VOREC Community Grant FAQs

(*Note: this document reflects questions received during two conference calls as well as email and phone inquiries. For any questions or concerns, please email Jessica Savage at* *jessica.savage@vermont.gov* *or call 802-249-1230)*

Q: Are there any forms required as part of the proposal? i.e. Project Review Sheet required for RTP

A: For any Capital construction, yes, there are more requirements and an applicant should talk to Jessica in advance to ensure all requirements are understood. We will require grantees to fill out a Project Review Sheet to determine any state permits needed, that they must provide written landowner permission in the format we need and that all construction will be done to the highest standards available for that infrastructure type (example: all bike paths will conform to national bike path standards etc.). A map is also needed to show the location of all planned physical development.

Generally speaking, this grant program is not purely for capital construction: your narrative should tell the full story of how any construction is part of a community-wide effort to become a recreation-friendly community. Requirements for trail projects will be similar to the RTP Program.

Q: What level of engineering documents are required if applying for construction?

A: A map and some basic design/site plan as to what is being proposed. As good as you have to feel confident that you can tell us you know what you're going to do.

Q: Are matching funds required?

A: No, match is not required, but it shows project readiness and leveraged capacity at the local level. It can be any type of funding source or in-kind services/donated materials as long as they are related to budgeted, eligible expenses

Q: How are we measuring economic development for these projects?

A: We want Grantees to develop their own, appropriate metrics for economic development. With our pilot communities, we've been working with them to help craft those. Eventually it will be a designation program, hopefully funding will continue to accompany. Designation program will be a set of best practices and tool; a collaborative effort. The data that can be collected for most projects include number of people using infrastructure, local tax revenue (rooms and meals tax) and changes in the Grand List. FPR will work with communities to find metrics that work for their projects.

Q: Must landowner agreements be in place at the time of application?

A: We will need to see and approve them before we sign the grant for the project.

Q: A town is hoping to have New Town Center designation within 18-24 months. Would a project in the be eligible?

A: The town/village designation is just given preference. Towns can still apply.

Q: Can you explain measurable outcomes for infrastructure?

A: Let's say you built a trailhead and three new miles of trail. User counts, efforts to publicize, based on other places where that type of trail exists we can predict X number of people using. Some outcomes will be participation-based (short-term). Long term #s of people increase - residents and tourists (measured through Grand List and meals and room tax) as well as jobs created.

Q: How long do we have to get the work completed following grant approval?

A: Ideal timeframe is a year. Additional time may be available as needed.

Q: Is the full RFP available now?

A: Yes, full application is available on web site

Q: Does a trailhead need to be near the downtown? Like 6 miles away?

A: A trailhead doesn't need to be near the downtown. You need to be able to connect the recreational asset to the businesses and community that it supports (population that lives there, that may visit, amenities and services). If there's no relationship there, that won't make a compelling application. It doesn't need to be physically connected, but being able to make the case for that connection is important.

Q: Last year the emphasis was on communities that can demonstrate success and other communities can learn from. Is that still the case?

A: Yes, communities that can demonstrate a level of readiness and innovation/creativity that hits on as many aspects of this program as possible. The designation aspect is important. You don't have to be a second away from being the perfect outdoor rec community, there are varying levels that may be selected for an award. It was more about the enthusiastic embracing of this idea and not that everything was dialed in and ready to go.

Q: What are the steps and timeline for the application and selection process?

A: the application is available on the web site. Applications are due January 20, 2020. Two-part selection process. Reps from FPR and ACCD does an initial screening for eligibility and then passes on a ranked list to the ranking committee which is comprised of a diverse group of State-wide stakeholders, from Planning Commissions to Development Corporations to For-Profit Businesses and Non-Profit Organizations. They rank and make selections in February. NEW THIS YEAR: We'll invite the top applicants to come present briefly to the Selection Committee in February so we can get a better sense of each other in person. Then we will let people know, develop grants and hopefully have them executed by May 2020.

If your community is applying from the Northeast Kingdom: The Northern Forest Center has committed some funds to add on to our pot of funding here. If we end up with applicants from NEK, we may partner with them to spread the resources further. If you have questions about that, contact Joe Short: jshort@northernforest.org.

Q: Does this grant program favor rural areas?

A: Not necessarily. The top 10 projects from last year was a real mix of different sized communities around the State.

Q: If we were not successful last year, is there any information sharing or coaching to help improve our applications?

A: Yes, if you want to talk through a prior year application, Jessica can provide a debrief. What makes a compelling application is strong answers to the questions and really telling the story succinctly.