts this survey every five years. The 2017 dataset has not yet been released, but should be available soon, if it is released at all. To learn more on how the Census Bureau estimates the likelihood of minority status, go to: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sbo/about.html. Without the SBO data, the project was unable to compare population growth or contraction against business owner growth or contraction data.

In Table I below, "2012 SBO" is the number of Minority Owned Businesses reported by the US Census Bureau in the 2012 Survey of Business Owners, which is the latest version for which data is currently available. Table II compares the number of Global Majority businesses in the Vermont Partnership database by county with Minority Owned Businesses reported by the US Census Bureau in the 2012 Survey of Business Owners.

Vermont Partnership identified 496 Global Majority owned business, which represents 21% of the businesses reported by the 2012 Survey of Business Owners. The comparison, however, borders on the meaningless, given the decade's long gap in data collection.

The Vermont Partnership database began in 2002, when the organization held a roundtable of Global Majority business leaders with Gov. Jim Douglass. The organization grew its database as its executive director and staff randomly encountered Global Majority business owners on their travels across the

state. In 2020, the database proved useful in outreach efforts to Global Majority business owners on behalf of the COVID Economic Recovery Grant program.

Table II, below, shows the number and percentage of Global Majority businesses by county in the Vermont Partnership database.

Table I Evolution of VPFD Global Majority Database

Sources: United States Census Bureau, Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity

County	2012 SBO	VPFD Master Database on 09 March '22	New Entries	VPFD Master Database on 03 August '22	Difference between 2012 SBO and VPFD 03 August '22 Database
Addison	106	11	0	11	95
Bennington	175	9	20	29	146
Caledonia	57	4	24	28	29
Chittenden	826	200	20	220	606
Essex	0	0	0	0	0
Franklin	139	17	2	19	120
Grand Isle	0	2	1	3	-3
Lamoille	98	9	2	11	87
Orange	75	5	1	6	69
Orleans	107	10	7	17	90
Rutland	154	16	34	50	104
Washington	271	40	4	44	227
Windham	180	12	33	45	135
Windsor	159	11	2	13	146
Vermont	2,354	346	150	496	1,851

Table II

Number and Percentage of Global Majority Businesses
In the Vermont Partnership Database by County

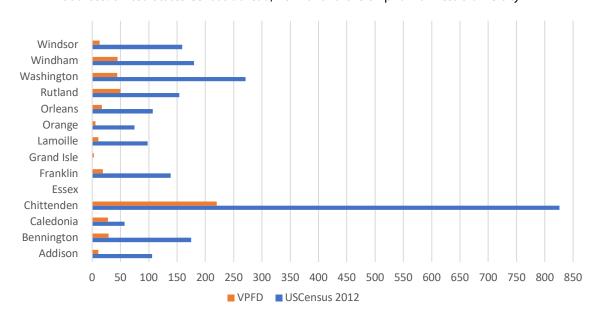
Source: Vermont Partnership

Addison	11	2%	Orange	6	1%
Bennington	29	6%	Orleans	17	3%
Caledonia	28	6%	Rutland	50	10%
Chittenden	220	44%	Washington	44	9%
Essex	0	0%	Windham	45	9%
Franklin	19	4%	Windsor	13	3%
Grand Isle	3	1%	Vermont	496	100%
Lamoille	11	2%			

Table III

Comparison by County between 2012 SB0 and VPFD Database

Sources: United States Census Bureau, Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity



The Database Manager assigned each Research Team member with their own data entry sheet and access to the main database of Global Majority businesses. Access to the main database allowed the Research Team to cross reference the businesses they found with what was already in the main Vermont Partnership database. The main database started with 346 businesses. The research team uncovered another 150 unique businesses by the close of August. Each team member spent nearly three weeks uncovering what information they could find on Global Majority businesses in their assigned geographic area. Because some businesses were skeptical of our motives and reluctant to provide information, we offered them the following script:

Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity routinely collects information on Vermont BIPOC businesses for the purposes of 1) determining to what extent numerical data from the U.S. Census Bureau corresponds with the reality on the ground, 2) informing BIPOC business owners of opportunities to participate in BIPOC Business Roundtables designed to shape public policy, and 3) identifying BIPOC business owners interested in forming a BIPOC business association.

This database is designed for research by Vermont Partnership and is neither visible nor accessible to the public. Recommendations from the Roundtables will be shared with the Agency for Commerce and Community Development and the Vermont Legislature under contract with the State of Vermont. We will create a platform for those business owners interested in forming a BIPOC business association. For more information contact info@vermontpartnership.org.

The project also experienced a technical glitch originating with Microsoft. On 15 April 2022, external user access to Microsoft SharePoint worldwide was severed. This meant that the Research Team members could not access the main Global Majority business database located in the project's

SharePoint folder. The Microsoft SharePoint Administrative Center notified the Database Manager that the issue had been resolved on 27 April 2022.

The Chief of Party inadvertently created a glitch when he failed to screen Research Team members for proficiency in Microsoft Excel. This came to light when a major data entry backlog ensued upon discovery that only two research team member were proficient in Excel. The Chief of Party focused on team members' knowledge of the terrain over their digital skills.

NUMBERS

Project analysts cross-referenced four databases that contained entries for Global Majority (GM) business owners: SOV Contractors 2021 (3,172); Buildings and General Services (301); Agency of Transportation DBE (193); and ThinkVT (269). Staff engaged their forensic skills to decipher the information contained in databases. Some databases lumped women- and minority- owned businesses in the same column without distinguishing the race or gender of the owner.

For other entries, to determine whether or not the business was an actual Vermont business required a trip to the Vermont Secretary of State corporations database. Every foreign-owned (out-of-state) business doing business with state government must have a Registered Agent domiciled in Vermont. For example, the SOV Executed Contracts database does not list addresses for businesses; however, if you traced businesses through the Secretary of State corporations database, you would likely find out-of-state businesses listed with a Registered Agent in Vermont. The project's first order of business was to compare all databases against the 3,172 entries in the SOV Executed Contracts 2021. Some of the other databases had street addresses, others did not.

