



**2017 VERMONT FINANCING WORKING LANDSCAPES  
CONFERENCE**

What does your business want to be when it grows up?

**PARTICIPANT AND ORGANIZATION BIOS**

**Weston Playhouse at Walker Farm  
Weston, VT  
October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017**



**SoVermont Economy Project**  
A Southern VT Economic & Workforce Development Network

## **PARTICIPANT AND ORGANIZATION BIOS:**

**Wayne Granquist** chaired the Board of the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company from 1996 to 2013 and is now Chair Emeritus and Chair of the Capital Campaign that has created the new community arts center at Walker Farm. He has served in leadership positions in government and business, including Chief of Staff to Senator Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut and Associate Director of OMB in the Carter Administration. He was President and co-owner of Stratton Mountain and Bromley from 1982 to 1990 and thereafter a partner in Manchester Capital Management. In 2015 he chaired the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone Committee, which recommended the creation of a comprehensive economic development strategy for the combined Bennington and Windham regions – a recommendation now being implemented.

**Anson Tebbetts** was appointed Vermont's Secretary of Agriculture, Food, and Markets by Governor Phil Scott in January of 2017. Prior to his appointment, Tebbetts spent more than twenty years as part of the WCAX news team, serving as the station's news director since 2009. From 2007-2009, he stepped away from his role at WCAX to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture, under the Douglas administration. An avid bird enthusiast, he co-hosts "For the Birds" on WDEV & WLVB radio.

**The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets** facilitates, supports and encourages the growth and viability of agriculture in Vermont while protecting the working landscape, human health, animal health, plant health, consumers and the environment.

**"Sugar Bob" Hausslein** and his wife Ann Ogden have been small scale maple producers for 25 years in the high mountain valley towns of Weston and Landgrove Vermont. Innovators in the value-added maple space, they brought Smoked Maple Syrup to market in 1995, as a way to extend both the use value of late season maple product and of the reach potential local maple producers have into specialty food markets and beyond. Their recent acquisition of the Vermont Maple Sriracha company with business partner Andrea Dammeier Ogden and her husband John, also of Landgrove, further solidifies their position as leaders in the savory maple space. Join them any evening in late March or early April for good times and possible misadventures in their Londonderry sugarhouse.

**Sugar Bob's Finest Kind Inc** produces value added savory maple products with a focus on super clean ingredient labels for homeowners, hipsters, foodies, and friends in their Rutland, Vermont factory sited at the Vermont Farmers Food Center. Their brands include Sugar Bob's Smoked Maple Syrup, and Vermont Maple Sriracha.

**Steve Paddock** is the VtSBDC Area Advisor for Bennington Counties and works with Debra Boudrieau (Windham and Windsor Counties Area Advisor) on the Vermont Yankee Economic Development Project in Windham County. In addition, Steve coordinates the VtSBDC Agribusiness program around the state.

**Vermont Small Business Development Center** helps Vermont business owners access capital (\$25 million last year), grow their business's profit, and build long-term value in their business. We work as a team to positively impact sustainable, economic development in Vermont by strengthening both established businesses and start-up entrepreneurs. Our certified professionals specialize in high quality, innovative advising and training to be responsive and serve the market. Nationally accredited by the Association of Small Business Development Centers, VtSBDC has leveraged its partnership of government, education and business for more than 22 years to help business owners create jobs, secure capital, build wealth and grow the

Vermont economy. We are funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration and the State of Vermont's Agency of Commerce and Community Development and hosted by the Vermont State Colleges.

**Mark Fischer**, Woodcock Farm Cheese Company, Weston, VT. Woodcock Farm Cheese Company is located in the Green Mountains of Weston, Vermont. A small family farm devoted to creating artisan cheeses from both their own farmstead sheep's milk and local organic cow's milk. For over 15 years we have been working to handcraft several varieties of sheep's milk cheeses made from milk produced by our flock of East Friesian Dairy Sheep.

**Beth Kennett**, Liberty Hill Farm & Inn, Rochester, VT. We've been welcoming guests from all around since 1984. We house about 270 cows on our farm. They're known as Robeth Holsteins and they're our award-winning herd. Our herd has been one of the leading milk producers in the State of Vermont for most of the past 27 years. Robeth Holsteins are known for their excellent genetics and have been honored with the

**Ben Doyle** is the Director of Community and Economic Development for USDA Rural Development Vermont and New Hampshire. In that capacity he works with communities and partners to advance Rural Development's mission of increasing the quality of life and economic vitality of rural communities. Ben is a former high school English teacher and served as both a volunteer and administrator for the Peace Corps. He holds a BA in English from the University of Vermont and an MA in the Humanities from New York University.

