

Spark! Connecting Community

Vermont Community Foundation

Guidelines

Spark! Connecting Community grants put building and nurturing community front and center. We aim to support grassroots work that builds social capital—the connective tissue of our communities. Social capital can be described as the value developed from working together, connecting across social networks, and sharing common place-based experiences. The more social capital a community has, the stronger and more resilient those communities will be, providing desirable places for us to live, work, and play.

This program will fund projects that:

- increase access to opportunity for youth and families experiencing barriers in reaching their potential, as outlined in our four focus areas (available by [clicking here](#));
- connect people with each other in deep and meaningful ways that are grounded in acts of generosity and volunteerism;
- connect people to the environment around them in ways that encourage stewardship and respect; and/or
- increase opportunities for inclusive, multi-generational social interaction especially for community members who may experience social isolation.

This program will not fund:

- general operating costs;
- capital campaigns—this program only considers requests for renovations or equipment that have a direct and short-term connection to building community connections;
- performance ticket subsidies or scholarships that are not directly connected to community-building work;
- events and performances that do not have any components of audience or community engagement;
- debt reduction;
- scholarships;
- individuals;
- expenses that have already been incurred;
- programs with religious instruction;
- indirect expenses for a project (including fiscal sponsor fees); or
- repeat support of the same project.

Please read the full application guidelines online by [clicking here](#).

Helpful Hints:

- Character limits include spaces and punctuation.
- Be sure to save your work frequently by clicking the "Save" button at the bottom of the page as the system will log out after 90 minutes of inactivity.
- The size of text boxes can be adjusted by dragging on the lower right corner.
- Create a PDF version of your application via the "Application Packet" button at the top of the page. All content and attachments will be included.

All applications must be submitted electronically to the Vermont Community Foundation through the application form in the Online Grants Manager, which can be accessed at www.vermontcf.org/OGM. Applications will not be accepted by mail or email. If you have questions about the Online Grants Manager, please contact grants@vermontcf.org or 802-388-3355 ext. 222.

Please view website for the most current deadline information.

About Your Project

Project Name*

Character Limit: 100

Project Description*

Provide a one to two sentence description of what the project will accomplish. Be clear and explicit about what you will accomplish and how. Please use complete sentences. Note: Your answer may be used in publications. *For example: "We will beautify a blighted neighborhood by creating a public mural space for residents to share their hopes and dreams."*

Character Limit: 300

Amount Requested*

Minimum \$500 / Maximum \$3,000

Character Limit: 20

Geographic Area - Town/City*

What Vermont town(s) will be directly served by your project?

Please keep your answer concise and refer to the following guidelines:

- For multiple towns, use commas to separate the town names.
- If your project spans state borders, limit your answer only to Vermont.
- If your project has broader implementation (multiple counties or statewide), you do not need to mention each town. Instead, briefly outline the geographic scope.

Character Limit: 200

Geographic Area - County*

Choose all that apply:

Choices

Statewide
 Addison County
 Bennington County
 Caledonia County
 Chittenden County
 Essex County
 Franklin County
 Grand Isle County
 Lamoille County
 Orange County
 Orleans County
 Rutland County
 Washington County
 Windham County
 Windsor County

Closing the Opportunity Gap*

How is your organization working to increase access to opportunity for Vermont youth and families and their communities? Please describe your current and/or anticipated outcomes, then select the best fit to the Community Foundation's strategic focus areas in the following question.

Character Limit: 800

Strategic Focus Area*

Which strategic focus area(s) does your organization or project serve? Read about our strategic focus areas by [clicking here](#).

Choices

Early care and learning
 College and career training
 Support for youth and families
 Community and economic vitality
 None of the above

Project Goals*

Explain the goal(s) of the project. Describe the work you will do and what that will accomplish, in other words - what you are doing and why. Please be specific. Note: Your answer may be used in publications.

Character Limit: 1800

Project Workplan*

Please explain the overall timeline for your project as well as the specific steps required to achieve your goals and when they will happen. Please list specific dates if they've been identified. We would also like to know the need that your project addresses, who is involved, and how they will be impacted.

Character Limit: 800

Project Champion

Who is championing this project, what is their role in the community, and why are they leading this work?

Character Limit: 1000

What will success look like?*

Please explain how you will know that you've achieved your goals.

Character Limit: 600

Tell us a story about your project.

