

FEBRUARY 2025

Statewide Regional Planning Commission (RPC) Network Assessment

APPENDICES

*Vermont Association of Planning and
Development Agencies (VAPDA)*



Appendix B: Statewide Matrix of RPC Staffing

STAFF	2011	2024
Executive Director	11	11
Assistant Director OR Assistant Executive Director OR Associate Director	4	6
Assistant Director/GIS Data Manager	1	0
GIS Manager	3	2
GIS Planner OR GIS Specialist OR GIS Technician	6	3
GIS Services/IT Systems Administrator	1	1
Planning Manager	1	3
Project Manager	1	4
Projects Specialist	1	3
Special Projects Manager OR Special Projects Planner	3	3
Senior Planner	10	14
Associate Planner	1	1
Staff Planner	2	0
Planner	2	26
Assistant Planner	4	4
Emergency Management Planner	2	3
Transportation Planner	5	16
Transportation/GIS Planner	1	3
Land Use Planner	3	0
Energy and Brownfields Planner	1	5
Energy Coordinator	1	6
Regional/Transportation Planner	1	3
Regional Planner	6	5
Office Manager and Bookkeeper OR Office Manager	4	6
Office and Grants Manager	1	0
Business Manager OR Bookkeeper	3	4
Executive Assistant OR Administrative Assistant	2	1
Office Administrator	1	2
Finance Administrator OR Financial Administrator OR Finance Manager	4	4
Totals	86	139

2011 - STAFF	Addison County Regional Planning Commission	Bennington County Regional Commission	Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	Lamoille County Planning Commission	Northeastern Vermont Devt Association	Northwest Regional Planning Commission	Rutland Regional Commission	Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission	Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission	Windham Regional Commission	
Executive Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Assistant Director OR Assistant Executive Director OR Associate Director		1					1	1			1	4
Assistant Director/GIS Data Manager	1											1
GIS Manager			1					1		1		3
GIS Planner OR GIS Specialist OR GIS Technician		1	1		1	1	1	1				6
GIS Services/IT Systems Administrator				1								1
Planning Manager						1						1
Project Manager						1						1
Projects Specialist		1										1
Special Projects Manager OR Special Projects Planner					1						2	3
Senior Planner			1	2		2			1	2	2	10
Associate Planner				1								1
Staff Planner				2								2
Planner								1	1			2
Assistant Planner									2		2	4
Emergency Management Planner	1			1								2
Transportation Planner	1		1		1	1					1	5
Transportation/GIS Planner							1					1
Land Use Planner	1						2					3
Energy and Brownfields Planner	1											1
Energy Coordinator			1									1
Regional/Transportation Planner		1										1
Regional Planner			1		1		1	1		2		6
Office Manager and Bookkeeper OR Office Manager	1	1							1		1	4
Office and Grants Manager			1									1
Business Manager OR Bookkeeper				1	1	1						3
Executive Assistant OR Administrative Assistant				1		1						2
Office Administrator							1					1
Finance Administrator OR Financial Administrator OR Finance Manager								1	1	1	1	4
Total Staff	7	6	8	10	6	9	8	7	7	7	11	86

2024 - STAFF	Addison County Regional Planning Commission	Bennington County Regional Commission	Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	Lamoille County Planning Commission	Northeastern Vermont Devt Association	Northwest Regional Planning Commission	Rutland Regional Commission	Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission	Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission	Windham Regional Commission	
Executive Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Assistant Director OR Assistant Executive Director OR Associate Director		1			1		1	1	1		1	6
Assistant Director/GIS Data Manager												0
GIS Manager	1									1		2
GIS Planner OR GIS Specialist OR GIS Technician					1	1	1					3
GIS Services/IT Systems Administrator				1								1
Planning Manager				1					1	1		3
Project Manager						1	2	1				4
Projects Specialist						1	2					3
Special Projects Manager OR Special Projects Planner				2			1					3
Senior Planner			2	2		1	3	1		2	3	14
Associate Planner								1				1
Staff Planner												0
Planner	3	2	6	1	1			3	4	5	1	26
Assistant Planner					1		2		1			4
Emergency Management Planner	1	1				1						3
Transportation Planner	1			9		2	1	1			2	16
Transportation/GIS Planner						1		1			1	3
Land Use Planner												0
Energy and Brownfields Planner	1					3	1					5
Energy Coordinator		1		1			1		2	1		6
Regional/Transportation Planner		2			1							3
Regional Planner		1				2	1	1				5
Office Manager and Bookkeeper OR Office Manager	1		1		1	1		1			1	6
Office and Grants Manager												0
Business Manager OR Bookkeeper				3		1						4
Executive Assistant OR Administrative Assistant									1			1
Office Administrator					1		1					2
Finance Administrator OR Financial Administrator OR Finance Manager		1							1	1	1	4
Total Staff	9	10	10	21	8	16	18	12	12	12	11	139

Appendix C: Peer Review Information



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: ACRPC

Date: July 24, 2024

Participants: Charlie Baker, CCRPC; Bill Colvin, BCRC; Adam Lougee, ACRPC;

Date of Board Meeting Attended: June 12, 2024

1. A determination of the RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC. **ACRPC serves 21 municipalities in Addison County with a rough population of 36,700 as of the 2020 Census. While ACRPC focuses most of its work on the region in general or its member municipalities, it does work closely with other regional entities, like Addison County Economic Development, the Addison Chamber of Commerce, Middlebury College, Porter Hospital and others.**
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC. **ACRPC's at work map and annual report provided to DHCD annually provides a good summary of ACRPC's program area. Its current Workplan contains a more detailed listing of all its current contracts.**
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area. **ACRPC currently has 8 full-time staff members, one Eco- Americorps Service member, and three summer interns. The Executive Director has been with the Commission the longest (24 years). Most other staff members have joined within the last 5 years. The Covid Pandemic caused a lot of turn over at ACRPC. That being said, the staff works well together and performs well. The Director and a Community planner handle most of the land use planning and regulatory issues. The GIS Manager handles mapping, IT and special projects as she has advanced degrees in law and forestry. The Assistant Director works in Transportation, natural resources and can cover emergency management. Another planner handles Emergency Management, brownfields and natural resources work. Yet another focuses primarily on energy, transportation and health equity. ACRPC's newest planner works mostly in water quality and natural resources projects, but has also been filling in with hazardous material planning. ACRPC's Office Manager handles finances with the Executive Director and HR. ACRPC's Eco service member devotes time to mostly natural resources and water quality issues. One intern works on Road and culvert inventories. Two others are working on a specific project, the Moosalamoo Master Plan.**
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.). **ACRPC currently has 36 municipal board delegates, 8 alternates, and six non-municipal delegates representing other organizations in the region. Many, 14, Delegates or alternates also serve on their local Planning Commissions. Three serve on their selectboard and others serve on other local community organizations.**

5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc). **ACRPC's board is supported by eight committees, including the Executive Board. The Executive Board, the Act 250/248 Committee and the Local Government Committee, which reviews local plans constitute standing committees. ACRPC also supports five ad hoc committees, including:**
 - a. **Natural Resources Committee**
 - b. **Economic Development Committee, which also includes brownfields work**
 - c. **Energy Committee**
 - d. **Transportation Advisory Committee, and**
 - e. **Housing Committee**

Each of the Committees have charges. Most are currently working on revising the regional plan.

6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures. **ACRPC's funding comes mostly from the State of Vermont or the federal government through grants and contracts. ACRPC currently has about 40 contracts. Dues at ACRPC are currently \$1.38 per capita, excluding group quarters, amounting to about \$45,000 per year. ACRPC generally only bills its member municipalities for work if the work requested will total more than eight hours. ACRPC allocates projects taking less time to dues or another program. Entities other than municipal members are asked to pay ARPC pursuant to its audited rate schedule. Two interesting contracts ACRPC is working on this year are the Moosalamoo Master Plan for the US Forest Service and the Middlebury College Lands Master Plan.**
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts. **ACRPC participates with other VAPDA members on federal, state or other regional efforts. Examples of federal partnerships include its Brownfields work with the EPA, its planning work the US Forest Service. ACRPC has numerous state grants and contracts similar to its peers. Granting or contracting entities include DHCD, VEM, VTrans, VTANR. Multi regional efforts include ACRPC's participation in the West Central Vermont Economic Development District in concert with Federal EDA.**
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities. **ACRPC uses the standard consultation checklist, process checklists for adopting plans and development regulations and the Enhanced Energy Checklist.**
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings. **ACRPC's regional plan defines projects with Substantial regional impacts. ACRPC generally participates in projects with Substantial regional impacts. These projects are also generally large enough to be considered major application by the District 9 Committee. ACRPC's level of participation is determined by the project impacts. ACRPC also participates in larger Section 248 proceedings that require a hearing. Several years ago they were numerous. However, given the constraints on the distribution grid in the Addison Region, we have not seen many projects in the last couple of years.**

10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhanced energy plan, future land use recommendations). **The Addison County Regional Plan was last adopted on July 18, 2018 and therefore expires on July 26, 2026. It has been amended since that time. The Commission adopted a new Housing Section in 2022, but did not re-adopt the entire plan. ACRPC also currently has an enhanced Energy Section. ACRPC is in the process of rewriting nearly all of the regional plan, including the Enhanced Energy Section updated with the new data recently released by the PSB. ACRPC's goal is to have all sections ready for adoption by the end of 2025, including the Enhanced Energy Section and the Housing and Future Land Use Sections of the plan. Since the Housing and Future Land Use sections will require some review by the yet to be created Land Use Resources Board, ACRPC will be monitoring the progress of that body to ensure it can hit its targets.**

11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)? **Yes, ACRPC's bylaws enable shared services. To date no towns have taken ACRPC up on the programs it has offered.**

12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each). **Yes, ACRPC participates in VAPDA's survey and endeavors to stay in the middle of its ranges.**

13. Review contracting and financial authority/procedures. **ACRPC and its peers reviewed ACRPC's contracting and financial authority/procedures. ACRPC uses automated payroll services and Bill.com for invoices. Both require approval of the Executive Director and either the Chair or Treasurer. Neither the Executive Director or the Office Manager have the authority to sign checks. Those are reserved by the officers. The Executive Director does have the authority to sign contracts, specifically those contained within the workplan and budget. The Director runs significant new projects through the Executive Board before signing them.**

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives
- Organization Chart **If we have one it is old.**
- Personnel Policies
- Executive Director Job Description **If we have one, it is old.**
- Purchase and Procurement Policies
- Staff and Board Travel Policies **Limited policies are contained within the Personnel Policy.**
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed
- Annual Report and marketing materials
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials
 - Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Bennington County Regional Commission

Date: April 26, 2024

Participants: Chris Campany (WRC), Jason Rasmussen (MARC), William Colvin (BCRC)

Date of BCRC Executive Committee Meeting Attended: April 26, 2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
Map of BCRC service area attached. The BCRC serves seventeen (17) regional municipalities. BCRC is a combined regional planning commission and regional development corporation taking over the state RDC contract in 2020 following four years of contractual work with the prior RDC. BCRC also supports numerous non-governmental organizations and area not-for-profit organizations.
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
BCRC provides a scope of services consistent with other VT RPCs with an increased emphasis on community and economic development fulfilling its role as the regional development corporation. BCRC provides solid waste management and planning for thirteen (13) towns, including the management of a recently opened household hazardous waste facility. Through a contractual arrangement, BCRC serves as staff to the Southern Vermont Communications Union District. Similar to other RPCs, BCRC provides staff support to the Regional Emergency Management Committee.
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
BCRC has ten (10) full time staff, including the Executive Director. They also employ paid interns on a regular basis, the work of whom tends to be project focused. Most staff have multiple program responsibilities. BCRC also actively oversees Americorps VISTA workers. Experience ranges from one year on the low end to over 30 years for two staff members. Most BCRC staff have at least seven years of experience in their respective program areas.
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
BCRC consists of one commissioner from each municipality with each municipality maintaining the option to appoint an alternate commissioner. There are seven interest group representatives that are non-voting members of the Commission. Four officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) are elected by the Commission at a duly warned annual meeting and serve for a term of three years.

5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
The standing committees of the BCRC are the Executive Committee, and programmatic committees that address Energy, Development Review, Plan Review, Brownfields, Transportation, Community Development, Workforce & Education, Emergency Management, and Solid Waste Implementation.
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
FY24 Budget (including midyear adjustment approved by Executive Committee) is attached. Municipal assessments total approximately \$104,000 per year. The formula is population-based with a minimum amount for small towns with a population of 500 or fewer. Other funding sources are typical of Vermont RPCs except for BCRC's role as the Regional Development Corporation (RDC) and the associated funding, manager of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance and staffing of the Southern Vermont Communications Union District.
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
BCRC participates in programs similar to most RPCs in the state. In addition, BCRC serves as the Regional Development Corporation (RDC) for the Bennington region and partners with the RPC and RDC in Windham County on a number of initiatives related to the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone including an EPA-approved CEDS and an annual economic development summit that regularly draws nationally-known speakers and over 300 attendees.
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
Enhanced consultation checklists and Zoning Bylaw review checklists consistent with those agreed upon by ACCD and other RPCs are utilized.
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
The BCRC regularly participates in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings of significant regional impact. BCRC has a written policy for determining whether a project meets the threshold of significant regional impact and has a Project Committee to provide input on Act 250 applications and a Regional Energy Committee to assist with Section 248 project responses.
10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
The Bennington County Regional Plan was adopted in March 2015 and amended to include a Regional Energy Plan in March 2017. Work on a revised regional plan is underway with a target adoption in Fall 2024.
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
BCRC does not have an approved Intermunicipal Services Policy or Shared Services provision in its bylaws. The previous Director did not see the need for one believing that any such support municipalities required could be provided through individual agreements with each governing body. This issue is being revisited in 2024.
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).

Yes, BCRC participates in the VAPDA Salary Survey and Benefits Survey. BCRC has identified where each staff person stands within the ranges provided for each position type.

13. Review contracting authority/procedures.

BCRC Procurement Policy updated in December 2023 and is incorporated in BCRC Policy Manual which has been provided.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws - BCRC Policy Manual provided*
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives - BCRC Policy Manual provided*
- Organization Chart - Yes*
- Personnel Policies - BCRC Policy Manual provided*
- Executive Director Job Description - Yes*
- Purchase and Procurement Policies - BCRC Policy Manual provided*
- Staff and Board Travel Policies - BCRC Policy Manual provided*
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed - Yes*
- Annual Report and marketing materials – On VAPDA website*
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials - Yes*
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas – Posted on website*



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Chittenden County RPC

Date: 4/18/2024

Participants: Tasha Wallis, Chris Campany, Charlie Baker

Date of Board Meeting Attended: 4/17/2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
 - a. Chittenden County municipalities (19)
 - b. Approx 170,000 population
 - c. Separate contracts with:
 - i. Chittenden County CUD – serve as treasurer and clerk
 - ii. MS-4 municipalities with regional education and engagement – water quality
 - iii. Clean water service provider
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
 - a. Regional plan
 - b. Transportation planning
 - c. Town plan assistance
 - d. Bylaw assistance
 - e. Economic development planning – CEDS, applying for EDD with Central, Addison, Rutland
 - f. Brownfields assessments
 - g. Housing – convenings, building homes together, navigator
 - h. Municipal Technical Assistance Program – St. George
 - i. Energy planning – regional plan, municipal plans, climate action plans, MERP
 - j. Water quality – road erosion inventories, CWSP
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
 - a. 21 staff
 - b. See [org chart](#) - for assignments
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
 - a. 29 members plus alternates – 19 muni, VTrans, 4 topic area reps, 5 non-voting transportation reps (rail, FHWA, GMT, FTA)
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).

- a. Standing - Exec/Finance, Board Development, TAC, Planning Advisory Committee, Clean Water Advisory Committee, Long Range Planning Committee, Unified Planning Work Program
 - b. ad hoc – Equity Advisory Committee (looking to add to bylaws in 2024 or 2025) and Brownfields
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
 - a. \$6,000,000 transportation
 - b. \$800,000 regional planning
 - c. \$300,000 brownfields
 - d. \$80,000 climate energy
 - e. \$400,000 water quality and CWSP staffing (not including CWSP project funding)
 - f. \$60,000 emergency management
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
 - a. MPO
 - b. Downtown Board
 - c. Rail Council
 - d. NADO
 - e. GBIC
 - f. Evernorth
 - g. CATMA
 - h. Opportunities Credit Union
 - i. UVM-MC – Community Health Investment Committee
 - j. VELCO – transmission planning committee(?)
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
 - a. Town plan review
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
 - a. Majors reviewed before hearings
10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
 - a. June 2018 regional plan approved
 - b. August 2018 energy plan compliance by DPS
 - c. Metropolitan Transportation Plan June 2022
 - d. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - 2022
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
 - a. Yes – Regional Stormwater Education Program for our MS-4 towns
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).

- a. Yes, yes
13. Review contracting authority/procedures.
- a. Yes, updated procurement in 2022
 - b. Per policy
 - i. ED can solely sign checks up to \$5,000
 - ii. ED can sign a contract up to \$15,000
 - iii. Above \$15,000 need board chair signature

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws - April 2017, updating this year.
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives - Mission statement in Bylaws, Goals etc. in regional plan
- Organization Chart - yes
- Personnel Policies – updated August 2023
- Executive Director Job Description – in Personnel Policy
- Purchase and Procurement Policies – updated August 2023
- Staff and Board Travel Policies – in Personnel Policy for staff, no policy for board travel
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed - process outlined in Personnel Policy, have a form that we use for staff. ED has an evaluation with Executive Committee each Spring.
- Annual Report and marketing materials – do annual report for VAPDA, provide annual reports to each municipality and visit each selectboard, only marketing materials are VAPDA and our website.
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials – yes online for board and do orientation trainings before the fall board meetings. We have an orientation checklist for staff.
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas – board agendas online. Informal agendas for staff meetings.



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: CVRPC

Date: May 14, 2024

Participants: Bill and Catherine

Date of Board Meeting Attended: May 14, 2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
 - a. 23 Municipalities
 - b. ~63K residents
 - c. We provide varying degrees of services to Cross VT Trail, CVFiber, and Wrightsville Beach Recreation District.
 - d. Ex officio members of Mad River Valley Planning District, and CVEDC.
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
 - a. Municipal planning, municipal plan approvals and EEP confirmations, Zoning bylaw support, state designation support, Training and education for municipalities, Capital improvement planning, recreation planning, Act 250 and sections 248 and 1111 application review, Regional planning, Brownfields project advancement, CEDS development, Grant writing, Broadband support, healthy community planning and health equity planning, participation on reviewing projects for the state priority project list, State , Regional and local transportation planning, Support with LEMPS, Drafting LHMPs, providing technical emergency resilience assistance, participating in response and recovery to natural disasters, grant writing, zoning map updates, creating maps for staff, climate and energy planning, support for municipalities creating EEPs, admin for MERP, watershed planning, CWSP Administrator,
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
 - a. 8 Planners, 1 office manager, 1 executive director, off site accounting services. Our professional staff have a variety of experience. Most are new to state, regional and municipal planning.
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
 - a. 23 seats. Two currently vacant. Mix of municipal committee members, several municipal staff, few select board members
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
 - a. **Standing committees** (are advisory): EC, Nom Com, Regional Planning, Project Review, Municipal Plan Review, TAC.

- b. **Special Committees:** CWAC, Brownfields
- 6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
 - a. Per capita rate of \$1.33.
- 7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
 - a. Participating in state level steering committees.
- 8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
 - a. Planning consultation worksheet, Town plan approval checklist, PUC determination check list
- 9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
 - a. Yes to both. Mostly only comment on SRI or major Act 250 applications. Section 248 as needed.
- 10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
 - a. Active through August 2024. We have decided to readopt with updated energy information and Housing targets. Will adopt a new plan in FY25.
- 11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
 - a. Yes
- 12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).
 - a. Yes
- 13. Review contracting authority/procedures.
 - a. \$25K for contracts issued. All grants go to the EC for review. Looking to amend this to set both issued and received agreement amounts to \$25K.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

Bylaws:

2023 - <https://centralvtplanning.org/about/operating-policies/>

Mission, Goals, and Objectives:

Yes. Mission on web site. Goals and Policies in Regional Plan

Organization Chart

No hierarchy. Reports are included in job descriptions.

Personnel Policies

2023 - <https://centralvtplanning.org/about/operating-policies/>

Executive Director Job Description

Yes – Personnel Policy

Purchase and Procurement Policies

Yes <https://centralvtplanning.org/about/operating-policies/>

Staff and Board Travel Policies

Yes Personnel Policy

Evaluation form utilized and process followed

Yes annually in April

Annual Report and marketing materials

Yes - <https://centralvtplanning.org/about/annual-reports/>

RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials

Yes – provided to new members

Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas

Yes - <https://centralvtplanning.org/about/minutes-agendas-staff-reports/>



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Lamoille County Planning Commission

Date: March 26, 2024

Participants: Tasha Wallis (LCPC), Christian Meyer (CVRPC), David Snedeker (NVDA)

Also in attendance – LCPC staff

Date of Board Meeting Attended: March 26, 2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
LCPC serves 10 towns + 5 villages. Other clients include their CUD, RDC, and a regional recovery group.
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
LCPC services are very similar to all RPCs – Planning in Land Use, Transportation, Energy, Emergency, Grant writing, Health, Brownfields, etc. LCPC does get directly involved in local flood mitigation projects.
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
LCPC currently has a staff of 9 persons (2 new staff, and the remainder having 4+ years of experience). LCPC staff are crossed-trained in multiple program areas for the most part.
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
Board of Directors on LCPC website: https://www.lcpcvt.org/index.asp?SEC=6BC75C22-F363-4851-B245-1C89C09829A8&Type=B_BASIC
No term limits for Board members. County Directors are elected each year.
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
List of Committees on LCPC website: https://www.lcpcvt.org/index.asp?SEC=AB3DD839-BFB7-415D-A458-B23581DD44C1&Type=B_BASIC
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
Funding sources are similar to all RPCs – state agency agreements. Municipal dues paid annually. LCPC enters into project management agreements with towns and other entities.
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
LCPC is a member of the NVEDD (CEDs region) and VAPDA. LCPC is not a CWSP, nor is the Director on any state boards.
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.

LCPC utilizes Town Plan Review and Zoning Bylaw checklists. They follow a Municipal Consultation checklist. Other documents utilized are those for preparing LEMPs, HMGP, and Enhanced Energy Plans.

9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
LCPC participates in major hearings for both Act 250 and Section 248. They utilize their Plan Review Committee for assessing and commenting on projects.
10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
LCPC Regional Plan was updated and adopted in November 2023. They are working toward Energy Compliance. Anticipating FLU work in the coming months/years.
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
LCPC Bylaws have been updated to enable shared services. *Examples?*
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).
Yes, and yes.
13. Review contracting authority/procedures.
LCPC Board reviews contracts and grants (only grants > \$30,000). Work plans are no longer reviewed by their Board.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws - 2022-23
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives https://www.lcpcvt.org/index.asp?SEC=3594198F-6F0E-4E71-AC8D-2CB2187381F7&Type=B_BASIC – Mission Statement.
https://www.lcpcvt.org/vertical/Sites/%7B3C01460C-7F49-40F5-B243-0CA7924F23AF%7D/uploads/Final_RegionalPlanAdopted_October2023.pdf - Goals & Objectives.
- Organization Chart - None
- Personnel Policies - 2023
- Executive Director Job Description - Yes
- Purchase and Procurement Policies - 2023
- Staff and Board Travel Policies – within Personnel Policies. Reimbursements for staff
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed – 6 month review after hire. Annual reviews, thereafter. Review letters are provided to staff with salary adjustments.
- Annual Report and marketing materials - <https://www.lcpcvt.org/annualreports> - Annual Report and https://www.lcpcvt.org/index.asp?SEC=20254912-11DF-4027-A937-586CC346024F&Type=B_BASIC -Newsletters
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials - <https://www.lcpcvt.org/bylaws> - Board Packet
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas - https://www.lcpcvt.org/index.asp?SEC=400EC2BD-CE93-451C-AAA0-C97F39D6910B&Type=B_BASIC – Meeting agendas.

*LCPC staff are currently working in-person in the office 3-days/week and remotely, otherwise.



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: MARC

Date: 05.03.2024

Participants: Adam Lougee (ACRPC), Christian Meyer (CVRPC), Jason Rasmussen (MARC)

Date of Board Meeting Attended: 03.26.2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
 - a. MARC serves a 10 town area in southern Windsor County, including Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor.
 - b. In 2020, the population of the region was 23,543.
 - c. Other clients served include Southeast Vermont Transit, Springfield Regional Development Corp., Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District, Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Management District, The Collaborative, Mt. Ascutney Prevention Partnership, and local trails groups.
 - d. MARC is one of the four partners for the East Central Vermont Economic Development District.

2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
 - a. MARC offers the typical range of services, including land use (planning and regulation assistance), transportation, regional planning, natural resources, economic development, emergency management, energy, GIS mapping and similar services. Additionally, MARC also has a robust brownfields program, administers the water quality design/implementation block grant program for DEC, manages two solid waste districts, and regularly contracts with our prevention partnership organizations.

3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
 - a. MARC currently has 14 employees and typically hires one seasonal staff person to assist with transportation and stormwater-related data collection activities.
 - b. Jason Rasmussen, Executive Director, 25 years
 - c. Tom Kennedy, community development, brownfields, solid waste, 39 years
 - d. Allison Hopkins, emergency management, economic development, 18 years
 - e. Chris Yurek, natural resources/water quality, land use, 8 years
 - f. Cindy Ingersoll, community development, brownfields, 10 years
 - g. Martha Harrison, land use, energy, 18 years
 - h. Logan Nicoll, transportation, IT, 1 year
 - i. Christine Eggleton, housing, GIS, 1 year
 - j. Malia Cordero, GIS, assistance with various programs, 2 years
 - k. Mary O'Brien, solid waste, 17 years

- I. Ham Gillett, solid waste, 9 years
 - m. Cynthia Porter, administration, 23 years
 - n. Lisa Comstock, administration, 2 years
 - o. Chris Titus, Franchise Reviewer, administration support, 11 years
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
 - a. MARC currently has 10 board members and two at-large members. All towns have active representatives on the board. Only half of the towns have appointed alternates (5).
 - b. Two board members are town managers, four are planning commission members, one is a selectboard member, and the rest are former town board members.
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
 - a. MARC has two advisory committees: Transportation Advisory Committee and Brownfields Steering Committee.
 - b. MARC has multiple standing committees: Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Budget Committee, Permit Review Committee, Regional Plan Committee, Town Plan Review Committee, Housing Committee, and Investment Committee.
 - c. MARC currently does not have any ad hoc committees. An ad hoc committee was established to help prepare updates to the land use chapter the last time the Regional Plan was updated. We will likely create a similar ad hoc committee to assist with upcoming regional plan updates.
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
 - a. MARC's funding sources are similar to other RPCs in Vermont.
 - b. Dues are currently based on \$1.30 per capita.
 - c. MARC has a fee rate structure, and also has a separate GIS fee structure.
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
 - a. MARC is a member of the East Central Vermont Economic Development District, and manages two solid waste districts. MARC is a member of VAPDA and currently serves as the Transportation Committee Chair. Staff attend VT solid waste managers meetings. Staff also participate on a variety of VTrans advisory groups, including the design standards stakeholder committee. Staff served on the FHWA's Federal Lands Access Program application review committee. Staff serve on the boards of SEVT/the MOOver, Springfield on the Move, Springfield Regional Development Corp., and Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce.
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
 - a. Town Plan Review Matrix

- b. Enhanced Energy Plan
 - i. Submission Requirements
 - ii. Checklist: Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans
 - c. Solar Preferred Site Letter Policy
 - d. Enhanced consultation checklist
 - e. Town Plan written report template
 - f. Bylaw written report/submission template
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
- a. We have very few major applications or hearings. We attend hearings when scheduled.
 - b. We review all applications and draft permits, and respond when we feel warranted.
 - c. Staff usually review applications and draft comments with our Permit Review Committee. They make a recommendation to our board, before they make a decision about submitting formal comments.
 - d. This year, the Committee has reviewed four applications that were determined to be de minimis and no comments were submitted.
 - e. For any preferred site letter requests, we follow [our policy](#).
10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
- a. We updated and adopted the plan last in 2022, including the transportation element. The enhanced energy element was not updated at that time. The new LEAP model was not ready yet at that time.
 - b. We intend to amend the plan once we update the enhanced energy element.
 - c. We also intend to update the plan per Act 181 (H.687).
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
- a. Shared services are enabled in [our Bylaws](#).
 - b. We do not presently provide shared services. We investigated a shared ZA position with two of our towns last year (Weathersfield and Windsor). They decided to hire someone as a Town of Windsor staff person instead.
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).
- a. Yes, MARC participates in these surveys. The results are provided to the Executive Committee and shared with staff.
 - b. Yes, MARC understands where the organization is in relation to the survey results.
13. Review contracting and financial authority/procedures.

