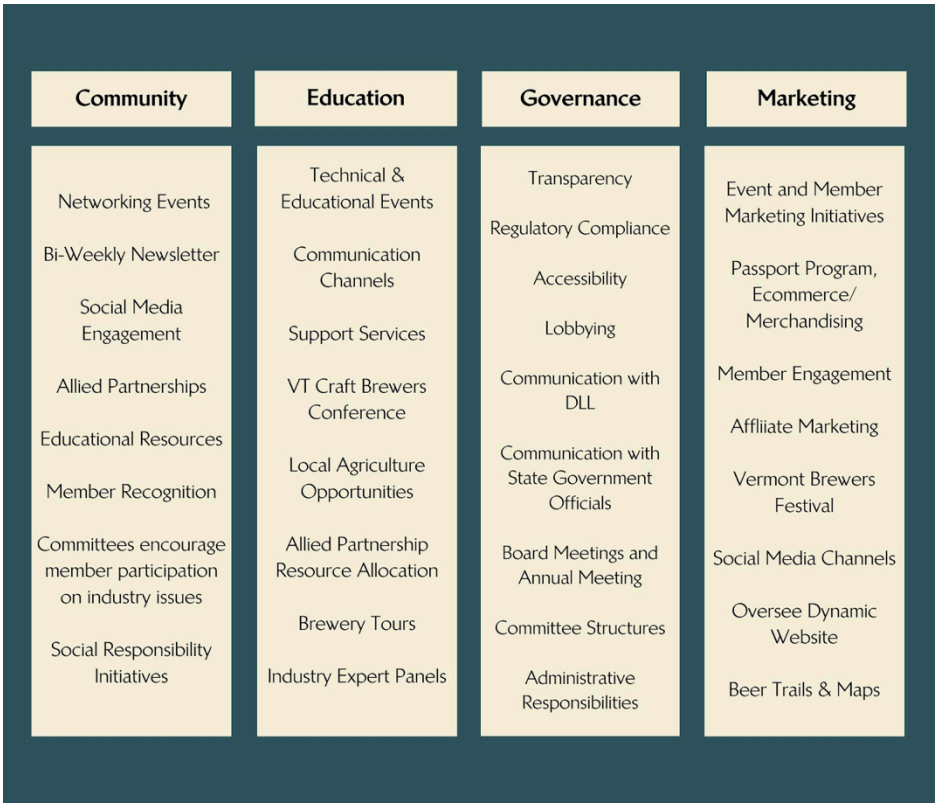
BEER WORTH FINDING
VERMONT BREWERS ASSOCIATION

# Three-Year Strategic Plan

## July 1, 2024- June 30, 2027




**Mission:** The Vermont Brewers Association was founded in 1995 to promote and strengthen the culture of craft brewing in Vermont through marketing, education, and advocacy for Vermont-made beer.

**Drafted:** March 12, 2024- June 6, 2024
**Approved:** June 18, 2024
**Updated:** November 23, 2026

I.COMMUNITY

| GOAL | STRATEGY | Responsible Party | PROGRESS |
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| **Transparent Communication**<br><br>*July 2024-forward* | ● Between VBA & Members | Exec Committee, ED & Committee Chairs | ● Bi-Monthly newsletters sent by Emma (started 04/07/2023)<br>● Quarterly Updates on Strategic Plan Progress (included in newsletters)<br>● Board meeting minutes added to resource page & sent to membership (included in newsletters)<br>● GAC meeting 9/23/2024, meeting minutes added to resource page & sent to membership (10/30/2024, weekly starting 1/13/2025)<br>● Events & Marketing, Tech & Ed, GAC meeting invites emailed to membership (1/31/2025)<br>● VBA Legislative Agenda for 2026 session sent to VBA members for feedback (10/27/2025). Actively securing testimony from membership.<br>2026: Continued regular member communications, including legislative updates, DLL stakeholder meeting notices, conference information, and opportunities for member input.<br>2026: Solicited brewery feedback and testimony to support Brews to Barns policy development. |
| | ● Member to Member | VBA Members & Staff | ● New website with improved job boards, event board, sales boards, contact information (launched 03/12/2024)<br>● 10/1: 25% of breweries have updated their contact information and posted events or jobs, 14 members have added/ updated contacts |

