# Seeking Funding? Get Your Project on the Priority List

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Certain funding programs require that a project be included in databases, on priority projects lists, or in annual plans to qualify the project for funding. Other funding programs use published lists or plans to give extra points to projects during application review. Boost your project's competitiveness for grant funding by making sure it is on "the List" before applying.

## General

*Municipal Plan* – Under 24 V.S.A. Subchapter 5, municipalities are authorized, but not required, to develop a Municipal Plan. The plan must be consistent with statutory goals, must be compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region and with the regional plan, and should include 12 required elements. The plan is a blueprint for how your community intends to change over time. It describes the public investments, land use regulations, policies, and/or other activities and programs that will guide that change. Having a municipal plan can qualify the municipality for certain State grants. It is required to participate in certain State programs (See *State Planning Manual - Module 1*, page 9). Describing a need that your project addresses or listing your project in your municipal plan can help increase its competitiveness.

If your municipality wants to access Municipal Planning Grants or State designation programs, the municipal plan must be approved by the regional planning commission . The approval process (24 V.S.A § 4350(b)(1)) confirms that the plan meets the requirements noted above.

State Designation Programs – Vermont's State Designation Programs encourage new development and redevelopment in compact, designated areas. Incentives are offered to both the public and private sector within the designated area. Public incentives include funding for transportation-related public improvements, priority consideration for some state grant programs, and location of state buildings or offices.

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When one-time opportunities for funding or technical assistance arise, such as after disasters, municipalities with designated centers are likely to be selected for technical assistance and funding.

To be eligible for any of the designation programs, municipalities must have an adopted municipal plan, a confirmed planning process, and the approval of the municipality's legislative body. Your Regional Planning Commission can help with municipal plans and designation program applications.

## Community Facilities and Economic Development

*Regional Project Prioritization (RPP) Lists* - Developed annually by Vermont's Regional Development Corporations (RDCs), Regional Project Prioritization lists express the highest priority projects for each region that will support job growth and economic development. The 12 regional lists are consolidated into a statewide list submitted to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). ACCD shares the list with federal and state funders, who may consider the list when making funding decisions. Projects may be from for-profit, non-profit, or municipal entities and can be any project that positively impacts the local economy. Nominations are ranked locally based on their readiness, ability to create jobs, and overall community and economic impact.

Submitting your project for inclusion on the list can earn it more points for certain grants, such as the Northern Borders Regional Commission Catalyst program, or earn State endorsement of your project for federal grants from the Economic Development Administration. Contact your Regional Development Corporation to discuss its timeline and process for soliciting projects for inclusion on its annual list.

*Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* – A CEDS is an economic development plan supported by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA)

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that provides guidance for future public investment to build economic development. In Vermont, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development crafts the State CEDS. Regional Planning Commissions and Regional Development Corporations work together to craft regional CEDS. CEDS may incorporate projects prioritized through a region's Regional Project Prioritization (RPP) List. The US EDA, Northern Borders Regional Commission, and other economic development grant programs consider how projects support CEDS implementation when they evaluate grant applications.

*USDA Strategic Economic and Community Development Program (SECD)* – Pre-qualifying your project through USDA's SECD Program boosts its competitiveness for funding from several USDA Rural Development, including Water and Waste Disposal Program, Community Facilities Program, and Rural Business Development Grants. The SECD Program does not provide funding. It reserves a percentage of funds from certain USDA programs for projects with regional benefits to economic and community development. Designation of your project by SECD prioritizes it for those set-aside funds when you submit the project to one of the three programs. SECD-eligible projects must implement a multi-jurisdictional, multi-sectoral plan.

## Transportation

*Vermont Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)* – The STIP is the State's multi-year, prioritized transportation improvement program for capital and non-capital projects for which the State will use Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration funding. VTrans uses a project selection and prioritization process, called VPSP2, to develop the Capital Program. It works with Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and municipalities to propose potential projects for acceptance into the Capital Program. This process is described in Appendix 1 of the STIP.

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Municipalities can participate in transportation project prioritization annually from March through May by engaging with their RPC. VTrans provides RPCs with a list of potential projects that the State has scored to reflect the transportation asset. RPCs and their Transportation Advisory Committees review this list and evaluate projects to reflect regional values. RPCs also can propose additional projects. If your project is on the federal aid highway system and you want Transportation Capital Improvement funds, your project must be in the STIP.

*Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)* – Due to its unique designation as Vermont's only metropolitan planning area, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is required by federal law to develop a list of upcoming transportation projects for the upcoming four years. The result is its TIP – a list of priority transportation projects. All transportation projects, programs, and operations receiving federal funds in Chittenden County must be authorized through the CCRPC TIP process. The exception is federal airport funds for Burlington International Airport. The TIP is updated at least every two years.

If your project is in Chittenden County and you want federal transportation funds for it, your project must be in the CCRPC TIP. Projects in the CCRPC TIP are included in the Vermont Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) by reference.

## Water and Wastewater

*Watershed Project Database* – The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Watershed Project Database (WPD) includes Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) funded projects and other potential projects in various stages of development identified though Tactical Basin Planning. Projects applying for any of DEC's CWIP funding opportunities must be recorded in the WPD. This ensures the project is assigned a unique identification number (WPD-ID) that allows

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DEC to track the relationships of projects to each other, and across funding programs. Each project must have a WPD-ID specific to the proposed project phase (e.g. preliminary design, final design). Follow directions provided in the CWIP Funding Policy to secure a WPD-ID if your project doesn't have one.

*VT DEC Priority Lists for State Revolving Funds (SRF)* – Each year, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) write Intended Use Plans (IUPs) that explain how SRF funding capitalization grants provided by the Federal government and other available sources will be used. Part of each IUP is the Priority List (PList), a list of projects that have requested funding that year ranked according to the priority system for the program. To obtain funding for any construction work and for certain CWSRF final design activities, a project must meet readiness criteria, and either be included on the priority list or be accepted as an "emergency" project.

The Priority Lists are updated annually. Applications for DWSRF planning loans from the planning loan fund and for land purchase or conservation easements from the source protection fund may be submitted, prioritized, and placed on a separate priority list for available funds at any time. CWSRF projects seeking planning loan money do not need to submit a priority list application. Projects that do not execute a loan in a given year must reapply to the next year's Priority List to maintain funding eligibility. New or updated applications must be submitted each year until the project receives a Step III construction loan. A separate application to state and federal funding programs still must be submitted.

*List of 3-Acre Properties* - A "three-acre site" is an impervious surface of three or more acres that has never had a Vermont operational stormwater permit or was permitted to standards in placed prior to Vermont's 2002 Stormwater Management Manual. The List of "3-acre Properties" identifies properties that are required to obtain permit coverage and retrofit their site to improve the level of stormwater treatment. This list includes properties in Lake Champlain, Lake Memphremagog, and stormwater-

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impaired watersheds only.  The list will be updated in the future as information for the rest of the state becomes available. If your project is located on a property included on the 3-acre Properties list, stormwater treatment upgrades may be required. Also, it may affect – either positively or negatively - the project's eligibility for grants.

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