Funding Opportunities for Cemeteries

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Cemeteries matter; they are places of remembrance, they document our history, and they serve as community spaces. By preserving these spaces, we honor the memory of loved ones while safeguarding valuable historical and cultural heritage. Below are funding opportunities we've identified to support your cemetery management efforts.

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.

Local Cemeteries

Municipal Restoration and Preservation Reserve Fund – A municipality's Restoration and Preservation Reserve Fund for restoration, preservation, digitization, storage, and conservation of municipal records (32 V.S.A. § 1671(8)(c)(1)) can be used to preserve and computerize cemetery records.

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.

Regional Planning Commissions – Regional Planning Commission work in fields that directly and indirectly affect the public at large: land use, transportation, housing, economic development, environmental quality, and more. The RPC serving your community may be able to assist with mapping efforts for your cemetery.

LCBP Local Heritage Grants **-** Up to $5,000 for local projects, and up to $10,000 for regional, multi-jurisdictional projects for educational endeavors that involve active

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participation from youth and students in the research and discovery of the cultural or natural heritage associated with their community, and the creation of new artistic expressions, or interpretation of those topics utilizing fresh perspectives or new technology.

LCBP Internship Grants **-** Up to $10,000 for CVNHP-sponsored internships focused on professional internships that provide experience in historical/natural interpretation or artifact curation, cataloging, and display, with exposure to general museum or historic site management during a portion of the tourism season (i.e. spring to fall 2027).

Vermont Old Cemetery Association Grants – Supports restoring abandoned or neglected cemeteries via 2:1 matching grants of up to $750. Example projects include righting and cleaning grave markers, clearing brush, fixing fences, repairing damaged markers, and recording inscriptions.

DAR Historic Preservation Grants – Supports projects that preserve historic records, objects and sites. Examples include restoration of historic buildings; digitization or preservation of documents/records; preservation of historic items/artifacts; restoration, rededication or relocation of existing historical site markers; cemetery headstone and monument conservation. Projects from all eras and chapters of American history are eligible to apply. Applications must be accompanied by letter from a sponsoring DAR chapter or state organization (find a local DAR chapter). Awards range from $500 to $10,000. 1:1 cash match must be secured prior to application. Applicants must be a 501(c)(3) organization. Applications are due ~October annually.

ACCD Community Development Block Grants – Supports planning ($3,000 to $60,000), accessibility modifications ($5,000-$150,000), and implementation ($50,000 to $1 million – max $500,000 for community public facilities) for projects related to housing, economic development, public facilities, public services, and handicapped

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accessibility. For cemeteries, improvements benefiting low-income communities and accessibility improvements may be competitive. For municipally owned facilities, no match amount is prescribed, but municipalities must contribute. The amount has bearing on an application's competitiveness. Funds must primarily benefit persons of low and moderate income. See HUD Low-and Moderate-Income Area Data for eligibility. Accessibility projects automatically qualify under this criterion. Both the Selectboard and Planning Commission must sign an application resolution.

FEMA Public Assistance Program – May provide funding for repairs and debris removal assistance after a federally declared disaster. Cemetery operators should understand that FEMA assistance requires proper documentation and timely application following declared disasters. FEMA may request your maintenance plan and records proving the maintenance was completed. It may elect not to assist without these records.

Religious Organization Foundations - Provide funding for faith-based cemeteries, particularly historic religious cemeteries

Nationally Significant Cemeteries

DAR Historic Preservation Grants – Supports projects that preserve historic records, objects and sites. Examples include restoration of historic buildings; digitization or preservation of documents/records; preservation of historic items/artifacts; restoration, rededication or relocation of existing historical site markers; cemetery headstone and monument conservation. Projects from all eras and chapters of American history are eligible to apply. Applications must be accompanied by letter from a sponsoring DAR chapter or state organization (find a local DAR chapter). Awards range from $500 to $10,000. 1:1 cash match must be secured prior to application. Applicants must be a 501(c)(3) organization. Applications are due ~October

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NPS American Battlefield Protection Program - Offers grants for Civil War and Revolutionary War battlefield sites, including associated cemeteries. Grants support planning, land acquisition, interpretation, and battlefield restoration.

