

**2021**

**YEAR IN REVIEW**



**BERMUDA  
FIRST**

## **ABOUT BERMUDAFIRST**

In 2009, in light of the impending economic downturn, approximately 90 stakeholders, representing all sectors of Bermuda formed BermudaFirst to better understanding the Island’s economic position, work in collaboration and identify ideas that might ensure the continued prosperity of Bermuda. In 2017, the newly elected PLP Government asked BermudaFirst to revitalise with a specific mandate of developing of a National Socio-Economic Plan for Bermuda. A new leadership team was formed and over the past two years, a diverse group has once together collaborated to produce the Phase I (Current State) and Phase II (Future State Recommendations) components of the overall Plan. The Phase II Future State Recommendation Report was formally submitted to the Government in August 2019 and identified education, health care and immigration reform as the three most critical areas for focus. BermudaFirst is currently working with Government to progress those recommendations and to assist with Bermuda's economic recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

## **OUR VISION**

BermudaFirst's Vision is to create and support the implementation of a National Socio-Economic Plan that shift mindsets and behaviours and offers every Bermudian the opportunity and tools to participate equitably in our sustainable, growing economy.

## **OUR PURPOSE**

1. Ensure the long-term sustainability of local & international business and identify opportunities for economic diversification;
2. Ensure Bermudians (all ages) are life-long learners, have access to a world-class education from Pre-K through College and ongoing professional development opportunities;
3. Bring a holistic approach to addressing health care, hospitality & tourism and infrastructure issues that place our economy and the welfare of our community at risk; and
4. Address the socio-economic issues that impede segments of our community from realising their full potential.

## **OVERVIEW**

Over the course of 2021, we continued our efforts in education, health care and immigration/talent acquisition. Work continues on the establishment of an independent Education Authority and we continue our participation in Universal Health System Reform. Immigration is a key component of Bermuda’s economic recovery. Accordingly, as requested, we are committed to supporting appropriate labour and immigration reform.

The long-term social and economic impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, while still not completely defined, has become more understood, and our commitment to supporting Bermuda’s long-term economic and social recovery remains ever present.

Given the number of transformational initiatives underway (i.e., education, health system and immigration reform), and the various initiatives contained within the Economic Recovery Plan (ERP), one of our key recommendations to the Government this year has been to work with the ‘Big 4’ consulting

firms, with the strategic support of BermudaFirst, to set up a project management office that would oversee and coordinate all major consulting projects throughout Government.

As we closed out 2021, recognising that we are now two years post-submission of the Phase II Future State Recommendation Report to the Premier of Bermuda, we have also begun to consider what role(s) and new areas of focus, if any, BermudaFirst should have moving forward. BermudaFirst is comprised of a Board and working group members who represent all sectors of our community. Implementing the Community/Stakeholder Engagement Plan that was developed in 2020 could make a tremendous impact in engaging the broader stakeholder community in the difficult conversations that are required in order to bring about the worldview shifts required by all stakeholders. However, such consideration cannot come without ascertaining how the Organisation will fund itself moving forward. We could and should be doing so much more; however, without sustained funding, we have kept our focus narrow.

Fund development continues to be a major challenge, with the vast majority of 2021 funding coming from a government grant. We must determine how to connect the donor community to the value of BermudaFirst and out work. While grass shoots are visible within our island's economic recovery, Bermuda's long-term economic recovery and growth is not yet secure. Appropriate education and health system reform are vital to creating the ability for more in our community to be able to participate in that economy. Thus, we will continue to seek the financial support of our corporate and private donor community to continue the significant work and community engagement effort that needs to be progressed.

## PHASE II CRITICAL FUTURE STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the course of 2021, select Board Members have engaged with the respective ministries in support of progressing the critical recommendations included within our August 2019 Phase II Future State Recommendation Report. More specifically:

### Education

1. *Independent Education Authority*—Phil Butterfield (Chairman and Education Working Group Co-Chair), and Dr. Duranda Greene (Education Working Group Co-Chair) continue to work with Minister of Education and the Innovation Unit consulting group to progress the implementation of an independent Education Authority. The Minister of Education confirmed in 2020 that the Government is fully on board with setting up the Education Authority and while work has not progressed as quickly as we believe is warranted, we will continue to push for results.
2. *Education Reform Governance Committee*—Phil continues to sit on the Education Reform Governance Committee and push for a more holistic approach to planning the four major reform initiatives that are currently underway.

### Health Care

1. *Universal Health System Reform Steering Committee* – Following our participation on the Health Strategy 2025 Steering Committee. Executive Director, Kerry Judd and Board Members Kirstin Beasley and Scott Pearman were invited to join the Bermuda Health Plan Universal Health Coverage Steering Committee, the purpose of which is “to oversee developments of the Bermuda Health Plan to achieve Universal Health Coverage, and ensure implementation through key stakeholder awareness, engagement and buy-in. This is considered a transitional body that will “ensure concrete strategic planning and reforms begin to be phased in... with a clear and transparent roadmap.” Supported by

KPMG, we are optimistic that the current approach to ensure that both appropriate planning is followed and critical sector relationships are strengthened, will result in progress of one of the most critical areas of focus for our social and economic recovery.

### Immigration

At the request of the Minister of Labour, the Hon. Jason Hayward, JP, MP, (“the Minister”) the BermudaFirst Work Permit Pilot Working Group was tasked with completing the development of a pilot programme, with initial focus on International Business (“IB”). The initial undertaking was to further develop and test the proposed approach to workforce development and the corresponding work permit scheme as recommended within BermudaFirst’s November 2018 Work Permit Reform Framework document and points 4 and 5 of the Immigration recommendations in the Phase II Future State Recommendation Report (page 21)<sup>1</sup>. Clarified direction was provided by the Minister during his April 2021 Monthly Meeting with BermudaFirst. The pilot concept and other work permit policy and process recommendations were submitted to the Minister on 18 May 2021 and we were subsequently advised that the policy and process recommendations were being integrated into the updates that were underway. Ultimately, however, our recommendation was that the Ministry focus on automating its systems and ensuring it has the appropriate talent in place to support its current and future needs. Without addressing these two critical things, the Department of Immigration will not be able to achieve the overall reform and efficiency it seeks to. We were pleased to be advised by the Minister that getting the appropriate technology in place is a key priority for the Ministry and that work is underway with KPMG to complete the first phase imminently.

### **MOVING FORWARD**

We will continue to push for progress and to gain traction in the critical areas of focus. Two years on, however, we must recalculate and identify any new critical priorities (i.e. climate change and sustainability) that might be worth BermudaFirst’s consideration. It is time to reflect on how BermudaFirst can make the biggest impact on our community and whether that looks different to how we currently operate. We remain committed to doing what is best for all of Bermuda and where warranted, driving efforts to bring about equity in the ability of our people to participate in their own economy.

*For more information or to become more involved, please contact Kerry Judd at [execdir@bermudafirst.bm](mailto:execdir@bermudafirst.bm) or 441.705.3615.*