- a. MARC's board annually approves of TPI contracts directly, and approves the Executive Director to sign the necessary documentation. Other contracts are built into and thereby approved as part of the annual budget. Any new contracts during the year are brought to the board's attention. The Executive Director is then authorized to sign those contracts.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws last amended June 22, 2020. Draft changes are a work in progress.
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives In Regional Plan, separate mission statement is drafted
- Organization Chart January 2024
- Personnel Policies June 20, 2022. Draft changes underway, per legal review.
- Executive Director Job Description 2022 - in Personnel Policies
- Purchase and Procurement Policies April 19, 2023
- Staff and Board Travel Policies 2022 - in Personnel Policies. Not much re: board travel.
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed
- Annual Report and marketing materials VAPDA annual report materials
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials Needs updates.
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Northwest RPC

Date: 5/28/2024

Participants: Catherine Dimitruk, Adam Lougee, Charlie Baker

Date of Board Meeting Attended: 5/29/2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
 - a. Franklin and Grand Isle County municipalities
 - b. Approx 60,000 population
 - c. Separate contracts with:
 - i. EDD
 - ii. Healthy Roots
 - iii. Working Communities Challenge
 - iv. With a separate non-profit, going to run the ADU and duplexes assistance program through this.
 - v. 2 CWSPs
 - vi. EDA District Manager
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
 - a. Regional plan
 - b. Transportation planning
 - c. Town plan assistance
 - d. Bylaw assistance
 - e. Economic development planning – CEDS, applying for EDD with Central, Addison, Rutland
 - f. Brownfields assessments
 - g. Housing – convenings, building homes together, navigator
 - h. Municipal Technical Assistance Program – St. George
 - i. Energy planning – regional plan, municipal plans, climate action plans, MERP
 - j. Water quality – road erosion inventories, CWSP
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.

The FY 25 budget includes 16 employees: Executive Director, Assistant Director, Senior Planners (3), Regional Planners (2), GIS Technician, Office Administrator (.8 FTE), Economic Recovery Coordinator (.6 FTE, temporary position), Transportation Planner, Assistant Planner & Zoning Administrator, Energy and Climate Planner, Water Quality Project Manager, Project Manager (.4 FTE), Housing for All Program Manager, and summer field staff/interns. NRPC also benefits from the service of two AmeriCorps volunteers.

4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
 - a. 46 members plus 2 youth members – 23 muni. 9 vacancies.
 - b. Reviewing bylaws this year.
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
 - a. Standing – Exec, Finance, Project Review, Regional Plan and Policy, Personnel
 - b. ad hoc – TAC, Code of Conduct
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.

Mun Assmt	66,397	68,388
Reg. Planning Funds (ACCD)	488,165	602,798
VADT	364,805	372,650
Grants in Aid Equip	133,260	0
Public Safety	105,164	58,826
Municipal	151,389	98,850
Shared Services	139,608	174,335
Clean Water Service	710,000	1,035,630
Natural Resources	210,681	219,121
Other Federal Grants	505,173	820,755
Other State Grants	55,328	92,000
Interest	1,500	1,500
EDA	74,777	145,000
Healthy Roots	191,745	0
Miscellaneous	92,626	43,000

Dues - \$68,000, \$1.19 per capita

7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
 - a. GMT
 - b. Sec of State Civic Engagement
 - c. VAPDA
 - d. VPA Exec Comm
 - e. Housing and Homeless Coalition
 - f. Hunger Council
 - g. Zoning Atlas
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
 - a. Town plan and confirmation review
 - b. Act 250/248 checklist
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.

NRPC comments on all applications, majors and minors. Board approval for comments required for projects of 'significant regional impact' otherwise staff/project review committee submits comments. Process outlined in a project review policy.

10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
 - a. July 2023 regional plan approved
 - b. June 2024 energy plan compliance by DPS pending
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?

- a. Yes – zoning admin for two towns. Excluded from indirect rate calculation, separate ‘municipal and partner services’ operation center, with 10% management fee. Also includes Healthy Roots and Working Communities Challenge.
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).
- a. Yes, yes. Above median.
13. Review contracting authority/procedures.
- a. Yes, updated procurement in 2022
 - b. Per policy
 - i. ED has full authority.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws - updating this year.
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives – outdated, on schedule for 2025
- Organization Chart – no, flat reporting – all report to ED with Sr. Plnr. mentors
- Personnel Policies – updated 2022
- Executive Director Job Description – yes
- Purchase and Procurement Policies – last updated 2023 including CWSP
- Staff and Board Travel Policies – in Personnel Policy for staff, no policy for board travel but will reimburse expenses for out of region travel on behalf of NRPC
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed – staff driven annual check-in. have a checklist of employee expectations reviewed at orientation.
- Annual Report and marketing materials – do annual report for VAPDA and annual report for each town.
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials – in process of updating. Orientation video online from a training a few years ago.
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas – board agendas online. Informal agendas for staff meetings about upcoming work. Weekly staff meetings via zoom, with monthly in-person.

Adopted 5/31/2023
**Code of Conduct for the Northwest Regional Planning
Commission**

Purpose

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) Code of Conduct promotes constructive civic engagement, and a welcome and inclusive workplace. This policy ensures that members of the Board of Commissioners or established committees (members) understand their role to uphold these goals while also serving in the best interest of NRPC and the community or group they represent. This policy is adopted in part to reflect the intent of the NRPC's *Statement of Inclusion* (attached) and other adopted policies of NRPC.

The Code of Conduct will be provided to all members of the NRPC Board and Committees and their appointing entities, including new members as they join. The Code of Conduct will be periodically reviewed and affirmed.

General Conduct

Members of the Board of Commissioners and committees shall conduct themselves in a manner that serves the public interest and is consistent with this Code of Conduct, NRPC's Statement of Inclusion and the mission of NRPC. In addition, Board and Committee members will:

- Act honestly, conscientiously, reasonably and in good faith at all times having regard for a member's responsibilities, the interests of NRPC and the welfare of the region.
- Refrain from communicating or acting in a disrespectful, abusive and/or threatening manner towards members of the community, other members of the Board/Committee, or NRPC staff.
- Comply with all applicable local, state and federal government laws, rules, and regulations including but not limited to Vermont's Open Meeting and Public Records Laws, as well as all NRPC adopted policies including but not limited to the Conflict of Interest Policy and the Personnel Policy's non-discrimination policy (attached).

Conduct in Carrying out Duties of the Board or Committee

NRPC is striving at every meeting, forum or other official interaction to treat every person fairly and with respect, regardless of any differences. All members appointed to the Board of Commissioners or one of its committees must maintain respectful discourse when acting in an official NRPC capacity, with their fellow members, with those who work for NRPC, those who volunteer their time and services on behalf of NRPC, and members of the public. This means:

- Treat all members of the Board/Committee to which one belongs with respect despite differences of opinion; keeping in mind that professional respect does not

preclude honest differences of opinion, but requires respect within those differences.

- Participate and interact in official meetings with dignity and decorum fitting those who hold a position of public trust.
- Attend all regularly scheduled Board and committee meetings insofar as possible, and notify staff as soon as possible if unable to attend.
- Uphold the intent of executive session as defined in the Open Meeting Law and respect the privileged communication that exists in executive session.
- Act only as a member of the Board/Committee. Recognize that no individual member is given authority to act alone. Do not assume any individual authority to represent the Board/Committee unless directed by the Board/Committee.
- Treat all staff as professionals and respect the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual.
- Take advantage of learning opportunities related to NRPC's Statement of Inclusion.
- Utilize inclusive meeting practices to make all feel welcome. Words or phrases that have been used in the past or present in a derogatory manner towards a group of people should never be used, regardless of the context.
- Take advantage of opportunities to learn about NRPC projects and programs.
- Speak up -within meetings if it is safe to do so. Speak up to the Chair, anonymously if preferred, if something does not meet this Code of Conduct. Hear with a fair and open mind and be responsive to concerns about conduct brought by members of the public, staff and other Board or committee members. Never retaliate against a person or persons raising a concern.

Upholding the Code of Conduct Policy:

NRPC strives to assist members in adhering to this Code of Conduct through education, training and discussion. All Board and Committee members of NRPC have a responsibility to respect and uphold this Code of Conduct.

Annually, the Chair shall appoint and the Board shall ratify up to five members of the NRPC Board of Commissioners to an ad hoc Code of Conduct committee. This committee will receive and review concerns raised under the Code of Conduct and make recommendations to the Executive Committee. In addition to any other remedies or enforcement options

available or required under the law, the NRPC Executive Committee may take, any action including but not limited to:

- Request member(s) receive specific training or education
- Arrange for additional training for the Board or Committee
- Request an apology or other restorative action
- Vote to censure any member
- Notify the appointing authority that their member(s) is in violation of the Code of Conduct Policy
- Request resignation of the member(s)
- Remove the member from the Board or Committee (when NRPC is the appointing authority)

If any Board or Committee member is accused of violating NRPC's requirements under our Personnel Policies or a state or federal law, the NRPC will initiate actions as described in the NRPC Personnel Policies.

ATTACHMENTS

Northwest Regional Planning Commission Statement of Inclusion

Adopted by the Board of Commissioners, 2020

NRPC celebrates diversity and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, or disability. NRPC wants everyone to feel and be safe and welcome in the communities we serve. We formally condemn racism and discrimination in all of its forms, and commit to fair and equitable treatment of everyone in our communities. NRPC strives to ensure all of our actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect this commitment. NRPC has and will continue to support its member communities as places where all individuals can live freely, express their opinions, and feel a sense of belonging.

Personnel Policies

From NRPC Personnel Policies, Adopted 2019. This is an excerpt and does not represent the full policy.

U. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is against the policies of this employer, and illegal, for any employee to discriminate against or harass another employee, Commission member, or member of the public because of that person's race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, citizenship, ancestry, place of birth, disability, military or veteran status, gender identity, health coverage status, HIV status, genetic information, crime victim status, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition or any other category protected under local, state or federal law. This employer is committed to providing a workplace free from this unlawful conduct. It is a violation of this policy for an employee to engage in illegal harassment. It is also illegal, and violates the Commission's policies, to retaliate against any employee for filing or cooperating in the investigation of a complaint of illegal harassment.

NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION BYLAWS

ARTICLE I LEGAL BASIS

Title 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, hereinafter called the Act.

ARTICLE II NAME

The name of this regional planning commission shall be the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, hereinafter referred to as the NRPC or the Commission.

ARTICLE III PURPOSE

To accomplish the duties of a regional planning commission as detailed in the Act.

ARTICLE IV REPRESENTATION BY MUNICIPALITIES

Section 401 Appointments

Representation on the NRPC shall be by Commissioners. The legislative body of each municipality comprising the Northwest Region may appoint 2 Commissioners. Commissioners shall serve until NRPC is notified by the legislative body that the appointment has ended. Appointments to the NRPC should be confirmed, in writing, by municipalities before April 15th of each year.

Up to two youth members, one from each county in the region, may be appointed by majority vote of Commissioners at the annual meeting. Youth members shall be recommended by a supervisory union or Commissioner, nominated by the nominating committee and be appointed for a term of up to two years.

Section 402 Voting

At meetings of the NRPC, each Commissioner shall have one vote except in cases where they are appointed by more than one municipality, in which case they shall have one vote per appointing municipality.

Each youth member shall have one vote, except that youth members shall not vote on the election of officers and adoption or amendment to the regional plan.

Section 403 Attendance

The Chair shall notify the appropriate legislative body when any municipality fails to be represented at three consecutive meetings without notice.

Section 404 Eligibility for Office

Commissioners shall be eligible to hold any office of the NRPC subject to the conditions of Article VII.

ARTICLE V APPROPRIATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Section 501 Funding

Member municipalities appropriate funds to the NRPC as provided in the Act. The NRPC may also receive funds from other sources.

Section 502 Assessment Apportionment

Member municipalities' share of expenses of the NRPC shall be in a ratio similar to the proportion of a municipality's population of the region, as determined by the most recent U.S. Census. Municipal membership assessments shall be fixed by the majority of Commissioners present and voting at a duly constituted meeting to be held on or before December 1st of each year.

ARTICLE VI ORGANIZATION

Section 601 Board of Commissioners

The Board of Commissioners, hereinafter called the Board, shall consist of the Commissioners.

Section 602 Officers

The officers of the Board shall include a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. A Commissioner may serve as both Secretary and Treasurer.

Section 603 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of the officers, the standing committee Chairs, the immediate past Chair, and a member at large to be elected annually at the annual meeting.

Section 604 Standing Committees

There shall be 4 standing committees: Finance/Operations Committee, Personnel Committee, Project Review Committee, and Regional Plan and Policy Committee. Each committee shall consist of no less than 5 Commissioners, including the committee Chair. At the first committee meeting of each fiscal year standing committees shall elect a Vice-Chair.

Section 605 Special Committees and Appointments

The Board may appoint, empower, dissolve or remove special committees, task forces, or representatives to/from other boards for purposes of addressing specific problems or fostering cooperative efforts. A time limit for the functioning of a task force or other board appointment may be set by the Board at the time of appointment.

Section 606 Staff

The staff of the NRPC shall include an Executive Director and other necessary administrative and technical staff as shall be authorized by the Board. Personnel management shall be in accordance with the NRPC's duly adopted personnel policy.

ARTICLE VII ELECTIONS

Section 701 Nominations

In March of each year, the Chair shall appoint a nominating committee made up of five Commissioners. The Nominating Committee will prepare a slate of nominations for all officers, standing committee chairs, and the at-large member of the Executive Committee. This slate of nominations will be presented at the annual meeting. Additional nominations will be taken from the floor for all officers, standing committee chairs and the at-large member to the Executive Committee at the annual meeting.

The Nominating Committee may also nominate up to two youth members, one representing each county in the region.

**Section 702 Election of Officers, Standing Committee Chairs and
Other Representatives**

The officers and standing committee chairs of the NRPC, and the at-large member to the Executive Committee shall be elected by the written ballots of the Commissioners present and voting at the annual meeting.

Where only one candidate has been nominated for an office, upon motion without objection, the Secretary may be directed to cast one vote for the nominee which shall determine the election. Where only one candidate has been nominated for each office under consideration, upon motion without objection, the Secretary may be directed to cast one vote for the slate which shall determine the election.

Section 703 Terms of Office

The terms of office for the Chair, the Vice Chair, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the standing committee chairs and the at-large member of the Executive Committee shall be 1 year beginning immediately after the meeting at which they are elected. Officers shall hold office until their successors have been elected and installed.

Commissioners may serve in the position of Treasurer for a maximum of six consecutive

terms. Commissioners may serve as other officers, standing committee chairs or the at-large member of the Executive Committee for a maximum of three consecutive terms.

Section 704 Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in the office of Chair, the Vice Chair shall become the Chair until such time as the vacancy is filled.

All vacancies shall be filled by election at the next regular meeting. Persons so elected shall hold office until the next annual election or until their successors are elected and installed.

ARTICLE VIII DUTIES

Section 801 Commissioners

It shall be the duty of each Commissioner to make annual and periodic reports of the activities of the NRPC to the legislative body by which the Commissioner was appointed.

Section 802 Chair

The Chair of the Board shall call meetings of the Board and the Executive Committee, shall preside at these meetings and, except as otherwise provided, create and discharge special committees and serve as a non-voting ex-officio member to all committees, and shall perform such other duties as customary to the office. The Chair shall cast a vote on all issues voted on at a full Board and/or Executive Committee meeting, unless the Chair wishes to abstain.

The Chair shall appoint members of standing committees subject to confirmation by the Board at the first meeting after the annual meeting.

The Chair shall prepare and cause to be distributed to members, an agenda for all Board and Executive Committee meetings.

Section 803 Vice Chair

The Vice Chair shall act as Chair in the absence or incapacity of the Chair.

Section 804 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall perform such duties as are assigned by these bylaws, put into effect the directives of the Board, be the chair of the Finance/Operations Committee, and oversee the acceptance and expenditure of funds.

Section 805 Secretary

The Secretary is the recording officer of the assembly and the custodian of its records, except as those duties are delegated to Commission staff. The Secretary may also advise the Chair on parliamentary issues.

Section 806 Executive Committee

The purpose of the Executive Committee shall be to facilitate management of the NRPC between regular meetings of the Board, and to oversee personnel matters in conjunction with the Personnel Committee as described in the Commission's Personnel Policies. In the absence of full Board representation, the Executive Committee may make such decisions as are required to maintain continuous operation of the NRPC. Such authority shall only be granted to the Executive Committee in matters which cannot be deferred until the next regular Board meeting. All such decisions shall be reported for ratification to the Board at the next regular meeting.

Section 807 Committee Chairs

Committee Chairs shall call meetings of their committees as needed and report recommendations and actions to the Board.

Section 808 Finance/Operations Committee

This committee shall develop, review and recommend changes to the NRPC's municipal assessment policy, and recommend an annual budget and municipal assessment rate, for Board consideration. It shall advise the Board on major equipment purchases, leases, contracts, etc. This committee may also have other duties as assigned by the Board.

Section 809 Personnel Committee

This committee shall develop, administer, review and recommend changes to the NRPC's personnel policy. This committee will also participate in hiring of new employees and employee evaluations in accordance with the Commission's Personnel Policies. This committee may also have other duties as assigned by the Board.

Section 810 Project Review Committee

This committee shall develop, review and recommend changes to the NRPC's project review policy. This committee will also implement the project review policy by reviewing Act 250, PSB Section 248 and other regional, state or federal permit applications and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. This committee may also have other duties as assigned by the Board.

Section 811 Regional Plan and Policy Committee

This committee shall develop, review and recommend changes to the Northwest Regional Plan. This committee shall also review plans, policies and programs of interest to the region and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners in that regard. This committee may also have other duties as assigned by the Board.

Section 812 Executive Director

The Executive Director takes direction from, and is responsible to the Board and its Executive Committee. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to assist in the development, administration and implementation of policies and programs adopted by the Board, and such other tasks as provided for in the job description.

ARTICLE IX MEETINGS

Section 901 NRPC Board Meetings

The Board shall meet on the last Wednesday of each month. Meetings will be held at a time and place to be determined by the Chair. Changes from this procedure may be made when necessary by the Chair. Notification and conduct shall be in accordance with Vermont Open Meeting Law.

Section 902 Special Board Meetings

Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Chair. Special meetings shall be called if requested in writing by 5 or more Commissioners.

Section 903 Annual Meeting

The annual meeting shall be the regularly scheduled meeting in the month of June.

Section 904 Notice of Meetings

Notice of all regular and special meetings of the Board shall be distributed with an agenda by the Chair or Executive Director to all Commissioners and local media.

Section 905 Minutes of Meetings

Minutes of all meetings of the Board and of the Executive Committee shall be the responsibility of the Secretary or his/her designee.

Minutes shall be available in accordance with Vermont Open Meeting Law and provided to all Commissioners.

Section 906 Quorum

A quorum of the Board shall consist of one Commissioner from a simple majority of the member municipalities.

ARTICLE X MUNICIPAL SERVICES AGREEMENTS

Participation by a municipality in a municipal service agreement with the NRPC shall be voluntary and only valid upon action by the Board of Commissioners and of each of the legislative bodies of the municipalities who are proposed parties to the service agreement. The agreement may include other parties as may be relevant to a particular service. Any modification to a service agreement shall not become effective unless approved by all parties to the service agreement, including the legislative bodies of all involved municipalities. Such modifications shall be in writing, with a copy provided to all parties to the agreement.

Section 1001 Content of Agreement

A municipal service agreement shall describe the services to be provided and the amount of funds payable by, and/or a formula for allocating costs to, each municipality that is a party to the service agreement. Service of personnel, use of equipment and office space, and other necessary services may be accepted from municipalities as part of their financial support and shall be clearly documented in the annual budget for the service approved by the parties to the agreement. A municipal service agreement shall include details regarding liability and enforcement.

When deemed appropriate by the participating municipalities and the NRPC, a service agreement may include a governance committee made up of representatives of the participating municipalities and NRPC. If a governance committee is formed, the service agreement shall include appropriate details regarding the responsibilities, voting rights and financial obligations of each member.

Section 1002 Termination of Agreement

All service agreements shall contain a termination date unless some other method of termination is expressly provided in the agreement. Service agreements shall also contain a provision describing how parties may withdraw from the agreement prior to the termination date. The method of withdrawing from and/or terminating a service agreement shall generally be the same as the process for entering such agreement - i.e., by majority vote of the members of the legislative body, subject to other applicable provisions of law. If, however, the service agreement involves multi-year financial obligations or other contractual obligations have been incurred in reliance on the service agreement, the withdrawing party shall withdraw only upon satisfaction of those obligations or mutual written agreement regarding the process to satisfy the same.

- i. The withdrawal provision of a municipal agreement with one municipality shall provide for at least 30 days' notice unless otherwise provided in the agreement.
- ii. The withdrawal provision of a municipal agreement with multiple municipalities shall provide for at least six months' notice prior to the beginning of a fiscal year unless otherwise provided in the agreement.

Section 1003 Other Contracted Services

Nothing within this section shall limit NRPC's ability to enter into contracts or agreements to provide services to individual municipalities or with other entities or governmental organizations, including those serving multiple municipalities.

ARTICLE XI AMENDMENTS

Upon the authorization of the Executive Committee, or upon petition by 10 or more Commissioners, an amendment to these bylaws shall be presented to the Board. Any proposed amendment to these bylaws shall first be sent to the Commissioners in preliminary form for consideration and comment for a period of not less than 21 days. Not later than 21 days after this period, the Executive Committee shall submit to the Commission a report summarizing the comments received and the recommendations of the Executive Committee.

Adoption of any amendment(s) shall require the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Commissioners present and voting at a duly constituted regular meeting.

ARTICLE XII RULES OF ORDER

The NRPC shall apply the current Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised, and so be governed by them in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws and rules of order of the NRPC or Vermont Statute.

ARTICLE XIII CONFLICT OF INTEREST

In the event any Commissioner, officer or employee has a real or apparent personal or financial interest with any individual, partnership, firm or corporation seeking to contract with the NRPC, or to provide materials or labor thereto, or has a personal or financial interest in a project, or a project before Act 250 or other regulatory board where the NRPC is a party, such person shall state on the record the nature of the interest, refrain from exercising undo influence with respect to such contract or project, and shall not vote on related motions.

Commissioners, officers, employees or agents of NRPC shall follow the NRPC Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy, as adopted and amended by the Board,

In the event a Commissioner is uncertain whether he or she has a conflict of interest in or is challenged in any matter, the Board shall state, for the record, its position as determined by roll call vote.

ARTICLE XIV REMOVAL

Any incumbent in any elected position of the NRPC may be removed from office, for cause, after a hearing affording due process held at any duly constituted regular or special meeting, called for that purpose, by a two-thirds vote of the Commissioners present and voting by written ballot. The results of the ballot shall be ascertained and

announced at such meeting.

ARTICLE XV FISCAL

Section 1401 Fiscal Year

The fiscal year for the NRPC shall be from July 1st through June 30th.

Section 1402 Bonding

All positions with fiduciary responsibilities assigned by the Board shall be bonded for the faithful performance of duties in an amount to be approved by the Board. The premiums for such a bond shall be paid for from NRPC funds.

Amendment History

June 26, 1996:

- V. 501, 502.** Section headings added. "The NRPC may also receive funds from other sources," added to 501 and deleted from 502 for consistency.
- VI. 603.** Changed Executive Committee membership to include "representative to most prominent statewide planning organization" (e.g., VT Association of Planning & Development Agencies, Council of Regional Commissions, etc.) as determined by annual vote, in lieu of representative to Council of Regional Commissions, as non-voting member. Clarified that representative to statewide planning organization is a Commissioner.
- VI. 604.** Added word "Committee" following named standing committees for clarification.
- VI. 605.** Amended wording for clarification; no substantive change.
- VI. 606.** Changed "Staffing" to "Personnel management" for clarification.
- VII. 703.** Deleted "affirmative" preceding "written ballots."
- VII. 704.** Changed term of office for standing committee chairs from 2 to 1 year. Eliminated 2 year term limit for positions of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.
- VII. 705.** Changed succession of Vice Chair to Chair in the event of a vacancy to election at next regular meeting, rather than annual meeting.
- IX. 905.** Clarified that the Secretary (Secretary/Treasurer) is responsible for Board and Executive Committee meeting minutes with regard to timely release and availability, regardless of who takes or prepares them.

January 28, 1998

- XI. 906** A quorum of the Board shall consist of a simple majority of the Commissioners appointed and confirmed, except as otherwise required by the Act or other specific articles of these bylaws. Amended to read " a quorum of the board shall consist of one Commissioner from a simple majority of member municipalities.

September 24, 2008

Term Limits for Officers added, youth members added

May 30, 2018:

- The ad hoc Regional Plan Committee becomes a new Standing Committee: Regional Plan and Policy Committee, Project and Policy Review Committee becomes Project Review Committee
- Add a six-year term limit for Treasurer
- Remove Pronouns
- Link Conflict of Interest Section to NRPC's Code of Conduct Policy
- Update language for consistency with VT Open Meeting Law

April 24, 2019

Added Intermunicipal Service Agreements, new Article X; renumbered remaining articles.

Commission Bylaw History:

Bylaws first adopted: May 17, 1966
Amended: December 10, 1969, February 21, 1971, April 14, 1971, October 13, 1971,
Repealed: June 1973
Adopted as Revised: June 1973,
Amended: May 9, 1979, March 14, 1984, May 24, 1989, September 21, 1989, May 27, 1992
Repealed: May 31, 1995 (effective July 26, 1995)
Adopted as Revised: May 31, 1995 (effective July 26, 1995)
Amended: June 26, 1996, January 28, 1998, September 24, 2003, September 24, 2008- term limits adopted,
May 30, 2018, April 24, 2019-

April 24, 2019

Policy	Adoption/Amendment Date	Adoption	Timeline for Review
Benefits Summary	December 2024	Executive Committee	
Personnel Policy	February 2024	Board	
Internal Procedures	May 2024	Executive Committee	
Municipal Plan Review	April 2024	Board	
Title VI Plan	2014	Board	October 2024
Public Participation Plan	New	Board	October 2024
Bylaws		Board, special vote	December 2024
Record Retention	2022	Board	April 2025
Building Repayment Plan	2024	Board	June 2025
Municipal Assessment	2013	Board	September 2024
Reserve Fund	2016	Board	September 2024
Fee Schedule	2009	Board	September 2024
Procurement Procedures	2022	Board	As needed
Code of Conduct	2023	Board	As needed
Subrecipient Monitoring	2018	Board	As needed



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Date: June 4, 2024

Participants: Tasha Wallis (LCPC), Catherine Dimitruk (NRPC), David Snedeker (NVDA)

Also in attendance – NVDA staff

Date of Board Meeting Attended: May 23, 2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
NVDA serves the 50 legislative bodies within the 55 municipalities of Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans Counties. Total population @65,000 persons. As the RDC, NVDA also serves all businesses within the 3-county region.
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
NVDA services are very similar to all RPCs – Planning in Land Use, Transportation, Energy, Emergency Management, Natural Resources, GIS and mapping, Grant writing & administration, Health, Brownfields, and Community and Economic Development.
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
NVDA currently has a staff of 15 persons (12 planning staff and 3 administrative staff).
Transportation, Emergency Management, and GIS staff are focused directly with those programs.
Other staff are cross-trained.
NVDA also utilizes local planning consultants to assist with some projects.
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
Board of Directors on LCPC website: <https://www.nvda.net/nvda-board.php>
Municipalities can appoint up to two members. All NEK Legislators are automatically board members. NVDA currently has 5 at-large members representing industry sectors.
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
List of Committees on LCPC website: NVDA currently has the following standing committees: Executive, Finance, and Town Plan Approval Committees. NVDA has an ad hoc nominating committee. NVDA has formed special committees for Energy Study and recently for salary reviews.
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
Funding sources are similar to all RPCs – state agency agreements. Municipal dues paid annually. NVDA has access to set-aside funding from USDA Rural Development for the region's

REAP Zone. NVDA enters into grant and project management agreements with towns and other entities.