Table IV

Database Overview

	SOV Executed	Executed Building and Agency of		ThinkVT
	Contracts 2021	General Services	Transportation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Database Entries	3,172	301	193	269
Vermont-based	14	34	1	269
GM Woman owned	4	20	1	unknown
% GM Businesses	0.4%	11.3%	18.1%	100%

Sources:

- 1. Office of Purchasing and Contracting
- 2. Building and General Services
- 3. Agency of Transportation
- 4. Vermont Professionals of Color

Of the 3,172 active contracts managed by the State of Vermont (SOV) last year only fourteen (14), or 0.4%, were with Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont. Half of that number (7, or 0.2%) did not appear in either the DBE or M/WBE databases that track self-certified Global Majority businesses. Registration for self-certification is voluntary. Those who declined or were unaware of self-certification include: Rajnii Eddins; Kiah Morris LLC; Etan Nasreddin-Longo; Tabitha Pohl-Moore; Curtiss Reed Jr.; Tabitha Moore Consulting LLC; and the VT Partnership for Fairness & Diversity.

Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont had contracts last year valued at \$642,366, or 0.00021%, of the \$3,039,706,311 in state contracts. Three Global Majority vendors domiciled in Vermont held multiple contracts with the SOV last year: Curtiss Reed/ Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity (4); Tabitha Pohl-Moore/Tabitha Moore Consulting, LLC (3); Cultural Research Solutions LLC (2). African-American vendors represented 85% of the contracts, while the remaining 15% went to Latinx vendors.

In addition to the requisite experience and expertise, Vermont-domiciled Global Majority businesses with state contracts largely had access to timely actionable business intelligence, and the financial and digital literacy skills to seize opportunities.

Eleven (11) entries (0.3%) in the SOV Contractors 2021 database were also found on the Agency of Transportation's DBE inventory. One, however, "Diversified" (Vendor code: 159812) may need to be verified. The other ten (10) entries in both databases include: Dufresne & Associates PC; Great Big Graphics Inc.; J.P. Sicard Inc (x2); Janus Software Inc.; KAS Inc.; Elizabeth McLoughlin LLC; The Janitors LLC; Third Sector Associates; and Worksafe Traffic Control Industries. All but one of these businesses were owned by White women.

Thirty-nine (39) entries in the SOV Contractors 2021 database were also found in the M/WBE directory maintained by Building and General Services. However, of those 39, only eight (8) were Global Majority owned businesses; the remaining thirty (30) were owned by White women. The nine (9) Global Majority business entries are: Abundant Sun LLC; Chocolate Thunder Inc.; Coast & Harbor Associates, Inc.; Cultural Research Solutions LLC (x2); Dion Security, Inc.; and Speridian Technologies. Coast & Harbor Associates, Inc. and Speridian Technologies are based in Massachusetts and New Mexico, respectively.

The Building and General Services (BGS) office maintains a database of self-certified Minority & Women Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) database. The database is available on-line at Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises | Buildings and General Services (vermont.gov). In addition, when the BGS issues a public bid solicitation, they also provide the same information to the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), which does general outreach to the supplier community within the state. The BGS updates this database of self-certified GM businesses on a monthly basis. Our analysis comes from the 13 May 2022 database of 301 self-certified business:

- 79 of these were Minority & Minority Woman/Women owned businesses
- 34 of these were Minority & Minority Woman/Women owned businesses domiciled in Vermont
- 31 of those 79 businesses were Minority Woman/Women owned.
- 220 were businesses owned by White Women
- 1 Minority business owner identified as transgender
- 3 businesses failed to list the race of the owner

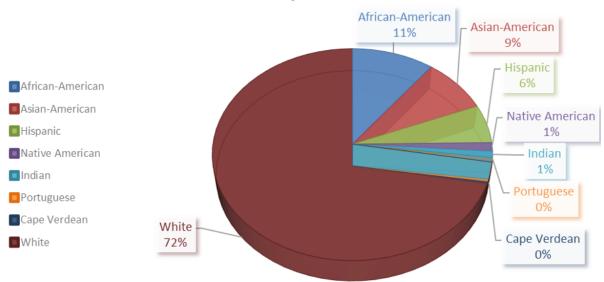
Of the 301 M/WBE database entries, 26.2% represent Minority & Minority Woman/Women Owned and Minority Transgendered Person Owned businesses. The remaining 73.8% are either Woman/Women Owned (and not Minority) or unspecified.

According to Director Deborah Damore of the Office of Purchasing and Contracting, "The state doesn't currently have a vendor registration process for the bidder/supplier community, nor does our current financial management system support the recording of this data. As part of our current design and fast approaching implementation of a comprehensive web-based procurement solution that we refer to as VTBuys, the supplier community at time of initial registration will have the opportunity to identify any applicable diversity characteristics (including, if applicable, multiple diversity characteristics for a single business).

We have undertaken extensive efforts to identify and configure this to include an especially wide variety of reliably known categories/credentials of officially credentialed, or self-certified, types of diverse entities, and are engaging with the Office of Racial Equity on topics connected with it." Damore serves as the Director of the Vermont Office of Purchasing and Contracting (OPC) and the Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS).

Table V Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications Amongst all 301 M/WBE businesses

Source: Building and General Services



M = Minority MW = Minority Woman MTP = Minority Transgender Person

Seventy-nine (79) businesses owned by Minority (M), Minority Women (MW), and Minority Transgender Persons (MTP) registered 85 "Self-Certifications." Some of the business owners either self-identified as more than one race/ethnic group, or the business could have more than one owner, and the owners belong to different racial/ethnic groups. The following data represents businesses with multiple self-certifications.

