

Department of Buildings and General Services
2 Governor Aiken Avenue - Montpelier, Vermont

Government Business Services Directorate

Vermont Information Centers Division

Fiscal Year 2016 - Annual Report



September 14, 2016

Vermont Information Centers Division

- Mission
- Authority
- Program History
- Program Overview
- Key Result Areas
 - People
 - Communication
 - Finances
 - Operations
 - Security

Mission...

- BGS Mission -- The employees of Buildings and General Services work together to deliver quality services and provide facilities management, enabling government to fulfill its mission.
- VICD Mission
 - Provide travel information and a safety break to travelers that is accountable and fiscally responsible
 - Serve as Vermont's Billboards
 - Promote the "*Vermont Experience*" by marketing Vermont's businesses, attractions and events to the traveling public

Authority...

1992	Act 144	Sec. 49	Operation authority transferred from VTrans to ACCD
1993	Act 59	Sec. 4d	Information re Recreational Vehicles
1993	Act 59	Sec. 7c	Close Putney, Coventry, Fairfax (northbound)
1994	Act 233	Sec. 42a	Keep open and operate Coventry and Georgia Northbound
1995	Act 60	Sec. 15	SW Vermont (Bennington) Welcome Center
1995	Act 60	Sec. 7c	Renovations/construction of 7 rest areas: Derby, Lyndon, Waterford, Randolph North and South, Highgate, Fair Haven. Closure of 7 rest areas: Coventry, Westminster, Georgia North, Fairfax South, Sharon North, Sharon South, Bradford South.
1996	Act 183	Sec. 12	Raze Bradford South and Coventry North; continue operation of Sharon North; completion of 7 rest areas; upgrades to Fair Haven, Lyndon, Waterford; study committee to investigate Fairfax SB, Georgia NB, and Highgate.
1996	Act 62	Sec. 33	Land purchase; Alburgh
1997	Act 38	Sec. 19e(c)	Authority to enter into agreements and grant funds to location or regional chambers of commerce
1999	Act 18	Sec 39	BGS authorized to operate as state or private facilities
1999	Act 18	Sec. 39	Design Bennington Welcome Center
1999	Act 18	Sec. 39	Investigate continued operation of Sharon South
1999	Act 18	Sec. 41t.	White River Junction downtown information center pilot
2002	Act 141	Sec. 11	Decrease funding for Bennington Welcome Center

Authority... (continued – 2 of 3)

2003	Act 19	Sec. 4(a)	Sale of Vermont Products
2003	Act 56	Sec. 59	Motorist Aide Refreshment Program
2003	Act 63	Sec. 160b	Sale of milk and milk products
2004	Act 160	Sec. 34	Study of information center funding
2005	Act 80	Sec. 12	Hartford sewer line
2005	Act 80	Sec. 13	Monuments to builders of VT interstate system
2005	Act 80	Sec. 14	Design basic rest area and information center
2006	Act 147	Sec. 12(d)	VT State Police outpost
2006	Act 175	Sec 60	VICD Funding from General Fund
2006	Act 175	Sec. 59	Rest Area Advisory Committee is created (19 VSA, Section 12c)
2007	Act 52	Sec 31	Lease space, sell products...within limits of federal Surface Transportation Act and Randolph-Sheppard Act
2009	Act 50	Sec 105	Rest Area Commercialization -- seek FHWA waiver
2009	Act 50	Sec 106-110	permanent closing of facilities; hours or operation; pilot projects; operations of information centers; Bennington construction

Authority... (continued – 3 of 3)

2010	Act 123	Sec. 51	Pursue private-public partnership at Exit 7 of I-91
2010	Act 123	Sec. 52	Cross-Border Opportunities
2010	Act 123	Sec. 55	Repeal of Rest Area Advisory Committee
2011	Act 40	Sec. 32	Summer Study - Future Vision for VICD (BGS/VTrans/ACCD
2011	Act 62	Sec. 27	Apportionment Study
Title 3	Chap. 47	Sec. 2476	Brochure distribution

Program History...

- 1960s and 1970s – Vermont Agency of Transportation
 - Built and operated rest areas
 - Federal interstate system expanded across the country
 - Mission to provide rest rooms and safety breaks
- Traffic Volumes Increase at Rest Areas
 - 1960s and 1970s – 50 to 100 visitors per day at a site
 - Today – 500 to 3000 visitors per day at a site
 - More during holiday travel
 - Increased traffic valuable to Vermont's tourism industry
 - Increased traffic accelerated the deterioration of facilities

Program History... (continued)

- 1992 – Commerce & Community Development
 - Manage highway information centers
 - Expanded mission to provide tourism information to travelers
 - Challenged with maintenance and operations of failing systems.
- 1997 – Buildings & General Services
 - Management transferred to Buildings & General Services
 - Expedite upgrade of facilities from rest areas to Information and Welcome Centers
- Funding
 - Currently Funded 86% Transportation Fund and 14% General Fund
 - Funded through General Fund for FY 2007 thru FY 2011
 - Funded through Transportation Fund until FY 2007

Program Overview...



- 18 Information/Welcome Centers
 - 4 Sites Closed February 2009*
- 3 Supervisory Districts
- 29 Classified Employees
- 33 Temporary Employees
- 23 Chamber Employees
- Hours of Operation Vary **
 - 9 facilities reduced to 12-hour days in 2009
- Predominantly single-layer staffing
- 318 Miles of Interstate Highway
- Transportation/General Fund Program (86% TF/14% GF)
- **Division Website:**
http://bgs.vermont.gov/information_centers
- 1 Public-Private Partnership at Exit 7, Berlin
 - Scheduled to open September 2, 2016
 - Services available 24 hours/day; 365 days/year

* 4 facilities closed in February 2009: Highgate, Hartford North, Randolph North, Sharon South

** 4 facilities operate 16 hours/day (Guilford, Sharon, Williston North, and Williston South); since 2009-08-16, hours at 9 facilities reduced to 12 hours/day (Derby, Lyndon, Bradford, Georgia North and Georgia South, Waterford, Randolph, Fair Haven); Hartford and Bennington operate 14 hours/day; Alburgh and White River 8 hours; Montpelier 11 hours.

