



# Self Assessment Re+Assess – Re+Imagine – Re+Invigorate

Elevate Awareness of My Creative Brand

# Program Overview

## Steering Committee Members

Meghan Asbury

Zone Agent and Planner at Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

Seth Butler

Vermont Photojournalist & Documentary Photographer

Sage Doviak

Planner at Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

Emerson Gale

Musician, Seven Stars Arts

Erika Hoffman-Kiess

Executive Director, GMEDC (Green Mountain Economic Development Corp.)

Carol Lighthall

Executive Director, Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce

Chris Maggiolo

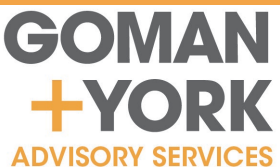
Campus Manager, Black River Innovation Campus



Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

128 King Farm Rd. • Woodstock, VT 05091

## Toolkits created by:



1137 Main Street  
East Hartford, CT 06108  
[www.GomanYork.com](http://www.GomanYork.com)

This program has been designed to support the Creative Economy Sector in the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Region and Cornerstone Creative Community and was jointly funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC).

A series of toolkits were designed for artisans and businesses within the Creative Economy in east central Vermont. These resources and tools are for use by various art organizations and individuals to assist in the promotion of their creative businesses.

The series, Elevate Awareness of My Creative Brand, is designed to promote greater sales and brand recognition of your business. The toolkits are designed in a progressive order but can stand on their own depending upon the needs of the individual or business. Topics include:

1. **Self-Assessment – Re+Assess – Re+Imagine – Re+Invigorate**
2. **Tell My Story – Create a Brand or Identity for Business**
3. **Communicate with My Customers - Marketing & Communication Plan**
4. **Share My Creativity - Social Media/Web Connections**
5. **Expand My Reach – Collaborating & Connecting**

**NOTE: At the end of each toolkit, you will find Resources and Links for additional assistance and helpful information.**



# Self-Evaluation

---

It is the goal of this first toolkit to look at what you do – RE+Assess, RE+Imagine, RE+Invigorate – so that you can be as successful as you choose.

If the results of the pandemic have taught us anything, it is that before you can determine what lies ahead for you as a member of the Vermont Creative Economy, you must understand what you have, what you are capable of and what you want.

It seems simple, but too many businesses don't succeed because they have not set goals or followed steps to achieve those goals. Just as you produce a beautiful artwork or host a play or design a building, there are methodical steps that need to be completed in the operation of your creative economy business.

This initial toolkit addresses the basics or foundation you need to focus on, whether you are in recovery mode or ready to expand your business.

Once you take this self-assessment, the companion toolkits that follow will provide guidance and resources focused on marketing, increasing your visibility, growing your customer base and your creative economy business.



# Re+Assess

---

## STEP 1 – CHECKLIST WHERE AM I NOW?

### What are my objectives?

- ☐ Art/expression
- ☐ Making a living
- ☐ Providing a service
- ☐ Engaging the community

### Do I have a basic business plan or strategy and is it working?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Do I have the sound business basics in place (accounting, inventory, inventory tracking, insurance, recording keeping etc.)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Do I have a brand/logo for my goods or services?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

## Assess what's working ...and what's not.

As you use this checklist think about short-term and long-term capabilities.

- Visibility – can I be found?
- Are my sales where I want them to be?
- Am I connecting with my clients/patrons?

Remember that you don't have to accomplish everything at once, you just have to recognize where you can improve.

## Time to elevate your business?

Small business training and resources are available through a variety of resources:

- the local Chamber of Commerce,
- Vermont Small Business Development Center (VtSBDC)
- SCORE Vermont

# Re+Assess

---

## STEP 1 (CONT.) WHERE AM I NOW?

### Who are my customers/clients?

- ☐ Consumers/Patrons/Clients
- ☐ B2B (Business to Business)
- ☐ B2C (Business to Consumer/Services)
- ☐ Wholesale – 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Distribution

### How am I communicating with my clients, patrons, consumers?

- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Online – Web, Social Media
- ☐ Print Media – poster, catalogs, ads
- ☐ Networking & Events  
Creative/Business/Chamber

### Do I have the capacity to grow?

- ☐ Time
- ☐ Materials/Inventory
- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Financial



### What technology do I have access to?

- ☐ Computers - hardware, software
- ☐ Connectivity – Wi-Fi, cellular data
- ☐ Alternative Access – libraries, students, professional services, other resources

### What online tools do I have access to?

- ☐ Website – desktop and mobile applications – https/secure site
- ☐ Social Media – Google My Business, Yelp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- ☐ Multi-platform /Analytics tools – Hootsuite, Mix panel, Google Analytics, etc.
- ☐ Online Sales/3<sup>rd</sup> Party Online sales – Shopify, etsy.com
- ☐ Wholesale Sites – i.e., Faire.com