Of the 85 "Self-Certifications" of M/MW/MTP businesses:

- 37.6%, or 32, identified as African-American owned
- 30.6%, or 26, identified as Asian or Asian-American owned
- 21.2%, or 18, identified as Hispanic owned
- 4.7%, or 4, identified as Native-American owned

- 3.5%, or 3, identified as Indian owned
- 1.2%, or 1, identified as Cape Verdean owned
- 1.2%, or 1, identified as Portuguese owned

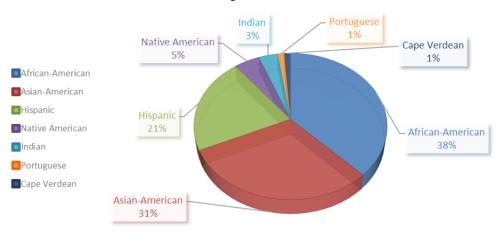
The correlation between being self-certified and winning a contract bid with the State of Vermont appears virtually non-existent. Half, or seven, of the Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont with state contracts did not self-certify. The value of self-certification might be for the benefit of White businesses looking for a DBE subcontractor to increase their credibility on bids. An area for further exploration would be the relationship between the self-certified and their appearance as subcontractors on White contractor bids.

Damore notes, "... for construction bid opportunities with an estimate exceeding \$50,000, the BGS encourages outreach by Bidders to contact M/WBE's in an effort to recruit to submit proposals for the work or portions thereof. The contractor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sexual orientation in the award and performance of subcontracts, and prior to executing a contract associated with the solicitation, Contractors are required to submit information as to their outreach efforts, etc.

Being listed in the BGS M/WBE online database, which is periodically updated, creates a profile-raising opportunity for the businesses listed there, both publicizing them in a general way on a site that is frequented by both State users and private sector (BGS OPC's site as a whole receives some of the highest web visit traffic of any part of BGS's websites), and their self-certification for diversity purposes."

The Contractor could find scant evidence that state government writ large proactively identifies or recruits Vermont-domiciled Global Majority businesses to self-certify on M/WBE or DBE registries. Global Majority businesses appear to randomly stumble upon the registries from browsing state websites. In contrast, women-owned businesses are encouraged to register from women business owner affinity groups or women-oriented technical assistance providers.

Table VI
Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications Amongst M/MW/MTP Businesses
(Inc. Multiple Identifications)
Source: Building and General Services



M = Minority MW = Minority Woman MTP = Minority Transgender Person

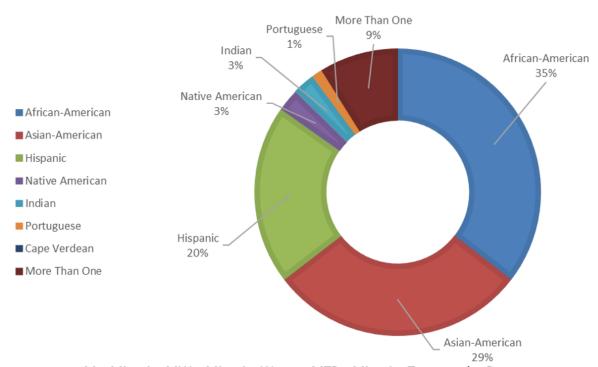
Over the years, advocates have made Buildings and General Services and the Agency for Transportation acutely aware that their databases inadequately serve Global Majority businesses. Last year, 0.4% of state contracts were with Global Majority businesses. While the Agency of Transportation has robust mentoring and technical support for its prospective Disadvantaged Business Enterprise vendors, White women-owned businesses account for nearly 100% of beneficiaries.

In addition, the Agency of Transportation operates an annual summer youth camp for middle and high school students through its National Summer Transportation Institute. Over the years the agency has been successful recruiting pools of diverse participants. The camp exposes students to rewarding careers in the transportation industry. The agency has placed a long-term bet that some of the campers will secure careers in the industry, preferably in Vermont.

Buildings and General Services plans to upgrade the state's bidding and contracting services with a new VTBuys portal. The new VTBuys portal intends to unify the entirety of State government bidding and contracting for both goods and services. Unfortunately, there are no corresponding actions or programs to drive Global Majority businesses to bid opportunities or towards the Vermont Procurement Technical Assistance Center services.

Table VII
Race/Ethnic Group Self-Identification
Amongst All M/MW/MTP Businesses

Source: Building and General Services



M = Minority MW = Minority Woman MTP = Minority Transgender Person

Of the 301 self-certified M/WBE businesses, 34, or 11.3%, were owned by members of the Global Majority. 191, or 63.4%, claimed Vermont as their domicile and of these, women-owned businesses represented 155, or 81.1%. Overall, 34, or 17.8%, represented Global Majority businesses. Two businesses were unclassified. Of the 34 (M/MW/MTP) owned businesses:

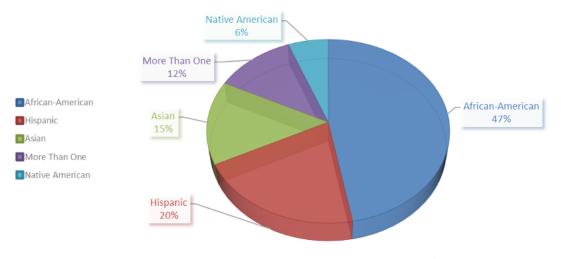
Gender

- 58.8%, or 20, were either woman-owned or transgender minority-owned businesses
- 2.9%, or 1, were transgender person minority-owned businesses.

Race/Ethnicity

- 47.1%, or 16, of the Vermont minority-owned businesses listed in the "Minority & Women Owned Business" Directory were African-American owned.
 - o 50%, or 8, of the African-American businesses were women-owned.
- 14.7%, or 5, of the Vermont Minority owned businesses listed in the "Minority & Women Owned Business" Directory were Asian-American owned.
 - 20%, or 1, of the Asian or Asian-American owned businesses was woman owned.
- 5.9%, or 2, of the Vermont minority-owned businesses listed in the "Minority & Women Owned Business" Directory were Native American owned.
 - o 50%, or 1, of the Native American businesses was woman-owned.
- 20.6%, or 7, of the Vermont minority-owned businesses listed in the "Minority & Women Owned Business" Directory were Hispanic owned.
 - o 71.4%, or 5, of the Hispanic businesses were women-owned.
 - 14.3%, or 1, was owned by transgender person.
- 11.8%, or 4, of the Vermont minority-owned businesses listed in the "Minority & Women Owned Business" Directory belong to multiple races or ethnic groups. Each of these were women-owned.

