Funding Opportunities for Trails, Paths, and Sidewalks

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Trails, paths, and sidewalks create community, improve health, and take us where we need to go. Below are funding opportunities we've identified to help you plan, build, and promote use of your trail, path, and sidewalk network.

Consult program-specific guidance for additional information. Links to other sites offered in this document are provided to assist municipalities: the inclusion of a link does not imply endorsement or approval of the linked site or product.

Funding Opportunities

AARP Community Challenge Flagship Grant - Funds a range of projects from public places (i.e. parks), transportation and mobility options, housing options, diversity/equity/inclusion, digital connections, community resilience, civic engagement, and community health and economic empowerment. Grant range is $500 to $50,000 with an average grant of $11,900. Projects should be consistent with AARP's mission to serve the needs of people age 50+. Applications are due in May annually.

ACCD Municipal Planning Grant – This annual State program supports planning and revitalization for municipalities. The program usually is announced in July with applications due in November/December. Single municipalities can apply for an amount between $2,500 and $50,000. A consortium (group) of municipalities may apply for a grant of any amount between $2,500 and $65,000. A cash match of 10% of total project cost is required for both. Project priorities vary each year.

American Trails Legacy Trails Grant Program - Support projects that restore aquatic habitat, preserve access, remove unauthorized trails, decommission unauthorized and previously closed roads/trails, and/or create more resilient and sustainable National Fores Service trails, trail bridges, and trail infrastructure. The Forest Service identifies and prioritizes watershed acres or areas where Forest Service roads and trails may

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impact water quality in streams and water bodies. Trails can be motorized or non-motorized. Awards range from $5,000 to $100,000. Applications are due ~mid-December annually.

American Trails The Trails Capacity Program – Funds trail maintenance, research, and stewardship training. Grants range from $5,000 to $10,000. Both motorized and nonmotorized trails are eligible. Match is preferred but not required. The program funds maintenance on existing trails; it does not fund new trails.

America Walks Community Change Grant – Supports innovative and engaging programs and projects that create change and opportunity for walking and movement at the community level. Activities can be physical improvements or programming. $2,000 per award. Typical application window is fall to early winter.

Athletic Brewing Co. Two for the Trails – Registered non-profit organizations working in trail construction and maintenance, waterway protection, environmental stewardship, and other outdoor conservation can apply for funding to support their projects. Grants range from $600 to $50,000 with the average award at $5,000. Applications are accepted in summer ~annually. Other trail support opportunities include having company employees volunteer at clean-up days and the company provide brews at your environmental events.

Ben and Jerry's Foundation Community Action Team – Funds small grants of up to $2,000 to meet basic human needs within Vermont's under-served populations, including elders, youth, low-income, and communities of color. Also plans community service projects for their employees. Applications reviewed monthly.

BF Goodrich® Tires Outstanding Trails Grant – Supports sustainable and responsible off-roading clubs to help preserve local off-road trails. Funds organization of clean up events, trail maintenance workdays, and other small stewardship projects. Eligible costs are tools, dumpster rentals, food/beverages, fuel, signs, trail building and

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restoration materials, and equipment rentals. The average grant is under $500. You must be an active Tread Lightly! Member Club to apply. Deadlines are June 15 and September 30 annually.

Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation Direct Effect Grants – Supports a wide range of projects and activities that clearly impact individuals living with paralysis and their families, including accessible trails. Grants range from $5,000 to $24,999.

Congressional Appropriation - Congressional appropriations were formerly known as Earmarks and are currently known as Congressionally Directed Spending for the Senate and Community Project Funding for the House of Representatives. Projects are nominated by Members of Congress for funding through the appropriations bill. The Senate and House have different rules for these requests. Projects benefit from advanced discussion with Congressional staff. If selected, funds pass through a federal agency with that agency's associated grant terms and conditions. Funds may not be available for 1-4 years based on agency capacity. Information is available on websites of Senator Sanders, Senator Welch, and Representative Balint. Projects are usually submitted in late February through mid-March annually.

EPA Recreation Economy for Rural Communities – Provides planning assistance to help small town and rural communities identify strategies to grow their outdoor recreation economy and revitalize their main streets. This program is a grant of technical assistance, not a grant of funding.