Program Overview... (continued)

- VICD sites provide:
 - Local and regional travel information
 - Safety breaks and restrooms
 - Free Green Mountain Coffee Roasters coffee
 - Knowledgeable employees
 - Lodging reservations
 - Statewide event listings
 - Free wireless internet access
 - Access to information kiosks



Program Overview... (continued)

- Promote the Vermont experience to our visitors through:
 - Statewide brochure distribution
 - Free display space
 - Live demonstrations
 - Event banner display
 - Event promotions
 - Visitor referrals
 - Promotional display panels
 - Static Interactive Displays



Key Result Areas

- People -- Employees, Customers, Stakeholders
- Communications -- Employees, Customers, Stakeholders
- Finances
- Operations

People

P1 - Goal

- P1 – Provide employees with effective leadership
 - Commitment to BGS Core Values
 - Quality and timely evaluations, feedback, training, and mentoring
 - Fair and deserving recognition

People

P1 - Performance Measure

- Performance Evaluation Data tracked and provided by DHR.
- Incidence of disciplinary issues - data tracked and provided by DHR.

People

P2 - Goal

- P2 – Provide training, resources, education, equipment and support required for employees to succeed in their mission.
 - Ensure employees are knowledgeable of VICD-BGS-State policies, rules, and regulations.
 - Provide BGS- and State-required training
 - Provide job-specific VICD training on all Ambassador levels to supervisors and field staff.
 - Encourage networking with state stakeholders and peers on a national level.

People

P2 – Program Information

Training Component/Quality Control

- Reinforce Division goals and missions
- Measure, clarify, and unify standards
- Provide a common level of understanding about the services we provide
 - Customer Service (2004-2007)
 - Interpersonal Skills (2005)
 - Team Building (2006)
 - VICD Ambassador Program (2006-2007)
 - Online Ambassador Certification Program (2010-2015)
 - Byways Testing – Team Training (2011)
 - Take This Job & Love It – Moving Thru Change (2012)

People

P2 – Program Information

Ambassador Training Program

FY 2015

- During FY 2015, 26 new Ambassadors were certified, in collaboration with VDTM.
- There are a total of 122 trained Vermont Ambassadors in Community Information Centers (CIC)
 - An estimated 60 Community Information Centers exist throughout Vermont.
 - These CIC employees do not participate in the National Certification Program
- An annual training package for VICD employees generally offers up to 15 new training modules.

National Certification in FY 2014

- It is expected that VICD employees will participate in a 2019 national recertification.
- During FY 2014, VICD Ambassador Training Program was awarded national certification through the National Council of State Tourism Directors (NCSTD) Travel Counselor Certification Program. NCSTD is a chapter of the U. S. Travel Association in Washington, DC.
 - 42 VICD Employees volunteered and successfully completed the National Certification test in 2014.
 - 21 employees from Williston, Georgia South, and White River Junction sites (staffed by grant/contract) also completed the certification test.

Community Information Centers

VICD Training Team collaborates with the VT Department of Tourism to provide training for hospitality businesses throughout the State, enabling them to be recognized as Community Information Centers and focusing on key customer-oriented employees.

Communications

C1 - Goal

- C1 - Provide employees with open and honest communications concerning program operations.
 - Share performance measurements at regular intervals
 - Share current program updates/changes
 - Weekly work plan review between supervisor and staff
 - Timely and appropriate supervisory feedback
 - Share site inspection reports with staff

Communications

C2 - Goal

- C2 -- Develop and Maintain Consistent Processes/ Procedures to ensure VICD has an effective comprehensive communications strategy.
 - Daily check-in call with Supervisors
 - Daily reports from each site
 - Weekly site inspections
 - Weekly reports from each site
 - Weekly reports to Commissioner
 - Routine update of site profile
 - Routine update of VICD spreadsheet

Communications

C3 - Goal

- C3 – Provide management with timely and accurate reporting of program operations
 - Daily supervisor contact with Supervisor and Director
 - Weekly report from Supervisor
 - Periodic meetings related to projects, etc.

Communications

C4 - Goal

- C4 – Provide stakeholders (chambers, attractions, businesses, and communities) with regular feedback on how they can take advantage of VICD opportunities through:
 - Website
 - Periodic listserv notices
 - Timely follow-up on inquiries
 - Public speaking

Finances

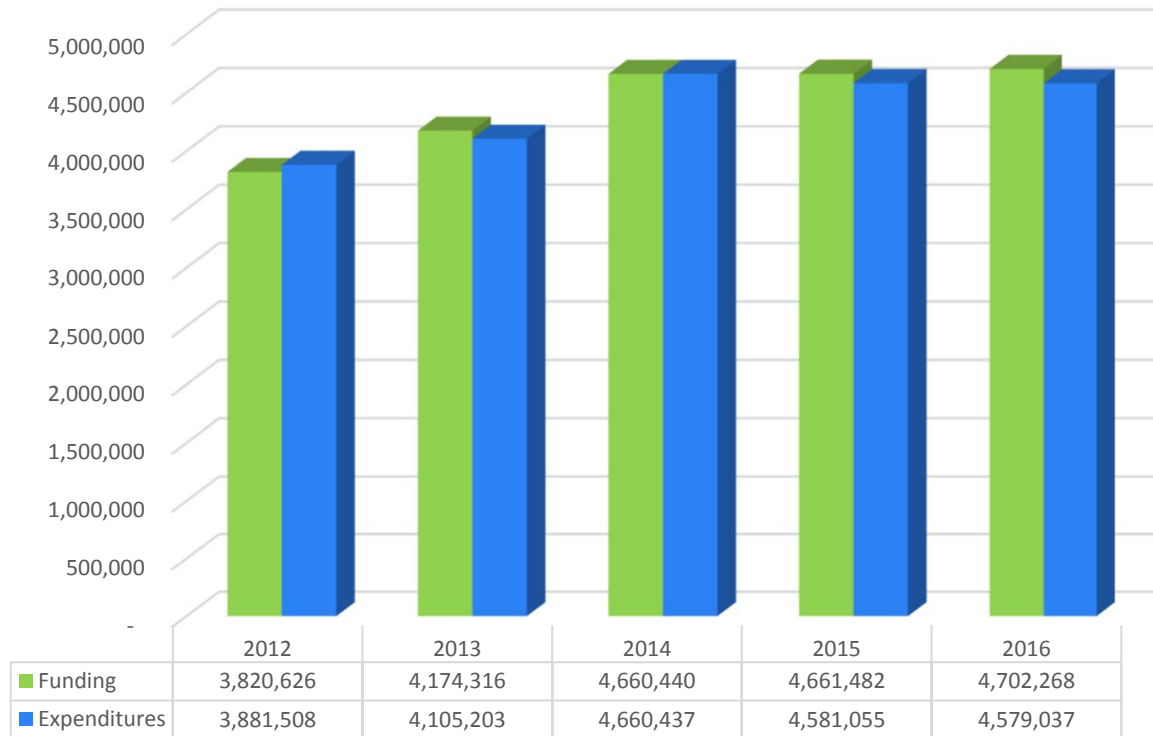
F1 - Goal

- F1 – Develop and implement strategies, procedures, and processes to effectively manage program expenditures and revenues by tracking
 - Monthly expenditures
 - Daily visitor counts
 - Daily water counts
 - Visitors by specific time periods
 - Analyze monthly financial reports
 - Review all invoices for expenses
 - Review monthly Purchasing Card purchases