7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
NVDA is a member of the NVEDD (CEDS region), VAPDA, and the RDCs of VT. NVDA is not a CWSP, but does sit on a BWQC. NVDA is on the board of the NEK Collaborative (REAP Zone). NVDA is on the RRA subcommittee of the Climate Council. NVDA Director is on the SIB Board.
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
NVDA utilizes Town Plan Review and Zoning Bylaw checklists. They follow a Municipal Consultation checklist. Other documents utilized are those for preparing LEMPs, HMGP, and Enhanced Energy Plans.
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
NVDA participates in major hearings for both Act 250 and Section 248. NVDA staff are utilized for assessing and commenting on projects.
10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
The NVDA Regional Plan was updated and re-adopted in November 2023. Staff, working with SE Group are work on a full plan rewrite for late 2024. Staff expect that the new Future Land Use guidance/requirements will extend the plan rewrite, or cause a future amendment.
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
Enabling shared services is not specified in our current bylaw. NVDA has participated with towns around the study of regionalized fire services, and more recently assisting the NVDA towns along the LVRT with special planning funds.
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).
Yes, and yes.
13. Review contracting authority/procedures.
NVDA is in the process of updating its Procurement Policy. The Board has authorized a Corporate Resolution for the Director to sign all contracts, accept grants, sell property, etc.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws – 2010, but 2024 update is in progress
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives – Articles of Association and NVDA Regional Plan
- Organization Chart – 2024, as part of a salary review process
- Personnel Policies – 2011, with a review planned for 2024
- Executive Director Job Description – Yes, but the position was not listed when the current Director was hired (internal promotion).
- Purchase and Procurement Policies – 2023, but 2024 update is in progress
- Staff and Board Travel Policies – within Personnel Policies. Reimbursements for staff
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed – 6-month review after hire. Annual reviews, thereafter. Annual reviews have been sporadic since the COVID pandemic, but we are now getting on track.
- Annual Report and marketing materials – 2023 report
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials – Board member packet
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas – Board meeting agenda

*NVDA staff are generally working in-person in the office 2-3 days/week and remotely, otherwise.



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Rutland Regional Planning Commission

Date: 7/24/24

Participants: Devon Neary (RRPC), Jason Rasmussen (MARC), Peter Gregory (TRORC)

Date of Board Meeting Attended: May 23, 2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
RRPC serves 27 municipalities in Rutland County (minus Pittsfield) and has a population of 60,068. Other clients served by RRPC include: trail groups (SVT, PHP, Velomont), Chamber and Economic Development of the Rutland Region (CEDRR), Marble Valley Regional Transit District (MVRTD), Rutland Region Workforce Investment Board (RRWIB), and other local non-profit and nongovernmental organizations.
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
RRPC services include the standard RPC services such as – Town Planning and Zoning, Regional Planning, Transportation, Natural Resources, Economic Development/Brownfields, Emergency Management, Water Quality, Energy, and more. RRPC is also a Clean Water Service Provider, Workforce Investment Board, Recreation Planning, and Municipal Project Management.
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
RRPC has a staff of 11 full-time employees, 1 part-time field technician, and 1-2 college and graduate school interns. RRPC full time staff include:
Devon Neary, Executive Director, 6 years
Mary Kay Skaza, Asst Director and Finance Manager, 10 years
Barbara Noyes Pulling, Senior Planner/Natural Resources, 10 years
Steffanie Bourque, Senior Project Manager, 6 years
Ethan Pepin, Transportation Planner, 2 years
Maggie O'Brien, Regional Planner/Emergency Management, 2 years
Nic Stark, GIS Planner/Recreation/Transportation, 1.5 years
Jeremy Gildrien, Energy/Climate Planner, 1 year
Logan Solomon, Town Planning/Zoning/Housing, 1 year
Greg Poelker, Economic Development/Brownfields/CEDS, 1 year
Karen Hill, Office Manager, 2 years
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
RRPC Board of Commissioners include 26 Commissioners, not including alternates. Most members are planning commission, some selectboard or town manager/mayor, the rest are

citizens with various local involvement. RRPC has no at-large members, and two ex-officio members.

5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
RRPC has an Executive/Finance Committee, Regional Committee, and Community Committee. Also has a Regional Plan Ad Hoc Committee.
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
RRPC funding similar to other RPCs. Dues are set at \$1,000 per town with plans to update formula. RRPC has rate sheet but lacks detail services/fee structure.
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
RRPC is a member of the West Central Vermont EDD and VAPDA. RRPC staff serve on HMGP, VTrans Bike/Ped, and Downtown Transportation Fund selection committees. RRPC serves on MVRTD board, PTAC board, Rutland Area Physical Activity Board, and VTrans design standards committee.
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
RRPC utilizes an enhanced consultation checklist, a LHMP checklist, a town planning and zoning checklist, and an enhanced energy checklist.
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
RRPC Board of Commissioners Regional Committee reviews all Act 250 and S.248 applications for significant regional impact and conformance with the 2018 Regional Plan.
10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).
RRPC Regional Plan and Enhanced Energy Plan was last adopted in June of 2018. RRPC is currently drafting a comprehensive overhaul of the Regional Plan with a target date of Spring 2026.
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
RRPC Bylaws enable shared services. No services currently offered.
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).
Yes – RRPC leads both VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey.
13. Review contracting authority/procedures.
RRPC Director and Assistance Director review contracts and grants. RRPC has grant initiation process. RRPC Financial Policy allows RRPC Director to sign checks <\$5,000 and two signers (Board of Commissioners Officer) for checks >\$5,000.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws [Updated June 2024](#)
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives [Updated June 2024 \(Mission unchanged\)](#)
- Organization Chart [Updated June 2024](#)
- Personnel Policies [Updated July 2024](#)
- Executive Director Job Description [Updated January 2022](#)
- Purchase and Procurement Policies [Updated 2022](#)
- Staff and Board Travel Policies [Updated June 2024](#)
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed [Updated May 2024](#)
- Annual Report and marketing materials [Updated annually](#)
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials [Currently updating \(Summer 2024\)](#)
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas [RRPC Website](#)



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Two Rivers Ottaquechee Regional Commission

Date: June 19, 2024

Participants: Peter Gregory (TRORC), David Snedeker (NVDA), Devon Neary to be contacted later

Date of Board Meeting Attended: May 22, 2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
TRORC serves 30 municipalities and has a population of 55,000. Other clients include GMEDC and local non-profit organizations.
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
TRORC services are very similar to all RPCs – Planning in Land Use, Transportation, Energy, Emergency, Grant writing, Health, Brownfields, etc. TRORC does work with their local hospitals on prevention outreach services.
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
TRORC currently has a staff of 13 persons (Some new staff, with others have significant years of experience). TRORC staff are exposed to work in multiple program areas.
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
Board of Directors on LCPC website: TRORC has a board of directors with 45-50 members, including alternates. They also have 6 at-large members.
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
List of Committees on LCPC website: TRORC has an Executive Committee, a Brownfield Advisory Committee, and a Scholarship Committee (10 - \$2,000 awards/year).
6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
Funding sources are similar to all RPCs – state agency agreements. Municipal dues paid annually at a rate of \$1.60 per capita with a 3% escalator. New funds from VHCG for the RIVER program. TRORC services policy is on their website.
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
TRORC is a member of the East Central VT Economic Development District (CEDS region) and VAPDA. They are participating in the EECBG program. They do work with the Upper Valley – Lake Sunapee region of NH.
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.

TRORC utilizes Town Plan Review and Zoning Bylaw checklists. They follow a Municipal Consultation checklist. Other documents utilized are those for preparing LEMPs, HMGP, and Enhanced Energy Plans.

9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.

TRORC participates in major hearings for both Act 250 and Section 248. They utilize TRORC staff for assessing and commenting on projects, keeping in context with their regional plan.

10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations).

TRORC Regional Plan was last adopted in July 2020. They are currently revising all sections of their plan, except for housing and land use, and expect to adopt at the end of CY2024.

11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?

TRORC Bylaws have been updated to enable shared services. There is a shared Energy Coordinator position.

12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).

Yes, and yes.

13. Review contracting authority/procedures.

TRORC Director reviews contracts and grants. Director signs all checks, except for his expense checks.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws – Updated within the last 2 years
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives – Updated in 2022-3
- Organization Chart - Yes
- Personnel Policies – Less than 1 year old
- Executive Director Job Description - Yes
- Purchase and Procurement Policies – Updated within the last 2 years
- Staff and Board Travel Policies – within Personnel Policies
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed – 6 month review after hire. Annual reviews, thereafter. Staff have input on ED evaluation for Executive Committee Review
- Annual Report and marketing materials -No annual report. TRORC does have a regular newsletter
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials - TRORC has a Board Handbook with Board Member Job Description
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas – Maintained on the TRORC website



Regional Planning Commission Biennial Peer Review

RPC: Windham Regional Commission

Date: TBD, 2024

Participants: Chris Campany (WRC), Peter Gregory (TRORC), Devon Neary (RRPC)

Date of Executive Board Meeting Attended: May 14, 2024

1. A determination of RPC service area to include municipalities, population, and other clients served by the RPC.
WRC serves 27 towns in Windham, Bennington, and Windsor Counties. Town demographic data is in the process of being updated <http://www.windhamregional.org/towns>
2. A determination of the current menu of services (i.e., services provided within a 3-year period) offered by the RPC.
WRC provides a scope of services consistent with other VT RPCs. We do have a successful brownfields program with associated revolving loan fund. Current work program lays out in detail services provided (http://www.windhamregional.org/images/docs/commission/FY2024_WorkProgramAndBudget.pdf)
3. List current staffing levels, experience, and staff assignments by program area.
WRC has 9 full time staff, including the Executive Director, and 2 part time staff (senior planner and office manager). Most staff have multiple program responsibilities. Most WRC staff have at least five years of experience in their respective program areas. Within the last 3 years we have added two senior planners with a focus on municipal and regional planning, which has effectively doubled that capacity. <http://www.windhamregional.org/contact-us2>
4. Assess current Board of Commissioners makeup (i.e., total # of board members, # of elected officials, # of legislators, # of at-large members, etc.).
Towns can appoint up to two commissioners and the Commission can appoint up to 10 Citizen Interest Commissioners. <http://www.windhamregional.org/about/commissioners>. The Executive Board consists of the three WRC officers (chair, vice-chair, secretary-treasurer) and up to 6 commissioners, most of whom chair at least one WRC committee. The Board currently has 8 members (<http://www.windhamregional.org/about/executive-board>).
5. Assess current board committee structure (i.e., standing, advisory, ad hoc).
We have 4 standing committees: Nominating, Finance, Personnel, and Project Review. The full committee list and related committee Purpose and Objectives Statements are available here: <http://www.windhamregional.org/committees>

6. Assess current RPC funding sources, dues and fee structures.
Work program and budget are available here:
http://www.windhamregional.org/images/docs/commission/FY2024_WorkProgramAndBudget.pdf
7. List of RPC participation in federal, state and regional efforts.
WRC participates in programs similar to most RPCs in the state. Additionally senior planners are active in NNECAPA and VPA. Executive Director chairs the VT Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel, is an Executive Committee Member of the CT River Watershed Partnership, is active in the Vermont and larger Staying Connected Initiative as well as the Berkshire to Greens Linkages project in MA, served on a UMass-Amherst National Science Foundation-funded climate migration study committee, is Vice Chair of the Board of the Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development (primarily because of WRC involvement in housing development proposal on the site), and is active with multiple state and federal agencies through these activities as well as his chairing of the VAPDA Emergency Management and Natural Resources Committees. As Chair of the VAPDA Emergency Management Committee he has begun serving as a liaison between the RPCs as a group and the disaster response and recovery agencies and functions at the state and federal levels.
8. RPC checklists utilized when working with municipalities.
Enhanced consultation checklists and Zoning Bylaw review checklists consistent with those agreed upon by ACCD and other RPCs are utilized.
9. Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings.
The WRC regularly participates in Act 250 and Section 248, and Section 248(a) proceedings of significant regional impact. The WRC's project review procedure is described here:
<http://www.windhamregional.org/project-review>
10. Regional plan status (i.e., date of adoption/amendment, enhance energy plan, future land use recommendations). *The 2014 Windham Regional Plan was readopted on June 29, 2021. The Regional Plan is currently in the process of being updated and the WRC is pioneering a process by which to create a fully digital plan that is intended to be more user-friendly and efficacious. A draft plan is almost complete and the public outreach around and review of the draft is anticipated to begin within the next month. We intend to adopt the plan in early 2025.*
11. Shared services enabled (yes or no, plus any specific examples that can be provided)?
Bylaws amended per statute on October 25, 2022.
12. RPC participates in VAPDA Salary and Benefits Survey (yes or no, and RPC understands where their organization lies within the given ranges for each).
Yes.
13. Review contracting authority/procedures.
Last updated April 11, 2023.

Please complete the following checklist. Note that bylaws and policies should be updated within the last 5 years.

- Bylaws
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives
- Organization Chart
- Personnel Policies
- Executive Director Job Description
- Purchase and Procurement Policies
- Staff and Board Travel Policies
- Evaluation form utilized and process followed
- Annual Report and marketing materials
- RPC Board (and staff) Orientation materials
- Copy of Board and Staff Meeting Agendas

Appendix D: Survey instruments



RPC Communications Survey

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate and analyze individual RPC public engagement efforts and communication strategies. Information gathered here will be utilized to offer resources and suggestions that will help amplify RPC communication efforts in the future.

Information gathered here will only be utilized for the purpose of the VAPDA assessment, and will not be shared outside of NADO. Summarized information resulting from this survey will be used to inform descriptive and comparative sections of the final report.

Questions or issues with this survey? Contact Bret Allphin at ballphin@nado.org.

* Required

1. Respondent Name (First and Last): *

2. Respondent Title: *

3. Respondent Email: *

4. Organization Name: *

5. Does your organization have a staff member that is assigned communications-related tasks?

*

- Yes
- No
- Multiple staff help with our organization's communications efforts

6. If "Yes," what is their job title?

7. Does your organization outsource communications work to an agency, consultant or freelancer? *

- No
- Yes

8. If "Yes," what percentage of your communication efforts are outsourced?

- 25% or less
- 100%
- 75%
- 50-75%
- 25-50%

9. Does your organization have an annual documented communications plan or calendar? *

- No
- Yes
- Other

10. Provide optional comments here on your communications plan or calendar.

This question is not required, but available for respondents who may have less than a complete plan or calendar - or wish to provide other explanation.

11. Does your organization have a documented crisis communications plan? *

- No
- Yes

12. Provide optional comments here on your crisis communications plan.

This question is not required, but available for respondents who may have less than a complete crisis communication plan - or wish to provide other explanation.

13. Does your organization have a dedicated communications budget? Or communication line items in administrative grant contracts? *

Yes

No

14. Which of the following tools, if any, does your organization use to enable communication work? *

Direct mail

Canva

Email service such as MailChimp or Constant Contact

Organization website

Adobe software (InDesign, Photoshop, Premiere, etc.)

Social media

Media database (i.e. contact list for local news outlets, press release distribution list)

Ad space purchasing (newspapers, social media, billboards, radio)

Blogging

Other

15. Which describes the level of emphasis your organization is applying to the following? [Rank these 1 to 4 with 4 being the highest level of effort.] *

Shared media (organic social, reviews)

Earned media (media relations, word of mouth, organic search engine optimization)

Blogging/newsletters/website updates

Paid media (sponsored content, paid social ads, pay-per-click)

16. Which of the following do you believe are the top three communication challenges currently facing your organization? *

Please select at most 3 options.

- Being able to cut through the noise and reach your audiences
- Too many priorities to communicate to your audiences
- Lack of employee experience to know how to complete communication efforts
- Ever-expanding duties and not enough time for communications-related tasks
- Measuring results/ROI of current communications efforts
- Leaders not understanding the importance of communications work
- Not enough budget for communications efforts
- Misinformation amongst audiences about what your organization does
- Other

17. What methods does your organization typically use to engage with the public? (e.g. in-person or virtual listening sessions, direct mail to purchased lists, buy ad space on local TV, radio stations, or billboards, etc.) *

18. When thinking of the public engagement efforts above, what is the best estimate for the percentage of the **population you serve** being reached with those efforts? *

- Less than 10%
- 10-20%
- 20-30%
- 30-40%
- 40-50%
- More than 50%

19. Which of the following are techniques your organization uses to measure the results of communications and public engagement efforts? *

- Website traffic (Google Analytics)
- Social media reach
- Email open rates
- Event registrations
- Coverage in local media outlets
- Other

20. If you could have one of the following to help your organization improve its efforts to measure communications, what would you choose? *

- Measurement know-how
- More budget
- Leadership support
- More or better technology
- Other

21. Please indicate your level of agreement. My organization's communications efforts are effective: *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22. Please describe any areas of communications work that your organization would like guidance on how to do more effectively. *



RPC Feedback Survey - Program Offerings and Services

A key focus of this effort is to understand the universe of program and service offerings afforded by the RPC network in Vermont.

Found in this survey are general categories of services and programming - please indicate whether or not your organization provides each of these services. The program and service offerings included here result from the best effort of NADO to inventory available services based on widely available information from RPC websites and other publicly available resources. If there are service offerings or programs that have been omitted from this listing, please note those in the open ended question at the end of the survey.

Problems with this form? Please contact Bret Allphin at ballphin@nado.org.

* Required

1. Name of Respondent: *

2. Which RPC are you representing: *

- Addison County Regional Planning Commission
- Bennington County Regional Commission
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Mount Ascutney Regional Commission
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission
- Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Commission
- Windham Regional Commission

3. Regional Planning and Assistance

	We offer this service	We <u>do not</u> offer this service
Regional Plan Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inter-Municipal Planning/Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Designations Assistance (Downtowns, village centers, neighborhood development areas)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional Workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional Fee for Service Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Inter-Municipal Planning & Assistance

	We offer this service	We <u>do not</u> offer this service
Municipal Plan Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Land Use Bylaw Assistance (Zoning, subdivision, flood hazard)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grant Application and Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local Public Official Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal Consultations/Public Engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development Review Assistance (Subdivision, platting, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural Resources/Historic Preservation Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inter-Municipal Planning/Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal Fee for Service Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Capital Improvement Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing Planning/Assistance (Affordable housing, fair housing, weatherization, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Data/Information Services

	We offer this service	We <u>do not</u> offer this service
GIS Mapping Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Census/Demographic Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Infrastructure Mapping/ Asset Management <i>(Water, sewer, road erosion, signage, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Land Use Mapping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Resource Mapping <i>(forest, farmland, wetland, habitat, floodplains, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic Counts/Analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Data Maintenance <i>(Tax parcels, road centerlines, 911 addresses, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Data Requests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fee for Service Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Transportation Planning

	We offer this service	We <u>do not</u> offer this service
Long Range Transportation Plan or Element	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rural Transportation Planning Organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Metropolitan Planning Organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation Project Priority Ranking (VPSP2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation Advisory Committee (Technical, citizen, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Infrastructure Assessments (Road safety audits, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Transportation Activities (Advisory committees, project development, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Project Assistance (Scenic byways, maritime, rail, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Natural Resource and Environmental Services

	We offer this service	We <u>do not</u> offer this service
Brownfield Site Assessments <i>(Hazardous materials, petroleum, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brownfield Site Remediation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brownfield Funding Administration <i>(Revolving loan funds, assessments, cleanup, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State/Regional Brownfield Coordination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water Quality Programing <i>(604b, stormwater, basin planning, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Land Stewardship <i>(Forest, shorelines, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Resources Plan or Element	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agricultural Plan or Element <i>(Food systems planning, value added agriculture, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreational Facilities Assistance <i>(Trail mapping, assessments, etc.)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Air Quality Programming/ Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Emergency Management Services

	We offer this service	We <u>do not</u> offer this service
Regional Emergency Planning Commission Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Safety Plan or Element	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency Operation Plans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning (<i>All hazard mitigation, hazardous materials, fluvial erosion, etc.</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inter-Regional Coordination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Liasion Services (<i>Pre/post disaster, NFIP, etc.</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Utility Infrastructure Services

	We offer this service	We <u>do not</u> offer this service
Water/Sewer Plan or Element	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Solid Waste Plan or Element	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Telecommunica tions Plan or Element	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Energy Plan or Element	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Energy Audits (<i>Regional, county, municipal, etc.</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coverage and Capacity Analysis/Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build-Out Analysis/Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grant Application and Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service Provider Outreach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Are there programs and or services you offer that **were not captured** in any of the categories and groupings listed above? If so please list them below. Please provide as much detail as possible.

If you wish to speak about any omitted services or programs in greater detail, please contact Bret Allphin at ballphin@nado.org.

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 Microsoft Forms



RPC Feedback Survey - Local Official

A major focus of the effort being led by NADO on behalf of VAPDA is to gauge the level of understanding, participation, and satisfaction of local elected officials with the RPC organizations that serve them.

The questions in this survey are aimed at understanding each of these areas from your perspective, and to gather ideas about unmet needs, considerations for future service offerings, and other improvements that could be implemented across the RPC network in Vermont.

As a recipient of this survey, you may be contacted by Melissa Levy or another NADO team member for a brief phone/virtual interview to collect additional information in relation to this survey.

Questions or issues with this survey form? Contact Bret Allphin at ballphin@nado.org.

* Required

1. Name of respondent: *

2. Respondent title:

3. Organization name: *

4. What is your relationship to the RPC?

- RPC Board Member
- Member Community Official (*Mayor, Selectboard Member, Council Member, Town Committee Member, Town Manager/Administrator, etc.*)
- RPC Committee Member (*Transportation Committee, Water Quality Committee, Brownfield Committee, etc.*)
- Program Participant/Stakeholder
- Interested Party
- None. No Interaction.

5. Which RPC serves your organization? *

Can select more than one option if appropriate.

- Addison County Regional Planning Commission
- Bennington County Regional Commission
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Mount Ascutney Regional Commission
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission
- Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
- Windham Regional Commission

6. How familiar are you with the total portfolio of services offered by your RPC?

	Not Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
Programming Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. How familiar are you with the organizational structure of the RPC?

This includes statutory roles/responsibilities, staff divisions, departments, and programmatic considerations.

	Not Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
Structural Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What is your opinion of the level of **overall engagement** by the RPC in regional development activities in the region?

Examples of this could include support for project development, infrastructure development, housing development, assistance in community engagement efforts, project review, etc.

	Not Engaged	Slightly Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Extremely Engaged
Development Involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How would you describe the amount of communication **received by you from** the RPC?

This can include newsletters, emails, phone calls, or other focused communications and direct contacts from RPC representatives that inform you of RPC events and other information.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Amount of Communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Of the services provided by the RPC, how would you rate the **importance** of each item listed below?

For additional description of what each of these program areas entails, please review the **2024 VAPDA Service Matrix**.

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Neutral	Moderately Important	Very Important
Regional Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data/Information Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Resources and Environmental Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency Management Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utility Infrastructure Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Assistance and Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. In your words, what are the **top three critical services** provided to the region by the RPC? *

These would likely be programmatically related to the options listed in question 10.

12. Are you able to identify **up to three** key areas of need or assistance that are **not currently offered** by the RPC that would make a difference to the region? *

13. Please offer any other feedback on RPC services, performance, or partnerships that might be useful to the research team as we complete this effort.

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RPC Feedback Survey - RPC Board Member

A major focus of the effort being led by NADO on behalf of VAPDA is to gauge the level of understanding, engagement, and satisfaction of RPC board members regarding the RPC that they serve on.

The questions in this survey are aimed at understanding each of these areas from the perspective of board governance and management, program performance, concerns about unmet needs, considerations for future service offerings, and other improvements that could be implemented across the RPC network in Vermont.

Individual responses to this survey will not be shared. Responses will be aggregated to provide generalized feedback on the topics listed.

As a recipient of this survey, you may be contacted by Melissa Levy or another NADO team member for a brief phone/virtual interview to collect additional information in relation to this survey.

Questions or issues with this survey form? Contact Bret Allphin at ballphin@nado.org.

**Note: Some of the questions will refer to general services and programs offered by RPCs, please refer to the Vermont RPC Services Matrix available at www.nado.org/VAPDA for more details about what these groupings entail.

* Required

1. Name of respondent: *

2. Respondent title:

If Applicable.

3. Organization name: *

The municipality or partner you are representing on the RPC governing board.

4. Which RPC board are you a member of? *

- Addison County Regional Planning Commission
- Bennington County Regional Commission
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Mount Ascutney Regional Commission
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission
- Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
- Windham Regional Commission

5. What is your role on the RPC board? *

Select all that apply.

- Voting Member
- Officer (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer)
- Executive Committee/Board
- At-Large
- Other

6. In your service to the RPC board, which type of organization are you representing? *

- Municipal/local government
- Private organization
- Other

7. How long have you been a member of the RPC board? *

- Less than 2 Years
- 2 to 5 Years
- 5 to 10 Years
- 10 Years or More

8. Prior to your appointment to the governing board, were you engaged with the RPC in any way? *

- Yes
- No

9. If yes, how were you engaged with the RPC prior to board appointment? *

- Grantee/ Service Recipient
- Committee Member
- Interested Party
- Other

10. How familiar are you with the total portfolio of services offered by your RPC?

	Not Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
Services Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How familiar are you with the organizational structure of the RPC?

This includes statutory roles/responsibilities, staff divisions, and programmatic considerations.

	Not Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
Structural Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. What is your opinion of the level of overall engagement by the RPC in regional development activities in the region?

Examples of this could include support for project development, infrastructure development, housing development, assistance in community engagement efforts, project review, etc.

	Not Engaged	Slightly Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Extremely Engaged
Development Involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. How would you describe the amount of communication **received by you from** the RPC?

This can include newsletters, emails, phone calls, or other focused communications and direct contacts from RPC representatives that inform you of RPC events and other information.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Amount of Communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Of the services provided by the RPC, how would you rate the **importance** of each item listed below?

For additional description of what each of these program areas entails, please review the **2024 VAPDA Service Matrix**.

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Neutral	Moderately Important	Very Important
Regional Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inter-Municipal Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data/Information Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Resources and Environmental Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency Management Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utility Infrastructure Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Assistance and Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Project Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grant Writing/Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Of the program offerings provided by the RPC, how would you rate the **general performance** in each area listed below?

For additional description of what each of these program areas entails, please review the **2024 VAPDA Service Matrix**.

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Regional Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inter-Municipal Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data/Information Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation Planning and Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Resources and Environmental Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency Management Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utility Infrastructure Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Assistance and Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Project Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grant Writing/Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. In your words, what are the **top three critical services** provided to the region by the RPC? *
 These would likely be programmatically related to the options listed in question 14.

18. In your words, what is the most critical **role** provided to the region by the RPC? *
 This does not have to necessarily be programmatically related, but could be broader items like leadership, collaboration, etc.