FHWA Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) – Supports planning, design, and construction of networks within communities and spines between communities. Minimum grant is $100,000 for planning and design, and $15 million for construction. Match is 20% for most applicants and 0% (no match) for high poverty areas.

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FHWA Federal Land Access Program – Supports capital improvements, enhancements, surface preservation, transit, planning studies, and research for transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within Federal lands. Public roads, transit systems, trails, and other transportation facilities qualify. Emphasis is on high-use recreation sites and economic generators. Applicant must be state, county, tribal, or municipal government that owns or maintains the transportation facility. No match required currently but may revert to previous 20% in the future.

Lawson's Finest Liquids Sunshine Fund – Open to 501(c)(3) nonprofits, Sunshine Awardees become the partner "On Tap" for a specific period of time during the year and receive 100% of "tip" donations during that period. priority is given to Mad River Valley, Washington County and Vermont non-profit organizations that focus on healthy communities, food and economic security, natural resource protection, and sustainable recreation in the Green Mountains. A 15-day period of tips typically garners $8,000 to $15,000 donation for Sunshine Awardees.

Lintilhac Foundation – Among other priorities, the Foundation provides grants for conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation. A current area of interest is recreational access to backcountry lands, and integrative land use planning. Grants are between $5,000 and $30,000. Application deadlines are March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15 annually.

National Forest Foundation Matching Awards Program – Supports projects that inspire their participants to get personally involved in caring for their public lands. Project must have both a community engagement and stewardship activity. Projects must take place on US National Forests and Grasslands or adjacent public lands and demonstrate benefit to National Forest System lands. Match is $1 local for every $1 in federal grant funds. Two application rounds annually. Municipalities must work through a nonprofit organization, university, or Tribal government or organization to

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access these funds.

National Park Service (NPS) Cost Share Program – Supports local projects that promote land and water conservation, outdoor recreation, and climate resiliency that directly benefit one or more NPS-administered Parks, National Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers (including Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers). Local project partners work with NPS staff to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Applications are submitted by NPS staff in collaboration with project partners. Maximum $25,000. Match is equal to NPS award (1:1).

National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program - Supports locally led conservation and outdoor recreation projects via technical assistance and professional services. NPS-RTCA assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors. This program is a grant of technical assistance, not a grant of funding.

Northern Borders Regional Commission Catalyst– Supports projects that address transportation, telecommunications, energy, and basic public infrastructure; business and workforce development; health care, nutrition and food security, and other public services; resource conservation; tourism; recreation; and open space preservation consistent with economic development. NBRC prioritizes construction-ready projects and prefers job-creation projects that help reduce poverty, unemployment, and outmigration. Focusing on project benefits in these areas helps an application be more competitive. Incorporating the project's relationship to economic activity will increase application competitiveness. Letters from businesses with expansion potential provide excellent supporting documentation. Other elements that can increase a project's competitiveness include a project's listing as a Regional Project Priority as and incorporating the project's relationship to job retention in the

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Designated Village Center.

Northern Borders Regional Commission Timber For Transit Program – 3-year program (through 2025) advances the use of domestic forest products in transportation infrastructure projects to showcase the capabilities of wood in these applications. Highly competitive projects will demonstrate and widely promote the utility of high value forest products (e.g. glued laminated timber, cross laminated timber, composite materials, etc.) in transportation infrastructure and commit to enhancing climate resilience in rural communities. Three categories of awards: feasibility, implementation projects, and feasibility and implementation. Pre-application required. Applicants are advised to speak with Kristie Farnham, Kristie.farnham@vermont.gov, about their project prior to submitting a pre-application.

Northern Forest Center Grants – Periodically, the Northern Forest Center offers grants for trails and outdoor recreation projects.

PeopleForBikes Industry Community Grant Program – Grants focus on bicycling, active transportation, or community development infrastructure. Requests must support a specific project or program; operating costs are not funded. 2024 grants were by invitation only, but 2025 may reopen to all applicants. Grants up to $10,000.

Rails to Trails Conservancy Trail Grants – Supports projects that elevate and unlock the economic, health and quality-of-life benefits of trail networks nationwide. RTC invests in infrastructure and programming necessary to create more access to trails for more people across the country.