Table VIII Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications Amongst M/MW/MTP Businesses Based in Vermont



M = Minority MW = Minority Woman MTP = Minority Transgender Person

Table IX
Race/Ethnic Group Self-Certifications
Amongst Businesses With State Contracts

Source: Building and General Services

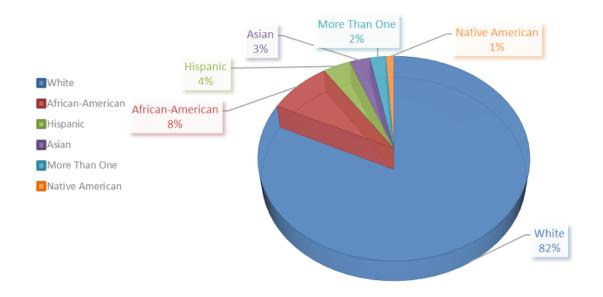


Table X
Geographic Distribution of the
301 M/WBE Self-Certified Businesses



Table XI M/WBE Self-Certified Businesses by State

State	M/WBEs
Colorado	1
Connecticut	19
District of Columbia	1
Florida	6
Georgia	7
Illinois	6
Indiana	4
Kentucky	1
Maryland	1
Massachusetts	13 2
Michigan	2
Missouri	3
Nevada	1
New Hampshire	4
New Jersey	9
New Mexico	1
New York	25
North Carolina	2
Ohio	2 2
Pennsylvania	4
Rhode Island	5
Texas	3
Vermont	191
Virginia	3
Washington	1
Total	301

Table XII

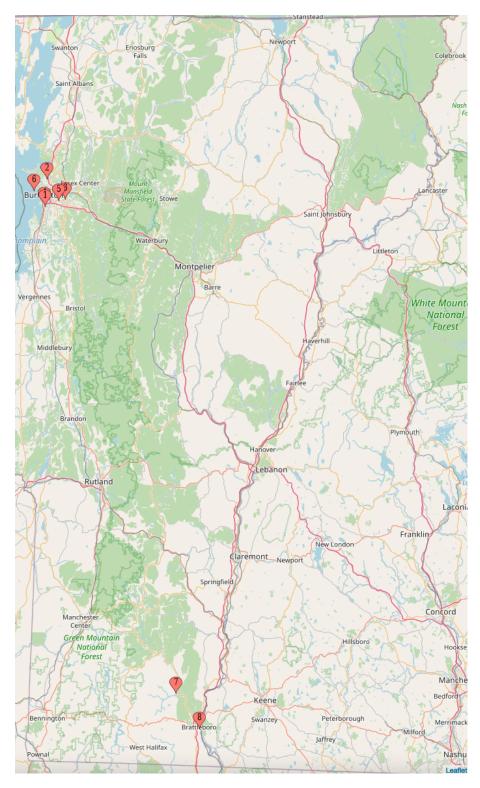
Geographic Distribution of Vermont Domiciled Self-Certified M/WBE

Source: Building and General Services

White Mou. Nationa Forest Franklin aremont Newport Conce Green Mountain National Forest Man Bedford Keene Peterborough Jaffrey 122 Wyst Halifax

Table XIII
Geographic Distribution of Vermont Domiciled
Global Majority Businesses with State Contracts in 2021

Source: Office of Purchasing and Contracts



Of the 193 entries on the Agency of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) list for May 2022, thirty-five (35) businesses were domiciled in Vermont. Thirty-three (33, or 94%) of these businesses were owned by White women and one (1, or 0.5%) by a woman from the Global Majority. A third party has challenged the DBE status of one business with a male owner of unknown disadvantaged status. When compared with the 165 entries on the Agency 's DBE list for April 2010, thirty-six (36) businesses appear on both lists; however, not all of the 36 are domiciled in Vermont.

Relative to other state agencies, the Agency of Transportation has the most coherent and aggressive strategy to working with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. They provide: matchmaking services between DBEs and White mainstream businesses in the construction and transportation fields; training on project management, business practices and contract bid procedures; and coaching of owners to improve their performance. The Agency uses Constant Contact to send a weekly "rap sheet" of relevant SOV contract bids to all DBEs.

Agency personnel proactively manage their Disadvantaged Business Enterprises database in a way that sends a clear message that they exist to assist DBEs grow their businesses and that there is a unique pathway for each business to follow. Unfortunately, Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont account for only about 3% of those benefiting from Agency assistance.

In addition, the Agency operates an annual summer youth camp for middle and high school students through its National Summer Transportation Institute. Over the years the Agency has been successful recruiting pools of diverse participants. The camp exposes students to rewarding careers in the transportation industry. The agency has placed a long-term bet that some of the campers will secure careers in Vermont's transportation industry.

Prior to COVID restrictions, the Agency held networking events for their DBEs with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the Department of Buildings and General Services. One objective of these networking events was to link DBEs with the Vermont Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC).

The following Word Clouds in Tables XIV and XV measure the frequency of the forty most popular "business categories" in the M/WBE database. The greater the frequency, the larger the font size of the word in the Word Cloud. For instance, in order of size, the most popular words are "contractor", "consulting", and "graphics design services". The least popular are "food services", "vehicle graphics", and "crane services".

Table XIV Word Cloud of Business Category of the 301 Vermont-based Minority & Woman Owned Businesses

Source: Building and General Services



Table XV Word Cloud of Business Category of Vermont-based BIPOC Businesses



FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings and Recommendations are grouped into three categories: Government; Global Majority Business; and Global Majority Association. Findings and Recommendations appear in a random, non-prioritized order and not every Finding has a corresponding mention in the Recommendations section.

Note that this section reflects a moment in time in fluid and dynamic public and private sector environments. For example, the reassignment of ThinkVT from the Department of Tourism and Marketing to the Department of Economic Development and the outsourcing of its BIPOC database to the Vermont Professionals of Color happened during the course of this study. The design and development of BuyVT by the Building and General Services hopes to address multiple findings.

