



VCRD Seeks Executive Director

About VCRD

Established in 1992, [The Vermont Council on Rural Development \(VCRD\)](#) is a dynamic partnership of federal, state, local, nonprofit, and private partners. VCRD is uniquely positioned to sponsor and coordinate collaborative efforts across governmental and organizational categories concerned with policy questions of rural import to help Vermont citizens build prosperous and resilient communities through democratic engagement, marshalling resources, and collective action.

VCRD envisions a future for Vermont where communities are healthy and resilient; the economy is innovative and vibrant; citizens are engaged in community-building and governance; communities attract youth, entrepreneurs, and healthy diversity; young citizens are fully prepared to contribute to their communities and participate successfully in a changing economy; the rural character and open lands are conserved and managed productively and profitably; communities, businesses, and citizens prosper by designing and building economic solutions to climate change; and Vermont communities serve as models for other communities throughout rural America.

Since its inception, VCRD has built a reputation for integrity as a neutral, non-partisan mediator of public processes, setting the framework for decisions by communities and by policy leaders, that lead to direct and practical results in addressing fundamental challenges at the local and state level. As a result, the collective success of [VCRD's Programs](#) have included:

- Twenty-five years of community development strategic planning processes in over 80 communities to evaluate assets and challenges, set priorities, build connections, and frame action to drive local community and economic development.
- Nine Governor's Summits retreats, fifteen statewide Rural Summit conferences, and three national Rural Policy convenings;
- Policy council initiatives on broadband, agricultural viability, value added forest products development, the creative economy, the structure of the planning system, in-state energy development, the future of Vermont, advancing the Vermont working landscape, and advancing Vermont's Climate Change Economy;
- Strategic planning guidance to initiate creative economy plans in twelve cities and towns; and
- Facilitation of over 50 community projects to advance broadband access.

Most recently, VCRD has taken the lead in developing the [Vermont Proposition](#), a set of ideas to drive common action and advance a successful and resilient future for the state. The Proposition was built based on statements VCRD heard from personal interviews, survey submissions, partners, policy councils and statewide coordinating efforts – including the Council on the Future of Vermont initiative of 10 years ago – and the tens of thousands of people who have been engaged through the years in setting and advancing action to improve life in their communities.

Based in Montpelier, but working throughout Vermont, VCRD has an annual operating budget of approximately \$900,000 and a staff of seven. Established as one of 37 [State Rural Development Councils](#) nationwide, VCRD is overseen by a 22-member Board of Directors comprised of federal, state, local, nonprofit, and private representatives. Since 2000, VCRD has been extremely well-led by its stalwart Executive Director, Paul Costello, who will step down from leadership of VCRD on September 30 to pursue other professional and personal opportunities.

Opportunity Going Forward

The Executive Director will have the opportunity to lead this unique, highly respected, collaborative, and mission-driven nonprofit which has partnered with state, federal, nonprofit, and private sector leaders to design and implement highly effective programming to identify and address key issues that impact rural life in Vermont. In addition to effectively and efficiently managing ongoing operations, high priorities for the Executive Director include:

- Transitioning relationships from a long-serving Executive Director and establishing new ones with political, government, community, nonprofit, legislative, and business leaders to ensure VCRD remains a present, engaged, and trusted collaborator and partner.
- Establishing oneself as a neutral convener and facilitator to sustain VCRD's long-term credibility as a nonpartisan and nonpolitical agent of change.
- Positioning VCRD to take a leading role enacting the Vermont Proposition and developing a comprehensive and coherent long-term implementation strategy.
- Analyzing the anticipated increase in federal funding over the next several years to determine where opportunities exist for Vermont communities and the role VCRD can and should play in securing and utilizing funding, either independently or collaboratively.
- Ensuring multiple voices and perspectives are respectfully included in all of VCRD's work, ultimately modeling the civil society required for comprehensive and permanent change.
- Leading and empowering a team of highly skilled, experienced, and passionate professionals and raising staff members' profiles in the state.
- Developing and sustaining a culturally aware workplace that considers equity and social justice issues in its policies and practices.
- Reviewing and improving procedures and practices to take greater advantage of technology and create efficiencies.
- Migrating VCRD's presentation to one that is more sophisticated and contemporary and that reflects the shifting trends in Vermont demographics.

Desired Credentials/Profile of the Ideal Candidate

- A minimum of five years of senior leadership, or equivalent experience
- Knowledge of and passion for community and economic development
- Champion of democracy, collaboration, collective wisdom, and inclusion

Skills and Experience

Visionary and Strategic Leader

- Strategic thinker and planner who is nimble and flexible, yet decisive
- A risk-taking entrepreneur who can think systems-wide and see the interconnectedness of all

- A fundamental commitment to and understanding of democracy with the knowledge of how local communities run
- Acute analytical skills with the ability to absorb many viewpoints and quickly offer paths forward that consider the collective perspectives of others
- Confidence to draw inferences and aggregate insights of many even if conclusions challenge ongoing advocacy or the agendas of others
- Proven commitment to empowering and building communities
- Able to focus on vision, collaboration, and facilitation rather than being a strong proponent of an issue or taking rigid stances

Consummate Networker and Trusted Facilitator

- Master convener and facilitator; a tremendous active listener with experience convening and facilitating large, disparate groups
- Strong desire and ability to network and interface with local, federal, and state governments and officials
- Tireless networker who easily creates deep and meaningful connections and relationships to move work forward
- Neutral and objective activator and facilitator with a deep commitment to collective power who can lift up the voices of others while demonstrating empathy and humility

Skilled Administrator and Empowering Team Leader

- Proven financial and personnel leadership at an organization of VCRD's complexity and scale
- Adept at engaging and maximizing the contributions of a large and diverse Board of Directors
- Able to identify, recruit, engage, mentor, and empower a strong staff
- Empathetic leader who motivates, appreciates, and respects staff and provides support to maximize their talents
- Demonstrated commitment to creating a culturally aware and sophisticated workplace and experience with social, economic, and racial justice issues

Experienced and Effective Fundraiser

- Able to understand and implement complex finance and funding strategies as well as develop and execute a comprehensive fundraising strategy
- Practiced fundraising skills with the ability to broaden VCRD's fundraising capacity beyond the contribution of the Executive Director
- Knowledge of public funding with the ability to secure, maximize, and manage government contracts and grants from state agencies and federal funding sources as well as provide foundations
- Ability to cultivate funder relationships, prospect for, and secure contributions and grants

Exceptional Communicator

- Adept at assuming a front-facing role with a compelling ability to engage publicly

- Strong communication skills across diverse audiences; equally comfortable talking to the farmer down the road and the governor
- People person with strong interpersonal skills, someone who can listen well and build relationships easily
- Exceptional writing skills

Application Guidelines

This is a full-time, salaried, exempt position with a competitive salary commensurate with experience and qualifications and within the framework of the organization's annual budget. Candidates must include a resume and a cover letter that describes how their qualifications and experience match the needs and mission of VCRD. Applications will be accepted until the position has been filled. Submit required documents at: <https://eostransitions.applicantpool.com/jobs/>

VCRD is an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer which encourages applications from candidates from diverse backgrounds and cultures, particularly candidates of color and/or candidates who know and/or represent the communities VCRD serves.

This executive search is being conducted by Eos Transition Partners consultant John Tarvin. All submissions will be acknowledged and are confidential, and any questions must be submitted to John at: jtarkin@eostransitions.com.