**USDA Rural Development** is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. Through our programs, we help rural Americans in many ways. We offer loans, grants and loan guarantees to help create jobs and support economic development and essential services such as housing, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure. We promote economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks, credit unions and community-managed lending pools. We offer technical assistance and information to help agricultural producers and cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their operations. We provide technical assistance to help communities undertake community empowerment programs. We help rural residents buy or rent safe, affordable housing and make health and safety repairs to their homes.

**Jean Conklin** of Haverhill, NH is a Senior Agricultural Loan Officer at the Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation (VACC). Jean joined VACC in 2016 after 12 years at Yankee Farm Credit, ACA, where she was a Senior Loan Officer and Farm Tax Specialist. Prior to that Jean was an Extension Dairy Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension for 16 years working in northern NH. Jean obtained her MBA at Plymouth State University, MS in Dairy Management from Virginia Tech, and has a BS in Animal Sciences from UNH. Her family operates a dairy farm in Haverhill and Jean serves on the Board of Directors for Cooperative Insurance Companies of Middlebury, VT and was previously on the board of the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge.

**The Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation (VACC)** is a program of the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) which provides credit to farmers, agricultural facilities, forestry and forest products businesses whose financing needs are not being fully met by conventional agricultural credit sources. Loans are available from VACC to strengthen existing operations, encourage diversification and modernization, increase energy efficiency, assist beginning farmers and forestry businesses and encourage marketing and processing of Vermont agricultural and/or forest products. VACC works closely with FSA and other lenders and has

offices in Montpelier, Middlebury, St. Johnsbury and Burlington. VACC's application and more information is available on-line at [www.veda.org](http://www.veda.org).

**Kate Stephenson** manages the Vermont Farm Fund, a revolving loan fund providing low interest loans to farmers and food producers. She is also a partner in HELM Construction Solutions, which works with owners, designers and builders to create high performance and sustainable buildings and businesses. She is an experienced leader in the fields of green building, professional education, sustainability, and business management. She's worked with established and emerging businesses and non-profits to achieve triple bottom line metrics, develop business systems, and plan for a dynamic and resilient future. She has deep experience in post-secondary education, and led the Yestermorrow Design/Build School for over thirteen years. Kate helped to develop and is a facilitator for NESEA's BuildingEnergy Bottom Lines program. Kate is the Chair of the Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee, and serves on the Board of the Vermont Council on Rural Development. She holds a MS in Management from Antioch University New England and a BA in Anthropology and Environmental Science from Haverford College.

**The Vermont Farm Fund** is a program of The Center for an Agricultural Economy. In partnership with Pete's Greens, we provide no-hassle, friendly-term loans to local farmers and food producers. A true revolving loan fund, as the community of recipients pays back their loans, funds are replenished for the next cycle of borrowers.

**Cory Haggett** is currently a loan officer with Yankee Farm Credit, ACA out of the White River Junction, VT office. I've worked for Yankee since August 2015 and prior to joining Yankee I owned and operated a small business in the Central Vermont area for 18 years. I grew up on a small dairy and later a beef farm in Brookfield, VT. I have an agricultural business degree from Vermont Technical College and an agricultural economics degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In June of this year, I graduated from Norwich University with a Masters of Business Administration (MBA).

**Yankee Farm Credit, ACA** is a cooperative agricultural lender and is part of the Farm Credit System which was chartered by congress in 1916. We primarily lend to full and part time farmers as well as farm related businesses. We offer both long term loans for real estate and short term loans for capital purchases such as machinery/equipment and livestock and well as operating lines of credit. Additionally, we provide other agricultural related services such as tax preparation, payroll and records keeping, real estate appraisals, crop insurance and farm business consulting. Our territory includes all of Vermont, Coos, Grafton, Sullivan and Cheshire counties in New Hampshire as well as Clinton and Essex counties in New York.

**Raymond Lanza-Weil**, Director of Business Programs, Vermont Community Loan Fund, is responsible for all aspects of the Loan Fund's business loan programs. Raymond previously served as the Loan Fund Program Manager at Goodwill Industries International. Before that, he was a Senior Vice President and Senior Financial Institutions Analyst at CARS, the CDFI Assessment and Ratings System (now Aeris Insight). Raymond is a long-time business lender with tenures at banks, state government, and community development loan funds. Raymond has founded a small business, launched a nonprofit theatre company, and served on the boards of nonprofit arts organizations.