The League of American Bicyclists Community Spark Grants – Supports projects and programs that spark change and catalyze a community's ability to create places where bicycling is safer, easier, and more accessible. Grants of $2,000 can be used for events, education, pop-up infrastructure, placemaking, end-of-trip facilities, giveaways or subsidies for bicycle equipment or accessories, bike audits or other

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evaluation/assessment efforts, and other activities. Does not fund permanent structures and infrastructure that require permits. Applications due ~January annually.

US Department of Transportation Programs – There are a variety of federal funding and financing programs available for sidewalk planning and implementation. The US DOT has compiled a list of Pedestrian and Bicycle Funding Opportunities to describe these opportunities. Projects funded through these programs are either large or are part of a larger project.

US Economic Development Administration Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance – Supports construction, non-construction, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects for public works (infrastructure, facilities and buildings, brownfields) and economic assistance (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy development and implementation). Eligible activities include land acquisition, design and engineering, construction. It is helpful to contact your regional planning commission or regional development corporation prior to initiating an application. Projects are more competitive if they link to a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

US Economic Development Administration Disaster Supplemental Funding - Supports disaster recovery in areas where a Presidential disaster declaration was issued. Eligible activities including economic recovery strategic planning grants, public works construction projects including broadband and resiliency projects, workforce development, capitalization of revolving loan funds, and economic development projects that enhance density in the vicinity of other economic development. In CY 2021 and 2022, Vermont had two qualified declarations and projects in the following counties are eligible: Bennington, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Orange, Orleans, Lamoille, Washington, and Windham Counties. A project does not have to be related to those disasters for an application to qualify, but it should discuss disaster impacts. It is helpful to discuss projects with Katherine Trapani, EDA's Vermont

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representative, prior to initiating an application. She can be reached at 215-514-6572 or ktrapani@eda.gov.

Vermont Arts Council Animating Infrastructure – Supports community projects that integrate art with infrastructure improvements. Infrastructure includes community facilities and services such as buildings, trails, water or sewer systems, roads, power systems, parks, and more.

Vermont Buildings and General Services Building Communities Program: Recreational Facilities - Supports capital costs associated with the development and creation of community recreational opportunities. Provides last gap funding for permitted, shovel-ready projects. Requires a cash match equal to the amount of funds granted. Match cannot come from any State or Federal funds. All match must be in hand when applying. Maximum award is $25,000. Applications are due by September 10th annually.

Vermont Community Foundation Spark Connecting Community – Funds projects that support a community of individuals with a shared identity or interest. Prioritizes increasing Vermonters' access to opportunity in economic equity, education and training, health and wellbeing, climate and the environment, and democracy, trusts and community leadership; increasing opportunities for positive social interaction while assuring full accessibility; connecting people with each other in deep and meaningful ways that are grounded in acts of generosity; and connecting people to the environment around them in ways that encourage stewardship and respect. For 2025, the program will prioritize applicants with operating budgets of $500,000 or less. Awards from $500 to $5,000. Applications due ~April to May annually.

Vermont Council on Rural Development Climate Catalysts Innovation Fund – Provides small grants of $500 to $4,000 to support local innovators developing solutions that move Vermont closer to its climate and energy goals. Projects should be innovative, equitable, replicable, and collaborative and should meet climate and energy goals,

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build resilience, and leverage other funds or support.

Vermont Land and Water Conservation Fund – Funds property acquisition and construction or rehabilitation of outdoor recreation facilities or areas. Certain pre-acquisition and construction, such as site investigation and construction specifications, may be eligible if identified in the application and incurred within three years prior to the project's submission to the National Park Service. Requires a non-federal match equal to the amount of funds granted. The area developed is protected through a permanent conservation easement. Site visits with State staff are required prior to applying. The program opens for applications every two years, typically on even numbered years. For more information, email ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov.

Vermont Natural Resources Council Small Grants for Smart Growth – Provides grants of $500 to $2,500 to catalyze community-based initiatives related to smart growth. Applications accepted on a rolling basis.

Vermont Recreation Trails Fund – Supports development and maintenance of public recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. Grant range is $7,500 to $50,000. 20% of total project cost required as match. Pre-applications required. Shovel ready projects are the most competitive.

Vermont State Infrastructure Bank – Supports loans for construction or reconstruction of highways, roads, bridges, and pedestrian facilities, certain facilities related to rail or public transit, and electric vehicle charging stations and natural gas refueling stations available for public use. A 10% to 20% equity contribution is required. This program is managed by the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA).