The Global Majority business community stretches across a broad spectrum of socio-political-economic thought, and these findings reflect that diversity of thought and experience. Some Global Majority business owners want nothing to do with state government because they believe state government embodies corruption and racism. Some business owners subscribe to an ethos of "doing a really, really good job for fewer clients rather than doing an 'okay' job with a lot of clients."

The Contractor communicates the findings of racism and sexism experienced by highly visible Global Majority business owners without revealing information that could identify individuals. For example, some Global Majority business owners are the only Global Majority entrepreneurs in their business sector. If the Contractor revealed the entity which one business owner found problematic, some owners fear public or private officials may decide to retaliate in subtle or not so subtle ways. Changing attitudes is a work in progress.

Government Findings

- Minority business data from the United States Economic Census of 2012 is outdated for current usage.
- Databases containing information on Global Majority businesses are difficult to find online for the uninitiated.
- Agency of Transportation personnel proactively manage their Disadvantaged Business
 Enterprises database in a way that sends a clear message that they exist to assist DBEs grow
 their businesses. Unfortunately, Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont account for
 only about 3% of those benefiting from Agency assistance, and of that 3%, virtually all are
 businesses owned by White women.
- The Agency of Transportation National Summer Transportation Institute summer camp for middle and high school students could serve as a model for other agencies.
- Agency of Transportation database in .pdf form is not user-friendly for analysis.
- Data categories in SOV managed databases are not uniform (AOT-8 categories, M/WBE-10 categories, SOV Contractors-15 categories).
- Agencies that interface with Global Majority (BIPOC) businesses do not have compliment/ complaint pages prominently displayed on their webpages.
- Posted self-certifications give the false impression that the SOV has current executed contracts with these Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont or elsewhere.
- Buildings and General Services is building a new platform (VTBuys) for bidding and contracting of goods and services for the entirety of state government.

- New Buildings and General Services personnel require training to decipher the Category and Origin codes contained in the BGS databases.
- Policy favors job growth over elevating solopreneurs beyond subsistence survival mode.
- Limited evidence that the SOV uses its various self-certified databases to proactively inform Global Majority business owners domiciled in Vermont of contracting opportunities.
- Businesses that lose contract bids are not told why they lost in a way that allows them to improve on subsequent bids.
- Information on registration, certification, and licensing is often disjointed and spread across multiple departments without a clear roadmap.
- An abundance of technical assistance goes unused because such aid is little known by Global Majority business owners.
- Presence of unmet opportunities to cultivate Global Majority business owners.
- Some public officials are unconsciously unskilful when interacting with Global Majority business owners
- The Secretary of State does not capture basic demographic such as the race or gender of the business owner when registering a new business or the filing of the biannual report, but is working to correct the oversight with the launch of a new website, possibly by next year.

Government Recommendations

- Conduct a census of Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont every five years beginning 2025.
- Fund a fulltime organizer/facilitator for twenty-four months to work with the exploratory group of Global Majority business owners working to create a business association
- Fund a Business Development Consultant to develop a business plan for the Global Majority business association.
- Streamline registration and licensing procedures
- Create easy to understand multilingual diagrams of the registration process including a decision tree to determine the best form of business to undertake
- Create easy to understand multilingual diagrams of licensing procedures (esp. food truck, restaurant, cosmetology, beauty products, and agricultural processing)
- Reinforce to SOV employees who interact with the public the importance Global Majority businesses have on Vermont's economic growth and prosperity
- Conduct training to reduce, if not eliminate, unconsciously unskillful language and behavior and how such language and behavior produces trauma for Global Majority businesses
- Prominently display a compliment/complaint link on AoA and ACCD webpages
- Aggressively promote the advantages of business registration to Global Majority business owners
- Create multiple points of contact for information on technical assistance providers
- Embed language translation software on AoA and ACCD webpages
- Aggressively promote the contract bidding system to Global Majority businesses
- Advise Global Majority business owners who lose bids on ways they could improve subsequent bid submissions
- Launch a series of culturally relevant technical assistance "boot camps" to aspiring and existing Global Majority businesses.
- Create a pipeline for Global Majority businesses to enter the construction trades and progressively move them into prime contractor positions.
- Reconfigure all databases with uniform categories for easy analysis (see Annex).

- Proactively inform Global Majority business owners domiciled in Vermont of contracting opportunities.
- Place a disclaimer on self-certified databases that self-certification does not denote an executed contract except on the executed contract database.
- Convert from .pdf and maintain the Agency of Transportation database in spreadsheet format.
- Update databases on the same day of the month, quarterly, or year to provide easy time-over-time analysis.
- Train Building and General Services personnel on the Category and Origin Codes meanings.
- Place a note or legend of the BGS Category and Origin Codes on the spreadsheets.
- Direct self-certified Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont to the SOV contract bid website on a quarterly basis.
- Provide technical trainings on how to bid on contracts for Global Majority businesses domiciled in Vermont.

Global Majority Business Findings

- 74% of businesses are under 10 years old
- 46.7% of business owners are between the ages of 18-44
- Access to capital is the number one need; however, very few will jump through the hoops of institutional financing for fear of race-based discrimination
- Access to bookkeeping/accounting services ranked second among needs
- Access to new markets ranked third among needs
- 69% of businesses provide the primary source of income for their owners
- 42% of business owners consider themselves working class
- 35.5% of business owners consider themselves middle class
- 9.7% of business owners cannot generate sufficent income to meet their basic needs
- Multiple Global Majority business owners told the project that the USDA-Rural Development paperwork was "too onerous for the amount of funds the agency was offering." The Uniform Certification Application for DBEs is 15 pages long without the required attachments.
- Some Global Majority business owners have strong feelings that the BIPOC label undermines
 their unique social identity, and rather than submit to the label they simply avoid questions
 that risk mislabelling who they are.
- Lack of available workers constrains the growth of some Global Majority businesses.
- Global Majority businesses are geographically dispersed with the highest concentration (44%) located in Chittenden County.
- In an increasingly charged environment of racialized violence, some Global Majority businesses fear malevolent actors who might submit Freedom of Information Act requests. For example, a request for all Asian businesses could lead to harassment or violence against these businesses.
- Global Majority women are accessing services from women-centered technical assistance programs such as the Center for Women & Enterprise and the Women Business Owners Network.
- Global Majority business owners engage risk analysis where variables include race, national origin, and gender.
- Small Global Majority organic farmers need access to tools and farm equipment.
- Some Global Majority business owners perceive that some officials who know better allow them to make mistakes rather than intervene to enable them to get their businesses up and