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| | | | • 2/3: update info - 18% (this number is lower because we have less breweries now in membership than we did on 10/1)<br>  ○ events/job posts - 16<br>  ○ added/updated contacts - 21<br>2026: Continued use of member communications and the online resource portal to share industry opportunities, events, and contacts. |
| | • Bulk Buying Initiative | VBA Staff | • Bulk buying has been a hot topic for years, but due to laws surrounding anti-trust , bulk buying is not possible<br>• This was communicated to the membership via email on 05/13/2024 |

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| **Planning & Networking** | • Outside of Chittenden County | VBA Staff & Board | • Regional Brewery meet-ups, Spring 2024<br>• Planning for additional regional meet-ups in 2025.<br>  ○ 2/3: 4, 30th birthday VBA networking events are in planning for spring of 2025 throughout the state.<br>• Annual Meeting & Holiday Party outside of Chittenden County 2024 (12/16/2024)<br>2026: Held brewery networking through the May golf tournament, October disc golf tournament (~40 brewery participants), and gatherings around VTCBC.<br>2026: December 8 Annual Meeting and Holiday Party scheduled at Long Trail in Bridgewater Corners. |

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| | | | 2026: Organized two collaborative brewing projects: the Board collaboration beer 'Everywhere At Once' for the Vermont Brewers Festival and the committee collaboration beer 'Town Meeting Lager' for VTCBC, involving nine breweries and five partner vendors. |
| **Events** | *2024-2025*<br>● 4 Networking events<br>● 2 Education events<br>● Fundraiser Event<br>● Membership Event | VBA Staff & Committees | ● Networking-<br>○ 2024: Holiday party (von Trapp, 12/16/2024), Baseball (07/30/2024), VBF After-Party (Foam, 07/19/2024), VTCBC After-Party (Switchback, 11/12/2024)<br>● Education-<br>○ 2024: tech & ed day: (05/19/2024, 14th Star, conference: (11/11/2024 - 11/12/2024)<br>● Fundraiser-<br>○ 2024: festival (7/18/2024-7/19/2024), glassware sales (orders due 10/4/2024)<br>● Membership-<br>○ 2024: Annual Meeting & Holiday Party (von Trapp, 12/16/2024) |
| | *2025-2026*<br>● Same networking, membership & fundraising as year 1<br>● Additional education event | VBA Staff & Committees | ● Networking-<br>○ 2025: Greg Noonan Day (3/4), Pre-VBF Party (7/17), VBF After-Party (7/18), Baseball Game (8/8), VTCBC After-Party's (11/17 & 11/18)<br>● Education-<br>○ 2025: tech & Ed Day (4/8), conference (11/17-11/18), de-escalation training 12/1 |

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| | | | • Fundraiser-<br>  ○ 2025: Newport Beer Festival (4/19), VBF (7/18-7/19), 30th collaboration beer (on-going), Siptemberfest (9/20), Idletyme Oktoberfest (9/26)<br>• Membership-<br>  ○ 2025: VBA at the Fair (8/21-31), Annual Meeting & Holiday Party (BBCO, 12/9) |
| | *2026-2027*<br>• Increase networking, education, and fundraising by one event from 2024 expectations | VBA Staff & Committees | 2026: Hosted the Vermont Brewers Festival (July 17-18), VBA golf tournament (May 22), disc golf tournament (October 15), and Vermont Craft Brewers Conference (November 12-13).<br>2026: Launched Battle of the Brewery Bands as a conference-adjacent networking event with six brewery bands.<br>2026: December 8 Annual Meeting and Holiday Party scheduled; evaluate annual event count against the original numerical target after year-end. |

