

Valley Futures Network:

Structure Group

**Project Presented By: Maggie Donin, Faye Conte,
Erin Buckwalter, Lindsey Bachelder, Jacob Evans**

In Collaboration with:
UVM Department of Community Development and Applied Economics

Strengths

- Energetic, committed and capable membership
- Flexible informal organization and leadership opportunities for all members
- Builds social capital in Mad River Valley
- Provides a networking space
- Retreats useful for member recruitment and retention

Weaknesses

- Long-term residents of the valley are underrepresented in the Valley Futures Network
- Lacks clear direction
 - Difficult to set and attain goals
 - Threat of member burnout
- Members lack consensus on Network's role in the community
- The Network's mission tends to appeal to like-minded individuals
- Language can be seen as inflammatory or exclusionary

Opportunities

- Many projects are within the community that the Network could take on or participate in
- Situated in a dedicated and energized community
- Many local resources, including organizations with similar values
- Local organizations can be used as models
- VFN is focused on timely issues

Threats

- Community members or organizations who are opposed to the VFN's vision
- Redundancy with other local organizations
- Perception of elitism

CASE STUDIES

How can the VFN learn from other organizations?



Source: New York Times

Transition Towns

“For all those aspects of life that this community needs in order to sustain itself and thrive, how are we going to:

-significantly rebuild resilience (in response to peak oil)

-drastically reduce carbon emissions (in response to climate change)?”

- Started in 2006 by Rob Hopkins
- Board of Trustees
- Based around model of a small group of individuals working together to gain support by whole community
- These communities based around specific elements that an official TT must adhere by
- Involves commitment
- Why should the VFN care about TT's?

The Center for An Agricultural Economy (CAE)



- A non-profit organization founded in 2004.
- Seeks to create a local 21st century healthy food system in Hardwick, VT.
 - Goals
 - How the CAE has changed Hardwick for the better
- Structure: Board of Directors with separate roles. Open to community involvement.
- What the VFN can learn

Industrial Areas Foundation

- IAF's Primary Goal:
 - To "build organizations whose primary purpose is power - the ability to act - and whose chief product is social change" (source: IAF website)
- Strong membership from all different sectors of the community
- The IAF believes in the ability of all members of the community to participate and become leaders.
- How IAF can serve as a model for VFN

Sustainable Ways

- Registered non-profit in Colorado serving their valley community through diverse projects promoting sustainability in all its definitions.
- Began as a community “think-tank” where ideas, knowledge, and visions were shared. Transitioned to a non-profit to better facilitate action.
- Followed a very similar path as VFN and provide a preview of what the formal non-profit route might look like.

Dudley Street Initiative

- The Dudley neighborhood is trilingual, multi-ethnic, and among the poorest regions in the Boston area
- Initiative developed as a community organization to promote “economic, human, physical, and environmental growth” without displacing the current residents
- Partners with members of each major ethnic group, with local individuals, organizations, churches, businesses, and non-profits
- Urban Village – “physical, economic and human development of a vibrant, diverse, empowered community where people could live, shop, work and play”

Dudley Street (cont.)

- Sustainable Economic Development
 - Community Land Trust – community control of property
 - 121A Corporation – eminent domain to redevelop privately-owned vacant lots for affordable housing
- Community Empowerment
 - Resident Development Institute – adult and youth value-based community learning
- Youth Opportunities
 - GOTCHA - advocate for summer teen job opportunities
 - Dudley Youth Council – Summer Youth Retreat
- Urban Village
 - Community-based multi-use development

Recommendations

- **Objective A:** Re-focus as a project oriented group to identify priorities and take action.
 - Create a more formal leadership and structure. This may or may not lead to incorporation as a 501 ©(3).
- **Objective B:** Serve as a networking forum and community think tank.
 - Create a leadership committee to facilitate and organize events and listserv. This committee could rotate, be elected, etc.



Source:Brailhawaii.com

Recommendations

- General Recommendations:
 - Decide priorities and objectives; articulate what VFN is about to the community to build greater partnerships and community support.
 - Determine if inclusiveness or vision is a higher priority; dedicate to that priority.

Sources Cited

- www.transitiontown.org
- www.transitionus.org
- www.industrialareasfoundation.org/
- www.sustainableways.org
- www.dsni.org