Finances

F1 - Performance Data

VICD Funding & Expenditures - FY 2012-2015



Funding: Transportation Fund (86%) and General Fund (14%) since FY 2013

Finances

F2 - Goal

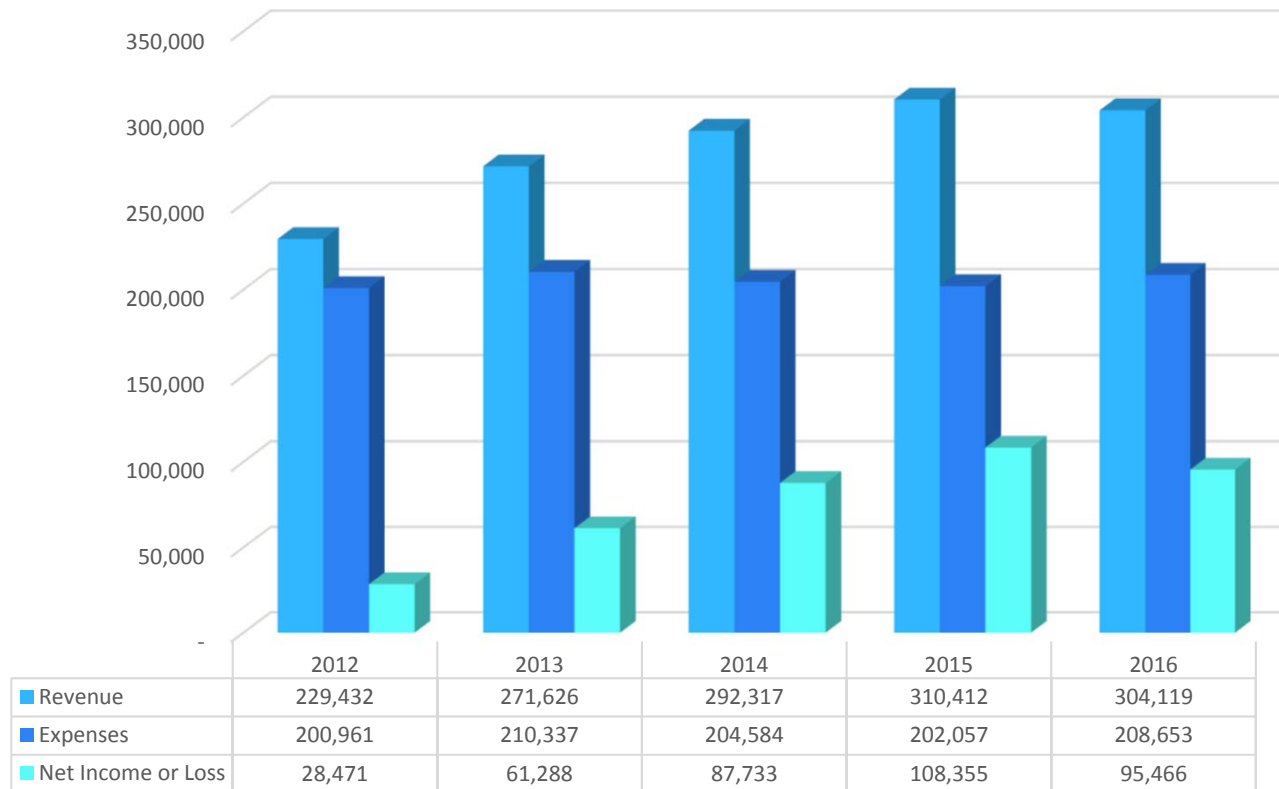
- F2 – Manage a successful Brochure Program
 - Monitor rates, revenue, and usage
 - May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015 (“brochure year”)
 - 520 individual pieces registered
 - 46 new registrants
 - Over 2,300,000 brochures and publications distributed
 - Potential to reach over 3,300,000 visitors at VICD sites

NOTE: The “brochure year” (registration period) runs from May 1 to April 30 each year.