19. Are you able to identify **up to three** key areas of need or assistance that are **not currently offered** by the RPC that would make a difference to the region? *

20. Are you able to identify any barriers that prevent the RPC from delivering at the highest possible level? *

21. Is there anything the RPC is engaged in currently, that you feel they should **NOT** be involved in? *

22. Please offer any other feedback on RPC services, performance, or partnerships that might be useful to the research team as we complete this effort.

Add anything of interest or concern here that may not have been covered by the survey questions.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.



RPC Financial Management and Accounting Procedures

The purpose of this brief survey is to gather information on individual financial management and accounting procedures for each of Vermont's RPC organizations.

Information gathered here will only be utilized for the purpose of the VAPDA assessment, and will not be shared outside of NADO. Summarized information resulting from this survey will be used to inform descriptive and comparative sections of the final report.

Questions or issues with this survey? Contact Bret Allphin at ballphin@nado.org.

Reminder: *RPC directed surveys can be completed by any RPC staff member at their discretion. Only one response per RPC should be submitted.*

required

1. Name of Respondent? *

2. Email address of respondent? *

NADO may use this email address to submit any questions pertaining to the answers and information provided in this survey.

3. Which RPC are you representing? *

- Addison County Regional Planning Commission
- Bennington County Regional Commission
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Mount Ascutney Regional Commission
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission
- Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
- Windham Regional Commission

4. Does your RPC organization conduct accounting and financial management activities in house? *

Yes

No

5. How many full time equivalent (FTE) positions are employed in the financial management effort of your organization? *

The value must be a number

6. What accounting method is utilized by your organization? *

Cash

Accrual

Other

7. What was the last date of adoption for RPC purchasing policies governing the procurement of goods and services? *

8. Does the chief executive officer have the ability to make purchases or enter in to contracts up to a predetermined amount without formal board approval? *

Yes

No

9. What is the predetermined amount that the chief executive official can expend without formal board approval? *

Example: All expenditures over \$10,000 must be approved by the board. If there is no limit to the amount please enter **99999**.

The value must be a number

10. Does the RPC have a written policy concerning the handling and processing of cash, checks, and other currency that the organization may be in possession of? *

Yes

No

11. Are financial reports regularly made available to board members and management staff? *

Yes

No

12. Does the RPC engage in future financial forecasting in order to anticipate revenues and expenses required to maintain services? *

Yes

No

13. What was the completion date of the most recent single audit for the RPC?

14. Name of organization that completed the most single recent audit?

15. Are the last three single audit results and materials available on the RPC website?

Yes

No

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.

Appendix E: Interview Contacts and Questions

All parties identified in H.687 (Act 181) Section 50a- Regional Planning Commission Study, adopted in June 2024 were interviewed as required. Additional parties were included at the discretion of VAPDA.

Contacts:

1. Rep Katherine Sims
2. Rep. Laura Sibilila
3. Rep. Seth Bongartz
4. Rep. Lisa Hango
5. Sen. Christopher Bray
6. Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale
7. Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) - Ted Brady
8. VT Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) – Alex Farrell, Jacob Hemmerick, Chris Cochran
9. VT Agency of Transportation (VTrans) – Michele Boomhower
10. VT Dept. of Health (VDH) - Suzanne Kelley
11. VT Emergency Management (VEM) – Eric Forand
12. Economic Development Administration (EDA - Philly office) Katherine Trapani
13. USDA Rural Development – Sarah Waring
14. Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) – Jenna Koloski
15. Vermont Office of Racial Equity (ORE) - Xusana Davis
16. VT Agency of Administration (AOA) - Doug Farnum
17. VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) – Trey Martin
18. VT Agency of Natural Resources – Julie Moore and Neil Kamman
19. VT Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) – Adam Grinold
20. VT Natural Resources Council (VNRC) – Brian Shupe
21. Northern Border Regional Commission – Sarah Lang

Questions:

1. What has your experience been like working with the RPCs?
2. Have you worked with particular RPCs more than others? Which ones?
3. What was that experience like?
4. How have RPCs been helpful to you in your work?
5. How can RPCs be helpful to you moving forward?
6. What is the value proposition for collaborating with RPCs?
7. How could RPCs improve their services to their member municipalities and to the State?

Appendix F: Statewide Scan of RPC Social Media

Organization	Socials Easily Accessible from Website? [Y/N]	Socials Present?	Socials Present, but not Active?	Notes
Addison County Regional Planning Commission	Yes	LinkedIn	LinkedIn	No posts to date
Bennington County Regional Commission	Yes	Facebook		
Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	Yes	Facebook		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Needs to update their Google presence ◊ FB icon broken on homepage of website ◊ Website URL wrong on FB profile
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	No			
Lamoille County Planning Commission	Yes	Facebook	Facebook	No posts since August 2023, June 2022 before that
Mount Ascutney Regional Commission	Yes	Facebook		
Northeastern Vermont Development Association	Yes	Facebook		Intermittent (once per month?)
Northwest Regional Planning Commission	Yes	Facebook YouTube		
Rutland Regional Planning Commission	Yes	LinkedIn Facebook	LinkedIn	No posts to date
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission	Yes	Facebook Instagram LinkedIn YouTube		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ LinkedIn is mostly job posting every few months ◊ YouTube is about once a year or so
Windham Regional Commission	Yes	Facebook		

Appendix G: DEI Focus Group Participants and Discussion Questions

Focus Group Participants

November 12, 2024 2-3 pm

Callie Fishburn – Bennington Regional Planning Commission

Tasha Wallis – Lamoille County Planning Commission

Dave Snedeker – Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Anne Nelson Stoner – Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

November 20, 2024 1-2 pm

Devon Neary – Rutland Regional Planning Commission

Matt Bachler – Windham Regional Commission

Allison Hopkins – Mt. Ascutney Regional Commission

Sarah Wraight – Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission

Greta Brunswick – Northwest Regional Planning Commission

November 20, 2024 3-4 pm

Christian Meyers – Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

Adam Lougee – Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Focus Group Questions

1. Please share your name and role at your RPC, which RPC and where it is located in the state, and your “third place” (where you go in the region outside work and home to relax and recharge)
2. Who is your RPC currently serving? Who would you like to be serving? Who is being underserved or even missed in your program areas? How are you paying attention to changing demographics and future needs in your region?
3. What outreach and engagement methods are you using to reach those you are serving? How do they hear about the work of the RPCs?
4. One outreach method to toss, one outreach method to bring in.
5. One thing each RPC could do to ensure they are a reflection of the whole region’s people.

Appendix H: Individual RPC Survey Response Summaries

Addison County Regional Planning Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

14 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 11 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (5)’ or ‘moderately familiar (6)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two responded as ‘somewhat familiar’ and one responded as ‘slightly familiar.’
- 12 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (4)’ or ‘moderately familiar (8)’ with the **total RPC portfolio of services**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 13 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged (7)’ or ‘moderately engaged (6)’ in **regional development activities**. One respondent indicated their opinion that ACRC was ‘not engaged’ in regional development activities.
- 13 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (7),’ ‘very good (4),’ or ‘good (2).’ One respondent indicated that the amount of communication was ‘fair.’

Open Ended Questions – Response Summary

When asked what crucial services ACRPC provided, board members indicated that the various planning services that ACRPC provides were critical to them. Some of the planning services highlighted were transportation, regional, housing, and municipal planning. Board members also highlighted grant writing and managing as critical services ACRPC provides. ACRPC’s role in environmental protection and natural resource management were also seen as critical to respondents.

Most respondents were not able to identify an area of need for which ACRPC was not currently providing a service. Those that did identify need areas expressed a desire for ACRPC to increase activity in addressing housing issues in the region. Others requested additional surface water quality data beyond what is already being provided and advocacy for member groups before state agencies. The desire for public listening sessions was also expressed.

Respondents agreed that the greatest barrier to ACRPC is financial limitations. This can create challenges in the hiring and retention of staff, can make housing difficult for staff to maintain due to salary limitations, and can lead to existing staff becoming overwhelmed by the size of the workload. One respondent also commented that the voluntary nature of delegates impedes the commitment and professionalism of commission members.

Board members expressed strong support for the work of ACRPC when asked to give general feedback. Respondents also discussed the limitations that RPCs have in Vermont given the highly localized form of government that Vermont utilizes.

Local Elected Official Survey

13 Responses

Towns Represented – Addison, Goshen, Lincoln, Middlebury, Monkton, Panton, Salisbury, Shoreham, Starksboro, Ripton, Waltham

Survey Highlights

- 11 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2),’ or ‘moderately familiar (9),’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar (2).’
- 10 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (3),’ or ‘moderately familiar (7)’ with the **total RPC portfolio of services**. Three indicated they were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 12 respondents expressed an opinion that RPCs were ‘extremely engaged (8)’ or ‘moderately engaged (4)’ in **regional development activities**. One respondent indicated that they were ‘somewhat engaged.’
- All 13 respondents indicated that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (2),’ ‘very good (8),’ or ‘good (3).’

Amongst elected officials there was broad agreement that the most critical service provided by ACRPC is its planning functions. This included transportation, municipal, housing, and energy planning. ACRPC also provides critical grant writing and management support to its region as well as emergency management assistance. Some respondents found ACRPC’s mapping services to be critical to their region.

Elected officials had a number of additional services they would like ACRPC to provide. The first was a desire for more regular contact between ACRPC and the governments of the region, particularly about any changes in planning requirements that would impact communities. Elected officials also requested additional services to address housing needs in the region. Elected officials also expressed a desire for more specific services including regionalization planning and mediation services, civil engineering staffing, and act 181 interim guidance.

When asked to provide general feedback about the work of ACRPC, elected officials broadly expressed support and appreciation for the hard work of ACRPC and its staff. Some respondents expressed a desire for semi-annual check-ins with ACRPC staff and increased assistance for small towns in the region. One respondent expressed disappointment with ACRPC’s handling of a LHMP contract revision and reported ACRPC had missed many deadlines and had a protracted billing process.

Bennington County Regional Planning Commission - Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

11 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 8 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (5)’ or ‘moderately familiar (3)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two respondents indicated they were ‘somewhat familiar’ while one respondent said they were ‘not familiar.’
- 9 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (3)’ or ‘moderately familiar (6)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar (1)’ or ‘slightly familiar (1).’
- All 11 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged (8)’ or ‘moderately engaged (3)’ in **regional development activities**.
- 10 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (4),’ ‘very good (5),’ or ‘good (1).’ One respondent indicated that the amount of communication was ‘fair.’

Open Ended Questions – Response Summary

BCRPC board members identified a series of crucial services they felt the organization provides to the region. There was broad agreement amongst respondents that BCRPC provides a variety of valuable planning services including transportation and municipal planning as well as broad project management support. Board members also found that BCRPC provides critical grant and technical assistance to the region. Board members expressed that BCRPC provides a critical role in facilitating collaboration between the various towns of the region. Some respondents also identified the emergency and hazard management services of BCRPC as critical.

Respondents were able to identify some gaps in the assistance that BCRPC was providing to the region. There were a variety of responses to this question from board members. Two trends that did present themselves were a desire for more inter-municipality meetings and communications facilitated by BCRPC, and for increased assistance with applying for grant funding. Respondents also requested more technological support, in particular GIS support, and for BCRPC to work on the consolidation of emergency response services.

When asked to identify barriers that BCRPC faces, respondents indicated that a lack of regional cohesion was a barrier to success. Respondents described a sense that BCRPC had more of a presence in Bennington itself rather than across region as a whole. Others indicated that municipal officials may be unwilling or unable to collaborate with BCRPC. Board members also indicated that staff capacity may stand as a barrier for the organization.

The vast majority of respondents did not feel that there was anything BCRPC is currently engaging in that it should not be. Only one respondent indicated an opinion that BCRPC was involved in private land issues that it should not be.

Respondents had a wide range of generalized feedback about the work of BCRPC. These comments were broadly positive and expressed that BCRPC is a key institution for the region both in how it can tie the communities of the region together and serve as a direct link to the state government. The organization was cited as a resource for both grant tracking and remaining updated on regulatory changes that impact the region. Respondents seemed hopeful that BCRPC will remain a positive force in the region if it is able to deepen the ties between regional towns and defend the region against out of state interests currently taking advantage of weak government infrastructure.

Local Elected Official Survey

11 Responses

Towns Represented – Arlington, Bennington, Dorset, Manchester, North Bennington, Old Bennington, Pownal, Rupert, Sunderland

Survey Highlights

- 9 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (1),’ or ‘moderately familiar (8)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 10 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (3),’ or ‘moderately familiar (7)’ with the **total RPC portfolio of services**. One indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- All 11 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged (7)’ or ‘moderately engaged (4)’ in **regional development activities**.
- All 11 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (3),’ ‘very good (5),’ or ‘good (3).’

Elected official respondents identified the various planning services as the most critical programmatic offerings of BCRPC. This included regional, municipal, transportation, and emergency planning services amongst others. Other respondents indicated that BCRPC was able to provide key assistance with town zoning and bylaw review. Elected officials also indicated that BCRPC was able to provide valuable assistance related to grants.

Local elected officials expressed a variety of services they would like to see BCRPC expand to offer including increased long range planning services and enhanced public safety coordination. Others highlighted a desire for greater interaction with municipalities and notification of grant funding opportunities.

Respondents provided strong positive feedback for the work of BCRPC. Elected officials expressed that the professional support offered by BCRPC helped to augment volunteer and part time municipal government staffing. One respondent expressed a desire for BCRPC to add engineering support to the services it provides.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

22 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 21 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (11)’ or ‘moderately familiar (10)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. One indicated that they were ‘slightly familiar.’
- 20 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (10)’ or ‘moderately familiar (10)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. One was ‘slightly familiar’ and one did not answer.
- 14 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Eight respondents indicated they felt the RPC was ‘moderately engaged (5)’ or ‘somewhat engaged (3).’
- 18 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (8),’ ‘very good (8),’ or ‘good (2).’ Three responded with ‘fair’ and one responded ‘poor.’

When asked to identify critical services provided by CCRPC, board members responses coalesced around a few key areas. Transportation planning assistance was consistently highlighted as well as municipal and regional planning. Board members also indicated that CCRPC worked to connect municipal governments to prevent siloing. Some respondents also indicated that CCRPC provided assistance with grant writing and administration.

Many respondents did not indicate any areas of service they felt CCRPC could expand into when asked. Others indicated that they felt CCRPC should expand its equity work in the areas of disability and aging equity as well as town financial equity. Some indicated a desire for increased transportation planning around cars and the integration of bike and pedestrian pathways into transportation infrastructure. There was also a trend of respondents that wanted CCRPC to work with the coordination of emergency response services.

The largest barrier that board members felt is facing CCRPC is a lack of resources, both in terms of staffing and funding. Others indicated that the lack of county governments in Vermont was an institutional barrier that CCRPC faced when coordinating programming and services.

The majority of responses did not indicate a service area that CCRPC should discontinue. One critique of CCRPC was the need to better balance services between rural, urban, and suburban municipalities. Another respondent felt that a different organization should be responsible for clean water services.

The generalized feedback offered by CCRPC board members was very positive of the work of CCRPC as well as its staff and leadership. One respondent indicated that the organization’s EAC should be at the top of the organizational flowchart. Another respondent also felt board meetings were too short and that board members should be providing greater input.

Local Elected Official Survey

21 Responses

Towns Represented – Bolton, Buel's Gore, Charlotte, Colchester, Essex, Essex Junction, Hinesburg, Jericho, Milton, Richmon, Shelburne, South Burlington, St. George, Westford

Survey Highlights

- 10 respondents indicated that they were 'extremely familiar (5)' or 'moderately familiar (5)' with the **RPC organizational structure**. Ten indicated that they were 'somewhat familiar (9)' or 'slightly familiar (1)'. One responded, 'not familiar.'
- 12 respondents indicated that they were 'extremely familiar (6)' or 'moderately familiar (6)' with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Nine were 'somewhat familiar.'
- 11 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was 'extremely engaged' in **regional development activities**. Nine respondents indicated they felt the RPC was 'moderately engaged (8)' or 'somewhat engaged (1)'. One responded, 'slightly engaged.'
- 18 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was 'excellent (11)', 'very good (4)', or 'good (3)'. Three responded with 'fair.'

Elected officials highlighted a number of critical services that CCRPC provides to their municipalities. Most mentioned planning services and in particular highlighted transportation, emergency, and municipal planning. Others indicated that CCRPC plays a role in augmenting undertrained or understaffed offices. CCRPC also provides critical support when identifying laws and regulations that apply to municipal operations.

Respondents highlighted a number of areas they felt CCRPC could provide greater assistance in. These included the desire to increase collaboration between municipalities for greater efficiency. Others requested CCRPC expand its role in both planning and funding acquisition for housing projects. Elected officials also stated that they wanted CCRPC to increase its role in emergency and disaster planning.

Overall, elected officials gave extremely positive generalized feedback of the work of CCRPC. They felt CCRPC provides valuable services despite limited staff. One concern expressed was that CCRPC may be stretched too thinly, and that greater staffing and funding resources may be needed. One request made by a respondent was that CCRPC should increase its climate resilience planning and another asked that CCRPC work as a bulwark against encroachment from the state government on the governing of towns.

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission - Online Survey Response Summary

Borad Member Survey

8 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 7 respondents indicated that they were 'extremely familiar (4)' or 'moderately familiar (3)' with the **RPC organizational structure**. One indicated that they were 'somewhat familiar.'
- All 8 respondents indicated that they were 'extremely familiar (1)' or 'moderately familiar (7)' with the **RPC portfolio of services**.
- 2 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was 'extremely engaged' in **regional development activities**. Six respondents indicated they felt the RPC was 'moderately engaged (4)' or 'somewhat engaged (2).'
- All 8 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was 'excellent (5)' or 'very good (3).'

Board members highlighted a few key vital services that CVRPC provides. The first was facilitating collaboration between municipalities in the region. Board members also highlighted the transportation, emergency, regional, and municipal planning services CVRPC provides, particularly to understaffed municipalities. CVRPC was also highlighted as a liaison between state and federal agencies for both funding and regulatory issues.

Respondents indicated a variety of service areas they would like CVRPC to expand into. Board members suggested that CVRPC take a larger role in telecommunication and public health communication infrastructure. Others want CVRPC to play a more active role in capital improvement planning. One respondent felt CVRPC should expand regulatory functions to take the place of counties. Some board members did not offer any areas that they wished to see CVRPC expand into.

There was broad agreement amongst board members that staff turnover was the largest barrier to CVRPC performing at the highest level possible. One board member also indicated that a lack of board involvement in the organization could impact organizational performance. Board members did not indicate that there were any areas of service that CVRPC was currently engaging in that it should end its involvement in.

When asked to provide general comments on the organization, CVRPC board members were broadly very positive of the work of the organization and felt that staffing levels had reached a point where the organization would be able to better achieve its mission. One respondent reported that CVRPC should take a more active role in responding to flooding concerns and another wanted CVRPC to provide more input on Vtrans project priorities.

Local Elected Official Survey

14 Responses

Towns Represented – Cabot, Calais, Marshfield, Middlesex, Montpelier, Moretown, Northfield, Waitsfield, Washington, Waterbury, Worcester.

Survey Highlights

- 4 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (1)’ or ‘moderately familiar (3)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Eight indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar (4)’ or ‘slightly familiar (4).’ Two respondents indicated that they were ‘not familiar.’
- 9 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (1)’ or ‘moderately familiar (8)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Five indicated they were ‘somewhat familiar (3)’ or ‘slightly familiar (2).’
- 10 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged (5)’ or ‘moderately engaged (5)’ in **regional development activities**. Four respondents indicated they felt the RPC was ‘moderately engaged.’
- 12 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (2),’ ‘very good (3),’ or ‘good (7).’ One felt the communication was ‘fair,’ and one felt it was ‘poor.’

Elected officials indicated that the transportation, municipal, emergency, and regional planning services were amongst the most critical services provided by CVRPC. Survey respondents also surfaced that they felt CVRPC’s zoning and regulatory assistance was of critical importance to them.

There were a variety of opinions about what service areas CVRPC should expand into. There was a trend of respondents who believe CVRPC should work more to facilitate cooperation between towns of the region. Others indicated that they felt CVRPC should provide services in the housing sector and additional assistance with zoning. There was also a call for CVRPC to more actively include conservation and other climate related values in their work.

When asked to give generalized feedback, elected officials highlighted a number of topics. Many expressed a positive opinion of CVRPC and had positive working relationships with the staff. In particular CVRPC is perceived as being very helpful to towns with small municipal staffs and volunteers. Others were frustrated with CVRPC either for not being able to get maps printed by the organization or for a lack of input from CVRPC about certain issues like telecommunication infrastructure or sewage. These issues broadly came down to an issue of communication between CVRPC and the towns they serve according to respondents.

Lamoille County Planning Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

17 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 14 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (6)’ or ‘moderately familiar (8)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar’ and one indicated ‘not familiar.’
- 15 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (7)’ or ‘moderately familiar (8)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. One was ‘slightly familiar’ and one was ‘not familiar.’
- 10 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Seven respondents indicated they felt the RPC was ‘moderately engaged (5)’ or ‘somewhat engaged (2).’
- All 17 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (9),’ ‘very good (6),’ or ‘good (2).’

Board members highlighted regional planning, project management, and grant writing/administration as critical services provided by LCPC. These functions are valued for assisting municipalities that lack full-time staff and for fostering intermunicipal cooperation, transportation planning, and emergency preparedness. LCPC's ability to support municipalities with planning and regulatory compliance was frequently noted. Additionally, the organization offers a regional perspective on significant projects, facilitates collaboration among towns, and provides specialized expertise critical for smaller towns with limited resources.

Many respondents did not identify new needs but emphasized areas like communication union district support and climate adaptation planning. A few mentioned potential improvements in housing, transportation, and workforce development planning. When asked to identify challenges that LCPC is facing, board members identified limited outreach, jurisdictional constraints, staffing issues due to high housing costs, and spreading staff resources thinly. Some respondents called for increased community engagement and awareness of RPC’s functions.

Most participants did not feel there were activities that LCPC should disengage from. A few cautioned about overextending into areas like energy planning without sufficient expertise. When asked for generalized feedback, LCPC board members praised the organization for its comprehensive support and effective partnerships, though concerns about adapting to legislative changes and potential restructuring of regional organizations were noted.

Local Elected Official Survey

19 Responses

Towns Represented – Belvidere, Cambridge, Johnson, Morrystown, Morrisville, Stowe, Wolcott

Survey Highlights

- 17 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (11)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar.’

- 15 respondents indicated that they were 'extremely familiar (2)' or 'moderately familiar (13) with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Four were 'somewhat familiar.'
- 17 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was 'extremely engaged' in **regional development activities**. Two respondents indicated they felt the RPC was 'moderately engaged.'
- All 19 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was 'excellent (10),' 'very good (6),' or 'good (3).'

Local elected officials identified transportation, energy, municipal, and regional planning as critical services provided by LCPC. Elected officials also expressed that LCPC serves as an area of collaboration for the towns of the region while also representing the region to state and federal agencies. Some respondents also highlighted LCPC's information and data services as critical to them.

When asked if there were areas that LCPC should expand their services into, some respondents indicated they did not have any additional service areas LCPC should interact with. Others indicated they wanted LCPC to do more to foster connection between the towns of the region. Some respondents also suggested LCPC provide more infrastructure planning.

Elected officials provided many positive comments about the work of LCPC when asked to provide general feedback. Many find the efforts of LCPC critical to the work of their towns.

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

6 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 5 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (1)’ or ‘moderately familiar (4)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. One indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 4 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (2)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. One was ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘slightly familiar.’
- 5 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. One respondent did not answer.
- 5 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (4)’ or ‘very good (1).’ One responded ‘fair.’

When surveyed, MARC board members said that the planning services of MARC were amongst the most critical that the organization provides the region. These planning services include municipal, transportation, and regional planning assistance. Respondents also found that MARC provided crucial grant writing assistance to the region as well as advocacy support. Board members also expressed that MARC provided research and professional support.

Broadly, board members did not indicate areas of service they felt MARC should expand into. Some did indicate they wanted MARC to engage in functions that would be considered regional governance while others wanted MARC to work on short term rental management as part of the organization’s municipal planning. Board members were in complete agreement that there were no areas of engagement that MARC should discontinue. When asked to provide generalized feedback board members expressed support for the work of MARC and a feeling that MARC was achieving its mission well.

Local Elected Official Survey

8 Responses

Towns Represented – Cavendish, Chester, Reading, Springfield, West Windsor, Windsor

Survey Highlights

- 5 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (3)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘slightly familiar.’
- 5 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (3)’ or ‘moderately familiar (2)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Three were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 7 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. One respondent said ‘moderately engaged.’
- All 8 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (2)’ or ‘very good (6).’

Elected officials were in broad agreement that the municipal, transportation, and regional planning services provided by MARC were critical to the region. There was also broad agreement that MARC provides crucial town planning and zoning services. Others indicated that MARC provided key legislative and granting assistance.

Elected officials indicated they would like to see MARC expand its services to provide more extensive grant management and town land use administration services.

Elected officials provided very positive general feedback about MARC. They were in agreement that MARC is an asset to their community and that the staff is a great partner to their towns.

Northwest Regional Planning Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

8 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 5 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (3)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. One indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar,’ one was ‘slightly familiar,’ and one was ‘not familiar.’
- 6 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (4)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. One was ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘slightly familiar.’
- 5 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Two responded ‘moderately engaged,’ and one responded ‘slightly engaged.’
- 7 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (5),’ ‘very good (1),’ or ‘good (1).’ One responded ‘poor.’

The NRPC board generally reports that NRPC’s most critical roles are providing guidance to localities and serving as a liaison between local and state governments. They identify regional and municipal planning support, grant writing assistance, and transportation and emergency planning as the key services provided by the RPC.

Regional animal control, mediation services, a focus on economic growth, and providing staff capacity for localities were identified as gaps for NRPC, while funding, lack of recognition, and lack of public participation were all identified as challenges.

Respondents felt that the RPC is doing little it should not be, beyond excess process for approving cell tower sites and town plans. Generally respondents complimented NRPC staff quality, leadership, expertise, and efficiency in delivering regional services.

Local Elected Official Survey

8 Responses

Towns Represented – Bakersfield, Fairfax, Fairfield, Montgomery, South Hero, Swanton

Survey Highlights

- 5 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (3)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. One indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar,’ one was ‘slightly familiar,’ and one was ‘not familiar.’
- 6 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (4)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. One was ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘slightly familiar.’
- 5 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Two respondents said ‘moderately engaged’ and one responded ‘slightly engaged.’

- 7 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was 'excellent (5),' 'very good (1),' or 'good (1).' One responded 'poor.'

Elected officials identified municipal planning support (land use, emergency, and transportation) and emergency management services as the RPC's most important services for the region.

Respondents thought the RPC could make a bigger difference by offering additional staff capacity to localities and by getting more involved with education, animal control, and public health work.

Generally local elected officials praised the RPC for its professionalism, connections throughout the state, and quality service provision and support to localities.

Northeastern Vermont Development Association – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

15 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 12 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (6)’ or ‘moderately familiar (6)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Two indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘not familiar.’
- 13 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (3)’ or ‘moderately familiar (10)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. One was ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘slightly familiar.’
- 13 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. One responded ‘moderately engaged’ and one responded ‘somewhat engaged.’
- 14 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (6),’ ‘very good (7),’ or ‘good (1).’ One responded ‘fair.’

NVDA board members identified a variety of services as critical, including regional and municipal planning, grant writing and administration, and informing towns of various opportunities and helping them to take advantage of them. They had similarly diverse responses when asked what the RPC’s most critical role in the region was, including regional and municipal planning and grant writing, project management, outreach to businesses, and external promotion of the region to investors.

Key areas of assistance not currently offered included robust business support, firm attraction, and specialized planning assistance. The board members thought that the main barriers to the RPC reaching the highest level of success were a lack of town participation, financial support, and a lack of understanding of the needs of marginalized groups.