I.COMMUNITY

| GOAL | STRATEGY | Responsible Party | PROGRESS |
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| **Financial Support**<br>Opportunity to provide support, microloan, or | • Matchmaker to the people with money | VBA Staff & Allied Partners | • 10/1: Increased Allied Partnership to 58 businesses, $12,000 over budget goal. |

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| investment by allied partner<br><br>*By 2027* | (expansion, growth, making more money)<br>● What is your great idea that will benefit the Vermont beer industry?<br>● What are we doing to create more resilience in our industry? | | ● Quarterly Allied Partner newsletters<br>● Include Allied Partners in wholesale glassware pricing<br>● 2/3: Ended 2024 with 58 Allied Partners, $13,811 over our budget goal. Added 2 new Allied Partners in 2025 so far, and one increase in membership tier. Increased budget goal for 2026<br>● 9/25: Currently at 61 Allied Partners, added 10 new AP in 2025<br>● 11/6: Currently at 65 Allied Partners, added 15 new AP in 2025. Increased in-kind AP to offset costs.<br>2026: Expanded Allied Partner engagement; welcomed The 5th Ingredient / Beer30 as a new partner in May.<br>2026: Introduced Retail & Craft Beer Bar Membership ($250 annual dues) to broaden connections with Vermont beer-serving businesses.<br>2026: Welcomed eight new Allied Partners: Reynolds, Invest EAP, Farrell Distributing, BCI, Innomalt, Elevated Beverage Solutions, Peak Motor and Pump, and Evergreen Services.<br>2026: Created the Allied Partner Benefits Marketplace, consolidating member discounts, consultations and resources across brewing operations, insurance, legal and financial support, employee assistance, energy efficiency, and marketing.<br>2026: Established a Stone-Leigh Cleaning rebate opportunity that returns a portion of qualifying purchases to the VBA. |
| **Brewers Resilience Fund (BRF)**<br>Create a fund to support brewers and brewery | ● Donations from Allied Partners<br>● Crowdfunding (i.e., additional dollars from | VBA Staff, Members, & Allied Partners | November 2026: No confirmed launch or funding mechanism documented. Requires Board decision on scope, administration, and feasibility before June 2027. |

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| owners during times of personal hardship (e.g., family changes, health changes, unexpected death, etc.).<br><br>*By 2027* | ticket sales will go to BRF)<br>● Support from Members | | |

I.COMMUNITY

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| **Increased Benefits for Brewery Staff**<br><br>*By 2027* | ● Explore options for Members with Allied Partners<br>○ Healthcare<br>○ 401K<br>○ Sustainability<br>○ HR<br>● Additional training for FOH<br>● Templates for HR Policies, including sexual harassment boiler-plate language<br>● EAP | VBA Staff & Allied Partners | 2026: Launched Pour the Girls, a women-in-beer network; initial sign-ups reached 32 by June and $1,200 was raised toward scholarships.<br>2026: Hosted a Women in Beer panel and meet-up at VTCBC (November 12).<br>2026: Continued exploring training and scholarship support; healthcare, retirement, HR templates and EAP benefits remain to be assessed.<br>2026: Established an Invest EAP partnership, allowing VBA members to pursue confidential employee assistance services for staff and their households; participation is through the partner program, not automatic coverage for all brewery employees.<br>2026: Launched an Allied Partner Benefits Marketplace with opportunities including insurance savings, financial and legal consultations, training discounts, energy efficiency support, and marketing |

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| | | | services. EAP partnership objective achieved; broader staff benefits goal remains ongoing. |