Finances

F2 - Performance Data

Brochure Revenues & Expenses - FY 2012-2016

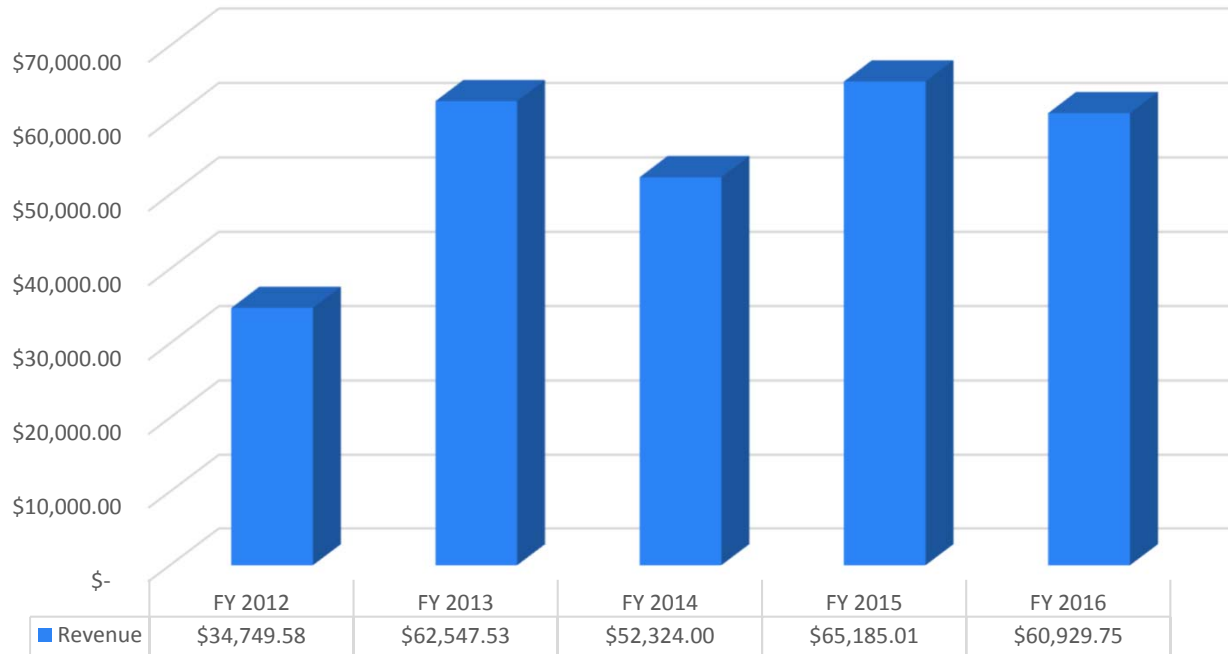


Since 2003 inception: Total revenue : \$2,878,999 Total net income: \$548,794

Finances

F2 - Performance Data

Advertising Panel Sales Revenue FY 2012 - FY 2016



Special Funds: Information Centers Revenue Fund (includes Ad Panel Sales)

Ad panels at seven VICD locations: Bennington, Derby, Fair Haven, Guilford, Hartford, Randolph, Sharon

Finances

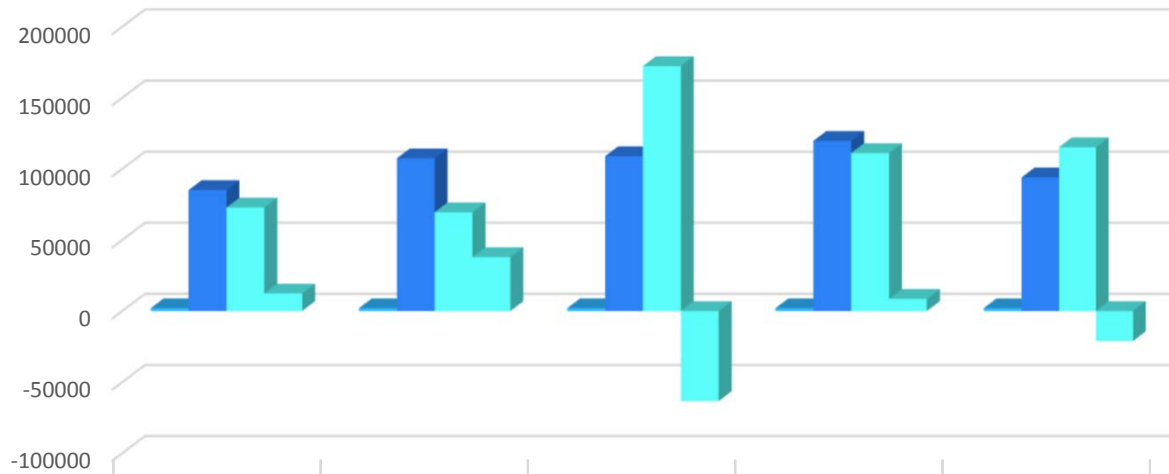
F3 - Goal

- F3 – Manage and provide oversight for the Coffee Program
 - Monitor donations and expenditures
 - Offered to promote traveler's safety break.
 - Green Mountain Coffee Roasters coffee is provided at all VICD sites.
 - Exception: Guilford – Vending Program of the Division of the Blind & Visually Impaired provides coffee at this site (Randolph-Sheppard Act).

Finances

F3 - Performance Data

Coffee Fund FY 2012-2016 - Revenue/Expenses/Net Income or Loss



	1	2	3	4	5
FY	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Revenue	\$85,062	\$107,395	\$108,869	\$119,649	\$93,999
Expenses	\$72,739	\$69,467	\$172,265	111,118	\$115,187
Net Income or Loss	\$12,323	\$37,929	\$(63,396)	\$8,532	\$(21,188)

VICD provides Free coffee at 12 of 17 locations

Finances

F4 - Goal

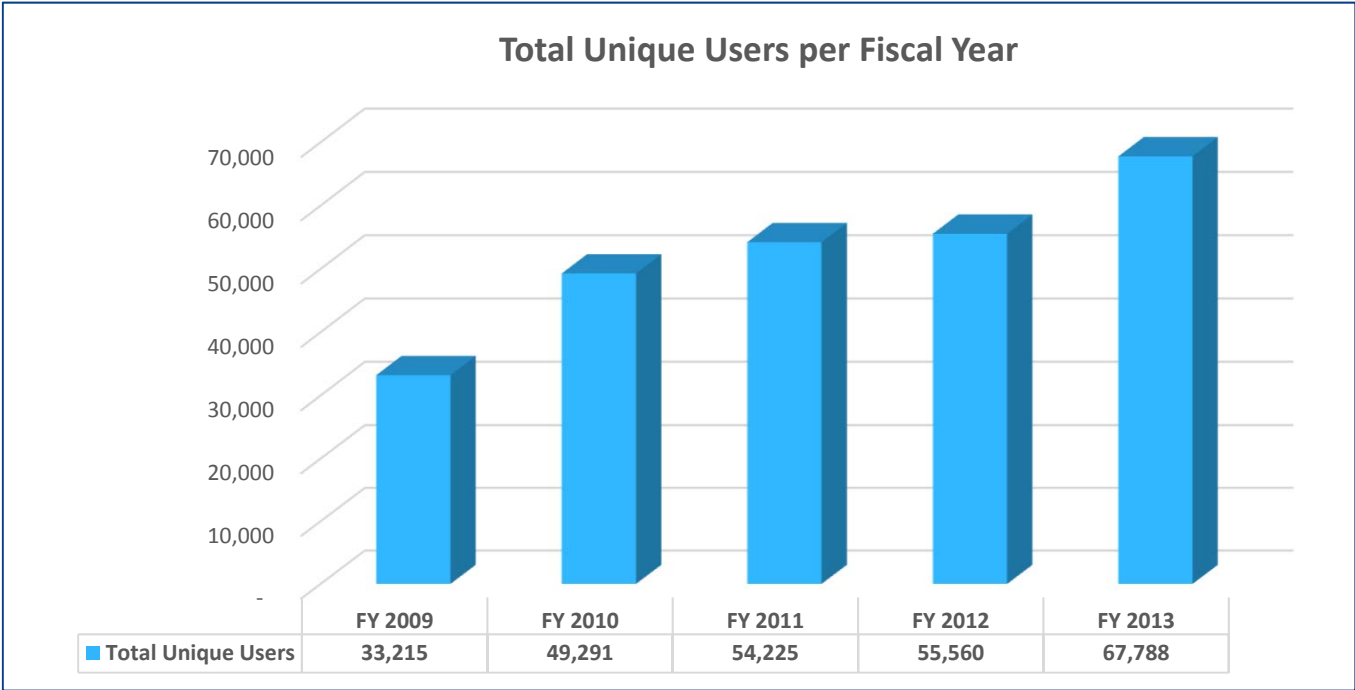
- F4 – Contract for WIFI services to provide free wireless internet access to the traveling public.
 - Monitor usage and expenditures
 - Free WIFI is currently available at all 17 VICD sites
 - VICD has paid all WIFI costs since September 2007 when the service became free to the traveling public
 - Accumulated Costs*
 - FY 2008 thru FY 2014 = \$433,272.92
 - In FY 2009 WIFI available at 18 sites
 - WIFI available at 14 sites in FY 2010
 - WIFI was discontinued at 4 closed sites during August of 2009
 - During FY 2011, negotiated with contractor to reduce cost of monthly user fees from \$1.75 to \$0.75 per unique user
 - In August of 2012, negotiated with contractor to eliminate cost of monthly user fee.
- The program grew as technology/connectivity became available at additional sites.
- In CY 2011, free WIFI became available at all 16 VICD sites when Montpelier and White River Junction were added.