NPS Save America's Treasures Grant - Supports nationally significant historic properties requiring major restoration. Properties associated with projects requesting funds for preservation must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places for national significance or designated as a National Historic Landmark. Projects associated with collections must be for conservation work on nationally significant collections. Awards for collections projects are $25,000 to $750,000 and for preservation projects are $125,000 to $750,000. 1:1 match required.

Non-Grant Funding Opportunities

Other methods of generating funds for cemetery records and preservation include:

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Memorial and Tribute Programs **-** Memorial benches, trees, and walkways offer families meaningful ways to honor their loved ones while supporting cemetery improvements. Successful programs typically include professional installation, maintenance agreements, and attractive placement throughout the grounds. These programs work particularly well when tied to specific improvement projects, allowing donors to see direct results from their contributions.

Community Engagement - Historical tours and community events provide excellent fundraising opportunities for cemeteries. Example events include:

- **Seasonal historical tours** focusing on notable burials, architecture, or specific time periods
- **Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies** with fundraising components
- **Educational programs** for schools and community organizations
- **Heritage events** like guided Halloween historical walks
- **Adopt-a-plot programs** allow community members to sponsor maintenance of historic or abandoned graves. These programs work best when combined with recognition opportunities and regular communication about maintenance activities.

Product Sales – Cemeteries can sell products to support maintenance activities. Example ideas include:

- **Monument and Memorial Sales** - Rather than relying solely on third-party monument dealers, many cemeteries establish their own memorial programs by partnering directly with monument manufacturers. In-house programs typically include design consultation, installation services, and inventory management of popular monument styles.
- **Bronze Markers** - Offer families elegant memorial options. Examples include flat markers for traditional burial sections, memorial plaques for cremation gardens,

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custom artwork and religious emblems, and vases and flower holders

- **Floral Programs and Landscaping** – These programs can help maintain cemetery aesthetics. Examples include seasonal flower placement services for grave sites, memorial garden maintenance and landscaping, holiday decoration programs for special occasions, and fresh flower delivery services for families. Premium services for individual plots might include regular cleaning and upkeep, seasonal flower planting, headstone cleaning and restoration, and specialized grass care. These programs work particularly well for families who live far from the cemetery or prefer professional maintenance.

Other Funding Opportunities

Portions of cemetery work may be eligible for other grants and assistance based on standalone components of the project. For example:

- Communities that have under 5,000 people may be eligible for free consultant assistance through VHCB's **REDI program**. REDI helps projects complete one step in the development process, such as grant writing, permitting, or development of a fund-raising plan.
- If the cemetery experienced damages from natural disasters and mitigation actions, such as disaster proofing structures or relocating the cemetery to a new location, it may be eligible for **hazard mitigation** grants.
- Sites with stormwater challenges may be eligible for grants from the **Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation**.

Resources

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Mapping cemetery plots can help families find their loved ones, reduce mistakes in plot assignment, help ensure accuracy in burial records, and improve operations. Here are some online resources we found that might assist with planning your cemetery mapping project.

- Stopping the Hands of Time: 9 Tips for Cemetery Preservation
- What is the Easiest way to Map Your Cemetery?
- Spot On – A Complete Guide to Cemetery Mapping
- How to Find Buried Headstones and Unmarked Graves

Where to Find Help

Municipalities are welcome to schedule time to meet with VLCT's Project and Funding Specialist 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 Writing Capacity for Grants*, that offers ideas for assistance with grants.

This resource is an adaptation of *Cemetery Grants and Funding: Complete Guide to Cemetery Fundraising,* by Cash Kalina. Published May 30, 2025 and accessed online on September 19, 2025, at https://everspot.io/blog/cemetery-grants-and-funding.

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

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