II. Education

| GOAL | STRATEGY | Responsible Party | PROGRESS |
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| Tech & Ed Events<br>Minimum of 2 tech & Ed events per year, with a goal to increase by one event per year.<br><br>*By 2027* | • Categories to include sales, HR, Front of House, social media, Technical brewing, Diversity & Inclusion | VBA Staff & Committees | • 2024—two tech & ed events, at 14th Star (05/19/2024) and Conference (scheduled 11/11/2024 - 11/12/2024)<br>• 10/1: Added external events section to membership newsletter with education opportunities outside of the VBA<br>• 2/3: Added external events section to VBA brewer only event calendar on website<br>• 9/25: Adding a de-escalation FOH workshop for 12/1<br>2026: Delivered VTCBC November 12-13 with two keynotes and 24 breakout sessions across Technical, Business, Sales, and Resilience tracks.<br>2026: Included technical sensory and brewing sessions, business and sales education, sustainability/ efficiency content, and a Women in Beer panel.<br>2026: Developed the VTCBC committee collaboration beer 'Town Meeting Lager' as a hands-on cross-brewery and supplier partnership. |
| Resources on Website | • Sustainability, DEI, Distribution contracts/ agreements/laws<br>• Legal bulletins and DLL updates<br>• Diversity training | VBA Staff & Allied Partners | • 10/1: VBA resources (19), Committee resources (56), VBF (9), Educational resources (33), Business resources (18), Marketing resources (1), passport resources (2) |

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| | • HR & hiring resources<br>• Contacts across industries to assist with training (hospitality, marketing, technical brewing, HR) | | 2026: Continued sharing education, policy, and industry resources through the member portal and member communications; resource inventory should be re-audited.<br>2026: Compiled a nine-page Allied Partnership Discounts & Opportunities guide (updated November 23) covering technical lab consultations, White Labs education discounts and scholarships, business services, and operational savings. |
| Access to National Conferences & Events | • Assist with entry fees for competitions<br>• Scholarships/discounts for national conferences | VBA Staff, Members & Allied Partners | • Free entry & shipping for GBF 2024<br>• Free entry & shipping for GBF 2025 (Lawsons and Foam participating)<br>2026: Continued work toward a goal of at least five scholarships for VTCBC and external conferences; confirm awards made and funding available. |

III. Governance

| GOAL | STRATEGY | Responsible Party | PROGRESS |
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| Lobbying<br><br>*2024-forward* | Continued relationship with lobbyist and developing expectations /goals with Governance Committee | VBA Staff, Governance committee, Lobbyist | • 2024—squashed bill to increase tax rates on higher ABV beers<br>• 2024 - Misc. Alcohol Bill passes with increased special event permits & wholesalers added to festival permits<br>• 2024 - GAC meeting 9/23, Emma/ Matt/Jessica meeting 8/29<br>• 2025 - GAC meetings weekly starting 1/17/2025. VBA display at statehouse 3/28/2025.<br>• 2025 - EA attended VT Senate Democrat Golf Tournament<br>• 2025 - Joined VT Hemp Beverage Alliance<br>• 2025 - VBA proposed a bill for the 2026 legislative session, met with Wholesalers, Big Beer, DLL to discuss<br>July 1, 2026: H.921 signed, authorizing qualifying Vermont malt manufacturers to self-distribute up to 3,000 barrels annually, alongside other licensing reforms. Major VBA advocacy milestone.<br>2026: H.915 Bottle Bill changes enacted; VBA communicated implementation implications to members.<br>Fall 2026: Began developing a Vermont Brews to Barns proposal, meeting with the Agency of Agriculture and collecting brewery/farmer evidence; exploring an excise tax credit approach.<br>2026: Submitted a $96,000 grant application on November 5 for brewing byproduct and packaging reuse work with sustainability consultant Luke Truman; funding decision pending. |