**The Vermont Community Loan Fund** is a mission-driven, community-focused alternative lender. We make loans to Vermont businesses, community organizations, child care providers, and affordable housing developers that don't qualify for conventional financing; we provide financial consulting and business advisory services to make sure our borrowers have access to all the tools they need to succeed. The money we lend is loaned to us by hundreds of investors – individuals & families, federal & state governments, faith-based groups, foundations,

banks – who demand a social, “community” return along with a financial return. VCLF has loaned \$100 million in Vermont since 1987.

**Carol Lighthall** was born and raised in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom among hard-working small business owners and farmers. Her professional background includes fifteen years of community banking in New Hampshire, followed by twenty years of community and economic development at state, regional and local levels in Vermont and New Hampshire, specializing in business financing. Before her work with Community Capital, Carol worked as Executive Director for Springfield on the Move focusing on downtown revitalization. Carol first served Community Capital as a member of the board and loan committee. She has been the Executive Director of Community Capital of Vermont since 2016.

**Community Capital of Vermont’s** mission is to help small businesses and lower income entrepreneurs prosper through the provision of flexible business financing.

**Noelle Sevoian** is program manager for the Working lands Enterprise Initiative and has been with the Agency of Ag since the program's creation in State Legislature in 2012. Noelle earned a Masters of Science from University of Vermont's Community Development and Applied Economics Program and has a Double Bachelors in Global Business and Management from Suffolk University, Boston.

The **Working Lands Enterprise Initiative**, (Act 142), is administered by the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets in partnership with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The Working Lands funds are administered by the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB), an impact investment organization whose mission is to grow the economies, cultures, and communities of Vermont’s working landscape by making essential, catalytic investments in critical leverage points of the Vermont farm and forest economy, from individual enterprises to industry sectors.

## **Liz Gleason**

### **Farm and Forest Viability Program**

**Chris Lindgren**, works with forest economy businesses through the University of Vermont Extension Agricultural Business Programs; from maple producers, to woodworkers, to loggers, researching forest business economics, developing business planning tools, and providing business planning and coaching services to forest products businesses.

**UVM Extension** integrates higher education, research and outreach to help Vermonters put knowledge to work in their families and homes, farms and businesses, towns and the natural environment.

**Geoff Robertson** joined the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund in 2017 as Director of Business Assistance. In this role, he manages a suite of business assistance services to help Vermont business owners and management teams advance profitability, job creation, and sustainable business development and manages the VSJF's climate economy efforts. Most recently Geoff held the position of CEO at Empower Mobility, a mobile platform, and software company. As the CFO at School Spring, LLC, Geoff managed and ultimately negotiated the successful sale of the cloud based recruitment and applicant tracking system for K – 12 schools. He previously served as the Entrepreneurial Advisor at Davis & Hodgdon CPAs serving School Spring, the Vermont Food Venture Center, and many other small businesses in Vermont.

**The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF)** is a nonprofit organization committed to nurturing the sustainable development of Vermont’s economy. VSJF is committed to partnerships and collaborations that position Vermont as a state where social impact entrepreneurs want to start and grow businesses connected to the emerging climate economy. VSJF is a partner in the Vermont Climate Economy Initiative, managed by the Vermont Council on Rural Development,

an effort to boost economic development, create jobs, and attract youth and creative entrepreneurs to the state.

**RT Brown** wears two hats at the BDCC: 1.) Windham County Economic Development Program Project Manager (WCEDP) and, 2.) Head Instigator. For WCEDP, he finds eligible projects for the fund and provides technical assistance so the application process is successful. As the Head Instigator, his primary focus is helping companies access capital and ensuring that the conditions are in place within the region for a vibrant culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.

**INSTIG8** is a BDCC initiative located in Windham Region and initially sponsored by the Windham County Economic Development Program (WCEDP). This program strategically fosters a safe environment for creative entrepreneurs to try, fail, learn, build, explore, and connect to other like-minded individuals while developing their business concepts and models. It's a series of workshops, events, and co-working. INSTIG8 will be the catalyst for engaging, business-minded, creative community of entrepreneurs, innovators, and instigators

**Jim Verzino** is the Director and Entrepreneur in Residence of Windham Grows, a business accelerator that was created by the Strolling of the Heifers and is designed to nurture the next generation of innovative food and agriculture entrepreneurs in southern Vermont.