They generally did not feel the RPC is overstepping in any identifiable area, and praised it for its extensive programming, staff quality, and responsiveness.

Local Elected Official Survey

8 Responses

Towns Represented – Albany, Barnet, Barton Village, Glover, Lunenburg, Newport City, St. Johnsbury, Wheelock

Survey Highlights

- 4 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (1)’ or ‘moderately familiar (3)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Three indicated that they were ‘slightly familiar’ and one was ‘not familiar.’
- 6 respondents indicated that they were ‘moderately familiar with the **RPC portfolio of services**. One was ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘not familiar.’

- 5 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was 'extremely engaged' in **regional development activities**. One respondent said 'moderately engaged,' one responded 'somewhat engaged,' and one responded 'not engaged.'
- 7 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was 'excellent (2)' or 'very good (5).' One responded 'poor.'

Local elected officials more frequently identified business support as a critical RPC service, and equally identified planning and grant writing services. They thought the RPC could further help the region by expanding administrative services to small towns and expanding its voice as a regional leader on economic development issues.

Some respondents praised NVDA as a well-run organization that has been a key partner to their localities, but others felt that it does not provide adequate support or that it lacks the staff capacity to meet its organizational goals.

Rutland Regional Planning Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

14 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 11 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (5)’ or ‘moderately familiar (6)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Three indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 12 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (4)’ or ‘moderately familiar (8)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Two were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 10 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Two responded ‘moderately engaged’ and two responded ‘somewhat engaged.’
- All 14 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (5),’ ‘very good (5),’ or ‘good (4).’

RRPC Board Members identified grant writing and assistance, planning work (regional, municipal, natural resources, emergency management, etc), business development, and municipal board guidance as key services provided by the RPC. They identified regional planning, communication, and local assistance as the most critical role provided to the region, and felt that more match-free grant funding, training on state resources, and emergency management services could help the region improve.

The board members identified state regulatory burden and staff retention as significant barriers for success of the RPC. Some expressed feelings that RRPC is too involved in local programming and tries to compete too much against private enterprise. Finally, they praised the RPC’s collaborative spirit but some expressed that they don’t communicate well with the general public and overstep their boundaries on some planning projects.

Local Elected Official Survey

39 Responses

Towns Represented – Benson, Brandon, Castleton, Danby, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Killington, Mendon, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, Pawlet, Pittsford, Proctor, Rutland, Shrewsbury, Sudbury, Tinmouth, Wallingford, Wells, West Rutland.

Survey Highlights

- 23 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (8)’ or ‘moderately familiar (15)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Ten indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar,’ four were ‘slightly familiar,’ and two were ‘not familiar.’
- 27 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (9)’ or ‘moderately familiar (19)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Seven were ‘somewhat familiar’ and four were ‘slightly familiar.’
- 22 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Fourteen respondents said ‘moderately engaged,’ two responded ‘somewhat engaged,’ and one responded ‘slightly engaged.’

- 37 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (17),’ ‘very good (13),’ or ‘good (7).’ One responded ‘fair.’

Local elected officials described planning work (local, regional, transportation, environmental), information sharing, emergency management, and grant identification and management as the RPC’s critical services.

Respondents felt the RPC could make more of a difference by training local government staff in various areas, expanding grant services, working on housing, agriculture, and historic preservation issues, and by creating a buying pool for local government employee benefits.

They praised the RPC for its support for small towns, its accessibility, and its work to standardize various local government processes.

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

17 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 11 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (6)’ or ‘moderately familiar (5)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Four indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar’ and two responded ‘slightly familiar.’
- 13 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (5)’ or ‘moderately familiar (8)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Four were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 12 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Three responded ‘moderately engaged’ and two responded ‘somewhat engaged.’
- 16 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (9),’ ‘very good (5),’ or ‘good (2).’ One responded ‘fair.’

Board members chose regional and local planning, grant writing and management, transportation planning, emergency management, designation assistance, and intermunicipal coordination as key services offered by the RPC. They saw planning assistance, intermunicipal coordination, and emergency management as the agency’s most critical role, and identified junk car removal, project management, and community engagement as areas of need.

Barriers to RPC identified included staffing, funding, and a lack of state leadership and resources for the RPC. Board members thought the RPC was mostly only engaged in appropriate activities, but one noted that they put too much time into financial investments.

Finally, respondents praised staff and the assistance provided by the RPC but noted that it has an unusually high rate of staff turnover and that it should communicate with the public more effectively. One respondent asked that the Council of Regional Commissions be revived.

Local Elected Official Survey

20 Responses

Towns Represented – Bethel, Braintree, Corinth, Fairlee, Hartford, Hartland, Norwich, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, Strafford, West Fairlee, Woodstock, Vershire

Survey Highlights

- 10 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (5)’ or ‘moderately familiar (5)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Five indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar,’ four were ‘slightly familiar,’ and one was ‘not familiar.’
- 12 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (6)’ or ‘moderately familiar (6)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Seven were ‘somewhat familiar’ and one was ‘slightly familiar.’

- 12 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was 'extremely engaged' in **regional development activities**. Four respondents said 'moderately engaged,' three responded 'somewhat engaged,' and one responded 'slightly engaged.'
- 19 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was 'excellent (5),' 'very good (8),' or 'good (6).' One responded 'fair.'

Local elected officials identified a variety of items as the most critical provided by the RPC, including planning and zoning assistance, environmental planning, transportation planning, emergency management services, information sharing, and general technical assistance to towns.

Respondents felt that housing development, outreach for regional planning, public health planning, pooled services, legal assistance, and staff capacity were all areas of need in the region.

Finally, their feedback included praise for their professionalism, quality of work, and information sharing, as well as concern that some communities do not fully understand how to work with the RPC.

Windham Regional Commission – Online Survey Response Summary

Board Member Survey

22 Responses

Survey Highlights

- 15 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (5)’ or ‘moderately familiar (10)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Five indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar’ and two responded ‘slightly familiar.’
- 17 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (6)’ or ‘moderately familiar (11)’ with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Five were ‘somewhat familiar.’
- 12 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was ‘extremely engaged’ in **regional development activities**. Nine responded ‘moderately engaged’ and one responded ‘somewhat engaged.’
- 19 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was ‘excellent (9),’ ‘very good (7),’ or ‘good (3).’ Three responded ‘fair.’

WRC Board Members identified regional and local planning, grant writing, project management, brownfields work, intergovernmental coordination, information sharing, and emergency management as the most critical services it provides to the region. They saw intergovernmental coordination, capacity augmentation, transportation planning, regional planning, disaster mitigation, and vision setting as the most critical role of the RDO.

Areas of need not currently addressed by the RPC included utility planning, housing assistance, homeless services, recreation, emergency services, and coordinating among towns to increase eligibility for federal assistance.

Respondents felt the RPC was prevented from achieving at its highest possible level by its limited influence on state decision-making, staffing and financial limitations, and by local control; they further noted a desire for the RPC to be involved in marketing for business development in the region.

Finally, they noted that the staff work hard and do good work but that the commission should consider adding resiliency and sustainability planners.

Local Elected Official Survey

37 Responses

Towns Represented – Athens, Bellows Falls, Brookline, Dover, Grafton, Guilford, Londonderry, Marlboro, Newfane, Putney, Readsboro, Rockingham, Searsburg, Stratton, Wardsboro, Westminster, Whitingham, Wilmington, Vernon

Survey Highlights

- 15 respondents indicated that they were ‘extremely familiar (2)’ or ‘moderately familiar (13)’ with the **RPC organizational structure**. Twelve indicated that they were ‘somewhat familiar,’ six were ‘slightly familiar,’ and four were ‘not familiar.’

- 24 respondents indicated that they were 'extremely familiar (6)' or 'moderately familiar (18) with the **RPC portfolio of services**. Ten were 'somewhat familiar,' two were 'slightly familiar' and one was 'not familiar.'
- 20 respondents indicated an opinion that the RPC was 'extremely engaged' in **regional development activities**. Eight respondents said 'moderately engaged,' seven responded 'somewhat engaged,' one responded 'slightly engaged,' and one responded 'not engaged.'
- 33 respondents expressed an opinion that the **amount of communication received from the RPC** was 'excellent (11),' 'very good (10),' or 'good (12).' One responded 'fair' and three responded 'poor.'

Local elected officials identified grant support, planning work, communications, intergovernmental coordination, and information sharing as key roles the RPC provides to the region. Respondents felt more robust resource help, pooling municipal resources, housing assistance, staff capacity support, energy planning, and emergency service coordination were all roles the RPC could fill but currently does not.

Finally, they praised the usefulness of WRC but some noted that it should improve its communications with localities and the public.

Appendix I: New England COG Model

A **Council of Governments (COG)** is a regional planning and coordination organization made up of representatives from local governments (such as cities, towns, counties, or special districts) within a specific geographic area. COGs are designed to address issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries, such as transportation, housing, economic development, environmental management, and public safety.

Key Features of Councils of Governments include the following:

1. **Voluntary Membership:** Local governments join COGs voluntarily to collaborate on shared regional challenges and opportunities. Membership may include elected officials, administrators, or both.
2. **Regional Focus:** COGs operate at a regional scale, often covering multiple counties or metropolitan areas, to address issues that individual local governments cannot effectively tackle alone.
3. **Functions and Roles:**
 - a. **Planning and Coordination:** Develop regional plans, such as transportation plans, land use strategies, and economic development plans (e.g., Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies or CEDS).
 - b. **Grant Administration:** Act as administrators for federal or state funding programs, distributing funds to local governments and monitoring compliance.
 - c. **Technical Assistance:** Provide expertise, data, and training to member governments on topics like infrastructure planning, housing development, and disaster preparedness.
 - d. **Advocacy:** Represent the region's collective interests to state and federal governments.
4. **Funding Sources:** COGs are typically funded through a combination of member dues, federal and state grants, and service fees.

In New England, there are COGs that operate a bit differently. For the purposes of this report, we are calling this the “New England COG model.” For example, many of their governing boards are made up of Chief Elected Officials (mayors or select people). For many, when voters in a municipality elect a mayor or select person, they are also electing them to serve on the COG governing board. Because so many New England states do not have county governments, COGs serve another function, which is to provide a basis for intergovernmental cooperation in dealing with a wide range of issues.

In New England, **Councils of Governments (COGs)** or **Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs)** are authorized to support shared services across municipalities through various enabling legislation at the state level. The legal frameworks that empower these organizations to coordinate regional cooperation, facilitate shared services, and support intermunicipal agreements differ by state. Below is a breakdown of the enabling legislation and legal language across New England states that allows COGs to facilitate and support shared services, along with some examples of COGs and how they support shared services.

Connecticut

In Connecticut, for example, the COG governing boards bring together the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs, or mayors and first select people) of the municipalities in the region to discuss matters of mutual interest and to address shared problems.

The State of Connecticut supports service sharing by statute and through various grant programs. The Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) administered by the Office of Policy & Management (OPM) offers an opportunity to lower barriers of entry for shared services. Grant recipients can use the program to fund staff and support infrastructure to start up a new shared service venture. Both councils of governments (COG) and regional education service centers (RESC) are eligible to apply to the RPIP on behalf of their members.

- **Enabling Legislation:**
 - **Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Title 7, Chapter 97:** This chapter authorizes municipalities in Connecticut to form **regional councils of governments (COGs)**. It allows COGs to support shared services through the creation of **intermunicipal agreements** for the joint provision of various services such as transportation, public health, and emergency services.
- **Language:**
 - **Section 7-136** authorizes municipalities to enter into “**interlocal agreements**” for shared services, and these agreements can be facilitated by COGs.
 - COGs may **coordinate the provision of services on behalf of municipalities**, such as public safety dispatching or regional transportation services.
- **Example of Language:**
 - “A regional council of governments may assist municipalities in the region in providing services jointly, including, but not limited to, public safety, public health, and planning services.”

Sec. 7-148cc. Joint performance of municipal functions. Notwithstanding the provisions of the general statutes or any special act, charter, special act charter, home rule ordinance or local law, two or more municipalities may jointly perform any function that each municipality may perform separately under any provisions of the general statutes or of any special act, charter or home rule ordinance by entering into an interlocal agreement pursuant to sections 7-339a to 7-339l, inclusive.

Public Act 24-151 Section 127. Authorizes COGs or groups of two or more municipalities to make appointments on behalf of municipalities for municipal functions that are subject to a shared services or regional services agreement The act authorizes a regional council of governments (COG), or a municipality acting jointly with at least one other municipality, to make any appointment on behalf of a municipality for municipal functions that are subject to a shared services or regional services agreement. The appointments must apply jointly to each municipality, that is a party to the agreement and be instead of the municipality’s individual appointment.

Capital Region COG (CRCOG) based in Hartford is a proponent of shared services models.

Shared services can provide municipalities, school districts, councils of governments, and other public agencies with the ability to pool their resources to provide a higher level of service, while taking advantage of economies of scale to utilize taxpayer funds more efficiently and effectively. Service sharing is often used to provide administrative and support services, such as financial management, information technology, and facilities maintenance. Within the CRCOG region, the municipalities of Mansfield, Plainville, and West Hartford all share administrative and support services with their respective school districts.

The shared services model is also effective for community-based services, particularly those requiring a specialized professional or technical skill set such as animal control, building inspection, waste management, and public health. The Town of Bolton, for instance, manages a regional building inspection program that serves three other communities – Andover, Ashford, and Willington. As another example, the municipalities of Windsor and Bloomfield have shared a landfill and transfer station for many years.

Good governance, communication, and collaboration are all essential components to a successful shared services partnership. Interlocal agreements or other collaborative agreements are recommended as a governance tool to detail how the participating entities will fund, manage, and provide shared services. Regular meetings and interaction between the principals is also encouraged to foster communication and collaboration, and to track performance.

Additionally, the [Capitol Region Purchasing Council \(CRPC\)](#) is frequently used for joint contracting, currently serving over 140 municipalities, BOE's, and other various gov't organizations. The CRPC functions as both a supplemental procurement office as well as a distributor of purchasing-related information and expertise.

Southeastern Connecticut COG (SCCOG) represents 22 towns, cities and boroughs and provides regional services, which include staffing assistance to local land use commissions and exploring additional avenues for cost savings and inter-municipal cooperation. In addition to its statutorily assigned duties, SCCOG's functions include providing a basis for intergovernmental cooperation, aiding in the solution of regional issues, serving as a technical resource to its member municipalities, and providing a collective voice for the region.

The council may enter into agreements with local political jurisdictions, the state government and its agencies, the federal government and its agencies, regional agencies, and other public and private organizations for the purpose of carrying out the powers and duties conferred upon the Council by the General Statutes. As part of its coordinating functions, the Council "shall promote regional coordination and cooperation through activities designed to:

1. Strengthen local governments and their individual capacities to deal with local problems;
2. Serve as a forum to identify, study and resolve area-wide problems;
3. Provide the organizational framework to insure effective communication and coordination among governmental bodies;
4. Serve as a vehicle for the collection and exchange of information for the membership;
5. Encourage action on, and implementation of, regional plans and policies by local, state and

federal agencies;

6. Provide, if requested, mediation in resolving conflicts among members and between members and other parties; and
7. Provide technical and general assistance to members within its staffing and financial capabilities.”

The **South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG)**, made up of 15 municipalities, provides a platform for intermunicipal coordination, cooperation, and decision making. Its mission statement says that the South Central Regional Council of Governments is dedicated to “regional cooperation enabling cities and towns to work together to accomplish projects they cannot do as efficiently or cost effectively by themselves.” This means that it oversees a variety of regional plans including a Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, a Regional Affordable Housing Plan, and a Regional Geographic Information System (GIS) Program. SCRCOG’s municipal services programs promote efficiencies and cost-savings initiatives through regional energy conservation, finance, grant writing and administration, information technology and cybersecurity, public works, purchasing, and solid waste and recycling programs, food waste diversion and municipal composting. Additionally, the Regional Purchasing Consortium functions as a supplemental procurement office and sponsors competitive bids and request for qualifications/proposals covering a wide range of products and services requested by member municipalities. As part of the municipal services program, SCRCOG established Working Groups of municipal department heads and staff members with similar roles to foster greater collaboration within the region. The Working Groups meet to discuss regional opportunities, current issues, and best practices.

Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) is a coordinating body for chief elected officials maintained by twenty-one municipalities in northwest Connecticut. NHCOG’s mission is to make Northwest Connecticut a better place to live, do business, and visit by providing a forum for local officials to discuss issues of intermunicipal concern, promote regional cooperation, and direct various regional initiatives to enhance government planning, efficiency and service delivery. The Northwest Hills COG serves its member towns by coordinating and administering programs and projects of regional interest. From equipment sharing to regional Household Hazardous Waste Days, **these COG services help save the towns money by sharing the cost of the service regionally** rather than each town taking on the full cost themselves. Below is a list of some of these services:

- Public Works Equipment Cooperative
- [Regional Household Hazardous Waste Days coordination](#)
- Regional Cooperative Purchasing Program
- Regional Animal Shelter feasibility support
- Foundation for Community Health Prescription Assistance Program administration
- Northwest Corner Fuel Bank administration
- Staff support for NWCT Regional Housing Council, Northwest ConneCT (regional broadband initiative), and Housatonic River Commission

Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) provides a regional framework within which municipalities can jointly address common interests and coordinate such interests with state and federal plans and programs. NVCOG strives to assist member communities and collaborate in sharing resources that increase efficiency and create economy of scale benefits. The agency's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program now includes 15 municipalities. This program has been successful in saving towns and cities money for more than 20 years, as it has proven more cost effective to operate the program on a regional basis than any single municipality could do on its own. Splitting setup and disposal costs and creating collection sites that rotate through each participating town and city in the region has benefited local taxpayers by reducing costs and provided convenience in disposing of items that should not be placed with conventional waste streams.

Massachusetts

Like Vermont, Massachusetts does not have county government; as a result, COGs can work to solve regional issues.

- **Enabling Legislation:**
 - **Chapter 40B of the General Laws of Massachusetts (Regional Planning):** This legislation provides the legal foundation for regional planning agencies (which include COGs or RPCs) in Massachusetts. It empowers these agencies to provide technical assistance to local governments and support shared services.
 - **Chapter 34B of the General Laws:** This law specifically enables regional cooperation through **Regional Councils of Governments (COGs)**, authorizing them to enter into intermunicipal agreements for shared services and collaborative projects.
- **Language:**
 - **Section 34B** of Chapter 34B allows COGs to **provide assistance to municipalities in areas such as public safety, waste disposal, and planning** by creating intermunicipal agreements. It also authorizes them to act as facilitators for regional purchasing, joint staffing arrangements, and other shared services.
 - This section allows COGs to **enter into contracts and agreements** on behalf of municipalities to share services such as emergency dispatching, public health services, and environmental management.
- **Example of Language:**
 - “Any city, town, or regional school district may enter into agreements with one or more other cities, towns, or regional school districts for joint provision of services, and such agreements may be administered by a regional council of governments.”

Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) has been referenced as the COG model most relevant to the VT situation. In Massachusetts, there were county governments, which were eliminated by former Governor Weld. Counties became COGs, voluntary membership

organizations. The members of FRCOG are municipalities in Franklin County; it is a very rural area like much of Vermont. Advantages or disadvantages, depending upon your perspective, are that a town can drop out at any time, which, according to Executive Director Linda Dunlavy, “keeps us on our toes to always be providing good service.” The assessment to towns is lower than when it was a county. FRCOG is an \$8 million organization now, 36% from local assessments. This covers inspection, community health, accounting, collective purchasing, emergency communications systems, etc. The rest comes from state and federal grants. FRCOG has a staff of 60 people. When it comes to shared services, FRCOG has been working with towns to basically run municipal programs on behalf of multiple communities. This is done through voluntary participation; the assessment formula for each program is different based on how the programs work and how they generate revenues and expenses. For example, the town accounting program is based on the average number of hours per week; it waxes and wanes per season and timing of the municipal accounting process. The building inspection program retains permit revenues and charges a small baseline assessment for things like permit software, zoning enforcement, etc. that they should not be using permit revenue for. If the permit revenue gets too high, FRCOG reimburses the towns based on the permit.

FRCOG facilitates shared services between multiple municipalities more often now. In this arrangement, FRCOG does the matchmaking and facilitates conversations, looks at feasibility, governance, staffing, cost share methods. It is done the same way they would create a program; they create the initial intermunicipal agreement, hand it over to the municipalities and then leave. The issue can be one of capacity; when towns have no staffing, they do not have the ability to create these agreements. Then FRCOG needs to be that capacity.

Each of these programs within the COG operates like an enterprise account, basically running as small businesses within the organization. They are expected to bring in revenue to match the expenses. The revenues are kept in separate places so they’re running as a small business within the organization. This puts pressure on FRCOG to figure out how to make them work. According to Dunlavy, “not everything works. We have closed programs, like the grant writing program and the engineering program.” For grant writing, the financing model was that towns had to pay us to write the grant; they couldn’t retroactively pay us with grant funds received. They still write grants for towns, but don’t have a dedicated grant writer. Grant writing is taken care of by whichever staff has the time and expertise.

FRCOG asks municipalities to choose their representative to the board. They ask that it is a selectboard member, town administrator or a municipal finance office (accountant, treasurer, finance committee member). They’re looking for representation that gets close to the municipal government. “We work hard to make sure that the board is the power brokers in the towns, so they are more connected.” Their full board meets quarterly. The executive committee meets monthly. Municipalities appoint their representatives.

The RPC is embedded within the COG, doing planning, which is not true of the rest of MA. For other RPCs in MA, their board members are municipal planning members. “Our board members are

selectboard members, so they know what is happening in the town. They manage the money so they know we're a good investment."

The COG structure allows FRCOG to act as a municipality, contracting with municipalities without procurement and without complication. FRCOG can directly act as a municipal government on a regional scale. FRCOG was legislatively created to help provide municipal services. FRCOG is a quasi-county government entity with 501c3 status. It's often harder to get federal funding, because it is not a county or a municipality. It also eliminates eligibility for foundation grants. The legislature had to create that through enabling legislation The towns adopted and ratified the charter.

Northern Middlesex COG (NMCOG) is one of thirteen regional planning agencies within the state. NMCOG maintains a [staff](#) of professional planners to assist member communities in designing, facilitating, and implementing community development programs and planning initiatives which further the interests of the overall region. Special legislation (Chapter 420 of the Acts of 1989) also allows the Council to perform a wide variety of non-planning functions on behalf of its members. Each community is represented on the [Council](#) by a chief elected official (Selectman or City Councilor) and a planning board member, and each community also has the option of appointing one alternate. This direct community representation dramatically improves the level of communication and coordination at the local level. Assessments upon the member communities are made on an equal per capita basis and are used to provide the "local share" of various projects undertaken by NMCOG through State and Federal grant programs.

Berkshire RPC (BRPC) administers the Berkshire Regional Group Purchasing Program (BRGPP) on behalf of all 32 Berkshire County municipalities. BRPC staff assist municipalities to jointly procure fuel and road maintenance products and services for best pricing. This also relieves municipal staff from the activities required under the Massachusetts procurement laws. BRPC participates in regional initiatives related to topics such as public education, outdoor recreation, and access to broadband, and operates a regional Group Purchasing Program. The Commission consists of one member of the Planning Board of each member city and town, known as the Delegate, elected annually by said planning board and certified in writing. Each city and town, acting through its Chief Executive official, may also appoint, pursuant to MGL c. 40B § 4, an alternate designee, known as the Alternate, to act in the delegate's absence.

Merrimack Valley PC (MVPC) fosters a cooperative effort among its communities in resolving common, regional problems, to allow its communities to plan jointly, and to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated and orderly development of the region and the general welfare of its residents. In keeping with its mission to encourage collaboration and cooperation among its 15 member communities, MVPC offers collective procurement services for a wide variety of offerings including roadway maintenance services, trash and recycling, utility, and other environmental services. Mayors, Town Managers, and Town Administrators along with the DPW Directors have benefited through cost efficiencies and much-needed expertise in the complex realm of procurement.

MVPC supports a variety of other regional coalitions. The Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition helped to initiate regional problem solving at the municipal leadership level. MVPC provides the support necessary to implement supportive programs which include:

1. Advocacy with the region's Federal and State Legislative Delegation
2. Collective Procurement
3. Regionalization of Services
4. Energy Programs

MVPC meets monthly with Merrimack Valley Planners and Community and Economic Development municipal staff. All 15 MVPC member communities send their DPW Directors and Engineers to meet monthly. MVPC formed the [Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative](#) to work together on regional approaches to cost-effective stormwater management. The Merrimack River Collaborative (MRC) is composed of municipal officials, state legislators, and subject matter experts, spearheading the improvement of water quality and the revitalization of the Merrimack River. MVPC also coordinates the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC).

Maine

Maine is also organized into Regional Planning Commission and COGs and Economic Development Districts (EDDs). Maine is fully covered by EDDs.

- **Enabling Legislation:**
 - **Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A, Chapter 115** (Regional Services): This chapter authorizes municipalities to form **Regional Service Centers** or join **Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs)** to promote regional cooperation. The statute allows for **shared services** such as public safety, waste management, and transportation.
- **Language:**
 - Under **Title 30-A, § 3401**, municipalities are encouraged to cooperate on matters such as **emergency management, public works, and municipal finance**, with the help of regional councils or commissions.
 - The statute allows municipalities to **jointly contract for services** through regional entities.
- **Example of Language:**
 - "A municipality may enter into an agreement with one or more municipalities to provide services on a regional basis through a regional planning commission or a regional service center."

Maine's RPCs and COGs support with intermunicipal collaboration through trainings and cooperative purchasing. For example, the **Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG)** aggregates the demand for products and services across the region, lowering the bulk price and reducing time on procurement and management. Their Cooperative Purchasing program saves communities money on paving services, road striping pavement marking, catch basin cleaning, heating and transportation fuels, pavement crack sealing, snow plow cutting edges, bulk copy

paper and road salt. GPCOG also helps communities share services like stormwater permitting and cable TV franchise review. GPCOG, the contracting entity, pays the providers' bills up-front and bills participating communities their respective shares.

The **Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC)**, a Regional Planning Commission and COG facilitates shared services with towns. Interlocal agreements signed by various governments are used and allowed by statute. Recently, Maine received a grant through FEMA for 3 years at \$130,000 per year for all the RPCs and COGs in Maine to have code enforcement officers; NMDC's code enforcement officer will be serving 15-20 communities. Through the Housing Opportunity Program, NMDC will also be hiring a housing planner/coordinator who will be working with communities on housing opportunities to create workforce housing. NMDC does not enter into agreements with towns; according to Executive Director Bob Clark, these are more like contracts. They also have contracts with towns to do their community development for them, administering grants for them. The NMDC Board is made up of 2 members from each dues paying member town; these representatives can be elected or appointed.

The **Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG)** is one of 4 COGs in Maine, which is also a 501c3. AVCOG serves 3 counties and 60 municipalities. Its structure includes a general assembly, in which every member municipality has two people to serve; they meet twice a year. Some larger communities may have 4 seats instead of 2. Of these 2 general assembly members, at least one needs to be an elected official. Their Executive Committee is their overarching board of directors of up to 21 members. The 8 founding municipalities of AVCOG have permanent seats on the Executive Committee. Other members are appointed by the President of the Executive Committee. Most Executive Committee members are town managers, not elected officials. Counties can join AVCOG for services for unorganized territories. Executive Committee officers are approved by the General Assembly.

According to Amy Landry, Executive Director of AVCOG, "Running an organization like this with elected officials would be a mess. They come and go. There wouldn't be a consistent structure. It's hard for elected officials to see what we do and understand it. With General Assembly, we do integrate elected officials. The day to day operations would be a nightmare with elected officials. We're an extension of the town staff."