VHCB Outdoor Recreation Lands Conservation - Supports purchase and conservation of recreational lands for outdoor recreation. Funds also are available for predevelopment costs and analysis for an individual project, such as appraisal

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services, engineering and environmental studies, options, energy assessments, and marketing analysis.

VHCB Rural Economic Development Initiative - REDI provides consultant-based services to rural communities and working lands businesses interested in applying for federal funds and other funding sources when applicable. REDI helps you take one step forward. It can hire a grant writer, complete a necessary step to make a grant application more competitive (such as a business plan, archeological assessment, or engineering). It also helps make a fundraising plan for a project in some instances.

VNRC Small Grants for Smart Growth – Supports advocacy for better land use, advancing transportation choice, supporting housing choice and affordability, promoting downtown or village center revitalization, conservation and natural resources, public outreach and engagement. Awards can be useful for project planning, as well as outreach and education activities around community revitalization efforts. Awards cannot be used for capital improvements. Awards range from $500 to $1,500.

VOREC Community Grant Program – This grant supports activities that growing local economies by leveraging outdoor recreation. Grants are accepted for four categories of projects: project development, project implementation, outdoor equity, and for 2023, flood recovery. Grant maximums vary by category. Equity and flood recovery have no minimum or maximum amounts. Project development is up to $20,000, and implementation is up to $50,000. Match is not required.

VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program – Funds safe and convenient facilities for those Vermonters who desire alternative transportation opportunities. Scoping/feasibility studies are required to compete for design/construction grants. This grant funds transportation trails, so a trail with destinations, such as a school, park, town office, housing development, etc. is most competitive. Typical awards are $300,000. Projects

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take an average 3-5 years to complete from date of application to end of construction. Studies and design/construction projects require a 20% cash match. Applications due in ~June annually. Use this source for more travelled sidewalks and paths because the path must meet Federal Highway Administration standards.

VTrans Transportation Alternatives Program – Funds planning, design, and construction of a variety of projects including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; traffic calming; construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas; community improvement activities related to transportation such as historic preservation, vegetation management in highway rights of way, and archeological activities; and environmental mitigation for stormwater and wildlife mortality. Maximum award is $600,000 for construction. Scoping studies are typically $40,000 to $70,000. Required 20% match. Projects take an average of 3 to 5 years to complete from date of application to end of construction. Use this source for more travelled sidewalks and paths because the path must meet Federal Highway Administration standards.

VTrans Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) – Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) receive funding from the Vermont Agency of Transportation to solicit local input, identify needs, develop regional transportation plans and prioritize regional transportation needs, and otherwise provide planning capacity to VTrans on an ongoing basis. Through this program, the RPC can assist its member municipalities with local planning and transportation issues. All projects must have a transportation focus. Depending on the year, your RPC may solicit project nominations. Contact your RPC.

Other Funding Opportunities

Portions of path, trail, and sidewalk projects may be eligible for other grants based on standalone components of the project. For example:

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- Sites that have suffered damage from natural disasters, such as flooding, may be eligible for funding through hazard mitigation programs.
- Sites with stormwater challenges may be eligible for grants from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.
- Sites that may have environmental challenges may be eligible for brownfield assessment or remediation grants.
- Trailheads that incorporate electric vehicle charging infrastructure may be eligible for multiple grants and tax incentives.

Where to Find Help

Municipalities are welcome to use VLCT's *Ask a Project Pro* service to discuss potential funding sources for a project or for project development advice. Through this service, VLCT narrows funding opportunities to those most pertinent to a project, saving municipalities time and resources. We also provide coaching for project development and grant management.

Many municipalities lack capacity for grant writing and administration. VLCT published a resource, *Increasing Municipal Capacity for Grants*, that offers ideas for assistance with grants.

Disclaimer: This resource was created by Municipal Operations Support (MOS) staff of non-legal professionals with expertise of the subject matter. It is only intended to provide information and does **NOT** constitute legal advice. Readers with legal questions are encouraged to contact an attorney. The use or downloading of this resource does **NOT** create an attorney-client relationship and will not be treated in a confidential manner. Non-legal questions about this resource can be directed to MOS staff at mos@vlct.org.

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