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| Revisit Tied House & 1st /2nd/3rd/4th class licensing<br><br>*2025-2026* | • Survey members<br>• Discussion at annual meeting<br>• Update Lobbyist with VBA position | VBA Staff, Members, Lobbyist | • 2024 - 9/24 - Board Meeting discussed Tied House conversation for 2024 Annual Meeting<br>• 2024 - Discussed Tied House at Annual Meeting, no conclusion made.<br>• 9/25 - Drafted bill language around self-distribution, have two sponsors, and are continuing conversations<br>2026: Self-distribution reform advanced through H.921; continue monitoring implementation and member experience.<br>2026: Additional licensing changes include expanded tasting-room privileges and fourth-class location allowances; review whether remaining tied-house questions require a separate workstream. |
| Relationship with DLL | • Small discussion groups in person<br>• Regular updates from DLL | VBA Staff, Members & DLL officers | • 2024 - Emma presented at DLL conference 05/03/2024<br>• 2024 stakeholder meeting with DLL 06/27/2024<br>• 2024 - no fines at VBF, VBA highlighted on DLL investigator's social media<br>• 2/3 update: DLL joined VBA Annual Meeting for a Q&A, DLL stakeholder meeting 2/3<br>November 19, 2026: DLL quarterly stakeholder meeting scheduled to review H.921 changes and collect feedback on implementation.<br>2026: Maintained regular communications with DLL and members on licensing and regulatory questions. |
| **Industry Representation & Leadership**<br>**2026-2027 and ongoing** | Increase the Vermont Brewers Association's representation and influence in statewide and national conversations that impact Vermont's brewing industry, including tourism, agriculture, workforce development, economic development, and sustainability. | VBA Executive Director & Board of Directors | 2026: Joined the Vermont Tourism Alliance Board of Directors and participated in VDTM tourism brand review discussions.<br>2026: Presented at the Brewers Association Guild Leadership Summit on member retention and at the Vermont Tourism Alliance summer event.<br>2026: Represented the brewing industry through engagement with Vermont banking, agriculture, tourism, workforce development, and higher education partners, including UVM |

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| | | | and the Vermont Specialty Food Association.<br>2026: Participated in statehouse outreach and collaboration with Lawson's Finest Liquids and Weston & Sampson on wastewater education. |

IV. Marketing

| GOAL | STRATEGY | Responsible Party | PROGRESS |
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| Event Promotion<br><br>*2024-forward* | • Events calendar on VBA website<br>• Cross promotion of brewery events on VBA social media | VBA Staff, Members | • Website calendar live on 04/2024.<br>• 10/1: Oktoberfest blog - 1,034 page views<br>• 10/1: 4,918 calendar page views since launch - one of our most visited pages<br>• 10/1: 233 events posted by VBA staff or members , 248 Clicks - average about 1 click per event<br>• 2/3: Jobs - 3,226 views, Brewery Events - 9,134 views<br>2026: Vermont Brewers Festival July 17-18 drew 50 participating breweries from Vermont, New England and Canada; ticket sales increased approximately 30% compared with 2025.<br>2026: Continued tourism partnerships, including the Veterans Cup collaboration and planning discussions for 2027.<br>2026: Secured 2027 Vermont Signature Event designation for the Vermont Brewers Festival (November 5), |

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| | | | providing promotional opportunities through the Vermont Inspiration Guide, VermontVacation.com, VDTM newsletters, and social media. |
| Storytelling<br>Encourage breweries & other Vermont resources to connect with each other to collectively tell our stories<br><br>*2024-forward* | • Collaborations with other influencers to further brewing's stories (i.e. Rocket in VT/eatvermont, HelloBurlington, VDTM) | VBA Staff, Members | • 2024 - "so you want to work at a brewery" series (6 articles)<br>• 2024 - EdibleVT Summer 2024 article spread<br>• 2024 - applying for grant opportunity to enhance story-telling abilities & VBA member marketing<br>  ○ did not get grant<br>• 2/3 update: Brewview Article, Bennington Banner Article<br>• 9/25: $4M+ in AVE from VBF earned media. Daily Show segment, CNN article, + 15 other publications.<br>• 9/25: Working on a food, beer, and landscape youtube series with CVH & Two Heroes |

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| | | | • 11/6: Will move forward with VBA paper passports & maps in SOV Welcome Centers May-October<br>2026: VBF earned media included 31 placements and 68 broadcasts, with reported advertising value equivalency of $18.7 million.<br>2026: Collaborated with the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing on beer-focused influencer outreach and brewery tourism promotion.<br>2026: Continued development of the Vermont beer destination story through partnerships, social content, and brewery events.<br>2026: The 2026 Vermont Brewers Festival generated 31 media placements; VBA continued cross-sector tourism storytelling through VDTM and Vermont Tourism Alliance collaborations. |
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