AVCOG facilitates intermunicipal agreements, mostly around transportation. In some instances, AVCOG staffs these intermunicipal entities, such as the transit system that was formed by interlocal agreement between two cities. AVCOG is part of the same code enforcement officer arrangement as NMDC. The majority of AVCOG's funding is federal grants. Member municipality dues are assessed based on population and valuation. With an over \$5 million budget, less than 1% of the money AVCOG receives is municipal dues; however, these dues are important because they're the only unrestricted money they have.

Regional cooperative agreements are mentioned in state statute, including the transit example and joint purchasing programs for the benefit of communities. Most examples of regional approaches

through AVCOG are in collaboration with all the towns in the region, such as their work in transportation, economic development, land use planning and environmental management.

Appendix I: Survey Results – Governing Board and Local Elected Officials

Survey Data Collection

As an integral part of this assessment effort, the NADO Research Foundation developed and deployed five online surveys intended to gather information about RPC programs and internal practices, as well as feedback from board members and local officials. These forms were developed as Microsoft Forms as part of the Office 365 platform and were distributed by VAPDA leaders and RPC officials to target audiences. The survey instruments are included as Appendix D. Results of each of the five surveys are detailed in the sections below.

Local Official Survey Results

During this assessment effort, NADO created an online survey focused on collecting feedback from local elected officials representing communities across Vermont. The survey contained 13 questions about local officials’ perspectives on RPC services, structure, communications, and other questions concerning the performance of RPC organizations. Three open-ended questions offered an opportunity for respondents to provide feedback on existing or potential services.

Survey questions were generated following conversations with VAPDA and RPC representatives based on historic questions, feedback, or commentary that had been received during the disposition of their duties. There was also an effort to capture information while minimizing respondent burden. Responses were collected October 4 – November 8, 2024. During this time, 199 individual responses were collected across all the RPCs. The breakdown of local official responses by RPC is illustrated below.

RPC	Elected Official Responses
ACRPC	14
BCRC	11
CVRPC	14
CCRPC	21
LCPC	19
MARC	8
NVDA	8
NRPC	8
RRPC	40
TRORC	20
WRC	37

The number and percentage of towns represented in the local elected official survey is provided below. Please note this indicates towns that had at least one response to the local elected official survey. Twelve (12) individuals responded to both the local elected official and governing board member survey since they met both criteria. In total 127 of 267 (48%) towns were represented in the results.

RPC	Towns	Response	Pct.
ACRPC	21	11	52%
BCRC	17	9	53%
CVRPC	23	11	48%
CCRPC	19	14	74%
LCPC	10	7	70%
MARC	10	6	60%
NVDA	55	8	15%
NRPC	23	6	26%
RRPC	27	20	74%
TRORC	30	16	53%
WRC	27	19	70%

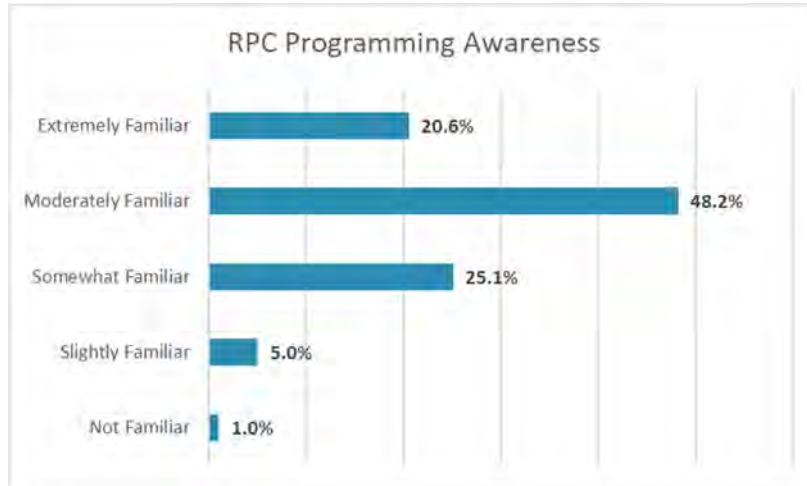
Respondents to both surveys categorized their relationship with the RPC, and respondents could choose more than one applicable category. The summary of relationships for all respondents to both surveys is below.

Relationship Type	Responses
RPC Board Member	13
Member Community Official	179
RPC Committee Member	20
Program Participant/Stakeholder	11
Interested Party	10
No Relationship	4

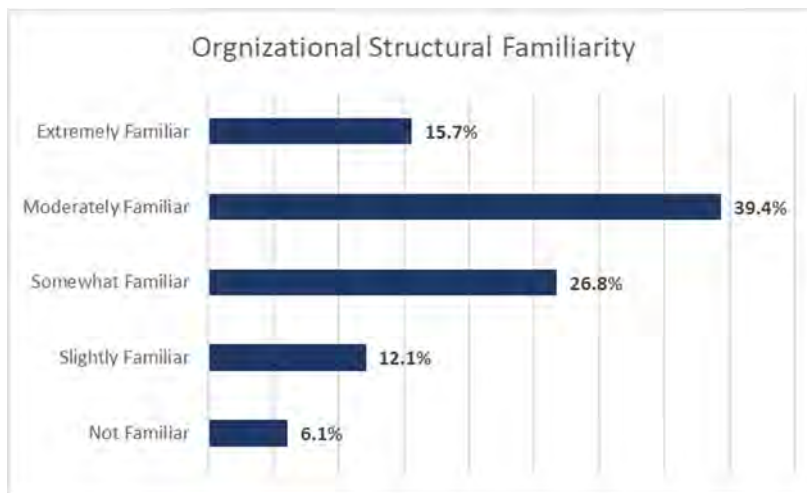
Following these questions clarifying the respondents' roles, five questions gave respondents the opportunity to rate their perceptions about RPC programming and structure.¹

Local elected official respondents were asked to gauge how familiar they were with the total portfolio of services offered by the RPC, with **68.8%** responding that they were **either extremely or moderately familiar** with the services offered by the RPC. Thirty percent indicated they were somewhat or slightly familiar. Only 1% responded that they were not familiar.

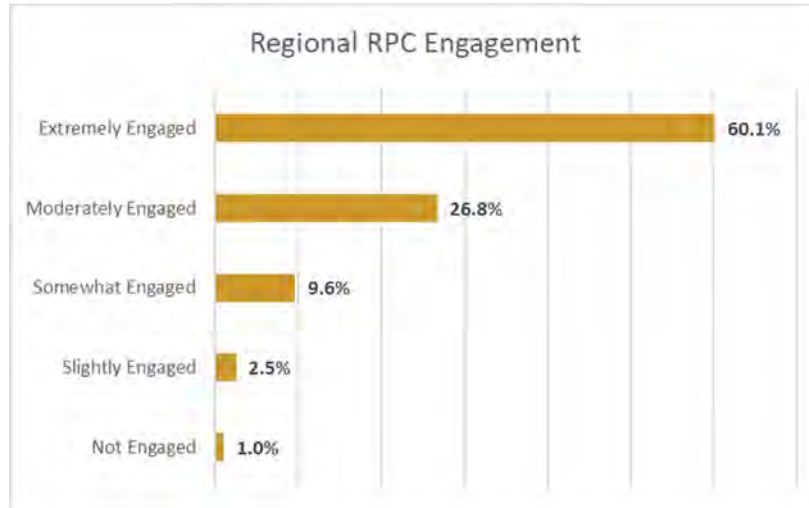
¹ Note: respondents were able to skip these questions or answer in portions for those that contained multiple options, so the total number of responses (n) varies in the information presented below.



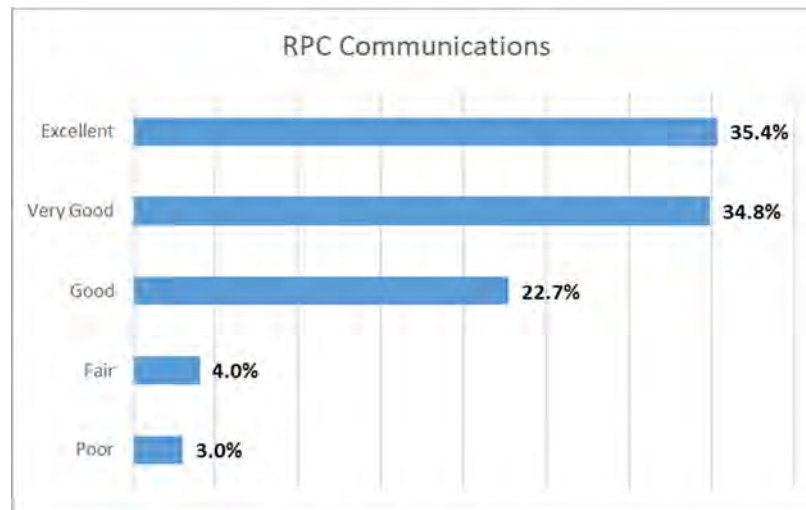
Respondents were asked to gauge how familiar they were with the organizational structure of the RPC, with **55.1%** indicating that they **were extremely or moderately familiar** with the organizational structure of the RPC. Only 6.1% indicated that they were not familiar.



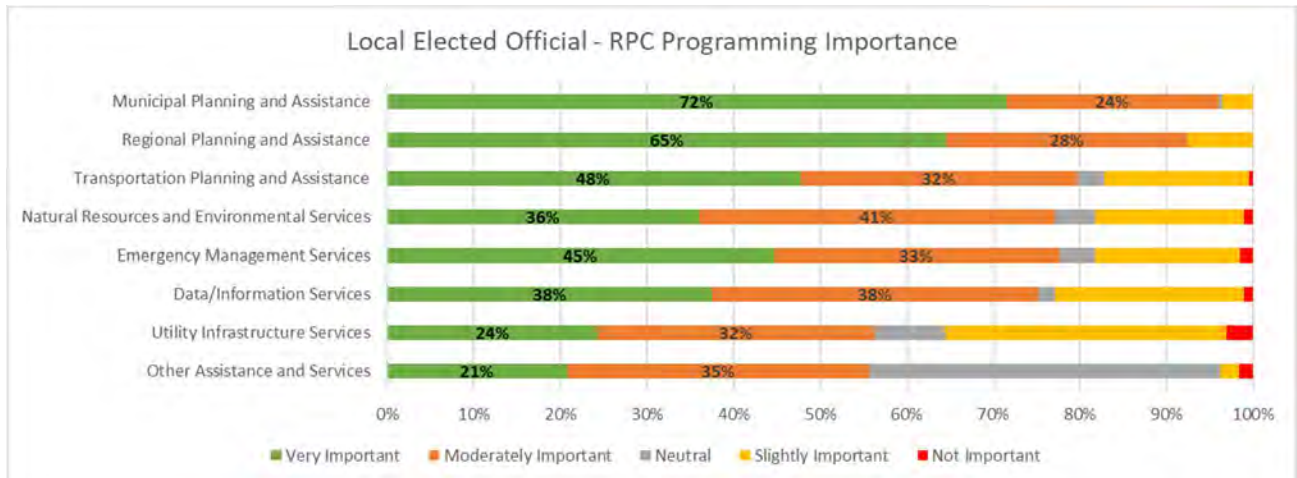
Next, respondents were asked to offer their opinion about the level of overall engagement by the RPC organization in development activities across the region, with **86.9%** indicating that RPCs were **extremely or moderately engaged** in regional development activities. Only 3.5% indicated that RPCs were slightly or not engaged.



Communication is a critical topic for RPCs and local communities. To this end, local elected officials were asked to evaluate the amount of communication received by them from the RPC. **Over 92%** indicated that the amount of communication was **excellent, very good, or good**. Only four percent rated the amount as fair, and three percent poor.



Following this, respondents rated how important seven core categories of RPC services are to them in their local official capacities. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale from very important to not important.



Of the eight program areas highlighted, **72%** of respondents indicated that **‘municipal planning and assistance’** was **‘very important,’** followed by **65%** indicating that **‘regional planning and assistance’** was of the highest importance. Transportation planning and assistance as well as emergency management services followed with 48% and 45% respectively. Conversely, 3% responded that utility infrastructure services were ‘not important,’ followed by ‘emergency management services’ at 2%.

With these rankings in mind, respondents were presented with three open-ended questions where they could provide additional information and feedback in their own words. Results are summarized below. In your words, what are the top three critical services provided to the region by the RPC?

The top three critical RPC service categories identified by local officials were:

1. Municipal and regional planning
2. Transportation planning and assistance
3. Emergency management services.

Identified as the most critical service category, municipal and regional planning comments repeatedly referenced the value of assistance in developing and updating town plans, zoning regulations and bylaws. This was closely paired with assistance regarding a number of development projects including housing and other topics related to land use considerations for municipalities. Each of these items can contribute to another frequent comment about ensuring that communities are in compliance with state and federal regulations.

The second critical area identified was transportation planning and assistance. Respondents made repeated references to assistance provided by RPCs in identifying and securing transportation-related grants and planning projects. Respondents also identified assistance in conducting transportation study activities including traffic studies and transportation-related mapping and data.

The third area identified in the survey results was emergency management services. Local official respondents repeatedly referenced critical assistance related to emergency management topics and hazard mitigation strategies for local communities. There were many specific references to the

value of assistance and guidance in the creation of local emergency operations plans. Assistance with disaster recovery planning was also highlighted by respondents.

Other overarching themes that resonated with local officials include the value of communication, information sharing, convening, service coordination, program and resource advocacy, as well as vision and leadership. It was evident that RPC organizations and their staff members are deploying these critical skills to the benefit of communities across Vermont.

The second open-ended survey question asked the following: Are you able to identify up to three key areas of need or assistance that are not currently offered by the RPC that would make a difference to the region?

The top three responses to this question were:

1. Enhanced grant assistance
2. Regional coordination and shared services
3. Housing and economic development.

The need for grant assistance, information and additional funding was ever present in response to this question. Of particular interest was additional information and communication about funding opportunities and related grant information, as well as more proactive notification of opportunities. There was also a call for grant writing and grant management/administration assistance, with specific focus on small municipalities that have limited personnel and administrative capabilities.

The second most requested item that RPCs could provide is additional support for regional coordination and shared service considerations. Many respondents shared their inability to meet some basic service needs (including administrative responsibilities). There were suggestions for RPCs to share administrative duties for municipalities as well as requests for additional shared service arrangements in the emergency service realm. There was interest in broader regional cooperation, with some references to exploring county-level styles of government structure to better enable shared service delivery and resource sharing. There was also an understanding that RPC organizations are working within the boundaries of available funding and staffing in order to meet the needs of member communities.

The third identified need for RPC communities was additional assistance with housing and general economic development. There were references to multiple housing topics including affordable/workforce housing, senior housing, assistance with housing inventories, and similar assistance to municipalities. There were also comments about supportive services like increasing cell phone service coverage and establishing additional shopping opportunities in or near communities.

As before, there were general themes expressing a need for overall assistance and guidance in all areas of municipal government and development, with a special emphasis on assisting communities in their efforts to remain in compliance with state and federal regulations. Many respondents shared the challenge of inadequate staffing and support resource capacity to meet the responsibility of increasing compliance requirements.

Response summaries for this survey created for each RPC are available as Appendix H.

Board Member Survey Results

During this effort, the NADO Research Foundation also created a digital survey to collect input and feedback from individuals serving on the governing boards of the Vermont RPC organizations. This survey contained 22 questions and provided an opportunity to evaluate program areas and services through Likert scale ratings, as well as six open-ended questions where respondents could share feedback in their own words. Responses were collected October 4 – November 8, 2024. During this time, 156 individual responses were collected across all the RPCs. The breakdown of board member responses by RPC is illustrated below. According to RPC bylaws across the state, there are a total of 582 commissioners seated, including members, alternates, and at-large members. The responses received to the survey correspond with approximately **27%** of the total board members (commissioners) across the state. (Note: some RPCs listed vacancies in seats, but those seats were counted in the total universe of possible members here.)

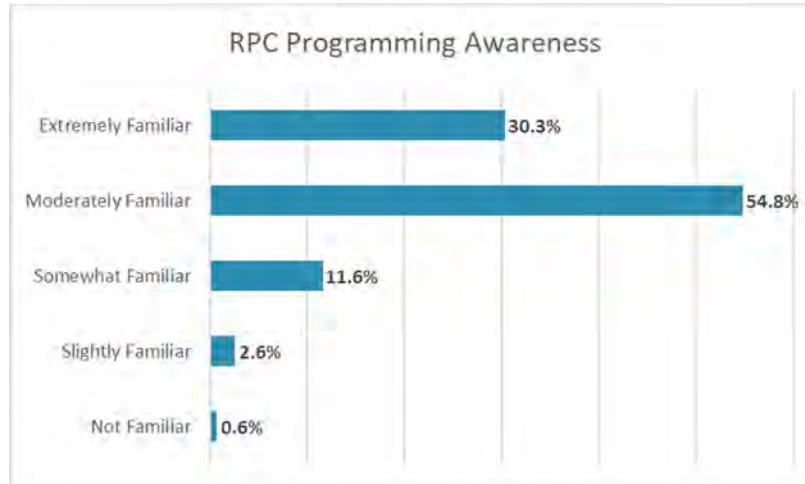
RPC	Board Member Responses	Percent
ACRPC	14	24.1%
BCRC	11	29.7%
CCRPC	22	36.7%
CVRPC	8	22.2%
LCPC	17	70.8%
MARC	6	35.3%
NVDA	15	13.4%
NRPC	10	20.8%
RRPC	14	23%
TRORC	17	25.8%
WRC	22	34.9%

Of the survey respondents, **33%** (51) have been a member of their RPC board for **2 to 5 years**; **26%** (40) have been a member of the board for **less than 2 years**.

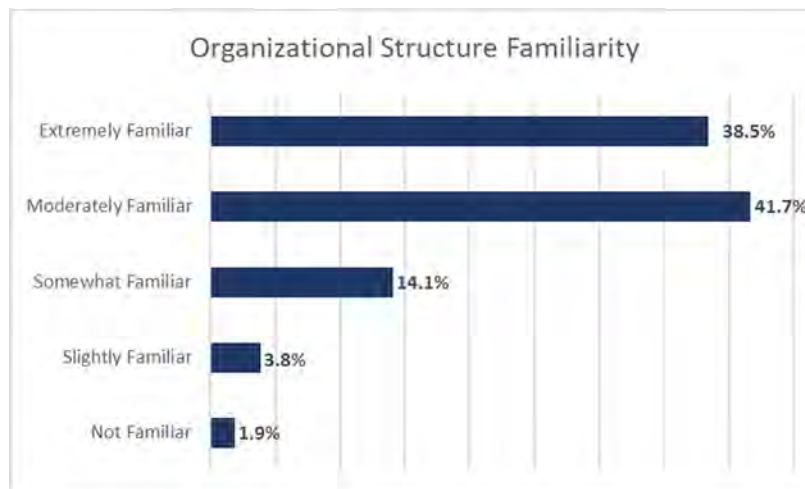
Years of RPC Board Service	Percent
Less Than 2 Years	26%
2 to 5 Years	33%
5 to 10 Years	19%
10 Years or More	23%

Board members were presented with seven questions where they were asked to rate their individual familiarity, satisfaction, or perception of importance regarding a variety of RPC topics.

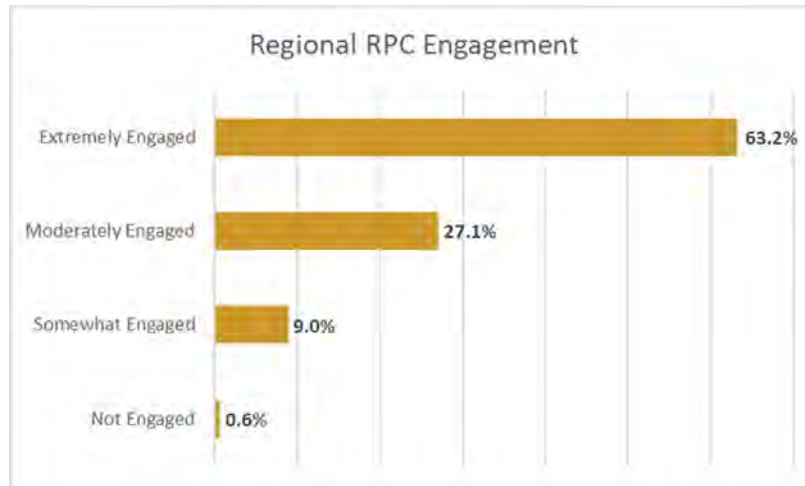
Respondents were asked to rate their familiarity with the total portfolio of services offered by the RPC; **85.1%** responded that they were **extremely** or **moderately familiar** with the portfolio of services. Only **3.1%** responded that they were slightly familiar or not familiar.



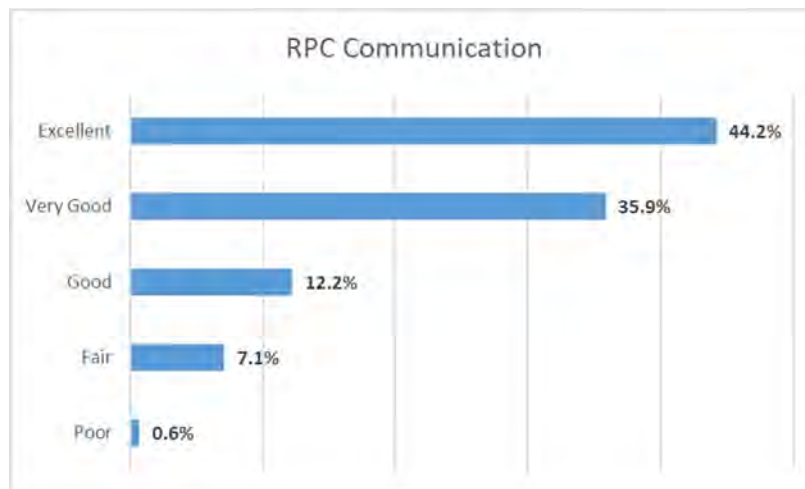
Respondents were asked to rate their familiarity with the overall RPC organizational structure; **80.2%** responded that they were **extremely** or **moderately familiar** with the RPC organizational structure. Only **5.4%** responded that they were slightly or not familiar.



Respondents were asked to rate their opinion of the level of overall engagement by the RPC in regional development activities in the region. These activities could include support for project development, infrastructure development, housing development, assistance in community engagement efforts, project review, and related activities. Among respondents, **90.3%** responded that they felt their RPC was **extremely** or **moderately engaged** in regional development activities. Only **.6%** felt that their RPC was not engaged.



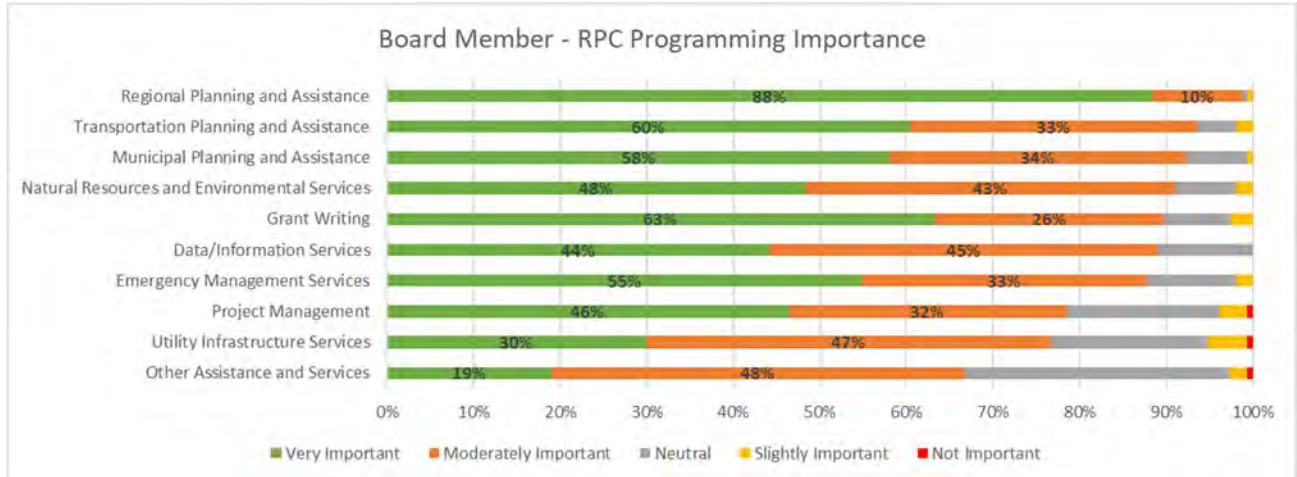
Respondents were asked to rate their opinion about the amount of communication received from the RPC. This communication could include newsletters, email, phone calls or other focused communication and direct contact. Among respondents, **92.3%** felt the amount of communication received was **excellent, very good, or good**; **7.7%** felt the amount was fair or poor.



Respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of RPC programming across eight simplified categories:

- Regional Planning and Assistance
- Municipal Planning and Assistance
- Data/Information Services
- Transportation Planning and Assistance
- Natural Resources and Environmental Services
- Emergency Management Services
- Utility Infrastructure Services
- Other Assistance Services.

Each of these categories includes numerous specific program and project areas as identified by reviewing RPC websites and other available information. The VAPDA service matrix that includes the sub-category descriptions is included as Appendix A of this report. The aggregated responses are illustrated below.

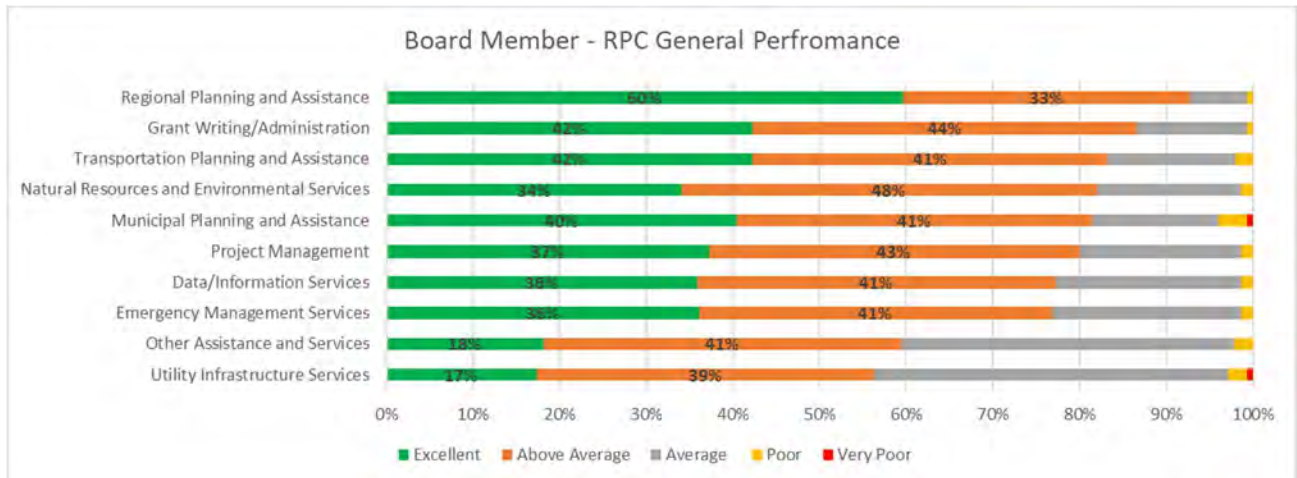


Of the ten program areas highlighted in the survey, **88%** of respondents felt that **‘regional planning and assistance’** was **‘very important.’** **‘Grant writing’** was identified as ‘very important’ by **63%** of respondents, followed by **‘Transportation planning and assistance’** at **60%** of respondents, **‘municipal planning and assistance’** at **58%** and **‘emergency management services’** at **55%**. The only program areas that received any ratings below ‘slightly important’ were project management, utility infrastructure services, and other assistance.

Following the question of importance, board members were asked to rate the general performance of RPCs in the following areas.

- Regional Planning and Assistance
- Inter-Municipal Planning and Assistance
- Data/Information Services
- Transportation Planning and Assistance
- Natural Resources and Environmental Services
- Emergency Management Services
- Utility Infrastructure Services
- Other Assistance and Services
- Project Management
- Grant Writing/Administration.