At the VCF, we are often sharing the impact and the activities of our grantees with partners and other funders. If you have a story about this project that inspires and educates, or that paints a personal picture of impact, please share it with us so that we may help raise the profile of your work. Example responses to this question can be found on our [Online Grants FAQ by clicking here](#).

Character Limit: 900

Community Engagement*

Tell us about existing community support for this project. How have community members been engaged in decision-making regarding this idea or project? You may attach a Letter of Support in addition to or in lieu of this question.

Character Limit: 900

Letter of Support (OPTIONAL ATTACHMENT)

You may use this space to attach an optional letter of support.

File Size Limit: 4 MB

Project Budget - Narrative*

What will the grant funds be spent on? Note: Administrative costs related to the project (such as staffing, rent, and gas mileage) are acceptable.

Character Limit: 900

Project Budget - Itemized (REQUIRED ATTACHMENT)*

Attach a copy of your itemized project budget. You should include both expenses and revenue, including pending and secured support. (Sample budget documents may be used as a *guide* and downloaded from the Community Foundation's website - visit our [Online Grants Center](#) for more details.)

File Size Limit: 2 MB

Bonus Words (OPTIONAL)

What else should we know about the project that we didn't ask?

Character Limit: 900

About Your Organization

Organizational Budget (REQUIRED ATTACHMENT)*

Upload a copy of your organization's Budget to Actual comparison or Profit Loss (P/L) statement for the most recently completed fiscal year. (Sample budget documents can be downloaded from the Community Foundation's website - visit our [Online Grants Center](#) for more details.)

File Size Limit: 4 MB

If you are showing a deficit in your organizational budget, please tell us why.

Character Limit: 300

What status best describes the applicant?*

Our grants must be paid to a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, place of worship/religious group, or town/municipal agency. If your organization or group does not fall into one of these categories, you will need to use a fiscal sponsor. If you have questions, please contact 802-388-3355 ext. 222. We are happy to talk through your options.

Choices

Municipal entity (i.e., town, public school, or other municipal department or agency)

Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit

Place of worship or religious group

Other - Please provide details in your answer to the next question.

Use this space to provide additional information about the applicant's status. (If Applicable)

If you have a fiscal sponsor—or if you operate under the umbrella of a larger registered nonprofit—provide their name below.

Character Limit: 200

Fiscal Sponsor Agreement Form (If Applicable)

Download a blank Fiscal Sponsor Agreement Form ([click here to download the form](#)) and forward it to your fiscal sponsor to print, fill out, and sign. The form must be filled out completely and you must use the official VCF form. Please call 802-388-3355 ext. 222 if you have questions.

Upload the form here.

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Grant Report (If Applicable)

If you received grant funding from the Small and Inspiring or Spark! Connecting Community programs in the past three years and you have completed your project, you are required to fill out and submit a final grant report through our online grant system. Your Grant Report Form is assigned in your online account as a Follow-Up Form connected to your application and can be accessed from your account dashboard. From the report form, please select the option at the top of the page to create a "Follow-Up Packet" of your final submitted report and upload the pdf here.

We are happy to answer questions. Please contact 802-388-3355 ext. 222 or grants@vermontcf.org.

File Size Limit: 10 MB

Attach a Photograph (REQUIRED ATTACHMENT)

When we share a proposal with other potential funders, it can be very helpful and inspiring to have an image to accompany it. Images of people engaged in activities similar to those in your proposal can help connect the readers to the impact and value of your project in a deeper way. Compelling images can be very influential in motivating funders to support a project.

Please attach Your Photograph in a .jpg file that is a minimum of 100KB and a maximum of 2MB.

File Size Limit: 2 MB

Photograph License and Release (if applicable)

If you are attaching a photograph, please indicate your acceptance of the terms below:

You hereby grant to the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) an unrestricted license to use and publish Your Photograph in VCF communications material in any and all manner and media. You hereby represent that you have permission to grant these rights (please make sure you have a signed photo release on file for any identifiable subjects in the photograph you submit). You hereby release the VCF and its employees from any and all claims and/or liability related to Your Photograph.

Choices

I agree

I do not agree

Save and Submit

Please view website for the most current deadline information.

By submitting your application to the Vermont Community Foundation, you give us permission to share your application and information about your project with other potential funders, both individuals and foundations.