# Re+Imagine

---

## STEP 2

### WHAT DO I WANT TO BE?

- ☐ Develop an Action Plan
- ☐ Set achievable short-term and long-term goals – Set 3 to start
  - 1: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Identify the resources needed - Software, hardware, connectivity
- ☐ Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) – Success indicators
  - 1: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Do I have the financial capacity to grow?
- ☐ Can I improve communication with my customers, clients?
- ☐ Do I need online sales capabilities?
- ☐ How am I tracking my inventory, sales and clients/consumers?
- ☐ Develop a Strategy and Business Plan (See Page 10 Resources and Links)

### Be flexible and open to change!

The more you know about your creative business, the easier you can adapt, capitalize on potential opportunities, and handle any situation that may arise.

Approach this as if you were your clientele!

### What's a KPI?

- Measures progress towards your goals
- Helps to determine what's working and what's not.

**Example:** *"I want to increase my social media followers by 20% this year."*



# Re+Invigorate

---

## STEP 3

### WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

- ☐ Put your plan in action
- ☐ Grow my client/patron base
- ☐ Invest in my creative brand or venture
- ☐ Tell my story – what is it that makes what you do unique
- ☐ Share my creativity & express my creative capabilities
- ☐ Communicate with my customers by developing well thought out strategies in a marketing and communication plan
- ☐ Expand my network - Collaborate within the Creative Economy
- ☐ Increase sales and services

**Start with the basics needed to strengthen my brand and creative expression.**

- Adopt a Business, Marketing and Financial Plan
- Explore Opportunities
- Make Connections
- Invest in yourself and your brand - operations, marketing, technology and creativity

**Follow your inspiration!**

# Best Practices/Success Stories



## Seek the help of others

This Vermont brewery utilized the professionals at the Vermont Small Business Development Center to aid them in the planning process and getting their business basics in place, from accounting, inventory management, sales, product development and marketing.

## Ten Bends Beer

Source: Vermont Small Business Development Center

Ten Bends Beer in Hyde Park, owned and operated by Michael Scarlata and Jason Powell, recently started serving its craft brewed creations from its tap room. But this pair first sought assistance from the Vermont Small Business Development Center (VtBSDC) Area Advisor and craft brewing specialist Charley Ininger.

Mike Scarlata and Jason Powell began brewing together in 2012 in a roughly outfitted shed in the woods just three miles from the current Ten Bends location in Hyde Park, VT. They now operate a seven-barrel brewery and taproom.

Scarlata said he and Powell attended one of Ininger's brewing workshops as they looked to turn a one-time hobby into a full-fledged business. "Jason (Powell) and I had a strong desire to own our own business before we even met," Scarlata said. "Being our own bosses and starting a company from the ground up in an industry we were passionate about was vital to our cause," he said.

The pair quickly went to work with Ininger on every aspect of the brewing business, including accounting, inventory management, sales, product development and marketing, among other things. "It's a lot of hats to wear and very time consuming," Scarlata said. "Charley gave us the tools to put together a professional set of financial projections. These projections were vital to us raising private equity to fund our business. Charley helped us focus our efforts and really got us to define a specific path of execution for launching our brewery, he said.

Source: VtSBC

<https://www.vtsbdc.org/success-story-ten-bends-beer/>



# Best Practices/Success Stories

---



## Using SCORE VT – A Vermont Success Story

“Don’t try to reinvent the wheel – develop and maintain a list of targeted connections whether it is through SCORE or trade associations. You will be amazed at how many talented people want to help you! And one day, you can do the same.” (excerpted from Score VT)

### Vermont Tortilla Company

After devoting their careers to science, April and Azur Moulaert decided to take a left turn. In 2015, tired of the extensive travel that April’s job demanded, and the unreliability of grant-funded projects that Azur worked on, they decided to start their own business.

Inspired by the local foods movement and the Mexican cuisine they’d fallen in love with during visits to the Yucatán Peninsula, they sought a unique product using local organic produce: stone-ground corn tortillas.

April says, “The resources SCORE provides have proved invaluable to folks like us that had an idea but no experience with running a business!” April made use of SCORE’s webinars, business plan template and financial spreadsheets.

Their first SCORE mentor helped them move past the initial concept phase of their business. They work with three different mentors with expertise in accounting, product distribution, and the natural foods industry.

April advises other small business owners: “Don’t try to reinvent the wheel – develop and maintain a list of targeted connections whether it is through SCORE or trade associations. You will be amazed at how many talented people want to help you! And one day, you can do the same.”