- running sooner. Some officials feign impatience with statements like, "You should know what you are doing already."
- Global Majority businesses have common needs for bookkeepers, information technology experts, tax accountants, marketing, and access to capital.
- Solopreneurs struggle to make enough to cover family needs.
- Solopreneur operations are not necessarily large enough to consider traditional transfers of wealth to the next generation.
- Global Majority businesses in the informal economy are reluctant to register their businesses to avoid tangling with bureaucratic red tape, costs, and the fear of spying by state and federal agencies.
- Global Majority business owners have limited access to the social networks where actionable business information circulates (country club, religious affiliations, civic groups, etc.).
- Contract bidding system is not well known or understood by Global Majority business owners.
- Culture of debt aversion in part due to racism by institutional lenders.
- Financial institutions pitch their products to Global Majority businesses rather than Global Majority wealth building.
- Global Majority business owners often experience trauma when dealing with public or private sector bureaucracies.
- Trauma induced fatigue weighs heavily on some Global Majority business owners.

Global Majority Business Association Findings

- A small under-resourced group of Global Majority business owners desire to create an association.
- During listening sessions, business owners shared their experiences in the early stages of entrepreneurship and the challenges they faced. As conversations continued, a collaborative goal to assist new business owners to avoid those challenges and provide guidance as a foundation for success in the state was clear.
- High interest in creating an association; however, few have the bandwidth to create such.
- Active speculation that Vermont Professionals of Color Network could be the technical assistance hub for aspiring and existing Global Majority businesses.
- Desire to create an ecosystem of Global Majority business technical assistance offered by Global Majority experts.
- Business association should be about self-help and mutual support.
- Attitude on government assistance: "Take the money and run!"
- Creative tension between those who want an association with lobbying credentials and those focused on self-help and mutual support.
- Creative tension between those in favor of government support and those who feel a business association should be self-financed by its members.

Global Majority Business Recommendations

Reality check: Global Majority business owners express a deep desire for a business association to tend to their evolving mutual support, technological, informational, and entrepreneurial training needs. However, recent attempts in 2020 and 2022 to create such an association failed because the interested parties lacked the bandwidth to do so, as their primary attention was focused on growing their own individual businesses. Be mindful that 74% of Global Majority businesses are under 10 years old, 29% are under five years old, and all require 120% of their owners' attention.

Creative tension grew between under-resourced Global Majority business owners in favor of government support and those who felt a Global Majority business association should be self-financed by its members. The Contractor proposes a multi-staged response over the course of five years to support the Vermont Professionals of Color Network in the delivery of business related content and services. During that period, a small group of interested parties with adequate personnel and financial support will create a business association that will assume the direct delivery of business related services and products.

The Contractor believes that the Vermont Professionals of Color Network (VTPoC), with state and federal support, could service the needs of Global Majority businesses until such time as an independent business association becomes operational. VTPoC leaders are young, smart, tech savvy, and visionary. Most importantly, they already have a fully functional online platform for their growing database of businesses to deliver content virtually via teleconferencing. This proven platform has produced results from their BIPOC Business Listening Sessions and BIPOC Grants Administration series. The platform could augment its content to include a "one stop shop" listing of all state and federal business development services and programs.

In order to satisfy the immediate desire of Global Majority business owners to be taught or advised by Global Majority business experts, state government should provide funding to bring Global Majority experts from surrounding states to deliver business content in-person or via teleconferencing. Content would minimally include: business start-up; bookkeeping; business planning; marketing; inventory control; and taxes. VTPoC could optimize its bulletin board with selected contract bid announcements with a link to the Building and General Services website.

In order to meet the mid-term (3-5 years) goal of creating a Global Majority business association, the VTPoC would need to hire a full-time organizer/facilitator. Over a 24-month period, this individual would be the connective tissue to provide vision and structure and accelerate decision making amongst a small group of interested parties. This person would see to the creation and registration of a formal entity including the development of vision/mission statements, bylaws, board member job descriptions, governance structure, and board member recruitment.

In addition, VTPoC would need to hire a Business Development Consultant to prepare a business plan including: market analysis of proposed services and products; capitalization; revenue/expense projections; messaging and marketing plan; website and social media development; logo creation; and branding. Proposed services could include mentorship programs, contract bid support, or tax accounting, among others.

Proposed Expenditures

Line Item	Period	Amount
1.0 FTE Business curriculum/distance learning specialist	36 months	\$210,000
0.5 FTE Information technology/web developer specialist	36 months	\$105,000
1.0 FTE Business association organizer/facilitator	24 months	\$100,000
1.0 FTE Business development consultant	6 months	\$50,000
		\$465,000

ANNEX

CONTACT

The Contractor hosted a series of virtual BIPOC business roundtables. These roundtables informed these recommendations to the State of Vermont on how best to support BIPOC business development. In 2020, Vermont Partnership conducted a survey of BIPOC business needs. We now want to know how best to deliver, or through what mechanisms, BIPOC business needs should be met.

The Contractor sent seven e-mail blasts to BIPOC-owned businesses (profit and not for profit), BIPOC thought leaders, and institutional stakeholders. The results exceeded industry standards for the percentage of openings and click through rates (CTR). According to Smart Insights, a digital marketing research firm, the open rate across all industries is 29.55% with a CTR of 1.27% (https://www.smartinsights.com/email-marketing/email-communications-strategy/statistics-sources-for-email-marketing/).