The aggregated responses are illustrated below.



Overall, **93%** of respondents felt that RPC performance in **‘regional planning and assistance’** was **excellent or above average**. **‘Grant writing/administration’** was rated as **excellent or above average** by **86%** of respondents, followed by **‘transportation planning and assistance’** at **83%**, **‘natural resources and environmental services’** at **82%** and **‘municipal planning and assistance’** at **81%**.

There was one additional question offered to board members regarding the historical effectiveness of serving specific populations within the RPC regions. The responses and analysis of this question are included in the section examining diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

Board member respondents were presented with six open-ended questions; the aggregated sentiment of those responses is offered in the sections below. This was an expanded set of questions compared to those offered to local elected officials in a similar online survey. These additional questions offered board members an opportunity to expand upon their RPC experiences from a governance perspective, providing additional insights into challenges, opportunities, and other ideas for the future.

Like the elected official results, there were many overarching themes referenced by board member respondents about RPC roles and activities. Communication, convening, guidance, facilitation, and leadership were among the high value traits of RPCs referenced across all responses. Most of the specific items mentioned could be generally categorized into these areas. Also present in the responses (over 20 references) were comments regarding challenges created by the lack of county government, the challenges this creates for service coordination, and how RPCs often serve to fill the role of county government whether they are intended or supported to do this or not. There was also a general acknowledgment that the environment of municipal management, grant management, and planning requirements was evolving and that RPCs would remain critical to helping member communities stay abreast of these developments. Similarly, there was an overarching commentary around helping communities remain aware of changing legislation that would have local impacts.

What are the top three critical services provided to the region by the RPC?

Board members’ aggregated top results were:

1. Regional Planning and Assistance
2. Grant Writing and Administration
3. Technical Support and Project Management

It was made abundantly clear that **overall planning activities**, as specified in Vermont state statutes regarding RPCs, were the most important and impactful service provided to member communities. This includes significant assistance in land use planning, transportation planning, and intermunicipal planning.

The second most critical area of service identified was grant writing and associated grant administration. Respondents indicated multiple areas of assistance that municipalities require, due to low staffing levels or low internal capacities of expertise. This included assistance regarding notification of available funding opportunities, grant writing, administering awarded projects, and other grant funding tasks. Specific references were made to assistance with brownfield, transportation, and emergency management grants.

The third critical area of service identified was technical support and project management. Respondents made references to crucial technical assistance provided by RPCs, including GIS mapping and related data services. These comments were often accompanied by remarks about lacking staff or capacity to effectively undertake these tasks alone.

What is the most critical role provided to the region by the RPC?

Board members' aggregated sentiment was that the most critical role is **municipal assistance**. Respondents again made numerous references to the many statutory requirements that municipalities must undertake and the challenges they face in meeting these expectations. Responses outlined that professional RPC assistance was crucial to ensure that selectboards and planning commissions (generally staffed by citizen volunteers) have the necessary support and resources to manage their respective tasks.

Aside from this core service, there were references to individual RPCs providing long-term vision, organization, facilitation, coordination, visibility, and similar support to member communities. Some even referred to RPCs as a 'lifeline' for local communities. These descriptions of municipal assistance being the most critical service match well with the stated intent of the enabling legislation language (24 VSA 4345 and 24 VSA 4345a) where RPCs are empowered to work with local communities providing a strong focus on planning and related topics.

Are you able to identify up to three key areas of need or assistance that are not currently offered by the RPC that would make a difference to the region?

Many of the responses did not offer a completely new area of technical assistance or service needed, but more the desire to see the existing services provided by RPCs increased and expanded. Many respondents illustrated an understanding of the funding and resource limitations RPCs are facing and expressed that with additional support resources, increased levels of assistance could be provided to member communities.

Shared services or the regionalization of specific services were frequently mentioned in these comments. Respondents indicated a need for shared service arrangements among municipalities for zoning administration, permitting, public transportation, animal control, dispatch services, as

well as an interest in building wider regional approaches to regional dispatch and emergency medical services. Peer reviews conducted by VAPDA in 2024 noted that 9 of 11 RPCs have provisions enabling shared services active within their current bylaws. The extent of existing shared services offered and utilized by member communities varied widely.

Are you able to identify any barriers that prevent the RPC from delivering at the highest possible level?

The most frequent responses regarding identifiable barriers were **limited funding** and **staffing challenges**. The desire for additional state and federal support for RPCs to bolster services was a common response. There appears to be a strong understanding that increased resources provided in support of existing services would create a significant impact in service regions across the state.

Staffing concerns were highlighted, including challenges with RPC staff turnover and difficulty in recruiting qualified staff to fill positions. There were multiple responses indicating that existing staff may be too overburdened or stretched too thin to provide the highest possible level of service.

There were multiple responses related to RPC boards of commissioners. Of note were comments around challenges finding effective board members to serve as town representatives. Identifying individuals with relevant backgrounds to serve effectively coupled with time availability to commit to board service were identified as key challenges. Some municipal representative seats on RPC governing boards go unfilled for these reasons and others that were unstated.

The final items of note were comments relating to awareness and communication of RPC programs and services. Some respondents identified a desire for RPCs to notify communities of programs, opportunities, and decisions more effectively, while others identified a perceived lack of interest on behalf of member communities to interact with RPC programming—regardless of the level of communication exhibited by the RPC.

Is there anything the RPC is engaged in currently that you feel they should not be involved in?

The majority of responses to this question indicated that respondents could not identify anything that RPCs were currently involved in that they should not continue. One response indicated that RPCs should give less attention to the topic of social justice and equity. Another response related to a specific decision made in the past that the respondent felt had a damaging impact on the regional economy and similar comments where an RPC failed to be as involved on a specific topic as the individual respondent would have liked. However, there was no conclusive trend of current activity or programming that should be curtailed by the RPC network.

Please offer any other feedback on RPC services, performance, or partnerships that might be useful to the research team as we complete this effort.

Many of the responses to this question were geared toward expressing appreciation and gratitude to specific RPC organizations and their staff for their professionalism, dedication, and effectiveness in delivering services on behalf of member communities.

There were comments related to RPCs working to achieve a maximum level of impact in an environment where it is recognized that they have limited powers and abilities to act. Respondents noted that if RPCs were given increased capacities to act in certain areas, they could potentially be more effective.

There was also recognition that the number and relative size of communities in the various RPC regions make service provision difficult. Large communities have different challenges compared to small communities, and regions with large numbers of communities (in total) compared to regions with fewer communities to serve, making providing customized services and solutions across the statewide network laborious. There was an expression of satisfaction with the current effort and a recognition that this is an incredibly difficult position to be successful in.

There were multiple references regarding efforts to improve communication between RPCs and municipalities, to better inform stakeholders of opportunities, promote existing services and improve engagement. Related to this were statements regarding the need to continue fostering partnerships and coordination efforts among municipalities.

Appendix J: Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder Interviews

External stakeholders were interviewed to learn more about their experiences with the RPCs in general and with specific RPCs. Questions also asked about how RPCs have been helpful to them in their work, how RPCs can be helpful moving forward, the value proposition for collaborating with RPCs, and how RPCs can improve their services to their member municipalities and the State of Vermont.

External stakeholders included key contacts at state and federal agencies and Vermont nonprofits as well as state legislators. A full list of questions and contacts interviewed can be found in Appendix E. It is important to remember that information gained from external stakeholders is reflective of their perceptions about RPCs and VAPDA and may not reflect other stakeholder experiences.

Overall, all external stakeholders discussed how valuable the work of the RPCs is, given the state's lack of county government and the resulting gap between municipalities and state government. The RPCs serve a critical role, connecting municipalities of all sizes and types with state government.

Each RPC has strengths and unique challenges, often influenced by leadership and resources. The perceived effectiveness of RPCs varies widely; while some are perceived to be proactive and deeply involved with communities, others are perceived to struggle with capacity and engagement.

Mentoring, succession planning, and fostering collaboration among RPCs could enhance overall performance and consistency across the state.

Strengths

1. Strong Partnerships and Valuable Liaison Role between State and Local Levels

- **Critical Resource for Small Communities:** RPCs are essential for small, lower-capacity towns, helping fill gaps in local expertise and resources, by offering vital support in planning, grant writing, and emergency management/disaster relief efforts. RPCs act as additional "boots on the ground" by providing technical assistance to towns, making them essential partners in local capacity building. For instance, when the state legislature funded energy planners, RPCs hired 14 young professionals to work on energy planning with towns.
- **Strong State Partnerships:** RPCs are valued partners for state agencies, helping extend state capacity in crucial areas and serving as vital intermediaries between towns and state agencies, helping navigate local perspectives and state policies, especially in areas with limited resources. RPCs have established relationships with local communities, which helps to disseminate information effectively and efficiently.
- **Legislative Collaboration, Advocacy, and Thought Leadership:** RPCs have been instrumental in the legislative process, particularly in helping to develop and pass

significant planning and housing bills. Their involvement from the early stages—meeting regularly to draft and refine legislation—ensures that the proposals are well-prepared and supported by a coalition by the time they reach the legislature. RPCs can advocate for local needs at the state level and help align local and regional efforts. They have also played roles in statewide policies, such as climate action plans and housing legislation.

- **Special Relationship with Federal Agencies, like USDA Rural Development (RD):** There is a strong, trusted relationship between USDA Rural Development (RD) and RPCs, largely due to USDA RD's unique funding approach that bypasses state government, working directly with towns. This partnership is seen as mutually beneficial, with RPCs valuing the support and direct funding access USDA RD provides, and USDA RD valuing their regional insight and assistance.
 - **Referral Partners and Project Insights:** RPCs are often the first point of contact for identifying and referring important regional projects. Their role in regional economic and community development planning allows them to pinpoint foundational projects (e.g., infrastructure needs) that can impact broader economic development efforts. Partners rely on RPCs for learning about projects and understanding specific regional needs, like infrastructure gaps that could affect development potential.
2. **Holistic and Regional Approach and Collaboration:** RPCs are seen as unbiased and holistic, focusing on the broader needs of their regions without pushing specific agendas and often contributing to statewide policy shaping. RPCs help coordinate regional efforts, such as joint agreements and municipal service agreements. This fosters regional cohesion and reduces redundancies, leading to more efficient service delivery and planning. They help establish standards and consistent planning processes, providing communities with a reliable baseline for development.
 3. **Trusted Expertise, Data, and Knowledge Partners:** RPCs bring significant expertise, relationships, and data to facilitate community projects, often acting as catalysts. RPCs have unique insights into local communities, understanding what works and what doesn't, translating community visions into actionable plans, and providing practical advice on what is feasible. RPCs serve as go-to resources for knowledge and gut checks. They are deeply embedded in their regions and have a keen understanding of local needs, challenges, and opportunities. This makes them valuable for ground-truthing information and for getting reliable advice on what approaches might work best in different contexts.
 4. **Implementation and Support:** RPCs are effective in implementing initiatives, especially when supportive funding is available, and serve as key thought partners and convenors for community planning. RPCs have also been helpful in connecting regional projects to feasible funding structures, such as energy infrastructure upgrades, by leveraging programs like USDA RD's funding streams. Their role extends beyond planning into areas like energy, making them versatile partners.

Some of the comments received from interviewees regarding implementation and support are outlined below to provide insight to the perspectives held by partners interacting with RPCs in Vermont.

“RPCs have a lot of the relationships, data and expertise to be able to help facilitate community work in a way that is an accelerant or catalyst rather than inertia.”

“The real dynamic RPCs are those that have a clear referral process to their RDC half or their RDC partner. From planning to planning and development side is when you see that innovation and the catalyst or accelerant really take on. This is based on relationships or structures built in different regions over time.”

“My impression of RPCs is that they do remarkable work. People largely don’t really understand what they do, but they help with local planning commissions, disaster relief, planning and planning grants and helping others be successful.”

“RPCs and VLCT are the first partner to look to when we’re doing anything to help communities. We’ve worked successfully with RPCs on initiatives. When there’s a slug of cash that needs to go out for a specific need, they’re amazing. If there’s no slug of cash, there is no entrepreneurial activity. The outcomes are limited.”

“RPCs are working on so many things... not sure how we can expect them to hold all those things in a way where they can meaningfully engage.”

“They are great thought partners. They understand their regions and towns. They are pragmatic about how to implement state policies and bring them to their regions.”

“Without RPCs in their existing state, every municipality in the state would be suffering.”

“RPCs are great brainstorming partner, referral partners, add boots on the ground and local knowledge in a great way. If other key partners relied on them more as trusted partner, we’d have better ecosystem that is evolving together.”

“It’s helpful for state government to have them to use as supplemental partners when we have an expansion of needs, but we can’t hire more people. There are only so many positions in state government. We rely on RPC flexing staffing levels to accommodate efforts, with large, longer-term efforts.”

“The direct connection with municipalities and ability to push info out in their networks. Invaluable.”

“We don’t have relationships with all 251 towns. Having RPCs allows us to get the word out about new programs. It is integral to administering work because they have a broader footprint than we have in the municipal space. Invaluable partnership.”

“Just a huge gulf between state government and municipalities. There is no framework to bridge that except for RPCs. We rely on them to be that bridge.”

“In this state, every town would be in worse shape if not for RPCs in every region. They’re making government work better. They’re improving quality of life in every region. There is not

a broken RPC in Vermont. Every one is excelling at some piece of their responsibility. Pretty impressive. Strong directors.”

“I am a big fan of the work they do and the services they provide. If they were given the flexibility to be more innovative and more proactive, I think we could leverage their capacity to do a lot more. They haven’t been given that time or funding. We’ve starved them a bit.”

“I think they’re stretched thin. So we can’t ask them to do a lot more. They’re good at working with their communities. In the grand scheme of things, they’re good about working with their towns and gaining their trust. They’re making things happen that you don’t see it day to day, but when you look back over the last 50 years, where we are now with planning and zoning across the state, when there wasn’t much, it is astonishing. Such little tiny incremental pieces that no one is realizing it’s happening.”

Opportunities for Growth

Many of the opportunities for RPCs mentioned below are in areas in which a VAPDA Coordinator could have a real impact. Building trust through a bottom-up approach is at the heart of all these opportunities. There is support for a more bottom-up approach to planning and decision-making, where RPCs are positioned as key facilitators of regional collaboration and community empowerment, actively seek input and participation from all communities (especially overwhelmed municipalities, and are transparent about their actions.

1. **Increased Public Awareness and Engagement:** There is interest in increased public awareness about what RPCs are, how they function, and their role in local and regional governance. This increased understanding will improve their effectiveness and build their ability to engage with member communities.
 - a. Greater awareness among policymakers and the public about the positive impact RPCs have on government efficiency and quality of life in Vermont is needed. This might involve more outreach, education, and transparency about their operations and decision-making processes.
 - b. RPCs are praised for their strong leadership and ability to assist towns in various projects, including grant applications and project management. Increasing public awareness and clarification of what RPCs do could help demystify their function and encourage more community involvement and increased utilization of their services by towns.
 - c. Greater Inclusivity and Responsiveness: There is a call for RPCs to ensure that their collaborations are more inclusive, while maintaining meaningful partnerships. To better serve all communities, RPCs may want to identify eligible and distressed areas within their regions and prioritize assistance accordingly.
2. **Regional Collaboration, Communication, Leadership and Advocacy:** There is an opportunity for RPCs to take a leadership role in advocating for regional solutions to common challenges, like resilience, transportation, or housing. By serving as a conduit for local concerns, amplifying them at the state level, flagging patterns that are emerging, and ensuring efforts are aligned with local needs and values RPCs could help shape policies

that better reflect the needs of their regions and solve existing problems. RPCs play a critical liaison role between the state and municipalities, providing insights into how state decisions impact local governance.

a. Roles in Sectors:

- i. **Health Integration:** There is a desire for RPCs to incorporate health considerations into their planning processes, reflecting a more holistic approach to community development.
 - ii. **Conservation Planning and Land Use:** RPCs could take a more regional approach to land conservation planning, coordinating with towns and land trusts to achieve statewide goals like preserving 50% of land by 2050. Uniformity and support from all RPCs are critical for these initiatives to succeed.
3. **Emerging Role in Capacity Building of Municipalities:** RPCs could take a more active role in capacity building, especially in helping municipalities implement plans and access federal funding. Some suggest a shift toward more independent regional entities with the autonomy to manage projects and make decisions that benefit multiple towns or regions. There is an opportunity for RPCs to expand their roles, incorporating more project management and tangible outcomes into their scope, especially with emerging needs such as disaster response and renewable energy siting.
4. **Strengthen Relationships with State Agencies:** The need to overcome entrenched perceptions within state government is a significant challenge. Some state agencies feel that cultivating relationships is crucial but can be hit or miss depending upon the RPC. Given these perceptions, there is a role for state agencies as well, in better communicating with RPCs about their concerns.
 - a. **Work Toward More Robust Evaluation and Greater Accountability:** There is a call for better reporting and accountability, more robust evaluation tools and stronger systems to track the impact of funds allocated to RPCs, ensuring better accountability and transparency in their operations. There may be value in considering creating templates or manuals for ensuring consistency.
5. **Staffing VAPDA.** There is value in considering a staff coordinator for VAPDA to support the RPCs in maintaining consistency and transparency. Some of the roles that a staff person could play are below.
 - a. **Statewide Alignment.** This coordinator could help RPCs to consistently report out budgets and operations to build trust, avoid external scrutiny, and demonstrate RPC value more clearly. This coordinator could also support more consistent communication, mapping, and planning across RPCs to ensure a baseline level of service and effectiveness. This could also include establishing regular communication channels with state agency partners and fostering collaboration among RPCs to share best practices. Utilizing VAPDA as a central coordinating body, with a more structured and intentional approach to ensure statewide alignment might involve having a VAPDA staff person to coordinate statewide efforts across the

RPCs; create and foster opportunities for collaboration, mentoring, and learning; and manage reporting and measurement across RPCs.

- b. **RPC Capacity Building** Investing in RPCs to build their capacity to provide more comprehensive support to municipalities, especially around grant writing, project management, and community engagement, could enhance their effectiveness and better position them to respond to local needs.
- c. There's a noted need for **better mentoring among RPCs**, especially for new Executive Directors or staff, to help navigate their roles and responsibilities. There may also be value in enhanced levels of support and resource allocation for under-resourced RPCs to ensure equitable service across communities.
- d. **Strengthen Governance Structures and Explore New Models:** There is interest in considering revising governance models to encourage broader participation, greater accountability, and transparency. There may be value in exploring alternative governance models for regional planning, such as forming new regional entities with different structures, funding mechanisms, or levels of independence, to better align with the needs of Vermont's communities. One model that has been discussed is the Council of Government (COG) model. A more streamlined approach, potentially reducing duplication and aligning missions across regional entities, could lead to more effective service delivery. Part of this discussion may be the strengthening of RPC board representation, ensuring clearer connections to the municipalities and the residents being served. RPC boundaries also do not always align with cultural regions, job sheds, or watersheds, which can complicate regional planning efforts.

Some of the comments received from interviewees regarding governance and new models are outlined below to provide insight to the perspectives held by partners interacting with RPCs in Vermont.

“As for RPCs as state/federal grantees, grantors are expecting a common level of deliverable, which is hard to do across 11 organizations, while understanding that RPCs are providing localized efforts that support regions. One model of success is if there is a statewide effort, we’ve found success in contracting with one RPC to manage their colleagues’ efforts to assemble a single product.”

“NEK – NVDA – I’m offended at the size of that RPC that continues to exist. It is so unjust. They will say they’re fine. It’s still not ok – the NEK has the most poverty and is a huge geographic area.”

“There are better and more effective regional structures. There is interest in having selectboard chairs be commissioners. They’re elected and they’re leaders. They have responsibility in the town.”

“Not all RPCs are created equal. When pushing resources to RPCs, often we divide by 11 and go about our business. This is a great value in some instances; in some, it is much less value. It is a challenge for them in recognizing that there are different levels of performance and capacity.”

“Lot of money is spent and not always meaning people are being helped. Nobody is in charge of getting back to us to say you got this money and this is what we got for it. We have poor evaluation tools.”

“Who are their clients? It should be municipalities, but often it is the grantmaker. Governance of RPCs is divorced from the will of the towns they serve. RPC delegates aren’t always selectboard members or commission members, but general public.”

“I find that they generally feel under-capacitated and overwhelmed. This gets in the way of what to do next. What I hear through them or about them, is that they don’t have the capacity to do this or that.”

“When trying to implement statewide program, there are RPCs that are capable and others that aren’t. It doesn’t give us that statewide presence or coverage that we need for a program to be successful. “

“If I could tell every town—you want to apply for this federal grant for a bike trail, you can reliably go to your RPC and the RPC can help you get the project to 30% design, they can help you fill out application, help you write application, help you manage the grant and the project, help you with project management and help with grant reporting. I don’t think I can tell every town in Vermont that this is true.”

“There is enough to do to be reactive, and it is hard to be proactive. All RPCs have lists of towns with plans that have to be updated... this is reactive. Rather than being able to be ahead of the ballgame and showing up at selectboard every quarter.”

“ They don’t want to tell state or local governments what to do. This is difficult for legislators who want better information to steer budget decisions. We only get really specific information when we ask them or when they draw the short stick. I’m asking for good data and policy... this is not anyone’s job at RPCs.”

“There isn’t capacity through RPCs or towns to actually implement the vision [of a town plan]. I’m not sure RPCs are the right entity to fill that project management gap. More planning and visioning isn’t helpful if there is no human infrastructure to support implementation.”

“Communities need to have a better understanding of what they’re doing.”

“The Act 250 bill is going to bring them a new level of accountability and scrutiny. Some will negotiate just fine. Others, I worry it will get real. VAPDA has to significantly step up as an organization to make sure all regions perform well. The cost of failure is awful. The consequences of not stepping up are real and painful.”

“The ecosystem of regional entities. Solid waste districts, conservation districts, RDCs, RPCs—it doesn’t make sense. So many regional organizations if we’re going for goal attainment. Big picture – where they’re going. Nice to see more coordination of services among regional organizations for same region. All have own IT, HR, etc. Not necessary.”

“RPCs could be a logical platform to deliver services that municipalities aren’t doing a consistent job at. There are common things they could be picking up for municipalities—assessment service, dispatch, development review, zoning admin. Some have done this. Some haven’t. The volunteer model isn’t working as well as it used to.”

“I think a standard and consistent structured relationship between VLCT and RPCs would be really important. RPCs should be creating their own track for training at the VLCT conference.”

“RPCs/RDCs are only more important as mechanisms of regional structure than ever before. Confidence needs to be rebuilt in what they can do and who they can do it for. They have been silent partner, rather than a vocal and charismatic partner.”

“RPCs are great brainstorming partners, referral partners, add boots on the ground and local knowledge in a great way. If other key partners relied on them more as trusted partner, we’d have a better ecosystem that is evolving together.”

“Discrete projects are the best way to go.. through one RPC who then contracts with all other RPCs.”

“They’re variable around staff... It would be great if they could acquire additional capacity to do something statewide. Much of what we want to do is statewide. We’re trying to get to a more uniform set of services... which would have enormous value from my perspective. Fundamentally, some of the differences between RPCs can be real challenge in administering statewide work.”

“They need their own staff to coordinate statewide participation by RPCs. VAPDA needs to be something more than directors. Have a couple of staff people that run statewide engagement of RPCs in certain policy conversations.”

“Better resourced RPCs are advocating about what they can do. If there is a way to help level their own playing field, it would be a great benefit to us and how we’re able to utilize them.”

“For me, the main way RPCs could be more helpful is if they weren’t RPCs. My main gripe with structure is that it’s very indirect. It is not a democratic structure. It doesn’t provide transparency or accountability to the residents. There is no direct feedback. Normal people don’t have any exposure to what RPC s are doing.”

“I’m a believer in bottom up... our municipalities are drowning. We need more ways for them to collaborate and have more capacity. In a perfect world, RPCs would be building the support for what we need from the bottom up. I want them to lead statewide conversation— all towns, you’re overwhelmed. We want to convene regional collaboration. We want commitment—I want them to come out publicly to help Vermonters understand opportunities. Being transparent and inclusive. Intentionally seeking to have that grassroots,

bottom-up building. I don't know who else in state is better poised in the state to do it than the RPCs."

"Would love to see RPC involvement and leadership around thinking about the next iteration around how capacity building could work. I want them to be involved in figuring out the model to improve capacity challenges that communities are facing."

"They vary region to region. They are incredibly important and valuable to community leaders. And I just wish they had more resources to do what they do."

"Links back to capacity... if they were able to have some general purpose staff that had consistent funding and were available for communities that can't afford to pay for general purpose items. But how do you determine what it means to not be able to afford it?"

By addressing existing challenges and opportunities, RPCs can become more strategic, accountable, and aligned with statewide goals, ultimately leading to better support for Vermont's communities. While RPCs serve as valuable partners, providing services and playing a crucial role in regional planning and community support, bridging the gap between state and local government, there is a need for them to address perceptions around transparency and accountability to strengthen their capacity, consistency, impact, and credibility.

Appendix K: State Enabling Legislation Comparisons

Enabling Legislation Comparisons

For the purposes of this assessment, the NADO Research Foundation has chosen six states to utilize as comparisons for statutory enabling legislation of regional development organizations. The topics of interest in this comparison are governing board membership, shared service considerations, general duties, funding, and other foundational considerations given to organizations like Vermont RPCs across the country. Ohio, Virginia, Minnesota, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine were identified as examples for this comparison exercise. The project team retained the services of current or past RPC executive directors from the states of Ohio, Virginia, and Minnesota to provide context and feedback on items outlined in this section. The inclusion of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine was requested by VAPDA, as these states are interpreted as possessing qualities and capabilities within their enabling legislation unique to the New England region of the United States. VAPDA has also identified these three states as having statutory powers and abilities that would improve the provision of service to residents of Vermont. Similarities, contrasts, and other observations from this review are included in the sections below.

New England Comparisons

Connecticut

Regional councils of governments established in Connecticut operate under establishing language found in the Connecticut General Statutes, chapter 50, sections 4-124i to 4-124p and 8-31.² Much of this statutory language was adopted in 1971 and updated in subsequent years. Similar to other states, the establishment of a regional council takes place through the ratification of ordinances by sixty percent or more of all potential member communities (towns, boroughs, cities).

Membership

As described in previous comparisons, the topic of membership composition is highlighted. Following establishment, each member community within the newly formed service region is entitled to one voting member of the council, and that member ‘shall be the chief elected official of such member’ or another elected official appointed by the legislative body in accordance with local regulations. Each community is entitled to one vote on the council. (Connecticut general statutes, 1971)

Shared Service

While these organizational foundations remain to the present day, significant reorganization of regional planning agencies and regional councils took place in 2013 and 2014. This realignment produced significant changes in the second area of interest highlighted by VAPDA, the ability to provide enhanced shared services or to provide services directly to or on behalf of member communities. The restructured language in the Connecticut general statutes in chapter 127, section 8-31, clearly lays out an expanded ability for regional planning organizations and other

² Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 50, Section 4-124i:
https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_050.htm#sec_4-124i

stakeholders to formally cooperate across a number of topic areas. The language of interest is found in section 8-31b and includes statements like the following:

“Notwithstanding the provisions of any special or public act, any political subdivision of the state may enter into an agreement with a regional council of governments to perform jointly or to provide, alone or in cooperation with any other entity, any service, activity or undertaking that the political subdivision is authorized by law to perform.”

Going further, the language explicitly states that “the administration and provision of such services shall not require the execution of any interlocal agreement.” (Connecticut general statutes, 2013) The services that can be provided by regional councils of governments are enumerated in the language and include: engineering, inspection and planning, economic development, public safety, emergency management, animal control, land use management, tourism promotion, social, health, education, data management, regional sewerage, housing, computerized mapping, household hazardous waste.

The language provided in chapter 127 provides enhanced authorization for regional councils of governments to work together, including the sharing of staff or working in neighboring regional council areas.