Source: SCORE Vermont

<https://vermont.score.org/success-story/vermont-tortilla-company>

# Resources and Links

## FOR THE NON-TECHY

Use local Library  
resources – access to  
computers and WiFi.

Engage local  
students/schools for  
assistance.

Connect with mentors  
through SCORE, Small  
Business Development  
Center and local Chamber  
of Commerce members.

Participate in business  
development workshops  
and trainings.

### **Small Business Association – Guide**

Starting a business involves planning, making key financial decisions, and completing a series of legal activities. Check out this website to learn about each step.

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/10-steps-start-your-business>

### **Running a Successful Creative Business: Business, Legal and Tax Tips**

Webinar – July 2021

Includes basic business, legal and tax skills necessary to run a successful business.

[https://fairfieldcounty.score.org/event/july-20-running-successful-creative-business-business-legal-and-tax-tips?\\_ga=2.12752887.1539583872.1654641179-1276432883.1646662639](https://fairfieldcounty.score.org/event/july-20-running-successful-creative-business-business-legal-and-tax-tips?_ga=2.12752887.1539583872.1654641179-1276432883.1646662639)

### **Crafting Your Artist Business Plan: A Step-by-Step Guide**

Artrepreneur Article – July 2020

A well-thought-out artist business plan can be the difference between success and struggle, control and uncertainty, succumbing to circumstances, and being in charge of your own destiny. Learning how to put together an artist business plan is an essential tool and road map for becoming an ‘artrepreneur’.

<https://artrepreneur.com/journal/artbusiness/artist-business-plan-guide/>

### **Vermont Small Business Development Center (VtSBDC)**

One Main Street,

Randolph Center, Vermont 05061

Tel: (802) 728-9101 or in VT (800) 464-SBDC

Request Help through VtSBDC:  
<https://www.vtsbdc.org/register/>

Offers no-cost expert assistance to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

<https://www.vtsbdc.org/about-vt-sbdc/>

### **SCORE Vermont**

60 Main Street

Suite 4

Burlington, VT, 05401

Phone: (802) 764-5899

Email Us: [scorevermont@scorevolunteer.org](mailto:scorevermont@scorevolunteer.org)

Vermonters helping Vermont Businesses Build their Dream

<https://vermont.score.org/>



**Mount Ascutney  
Regional Commission**



This program has been designed to support the Creative Economy Sector in the Two Rivers-Ottawuechee Region and Cornerstone Creative Community and was jointly funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Two Rivers-Ottawuechee Regional Commission (TRORC).

**Two Rivers-Ottawuechee Regional Commission (TRORC)** - TRORC is an association of thirty municipalities in east-central Vermont. TRORC is governed by a Board of Representatives appointed by each of our member towns. Our primary goals are to advocate for the needs of our member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life. The Commission's staff provides technical services to local, state and federal levels of government and to the Region's non-profits and businesses.

**3CVT (Cornerstone Creative Community)** - 3CVT is a Zone of the Vermont Creative Network, if you're located within the 3CVT Zone and consider yourself to be part of the Creative Sector, you're a member of 3CVT! The Zone is led by the 3CVT Steering Committee of working volunteers convened by Two Rivers-Ottawuechee Regional Commission, the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation, and the Vermont Council on the Arts. The goal of this committee is to broaden and build the future partnerships that will be needed within the creative economy at all levels.

**Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC)** is a compact of ten municipalities in southeastern Vermont, founded in the late 1960s to advocate for the needs of member towns and seek collaborative strategies to address local, regional, and state opportunities and concerns. One of its primary purposes is to provide technical services to town officials and to act as a resource for local governments.

**Vermont Arts Council (VAC)** - Since 1965, the Vermont Arts Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont. It is the only designated state arts agency in the U.S. that is also an independent nonprofit organization. The Council is committed to building a Vermont where art, culture, and creativity are at the heart of our communities.

**Vermont Creative Network (VCN)** - The Vermont Creative Network was established by the Vermont Legislature in May 2016 as an initiative of the Vermont Arts Council. The Network is a broad collective of organizations, businesses, and individuals working to advance Vermont's creative sector. Vermont's creative sector generates 9.3% of all employment, higher than the average across the U.S., and includes artists and architects, bakers and brewers, curators and crafters, dancers and designers—any enterprise, organization, and individuals whose products and services are rooted in artistic and creative content.

**Economic Development Administration (EDA)** - The U.S. Economic Development Administration's investment policy is designed to establish a foundation for sustainable job growth and the building of durable regional economies throughout the United States. This foundation builds upon two key economic drivers - innovation and regional collaboration. EDA encourages its partners around the country to develop initiatives that advance new ideas and creative approaches to address rapidly evolving economic conditions.