Table XVI Email Blasts

Source: Campaign Monitor

Communiqué N°	Recipients	% Opened	% Clicked	Date
7	489	34.8%	1.8%	25 April 2022
6	492	41.8%	2.2%	16 April 2022
5	501	4.74%	2.8%	13 April 2022
4	511	48.4%	1.6%	09 April 2022
3	482	45.1%	2.5%	02 April 2022
2	473	37.7%	2.6%	29 March 2022
1	474	41.9%	3.2%	27 March 2022

Each hourlong roundtable averaged five participants. Curtiss Reed, Jr., President & CEO of the CRJ Consulting Group, L3C, facilitated each roundtable. Each participant received the following pre-Roundtable message:

Dear Vermont BIPOC Business Roundtable Participants for (date) at 7 pm (1900 EDT):

We look forward to our virtual gathering tomorrow night at the BIPOC Business Roundtable. As a follow-up to our December 2020 report on BIPOC businesses that applied for or received COVID Economic Recovery Grant funds, the State of Vermont (ACCD) has asked us for a set of recommendations on how state government might better support BIPOC business development. Our conversation will revolve around the following questions:

- 1. How might state government better serve your needs as a business owner?
- 2. How might state government better serve the needs of businesses in your business sector?
- 3. To what extent, if any, should state government create a BIPOC business association?
- 4. To what extent, if any, should state government be the catalyst for the creation of a BIPOC business association? If so, how?

5. Do you have the time, inclination and organizational skills to work with other BIPOC business owners to create a BIPOC business association?

The attempt by five White and one Connecticut-based business to register for the Roundtables prompted us to include the following affirmation on the original registration page:

We would like to be certain that all potential participants understand that these roundtables are for the participation of BIPOC owners of businesses based in and operating in Vermont. With that in mind, we would ask that you state affirmatively that your business is based in Vermont and that you are by race or ethnicity a Black or Indigenous/Native person, or otherwise a person of color.

We pivoted to conducting individual interviews in lieu of later date Roundtables after the Vermont Professionals of Color announced their Listening Sessions which offered \$150 per session plus \$50 to complete a survey (https://www.vtpoc.net/about/our-projects/vt-poc-small-business-listening-sessions/).

The individual interviews proved much richer for content, as the Global Majority business owner was not competing for time with other Roundtable participants. This enabled the owner to take a deep dive into their situation. Although the project did not advertise a fee-for-participation, it offered \$150 honorariums to each participant at the end of the session.

Nine percent (9.4%) of the Global Majority business owners with email addresses in the Vermont Partnership database responded to a brief survey. The following charts highlight pertinent information from the survey.

Table XVII

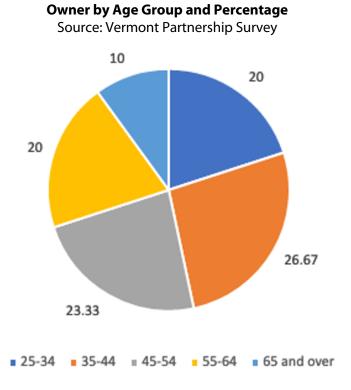
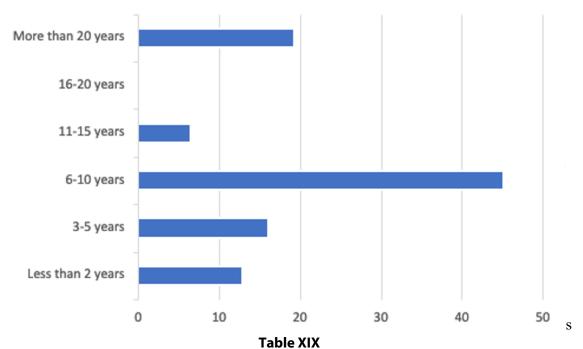


Table XVIII

How long have you been in business?

By Percentage

Source: Vermont Partnership Survey



How old were you when you opened your business? by Percentage

Source: Vermont Partnership Survey

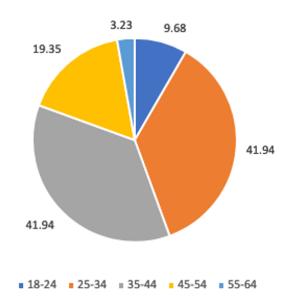


Table XX
What best describes your Economic Status
by Percentage

Source: Vermont Partnership Survey

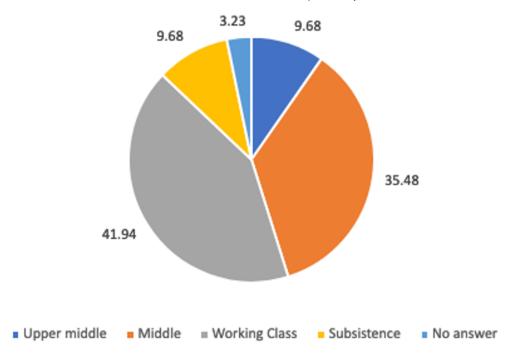
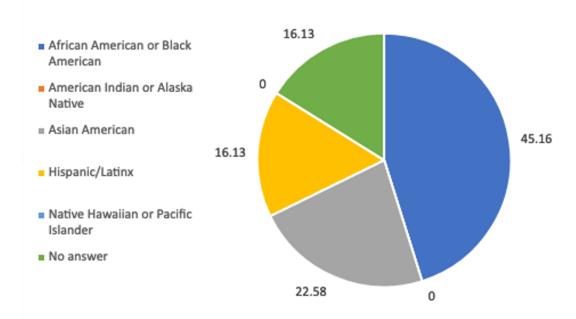


Table XXI Race/Ethnicity of Owner by Percentage

Source: Vermont Partnership Survey



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER SURVEY

The Contractor conducted a survey of Technical Assistance Providers in Vermont. Of the 23 known providers seven (7), or 30.4%, responded to the survey. While all responding providers provide personalized services there are notable service gaps. For example, none of the providers considered Chittenden County as a geographical service area where 44% of Global Majority businesses are located. Nearly eighty-six percent (85.7%) of service providers identity as White and provide pro bono services, respectively.