“Two or more regional councils of governments may establish one or more intercouncil committees to recommend policies relating to matters of an interregional nature, provided each participating council shall have first adopted a resolution authorizing establishment of any such intercouncil committees and defining the scope of its duties.

“Two or more regional councils of governments may share staff and staff from one council may work in the area of another council, provided each council involved in such a cooperative effort shall have first adopted a resolution authorizing such action and specifying the extent of cooperation and the terms under which it is to be provided³.”

This specific language from the State of Connecticut is of great interest to VAPDA and RPC members as they are searching for ways to provide additional services to communities or on behalf of communities as situations may dictate. This desire was received from RPC directors and board chairs during interviews and was also present in survey responses from both municipal members and governing board members. Further detail about these concerns is provided in the following section regarding the concept of the Council of Government organizational models.

Massachusetts

Continuing to evaluate enabling legislation more closely related to regional councils of government in New England, Massachusetts was also recognized as having capacities and capabilities for regional organizations that are aspirational for RPCs in Vermont. The overall language in question is found in Chapter 40B of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws, Part I, Title VII.

³ Intercouncil committees and staff sharing; https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_127.htm#sec_8-31e

Any group of local communities that act by vote of their legislative bodies can form and establish a planning district when two thirds of those communities vote for this effort in the affirmative.⁴ (Massachusetts general laws, 1955)

Membership

Regarding governing board membership and voting, Chapter 40B Section 4 states that each member community shall annually nominate in writing one member of the planning board to the governing board. If a community does not nominate a member, the previously nominated member can serve until a replacement is named and as long as that individual remains a member of the local planning board. There are similar alternative options available for local communities that may utilize other forms of municipal government. Both options also provide for the ability of a designee to be named who may not be a planning board member but is a resident of the town they are representing and is certified in writing by the mayor or the legislative authority. For communities that do not have a planning board, the selectmen will appoint a member to the district planning commission, with no further detail provided⁵. (Massachusetts general laws, 1955)

Shared Service

Similar to Vermont, Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40B Section 5 outlines the powers and duties of regional planning commissions and states that they are authorized to study the “resources, problems, possibilities and needs of its district” (Massachusetts general laws, 1955) and offer plans and studies that may address these needs. The specified areas of interest and action are outlined as land use, principal highways and expressways, bridges, airports, public utilities, public facilities, parks, recreational areas, public institutions and other topics that are deemed of interest to the district. Any plans or studies resulting from these efforts must be adopted by the planning district commission.⁶

Of greatest interest to the efforts of VAPDA is Chapter 40B, Section 29; Inter-agency agreements; expenditures; assessments; gifts, grants, etc.; fund. The key language detailing the abilities granted to regional planning councils is:

“The council is authorized to enter into contracts and agreements with any department, agency or subdivision of the federal or state government and any individual, corporation, association or public authority to provide or receive services, facilities, staff assistance or money payments in connection with the work of the council, and the council may contribute or receive services, facilities, staff assistance or money payments as consideration in such contracts and agreements⁷.”

⁴ Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B - <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40B/Section3>.

⁵ Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B, Section 4 - <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40B/Section4>.

⁶ Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B, Section 5 - <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40B/Section5>.

⁷ Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B, Section 29 - <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40B/Section29>.

Consistent with previous conversation, this section provides specific guidance about contractual arrangements with partners, including local communities, where services can be received or provided on their behalf. Vermont enabling language does not provide this level of detail.

Maine

Regional councils in Maine are authorized under Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A Municipalities and Counties, Part 2: Municipalities, Subpart 2: Organization and Interlocal Cooperation, Chapter 119: Regional Cooperation, Subchapter 1: Regional Council.⁸ These sections were first adopted in 1987. It is stated early in these sections that Maine recognizes a need for cooperation between state entities and local governments to achieve the goals of the public, and that regional councils are a vehicle through which to accomplish those goals. Article 2, Subsection 2311 states that the “municipal officers of any 2 or more municipalities by appropriate action may enter into an agreement, between or among those municipalities, for the establishment of a regional council of governments.” (Maine revised statutes, 1987)

It is noted here that Maine regional councils are not granted any unique or unusual abilities to raise or accept funds for the purposes of carrying out their mission. Member communities can appropriate funds to regional councils to address the expenses of the organization, and regional councils may accept funds from many sources including the federal government, state agencies or departments, other governmental units, and private sources.

Membership

Article 2, Subsection 2312 states clearly that half of the representatives from each member of the commission must be municipal officers.

Shared Service

In reference to the VAPDA concept of expanding the methods through which RPCs can work with and on behalf of member communities, enabling language in Maine clearly outlines intent for engaging with and on behalf of member communities, Title 30-A subsection 2305 states:

“This subchapter must be liberally construed toward the end of enabling councils to implement municipal programs and services on behalf of member municipalities, while avoiding the creation of special districts or other legal or administrative entities to accomplish these purposes. Programs and services may include, but are not limited to, programs and services for transit, solid waste, household hazardous waste, economic development, code enforcement, general financial and administrative activities and joint purchasing.”

This ability is taken even further in Subsection 2313 (2) Authority, which states:

“The council, on behalf of one or more member municipalities and upon appropriate action of the legislative bodies of one or more member municipalities, may exercise any power, privilege or authority capable of exercise by a member municipality and necessary or desirable for dealing with problems of local or regional concern, except essential legislative

⁸ Main Revised Statutes, Title 30A, Part 2, Subpart 2, Chapter 119, Subchapter 1 - <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/30-A/title30-Asec2301.html>.

powers, taxing authority or eminent domain power. This authority is in addition to any other authority granted to municipalities by the general laws and includes, but is not limited to, the formation of transit, solid waste and other services operations.”

Outside of New England

Ohio

Regional council organizations in the state of Ohio are organized under Title 1, Chapter 167 of Ohio Revised Code entitled “Regional Councils of Governments.”⁹ Originally formed in 1967, the establishing legislation is similar to that of Vermont, utilizing a voluntary creation and membership model for establishment. Ohio language specifies the universe of potential membership of these organizations with a broader number of entities, including “counties, municipal corporations, townships, special districts, school districts, or other political subdivisions.”¹⁰ (Regional councils of governments, 1967) Vermont enabling legislation speaks more narrowly to municipalities as the focus of membership, as Vermont has no functioning county governments. At a core level, the focus of regional cooperation is central to the intended purpose of organizations in both states. Ohio regional councils of government are classified as political subdivisions – and can generally act with the same status and capacity as any member government.¹¹ This is confirmed by review of individual organizational by-laws that state the specified organization is considered a political subdivision of the state.

Membership

With respect to membership on the governing board of regional councils in Ohio, Ohio Revised Code Section 167.02 (B) states the following, identifying that the chief executive of each member or other member appointed by the governing body, shall be the representative.

“If the agreement establishing the council does not set forth the manner for determining representation on the council such representation shall consist of one representative from each county, municipal corporation, township, special district, school district, or other political subdivision entering into the agreement, or subsequently admitted to membership in the council. The representative from each member county, municipal corporation, township, special district, school district, or other political subdivision shall be elected chief executive thereof, or, if such county, municipal corporation, township, special district, school district, or other political subdivision does not have an elected chief executive, a member of its governing body chosen by such body to be its representative.”

Regarding powers, Vermont legislation is more detailed with guidance to specific tasks that RPCs shall undertake or participate in, with a very heavy focus on regional planning. Ohio legislation, while similar in tone and overall effect, utilizes broader language in the descriptions of powers and duties listed at ORC 167.03 – Powers.¹² Ohio regional organizations are not only enabled to undertake planning, but also to promote coordination between communities on topics including

⁹ <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/chapter-167>

¹⁰ <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-167.01>

¹¹ <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-167.03>

¹² <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-167.03>

public safety, health, and education. The overall intent of having regional councils of government serve as technical assistance providers that can perform many tasks related to cooperation, planning, project prioritization, assistance to communities, training, and other administrative tasks is similar to Vermont; Ohio language presents a stronger emphasis on action as a key focus.

Shared Service

Of particular interest to VAPDA is exploring an enhanced ability to contract with municipal members for the provision of shared services with and on behalf of member communities. As outlined in later sections, there was significant survey feedback regarding the desire for increased and enhanced shared service capabilities for RPCs in Vermont. Ohio Revised Code, in Sections 167.08 and 167.081 state the following applies to regional councils of government.

“The appropriate officials, authorities, boards, or bodies of counties, municipal corporations, townships, special districts, school districts, or other political subdivisions may contract with any council established pursuant to sections 167.01 to 167.07, inclusive, of the Revised Code to receive any service from such council or to provide any service to such council. Such contracts may also authorize the council to perform any function or render any service in behalf of such counties, municipal corporations, townships, special districts, school districts, or other political subdivisions, which such counties, municipal corporations, townships, special districts, school districts, or other political subdivisions may perform or render.”

“A county, municipal corporation, or township and a special district, school district, or other political subdivision that is a council member may participate in a contract entered into under this section. Purchases under a contract entered into under this section are exempt from any competitive selection or bidding requirements otherwise required by law.”¹³
(Regional councils of government, 1967)

Of particular interest, and consistent with other states later in this section, is language allowing for regional councils of government to act with the same rights and responsibilities as units of local government in Ohio.

Virginia

Planning district commissions (‘commissions’) in Virginia are organized under Title 15.2 Counties, Cities, and Towns, Chapter 42, Regional Cooperation Act of Virginia Code, established in 1968.¹⁴ Commissions in Virginia are given broad ability to act as a “public body corporate and politic,” with specific reference to exercising “any power usually possessed by private corporations.” (Regional Cooperation Act, 1968)¹⁵

Statutory language for regional organizations in Virginia is similar to Vermont with a strong emphasis on regional cooperation and coordination. While referencing many similar planning and technical assistance considerations, Virginia has authorized commissions to be more broadly

¹³ <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-167.081>

¹⁴ <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title15.2/chapter42/>

¹⁵ <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title15.2/chapter42/>

involved in service delivery activities across the state. This includes, at the request of members, the ability to participate in the creation and operation of nonprofit organizations that further the purposes of the commission, to operate related programs, to provide administrative and management services, to contract with other entities as necessary, and similar services.¹⁶ Further, commissions may also do the following related to program implementation: “If requested by a member locality or group of member localities and to the extent the commission may elect to act, the commission may assist the localities by carrying out plans and programs for the improvement and utilization of their physical, social and economic elements.” (Regional Cooperation Act, 1968)

Commissions in Virginia also have broader financial authority to deploy financial assets in the pursuit of undertaking these duties. Three specific powers are outlined in 15.2-4206:

- the ability to lease, sell, exchange, donate or otherwise convey projects, properties, or facilities in support of commission endeavors;
- the ability to issue bonds;
- mortgage and pledge properties, projects, assets, or other revenues as security for any applicable debt.

This type of financial latitude is not provided in Vermont statutes as written.

Membership

Membership in the commissions is clearly spelled out in section 15.2-4203 – Organization of planning district commission.¹⁷ “At least a majority of its members shall be elected officials of the governing bodies of the localities within the district, or members of the General Assembly.” (Regional Cooperation Act, 1968) The section goes further to delineate how representation will reflect specific numbers of members based on community populations, while also directly stating that voting rights of members do not need to be equal and can be “weighed on the basis of the population of the locality represented by the member, the aggregation of the voting rights of members representing one locality, or otherwise.” (Regional Cooperation Act, 1968) There are no references to other membership categories outside of counties, cities, towns, and tribes.

Shared Service

In consideration of VAPDA’s interest in expanding shared service opportunities with and amongst members, Virginia legislation does make multiple references to this. In the Code of Virginia, 15.2-4207 (c), the following are stated: “Types of regional cooperative arrangements that commissions may pursue include but are not limited to (i) the facilitation of revenue sharing agreements; (ii) joint service delivery approaches; (iii) joint government purchasing of goods and services; (iv) regional data bases; and (v) regional plans.” The section also states, “the authority of the commission includes the power, to the extent the commission may from time to time determine, when requested to do so by a member locality or group of member localities.... to contract with nonprofit entities, including localities, performing such functions or operating such programs to provide administrative, management, and staff support, accommodations in its offices, and financial

¹⁶ 15.2-4207- Purposes of Commission; <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title15.2/chapter42/>

¹⁷ 15.2-4203- Organization of Planning District Commission; <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title15.2/chapter42/>

assistance.”¹⁸ No mention is made here regarding how these agreements can be entered in to and if they are subject to competitive bidding and selection processes.

Minnesota

Regional development commissions in Minnesota were organized under the Regional Development Act of 1969, codified in Chapter 462 – Planning, Zoning, Section 462.371 to 462.398.¹⁹ Similar to the other states, enabling language for Minnesota and Vermont share an overall emphasis on regional planning as a method to address regional issues faced by local communities including social, economic, and physical issues. Different from other examples cited, the counties of Minnesota that comprise thirteen (13) distinct regions are directly stated in the language. (The regions are named 1 through 11, but two districts are split into east west components, hence the total number of 13 distinct regions.)²⁰ The Governor of Minnesota (or their designee) must approve any regional commissions established through petition by local governments.

Minnesota also offers regional development commissions broad powers regarding financial capabilities for the purpose of carrying out the duties of the organizations. Specifically, commissions can levy a property tax “on all taxable property in the region” for the purposes of executing the mission of the commission. (Regional Development Act, 1969) Commissions are also included in annual distribution of ad-valorem taxes generated within the communities of the respective service regions. These amounts are determined following a public hearing held no later than September 15th each year where the anticipated budget for the upcoming year is discussed, and the amount of tax contributions needed to meet these expenses is discussed.²¹ Furthermore, Minnesota regional commissions may borrow money (via the issuance of bonds) against these anticipated tax receipts to meet expenses as necessary. In such a scenario, the commission cannot borrow more than fifty percent of the non-delinquent taxes that have been certified for collection. (Regional Development Act, 1969)

Outside these specific tax considerations, the financial capabilities of applying for and accepting grants, loans, and appropriations from municipalities and private entities is similar to what is permitted for RPCs in Vermont.

Membership

In Section 462.388, membership of regional development commissions is based on the type of organization being represented. Categories include county boards (over and under 100,000 population), organized towns, non-organized county areas, municipalities (over and under 10,000 population), school boards, native American tribal councils, and public interests. For the groups representing traditional units of government, mayors, council members and county board members are specified. A town clerk, treasurer, or board member is also specified for each county containing organized towns. Allowances for designees or alternates are not discussed.

¹⁸ 15.2-4207 – Purposes of Commission: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title15.2/chapter42/>

¹⁹ <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/462>

²⁰ Designation of Regions - <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/462.385>

²¹ Grants; Levies; Budget; Accounts: Audits; Bids; Deposits. - <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/462.396>

Shared Service

Regarding shared services, the Regional Development Act of 1969 does speak to this topic in 462.391, Subd. 2a. As stated: “To avoid duplication of staff for various regional bodies assisted by federal or state government, the commission may provide basic administrative, research, and planning services for all regional planning and development bodies. The commissions may contract to obtain or perform services with state agencies, for-profit or nonprofit entities, subdistricts organized as the result of federal or state programs, councils of governments organized under section 471.59, or any other law, and with local governments.”²² (Regional development act, 1969) The referenced section of 471.59 does provide extensive guidance on who may enter into such agreements, and the terms that apply therein. Subdivisions 10 and 11 of this section also state that regional commissions may contract with local governments to provide services and technical assistance and may be regarded as general-purpose units of government to receive funds necessary to operate programs on a regional (or subregional) basis for the purposes of efficiency. (Regional Development Act, 1969)

This high level of detail providing guidance on how regional councils can engage in regional governance matters on behalf of members closely aligns with the interests and feedback received from the RPC directors and VAPDA during the course of this research effort. These concepts and concerns are more fully discussed in the section below.

²² <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/462.391>

Appendix L: Communications Survey Results

Communications Survey Results

As part of this study, NADO surveyed the eleven Vermont RPCs to answer eighteen questions to evaluate and analyze individual RPC public engagement efforts and communication strategies. A summary and highlights of the responses are detailed below.

Staff and Budget

As detailed in the survey responses, only **one** of eleven of the Vermont RPC organizations currently **employs a dedicated communications staff member**. Of the remaining ten organizations, communications tasks and efforts are not outsourced but managed by multiple staff internally.

13. Does your organization have a dedicated communications budget? Or communication line items in administrative grant contracts?



Of the eleven organizations, **64%** reported having a **dedicated communications budget** or communication line items written into grant contracts.

Communications Plan

A communications plan typically contains a structured framework that outlines how an organization will share information with its stakeholders, employees, the public, and other audiences. Only **36%** of the RPC organizations **reported having either a formal or informal annual communications plan** or calendar while nearly 45% do not. Two organizations noted a plan was in development or that some communications tasks occur annually but are not documented.

9. Does your organization have an annual documented communications plan or calendar?



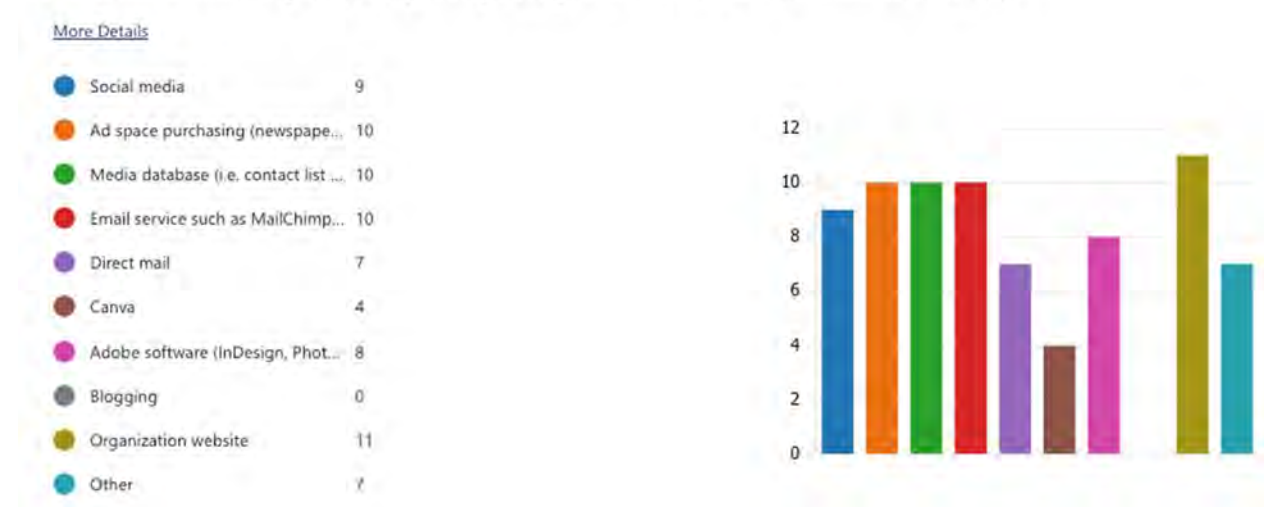
Crisis Communications

While almost all the RPC organizations have some type of disaster communication protocol in place with the municipalities they serve, **the majority (7) do not have a written document outlining the procedures, roles, and key messages they would use to respond to a crisis situation.** A crisis situation is a time when an organization needs to manage and share critical information to address an emergency, public issue, or unexpected event.

Communication Strategy

Most of the RPC organizations are familiar with and currently utilizing a range of communication tools from email services to graphic design platforms to carry out their communication strategies and stay connected with their audiences. The survey also revealed that most of the Vermont RPC organizations are staying connected with their constituents most effectively by using the Vermont-based service Front Porch Forum in addition to direct emailing and public and virtual meetings.

14. Which of the following tools, if any, does your organization use to enable communication work?

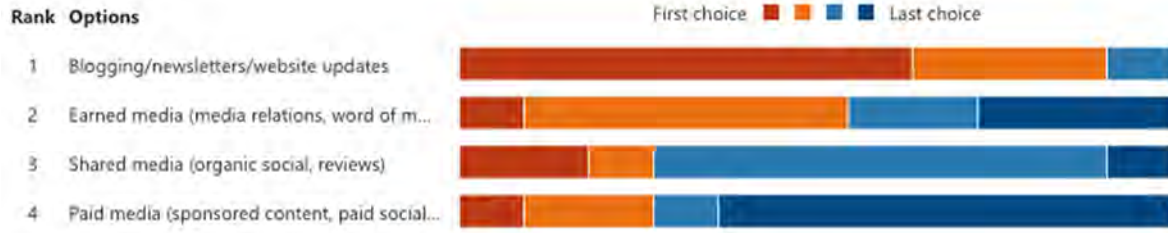


A few of the RPC organizations noted that most of their work and strategies do not necessarily need to reach the general public as they are mostly communicating in a focused manner with the municipalities they serve, noting, “Ultimately, it’s not the [Regional Planning] Commission as an entity the general public would need to engage, but rather individual Commissioners and, to some extent, town selectpersons and planning commission members.”

The survey found that most RPC organizations were prioritizing communications efforts through agency websites, blogging, and recurring newsletters. Paid media efforts such as sponsored content, paid social ads, or pay-per-click (online advertising model where advertisers pay a fee each time a user clicks on their ad) was the least prioritized effort with the exception of one RPC that prioritizes paid media as they purchase ad space to advertise public meetings.

15. Which describes the level of emphasis your organization is applying to the following?
[Rank these 1 to 4 with 4 being the highest level of effort.]

11 Responses



Engagement and Measurement

When reflecting on the reach of their public engagement efforts, 72% of the RPC organizations self-reported reaching 30% or less of the populations they serve. Further detail about these populations was not specified in the question and was left open to interpretation by the respondent.

The same organization that prioritized paid media over other efforts is the only organization to feel their public engagement efforts were reaching more than 50% of the populations they serve.

18. When thinking of the public engagement efforts above, what is the best estimate for the percentage of the **population you serve** being reached with those efforts?

[More Details](#)



By tracking communication metrics, organizations are able to establish the effectiveness of their communication efforts. Measuring communication responsiveness helps in making informed decisions on refining strategies to ensure messages are clear, engaging, and impactful. More than 50% of the RPC organizations reported tracking their communications efforts through at least one channel.

Two organizations noted that they either do not track engagement or perform post-communication analysis while a third noted they measure results through looking at how many people are attending and engaging with their events versus using tools that track metrics.

19. Which of the following are techniques your organization uses to measure the results of communications and public engagement efforts?

[More Details](#)

● Website traffic (Google Analytics)	6
● Social media reach	6
● Email open rates	6
● Event registrations	6
● Coverage in local media outlets	5
● Other	5



The RPC organizations shared that having more measurement know-how, as well as more staff capacity, would help in improving their efforts to measure the effectiveness of their communications, with one RPC specifically noting, *“With new initiatives happening constantly, there is very little time to measure effectiveness or pause to be thoughtful about tweaking strategies.”*

20. If you could have one of the following to help your organization improve its efforts to measure communications, what would you choose?

● Measurement know-how	4
● More budget	1
● Leadership support	1
● More or better technology	1
● Other	4

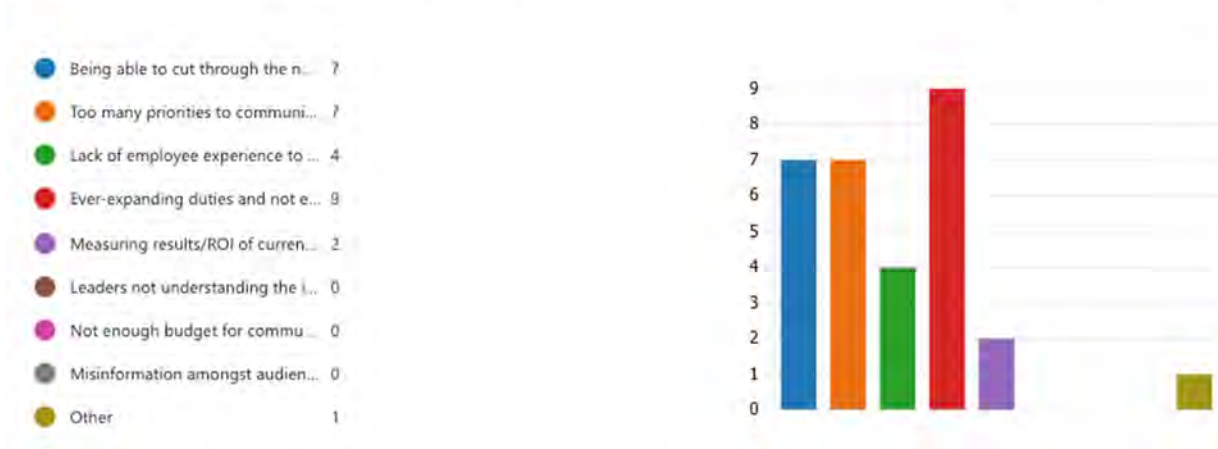


Challenges

The most significant challenge identified in the RPCs’ public engagement and strategic communication efforts is **staff capacity**. Staff responsibilities are ever-expanding, and dedicating time to communications-related tasks is challenging. The RPCs are challenged to effectively communicate their organizations' priorities in a way that gets noticed by their intended audiences, especially in a marketplace full of other information.

The RPCs also expressed frustration with experiencing minimum results from their existing social media efforts and were interested in seeing other organizations’ effective social media campaigns and learning how to conduct effective campaigns themselves.

16. Which of the following do you believe are the top three communication challenges currently facing your organization?



Strengths

The eleven Vermont RPC organizations are effectively utilizing many of the communication tools available to help them carry out their public engagement efforts, from graphic design software and email marketing platforms to managing their own media contact lists and keeping their own organization websites updated to effectively reach their audiences.

All RPCs are successfully sending some type of digital newsletter/direct email to their stakeholders keeping them informed on projects, programs, and other general updates.

To conclude the survey, respondents were asked if they felt if their organization's communications efforts are effective. **Seven** of the Vermont RPC organizations agreed that their organization's communications **efforts were effective**. Four organizations feel neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

21. Please indicate your level of agreement. My organization's communications efforts are effective:



Communication Recommendations

Overall, the survey emphasizes the common communication approaches and hurdles faced by the Vermont RPC organizations in their public engagement efforts. To help address some of their challenges, the following items are recommended:

Establish a written communication work plan and assign staff to tasks. To help public engagement and communication efforts not feel so burdensome to already stretched thin staff, and to streamline and formalize efforts, it is recommended that each RPC create a written communications work plan, calendar, or similar at the beginning of each calendar year. Using online project management tools, pulling from annual organizational work plans, or borrowing a plan outline from a similar organization can help get the initial communication plan off the ground, which can then be updated annually once established. Staff should be assigned to carry out specific tasks helping distribute the load among the organization. As a first step, RPCs should document existing communications efforts and their frequency. Between e-newsletters, email updates to specific groups of stakeholders or committees, and other ongoing tasks, many communications products are likely already being produced through existing RPC resources and staff time.

Establish a communications budget line item or write one into future grants and funding opportunities. An upside to communications work is that much of it can be accomplished through minimal dollars, if any at all. Through free online resources and tools, such as social media, a great deal can be communicated from an organization to its stakeholders for little to no cost at all. However, when more complex needs arise, it is helpful to have a pool, no matter how small, to help meet those needs. It is recommended that if an RPC does not already have room for communications expenses to be included in their budget, that they research how to work towards adding funding for public engagement efforts in future budgets. If it is not already included in project proposals or other types of funding requests, RPCs can use their communications work plan or calendar to document the staff time, materials, or subscriptions (such as e-newsletter software) that would be required to complete needed outreach for each project or program area.

Use VAPDA as a resource to help create robust network-wide communications. Producing cohesive messaging about the important roles that the eleven RPCs play throughout the state is a crucial step in outwardly establishing their value. It is recommended that VAPDA help create core messaging that the RPCs can use to help express to the public and their stakeholders their significant impact in communities. Coupled with this targeted messaging could be communications-related training opportunities, organized by VAPDA and led by RPC peers or subject matter experts as needed.