* Costs include monthly user fees (for each unique user) as well as operating costs.

Finances

F4 - Performance Data

Growth of Free WIFI Utilization
(Number of unique users per year – FY 2009 thru FY 2013)

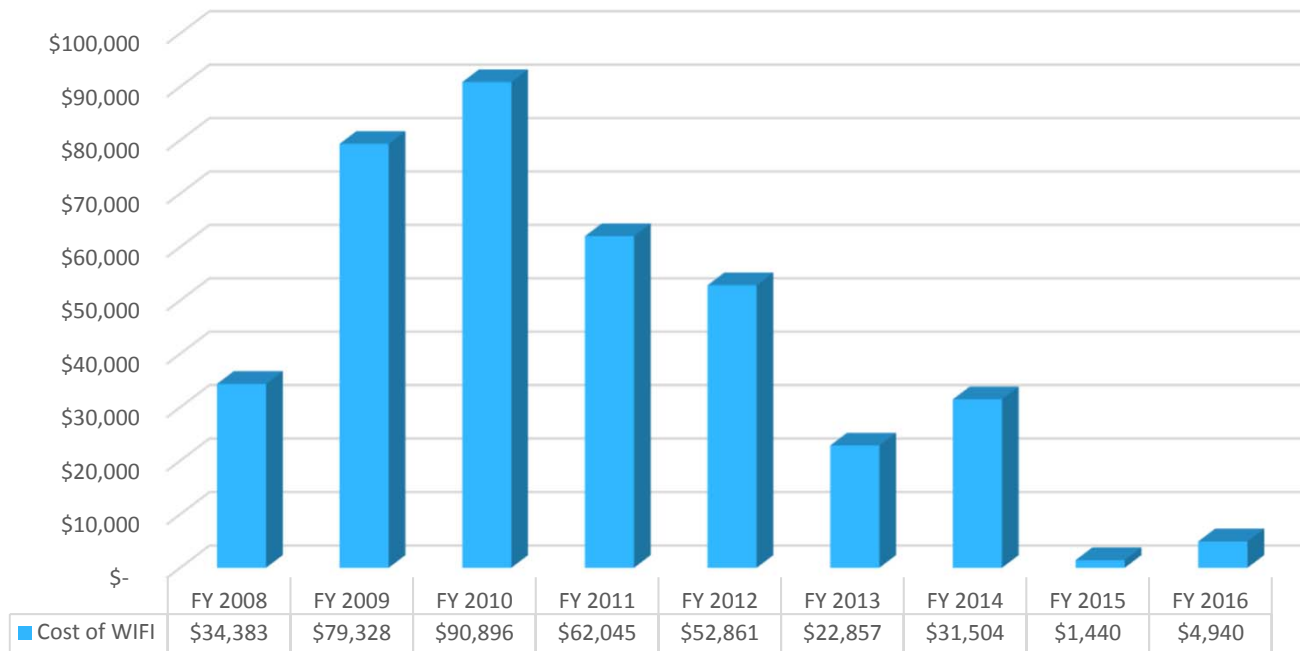


Data available from vendor only thru FY 2013

Finances

F4 - Performance Data

Cost of Free WIFI



Since FY 2013, costs include internet connectivity and miscellaneous service calls.

Operations

O1 - Goal

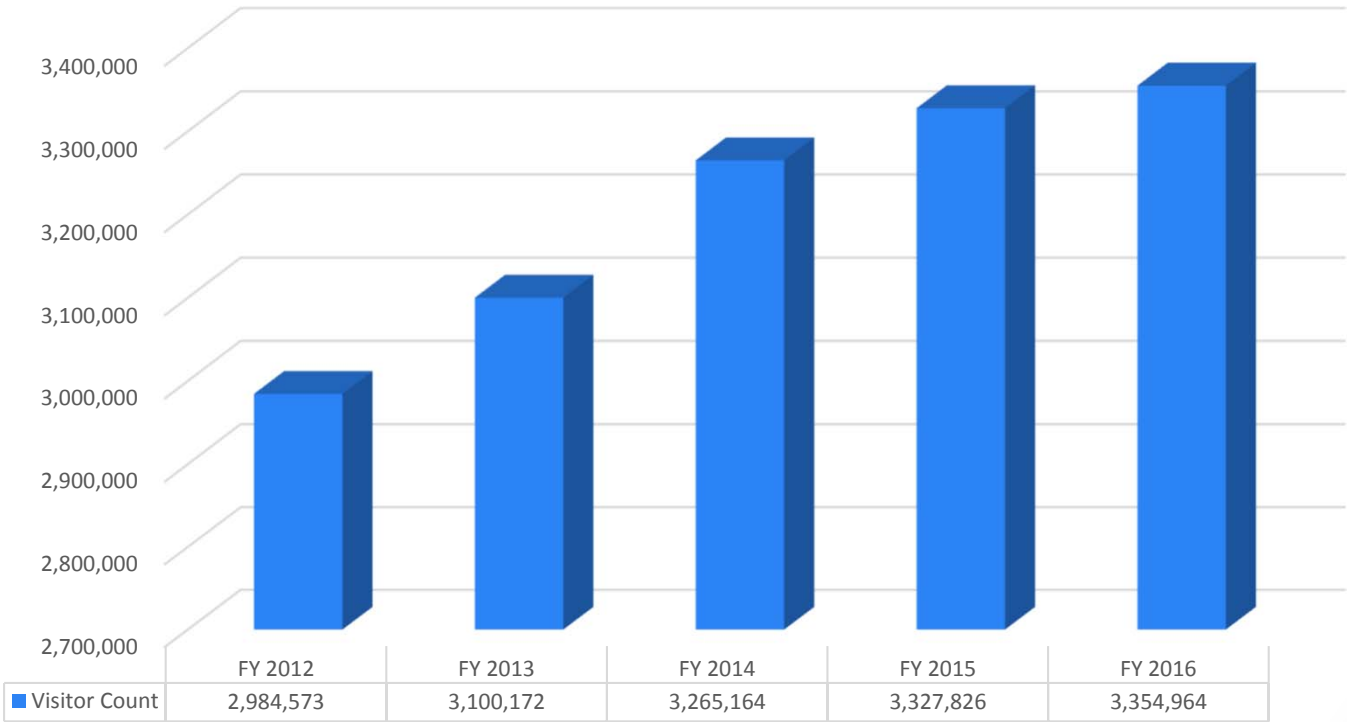
- O1 – Effectively operate 12 state-run visitor centers and provide oversight at the 6 partnered locations
 - Monitor visitor count statistics
 - Collected daily per site
 - Annual data reporting
 - Provide staffing for 12 sites
 - Provide clean, safe facilities
 - Provide information of interest to the traveling public
 - Six partnered locations:
 - Williston North (contract - LCRCC)
 - Williston South (contract - LCRCC)
 - Georgia South (contract - LCRCC)
 - White River Junction (grant – Town of Hartford)
 - Bennington (contract - BACC)
 - Berlin; Exit 7 -- Public-Private Partnership -- slated to open in September 2016.

LCRCC = Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce
BACC = Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce

Operations

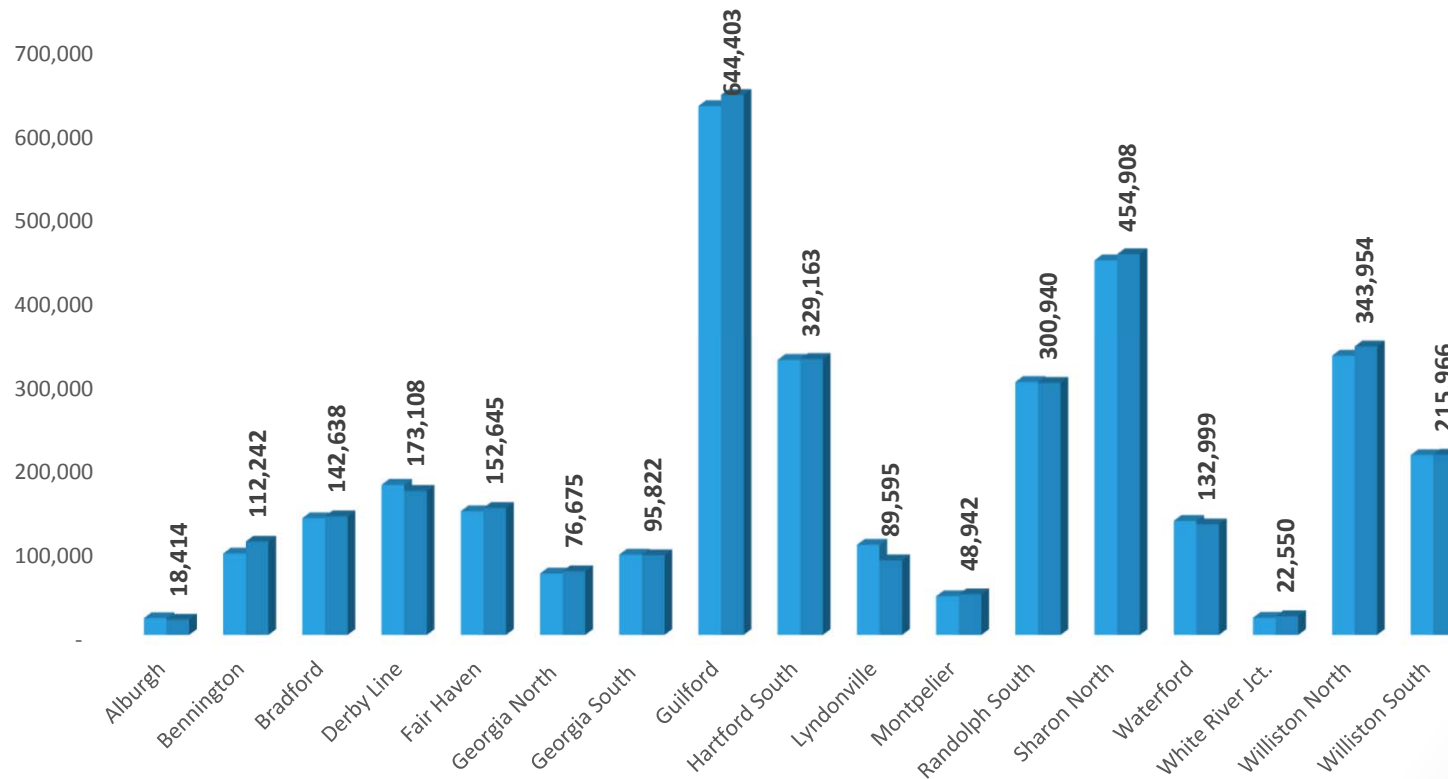
O1 - Performance Data

FY 2012 – 2016 Overall Visitor Count



Operations - O1 - Performance Data

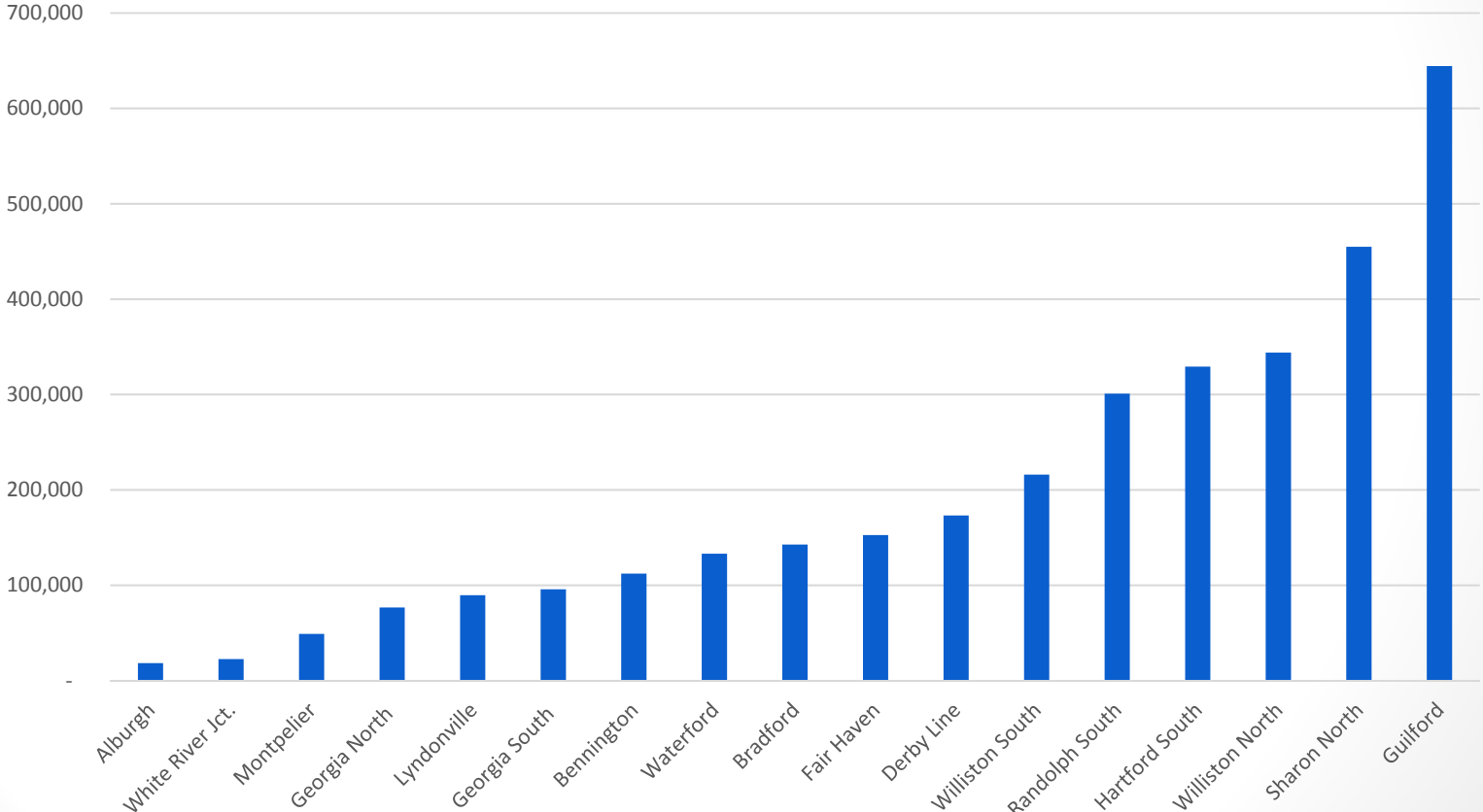
Visitor Count Per Site FY 2015-2016



Note: The amounts shown represent the FY 2016 Visitor Count at each site.

Operations O1 - Performance Data

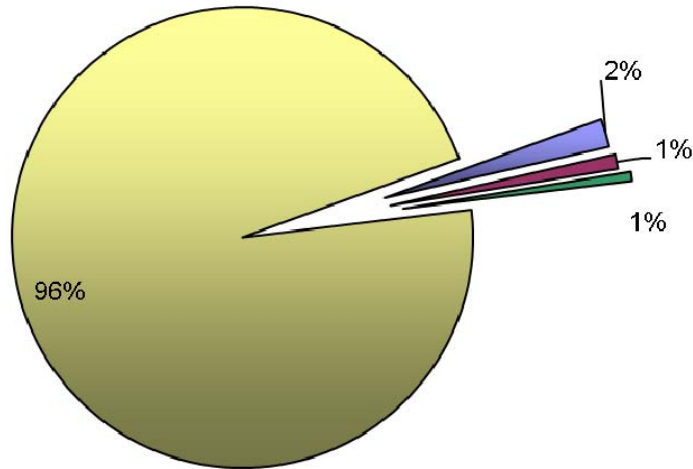
FY 2016 Visitor Count - Site Comparison



Operations

O1 - Performance Data

Hourly Visitor Counts - 2008...



**7 AM to 8 AM: 77,520
Visitors**
2% of total (1.97%)

**9 PM to 10 PM: 40,405
Visitors**
1% of total (1.03%)

**10 PM to 11 PM: 25,269
Visitors**
< 1% of total (0.64%)

**8 AM to 9 PM: 3,792,124
Visitors**
96% of total (96.36%)

FY 2008 Total Visitors
3,935,319

- To support right-sizing decisions
- During 3 hours (7-8 AM + 9-11 PM), VICD sees 4% of the visitors, and utilizes 18.75% of the resources.