Table XXII

Race/Ethnicity of Technical Assistance Provider
Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

With which racial and/or ethnic identities do you identify? Please check all that apply.
7 responses

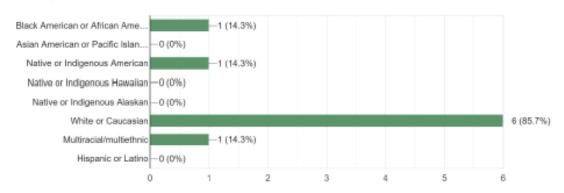


Table XXIII
Sex/Gender Identity of Technical Assistance Provider
Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

With which sex/gender identities do you identify? Please check all that apply.
7 responses

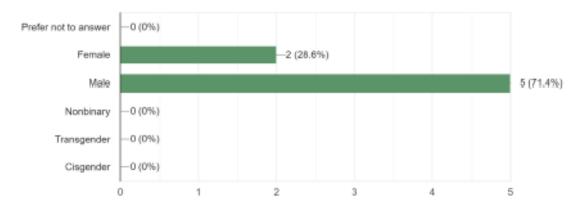


Table XXIV LGBT Identity of Technical Assistance Provider

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

Do you identify as a member of the LGBT communities? 7 responses

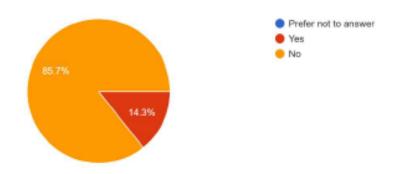


Table XXV

Age of Technical Assistance Provider

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

What is your age?

7 responses

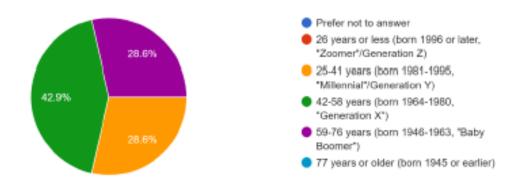


Table XXVI Technical Assistance Provider by County of Headquarters

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

In which county of Vermont is your business or organization headquartered? 7 responses

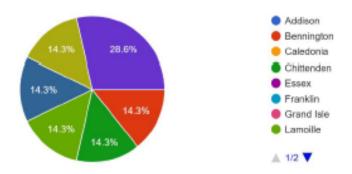


Table XXVII
Technical Assistance Provider by County Presence

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

In which counties of Vermont does your business or organization maintain a physical presence? 7 responses

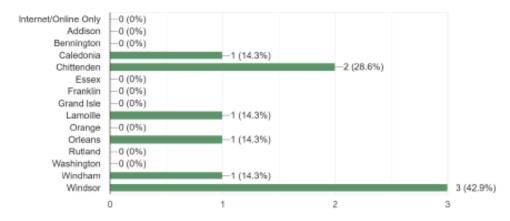


Table XXVIII Technical Assistance Provider by Geographic Coverage

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

Which counties in Vermont do you consider to be the geographical service area of your business or organization?

7 responses

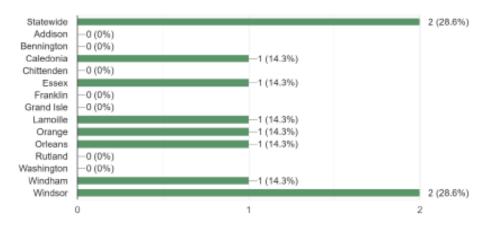


Table XXIX
Technical Assistance Provider by Legal Structure

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

What is the legal structure of your business or organization? 7 responses



Table XXX Technical Assistance Provider Workforce

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

How large is the staff of your business or organization? 7 responses

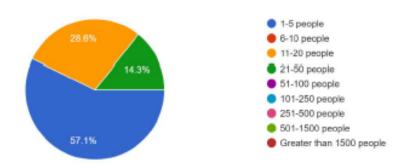


Table XXXI
Technical Assistance Provider by Years of Service

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

How many years has your business or organization offered technical or professional assistance in Vermont?

7 responses

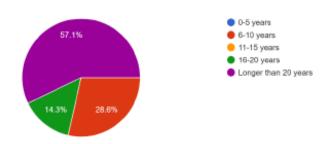


Table XXXII
Technical Assistance Providers Providing Pro bono Services

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

Does your business or organization offer services on a pro bono basis? 7 responses

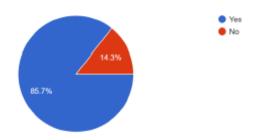


Table XXXIII Technical Assistance Provider by Business Formation Services

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

Please indicate the types of business or organization formation assistance services your business or organization offers:

7 responses

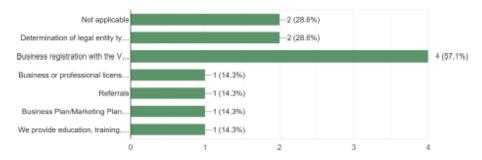


Table XXXIV
Technical Assistance Provider by Type of Provided Legal Services

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

Please indicate the types of legal assistance service your business or organization provides: 7 responses

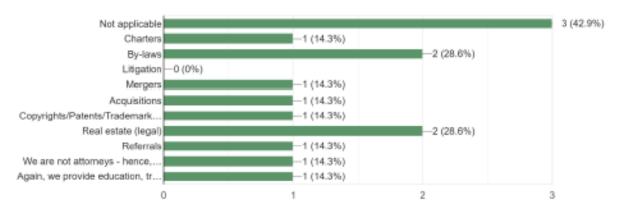


Table XXXV Technical Assistance Provider by Type of Financial Assistance Offered

Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

Please indicate the types of financial assistance services your business or organization offers:

7 responses

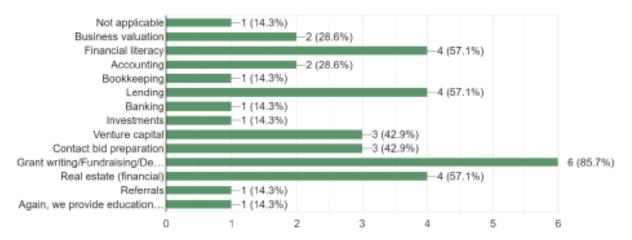


Table XXXVI
Technical Assistance Provider by Type of Service
Source: VPFD Technical Assistance Provider Survey

Please indicate the types of consulting or other professional services your business or

7 responses

organization offers:

