

Spark Connecting Community (2025)

Vermont Community Foundation

Spark Connecting Community Guidelines

Spark Connecting Community grants put building and nurturing community front and center. We aim to support emerging grassroots projects with the potential to build social capital—the connective tissue of our communities. Social capital can be described as the value developed from working together, connecting across differences, and sharing common place-based experiences. Higher levels of social capital are correlated with better health outcomes, higher educational achievement, increased civic engagement, and greater resilience—all of which help build community vitality.

In 2025, applications received from Essex, Grand Isle, and Franklin counties will receive priority consideration.

When the committee receives multiple applications for projects that clearly meet the stated goals of the Spark Connecting Community program, they will then consider the size of the organization's operating budget. Applicants with budgets under \$500,000 will receive highest priority for available funding.

What does the Spark grant program support?

The Spark program will accept applications from **hyperlocal, place-based** projects (applications from a single community or a few towns working in partnership in the same region) or statewide/regional projects that support a **community of individuals with a shared identity or interest**.

This program will prioritize projects that:

Increase Vermonters access to opportunity as outlined in our five areas of impact,
Increase opportunities for positive social interaction while assuring full accessibility,
Connect people with each other in deep and meaningful ways that are grounded in acts of generosity, and
Connect people to the environment around them in ways that encourage stewardship and respect.

What does the Spark grant program not support?

- Capital costs and campaigns, unless the capital investment is needed for an activity or event that builds community connections (for example, eligible expenses may include purchase of materials to construct or expand on a community garden or greenhouse;

purchase of upgraded lighting or furniture to expand use of a local gathering space; and/or purchase of materials to repair a skatepark and restore safe use)

- Ongoing, recurring, or annual events or projects
- Event sponsorships
- Performance ticket subsidies or scholarships that are not directly connected to community-building work. However, the program will support stipends to individuals who otherwise would not be able to participate to ensure more inclusive community processes, programs, and/or events (ex. childcare support, stipends to individuals, or transportation)
- Events and performances that do not prioritize audience or community engagement
- Debt reduction
- Individuals (applicant should apply as part of a nonprofit organization, community group, municipality, or similar entity)
- Expenses that have already been incurred
- Requests for general operating support
- Programs with religious instruction
- Indirect expenses for a project (including fiscal sponsor fees)
- Repeat support for the same, or a similar, project

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

Spark Connecting Community 2025 Timeline

- The Spark Connecting Community grant program will offer one competitive grant round in 2025.
- Applications will be accepted between **April 22 – May 27 , 2025**. Applications must be received by 5PM on Tuesday, May 27 in order to be considered.
- We anticipate notifying applicants of grant decisions by late June. Grants can be used to cover activities beginning in June 2025 and extending through June 2026.

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 opt. 6.

Organization Questions Part I

What is your organization's annual operating budget?*

Character Limit: 20

Financial Statements - Current Fiscal Year*

Upload a copy of your organization's budget to actual, including both revenue and expenses, from its current fiscal year. Sample documents can be downloaded from the Community Foundation's website - visit our Online Grants Center FAQ for more details.

File Size Limit: 3 MB

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 opt. 6. 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 opt. 6 if you have questions.

Upload the form here.

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Spark Connecting Community Application Questions

Project Name*

Character Limit: 100

Total Amount Requested*

Minimum \$500 / Maximum \$5,000

Character Limit: 20

Previous Spark Funding*

Has your organization received support from the Spark program in the last three years? *Please note that Spark cannot provide repeat support for the same program/project.*

Choices

Yes

No

If you answered yes above, please provide the grant amount, grant purpose, and year awarded.

Character Limit: 500

Project Summary*

Provide a concise overview of the project and what it will accomplish in one or two sentences. *Please use complete sentences – this description may be used in publications.*

Character Limit: 450

Project Description*

Describe your project, your project partners, the work you will do, and the overall timeline.

Character Limit: 2250

Community Buy-In*

Provide evidence of community buy-in, interest, and/or engagement in the planning for your project.

Character Limit: 1250

Project Outcomes/Community Benefit*

Tell us how this project will build social capital in your community and who it will benefit.

Character Limit: 1250

Project Budget*

Attach a copy of your itemized project budget showing both expenses and revenue, with a narrative description for each expense line included in the budget document. Note: Administrative costs related to the project (such as staffing, rent, and gas mileage) are acceptable. *Sample documents can be downloaded from the Community Foundation's website - visit our [Online Grants Center FAQ](#) for more details.*

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Attach a Photograph (OPTIONAL)

Quality photos can be very helpful and inspiring. Sometimes we have opportunities to share your proposal with other potential funders and sometimes we want to promote the good work you are doing through social media and web posts. Providing an image is optional, but we would be grateful.

Please indicate photographer credit and/or photo description in text area. *File types supported: png, jpeg, or jpg.*

Character Limit: 500 / File Size Limit: 2 MB

Photograph License and Release (if applicable)

Do you wish to give the VCF permission to use your photo in communications? Please indicate below how you'd like it used.

Option 1: Please only use my photo internally if relevant to this application (to be shared among VCF staff only)

Option 2: Please use my photo internally and externally as determined by the VCF (this may include external communications, such as press releases, social media, or communications with potential funders of your project) Your organization &/or the photographer will be credited as the source of the image.

Select option below.

Choices

Option 1

Option 2

Save and Submit

Applications must be submitted online by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, to be considered.

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.