**Windham Grows**, a project of Strolling of the Heifers, is a food and agriculture business hatchery ready to give the mentorship, education, tools and financing help food and agriculture businesses grow. The program is led by two experienced Entrepreneurs-in-Residence that work one-on-one with entrepreneurs to help drastically improve business growth and health. We get specific on the exact help needed, working as a team with subject matter experts to set specific goals and create plans that are reviewed to assure execution.

**John Jacobi**, Financial Advisor, MM Financial Services Group, has over 20 years of institutional experience in the asset management field. Academic achievements include an undergraduate degree from University of Vermont and a Masters in Finance from Boston College. He and his wife enjoy spending time with their two children and watching them participate in alpine ski racing, soccer, softball, baseball and lacrosse. John is an avid skier and also enjoys golf and fishing.

**MM Financial Services Group** is an independent firm, our goal is to allow you to spend time on what you enjoy, whether it is, growing your business or spending time with your family. MM Financial Group, a Vermont-based full service financial consulting firm, can help you to make the most of the time you have by helping you plan your financial future, for yourself or your employees.

**Richard Berkfield** is the co-founder and Executive Director of Food Connects. He has been leading food system development work in the Windham County area since 2009. He is a member of the Vermont Farm to Plate Steering Committee as well as the Vermont Farm to School Steering Committee. Richard holds a M.A. from SIT Graduate Institute in Sustainable Development with a focus on Food Security for Vermont, as well as a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Marlboro College Graduate School. Berkfield was named one of Vermont's Rising Stars by Vermont Business Magazine in 2014.

**Food Connects**, an entrepreneurial non-profit, delivers locally produced food as well as educational and consulting services aimed at transforming local food systems. Their Food Hub aggregates and delivers from over 45 local farms and food producers to over 100 buyers in Southeast Vermont and Southwest New Hampshire. Educational services focus on a Farm to School Program. Acknowledged as a statewide leader, the program supports over 30 schools to increase local food purchasing, school meal participation and food, farm and nutrition

education. Together these core programs contribute to a vibrant local economy by increasing local food sales by schools and improving students' nutrition and academic performance.

**Mike Ghia** has worked with dozens of families on farm business and real estate transfers over the last decade. Mike farms part-time while working as a farm consultant, primarily through Land For Good and the University of Vermont Extension Farm Viability Program. Mike assists farmers with business planning and financial management through the VT Farm and Forest Viability Program. Through Land For Good, Mike coaches farmers and landowners on farmland access and tenure, and also assists with the development of tools and technical resources to help farmers and landowners with farmland tenure issues. Through both organizations, Mike assists families with farm succession and transfers with the goal of helping farms remaining productive and successful.

**The Land For Good** mission is to ensure the future of farming in New England by putting more farmers more securely on more land. We envision a vibrant landscape of working farms managed by thriving farmers. Entire communities will benefit from increased farming opportunity, healthy lands, and a more secure food supply. Since 2004 we have provided caring support and expert guidance to help farmers, landowners and communities navigate the complex challenges of land access, tenure and transfer. And our comprehensive and collaborative approach achieves customized solutions and helps realize family, farm business and community goals.

**Don Jamison** is a founder and the Executive Director of the Vermont Employee Ownership Center where he helps plan and deliver VEOC's educational offerings, and works with those in established companies to assess the potential of employee ownership for their businesses. He is also a singer and composer whose music has been performed by many Vermont-based groups.

**The Vermont Employee Ownership Center** is a statewide non-profit whose mission is to promote and foster employee ownership in order to broaden capital ownership, deepen employee participation, retain jobs, increase living standards for working families, and stabilize communities. The VEOC provides information and resources to owners interested in selling their business to their employees, employee groups interested in purchasing a business, and entrepreneurs who wish to start up a company with broadly-shared ownership.

**Michael Snyder** was appointed Commissioner of Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation by Gov. Peter Shumlin in December 2010. Prior to that he served for 14 years as Chittenden County Forester, providing land stewardship assistance to private landowners and municipalities. He also taught, for 12 years, two courses in Forestry at the University of Vermont and he continues to write the Woods Whys column for Northern Woodlands Magazine.

**Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation** is responsible for the conservation and management of Vermont's forest resources, the operation and maintenance of the State Park system, and the promotion and support of outdoor recreation for Vermonters and our visitors. In addition, FPR is responsible for the acquisition, planning coordination and administration of all Agency of Natural Resources lands. Department employees are stationed throughout Vermont, including offices in Montpelier and at five regional locations.