Operations

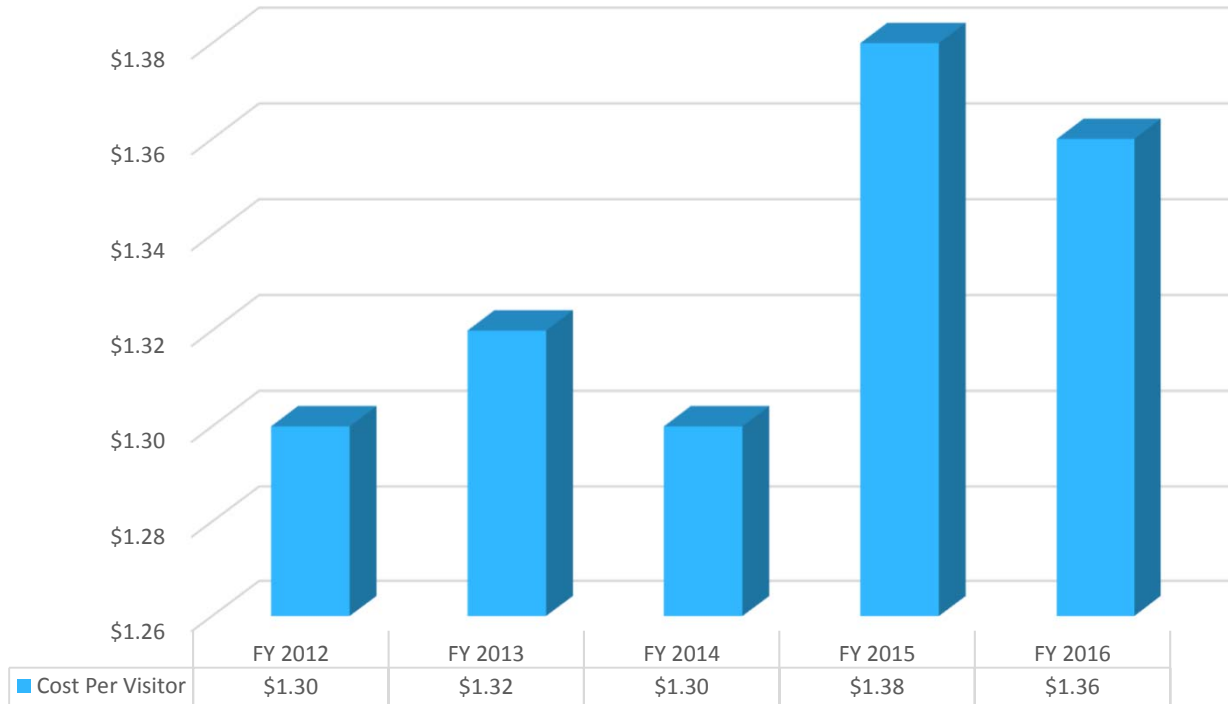
O2 - Goal

- O2 – Strive to maintain average visitor-to-expense ratio of \$1.25

Operations

O2 - Performance Data

Overall Cost Per Visitor FY 2012-2016



Operations

O3 - Goal

- O3 – Manage clean and well-maintained facilities
 - Conduct/document routine quality control inspections and follow-up remediation at all sites.
 - Monitor daily reports and maintenance work orders submitted from each site.
 - Coordinate with BGS Maintenance Districts for projects requiring major maintenance funding.

Operations

O4 - Goal

- O4 – Provide the supervision and oversight to effectively manage all aspects of the program

Operations

O4 - Performance Information

How We Manage -- Supervisory Structure:

- **Northwest & Northeast** (Penny Libercent)
 - Alburgh, Georgia North, Bradford, Derby, Lyndon, Waterford
 - **Guilford** (Kathy Dowd)
 - **Central District** (Lisa Sanchez)
 - Sharon, Hartford, Randolph
 - Fair Haven
 - **Liaison oversight for 6 Locations operated by grant/contract** (Lisa Sanchez)
 - Williston North, Williston South, Georgia South, Bennington, White River Junction, and Berlin*
-
- **Four sites operated through contract with local/regional Chambers of Commerce**
 - **White River Junction operated with Grant to Town of Hartford.**
 - **Berlin is Public-Private Partnership**

Note: 4 Sites Closed in February 2009: Sharon South, Randolph North, Hartford North, Highgate

Operations

O4 - Performance Information

Operations Oversight

- **Maintain accountability over daily operations**
 - **Morning Check-In Calls**
 - Verifying opening
 - Flag is flying per directive and proper flag etiquette
 - **Daily Operations Reports**
 - Submitted electronically from each site
 - **Security Systems**
 - Contracted Electronic Monitoring of Openings/Closings
 - Employee Panic Buttons
 - Isolation - single-staff coverage
 - Remote Locations
 - **Weekly programmatic reports**
 - **Annual Reports**

Operations

O5 - Goal

- O5 – Market Opportunities to Promote the Vermont Experience to Travelers.
- Outreach
 - Tell the VICD Story
 - Brochures
- Partners in Promotion
- Marketing
 - Entrepreneurial Efforts -- Selling Advertising Space (Lisa Sanchez)
 - Frames and Skins Installed at 7 sites
 - Derby Line
 - Fair Haven
 - Guilford
 - Randolph
 - Sharon
 - Hartford
 - Bennington

Program Summary...

- **FY 2009-2016 Changes/Progress**

- Continue to Right-Sizing Facilities/Operations
 - FY 2009 Closure of 4 sites (February 2009)
 - Hartford North, Highgate, Randolph North, Sharon South
 - FY 2010 Reduction in Hours of Operation -16 to 12 hours
 - 7 Sites -- August 16, 2009 -- Derby, Lyndon, Bradford, Waterford, Randolph South, Hartford South, Fair Haven,
 - 2 Sites -- November 22, 2009 -- Georgia North and South
- Hartford South opened to visitors on October 1, 2012.
- Bennington Welcome Center opened to visitors on October 11, 2013

Program Summary...

• Opportunities...

- Partnering with private sector providers
 - **Public-private partnership at Berlin Exit 7 off Interstate 89.**
 - Development Agreement in place; anticipated opening in September of 2016.
 - **Public-private partnership at the Randolph Exit 4 off Interstate 89.**
 - Development Agreement in place.
- Advertising Sales – Continue marketing efforts to sell advertising panels to businesses at seven VICD sites.
- Federal System Preservation Funds -- facilities network preservation
- Security – RFP for Safety and Security Assessment issued; awaiting awarding of contract.

Program Summary...

• Challenges...

• Personnel

- Aging Workforce
 - Longer 12-hour shifts a challenge
- Technological Communication/Supervision
- Safety/Isolation
 - During FY 2015 and 2016 there were
 - Employee safety concerns
 - Break-ins and thefts of coffee donations boxes
 - Safety/Security Assessment of all VICD locations
 - Request for Proposal issued in FY 2016

• Facility Upkeep

- Requires sustainable source of funding for any major maintenance projects.