

Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth (2026)

Vermont Community Foundation

Guidelines

Established in 2018, the Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth is a growing fund with the goal of ensuring a source of revenue for dynamic and innovative youth programs in Bennington, North Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, and Woodford in perpetuity.

The Opportunity Fund for Southshire youth awards grants for creative and effective initiatives that empower and support Bennington-area teenagers, particularly those facing challenges and limited access to opportunities due to economic distress, disengagement from school, mental health issues, racism, gender identity, disability, legal status, or other reasons.

In 2026, the Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth aims to support spaces, activities, and opportunities for youth to gather, connect, feel a sense of belonging, or participate in or learn a new activity. The four priority areas of the grant program include youth-led or youth-focused events, programs, or projects that:

- Bring youth together, especially those that introduce a new activity and/or have a low barrier to access. Examples include:
 - Themed camp
 - Festival/celebration
 - Intramural sport
 - Casual club or extracurricular;
- Create, maintain, or expand spaces or places that allow youth to gather, connect, and share experiences in formal and informal ways;
- Provide opportunity and access for youth facing hardships;
- Encourage feelings of belonging and increase inclusion.

The fund will consider both small (\$500-\$5,000) and large (up to \$10,000) grant requests, and will only award up to one large grant each year. Applicants who apply for and are not awarded a large grant will still be considered for a small grant.

The fund welcomes proposals for up to \$10,000 for a capital project, a new program, or a large program or capital expansion that fits within the guidelines above.

The Fund will support programs that benefit teenagers entering or enrolled in 6th through 12th grades (typically ages 12 to 18) including students at Mount Anthony Middle School or High School and/or those who live in the communities served by those schools.

All applicants to this grant program must meet the guidelines on the Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth page on the Vermont Community Foundation website. Please view the website for the most current deadline information.

For questions regarding the application process, please contact Emma Marks, Grants Coordinator at 802-828-7902 or emarks@vermontcf.org.

Applications will be accepted between July 28- September 8, 2026. Applications must be received by 5PM on Tuesday, September 8 in order to be considered. No late applications will be accepted.

Organizational Questions

Please share the mission of the organization.*

Character Limit: 500

What is your organization's annual operating budget?*

Character Limit: 20

Financial Statement - Completed Fiscal Year*

Upload a copy of your organization's profit/loss statement and balance sheet from its most recently completed 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

Financial Statement - 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 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 if you have questions.

Upload the form here.

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Application Questions

Project Name*

Character Limit: 100

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: 500

Total Amount Requested*

Minimum \$500 / Maximum \$10,000

Character Limit: 20

Geographic Area*

Choose all that apply.

Choices

Bennington

North Bennington

Pownal

Shaftsbury

Woodford

Alignment with Funding Priorities*

How does your project align with the Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth's funding priorities? *Check all that apply.*

In 2026, the Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth aims to support spaces, activities, and opportunities for youth to gather, connect, and feel a sense of belonging. The four priority areas of the grant program include youth-led or youth-focused events, programs, or projects that:

Choices

Bring youth together around an activity

Create spaces or places that allow youth to gather, connect, and share experiences

Provide opportunity and access for youth facing hardships

Encourage feelings of belonging and increase inclusion

Project Description*

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

Character Limit: 3000

Youth and Community Engagement*

Please describe how youth have been involved in decision-making regarding this idea or project. We encourage you to attach up to two letters of support from teenagers involved with the project planning or implementation in addition to your answer.

Character Limit: 2000

Youth and Community Benefit*

Please describe the youth that will be engaged with and benefit from this project. When possible, please include the number of youth that will benefit.

Character Limit: 2000

Project Outcomes*

Tell us how this project will cover one or more of the 2026 grant priority areas.

The four priority areas of the grant program include youth-led or youth-focused events, programs, or projects that:

- Bring youth together, especially those that introduce a new activity and/or have a low barrier to access.
- Create, maintain, or expand spaces or places that allow youth to gather, connect, and share experiences in formal and informal ways;
- Provide opportunity and access for youth facing hardships;
- Encourage feelings of belonging and increase inclusion.

Character Limit: 3000

Letter of Support (Optional)

File Size Limit: 2 MB

Letter of Support (Optional)

File Size Limit: 2 MB

Project Budget - Itemized (PDF)*

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

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Project Budget - Narrative (Optional)

Please feel free to include additional information about the budget here or within the budget itself.

Character Limit: 1000

Bonus Words (Optional)

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

Character Limit: 1200

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

All applications must be submitted electronically to the Vermont Community Foundation through the application form in the Online Grants Manager. Applications will not be accepted by mail or email. If you have questions about the Online Grants Manager, please contact: jmulcahy@vermontcf.org or 802-828-7760.

2025 deadline: 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 9.

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.