

SRD Abstract: Evaluation of Growing Vermont

Growing Vermont is a student run retail incubator intended to support local entrepreneurs, provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills through service learning activities, and to increase awareness within the UVM community about the positive impact of buying local. These goals are both praiseworthy and substantial, and five years in operations has created a significant amount of data available to evaluate the extent to which Growing Vermont has met or is meeting its objectives according to its multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders to be considered in this evaluation include vendors, student employees and interns, professors and students within the department of CDAE, and students from the broader UVM community. The research will initially be carried out through interviews with key members of the various stakeholder groups. From these interviews survey questions will be designed to determine how the stated goals are being met. The financial health of the store will be evaluated through financial records from the store's computer system and PeopleSoft. The results of these mixed methods will show the extent to which Growing Vermont is reaching its goals and fulfilling the needs of its stakeholders. This research should show the major costs and benefits to operating a student run incubator store at UVM. The larger implications of this research may offer suggestions on how to support Growing Vermont in its future at UVM. Understanding the major advantages and challenges to the stated goals, as well as less obvious ones, will offer insight into the impact of student run enterprises and provide decision-makers with an objective evaluation of the project.