2023 VOREC Community Grant Program Information Session Automatically Generated Transcript

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Polfus, Claire   12:31

If it's so exciting, so many people.

Polfus, Claire   13:17

What do you guys think?

Should we go to like 102 or something like that?

Dagger, Jackie   13:24

Yeah, maybe give it a couple minutes.

Seems like there's still consistent people joining.

Polfus, Claire   13:30

Sounds good.

Dagger, Jackie   14:14

He a lot of familiar names. Exciting.

Polfus, Claire   14:16

Yeah, a lot of familiar names and a lot of unfamiliar names, so I'm really excited about both.

Dagger, Jackie   14:23

Exactly.

Polfus, Claire 14:59

As just like gearing myself up to say we can get started, but there's all these people coming in.

Dagger, Jackie 15:05

We could also get started.

Dagger, Jackie 15:07

Claire, just because we only have an hour and people can catch up later too.

Polfus, Claire 15:10

Yeah.

Yeah, I don't wanna.

Certainly don't wanna waste anyone's time.

So yeah, let's get started and then Lauren will keep adding people as they come in a few minutes late.

Polfus, Claire 15:23

Welcome to everyone who's here for the for community grant programs webinar for the 2023 grant round, and we're really excited to see all of these faces or names really not at this point.

Polfus, Claire 15:36

There's no faces besides ours.

Umm, as Jackie said, some familiar, some unfamiliar, and that's something that's really excited.

We want to continue supporting communities across Vermont and support new organizations and new communities as well.

Umm, just for some housekeeping for all of you, the meeting is being recorded and transcribed and will be posted on the website after we are done today.

So don't say anything that you don't want forever on the Internet, and if you need closed captioning, you can turn it on through the three dots and the more and then to go to language settings and then turn on live captioning.

And if you need translation of this or one of your partners needs translation, you can call our language services which is at 8026367827 and that number is on the next slide.

So don't worry if you didn't write it down.

Umm, all of you have your videos off.

Polfus, Claire 16:40

Please keep them off until you ask a question.

Polfus, Claire 16:43

Because of, we all know people's bandwidths are limited in parts of rural Vermont, and my name is Claire Polfus.

I'm the recreation program manager for the Department of Forest Parks and Recreation.

I'll be doing the talking during the presentation part of today, but I have my 2 colleagues here helping me out.

Polfus, Claire 17:06

So Jackie Dagger is the VOREC Program Manager and she'll be helping answer questions.

And Lauren Pyle is our new Outdoor Recreation Grants Manager, and she'll be running the show, all the stuff behind the scenes.

If you have questions, we're gonna save them for the end.

But if you would like to put them into chat, go ahead and then Lauren will compile them for the question and answers.

Polfus, Claire 17:36

Period.

With that, let's get started.

Polfus, Claire 17:45

So today what we're going to what you're here to listen to is to learn more about the VOREC community Grant programs 2023 grant round.

And we're gonna start with just an overview of of where we've been and where we're going with this grant program.

And this is the first year that we've had grant track.

Polfus, Claire 18:04

So I wanna go a little explain a little bit about why we're doing that.

Then we're gonna go into timelines and important dates to know some tips about the application.

How to find more information and then we'll open it up for the question and answer period.

Polfus, Claire 18:22

You can follow along with how we're doing on this agenda.

By each note is on a light green slide and all the rest of the slides are dark green.

Again, there is that number for language services in case you or your partners is need it, please call.

The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative, or VOREC, was founded by executive order, and it's a collective Action Network that's working to lift up the outdoor recreation economy in Vermont.

And that includes the people who are providing recreation, like trail organizations and communities, as well as outdoor businesses that are providing the backbone of the outdoor recreation economy.

The the wreck is led by a steering committee of across Cross Sector representatives of all of those umm sectors that I just mentioned and is.

Polfus, Claire 19:29

Yeah.

Sorry, it's.

Polfus, Claire 19:32

Follows the core pillars of VOREC, which I've listed here, and all of our grants that were asking you to write no matter what track you're in.

We're asking you to connect to at least one of the core pillars of VOREC.

So you'll note that all of those, that representation is noted in these core pillars, the businesses, the communities, the outdoor recreation resources and all of the benefits that those core pillars entail.

Polfus, Claire 20:03

So that's one of the really critical parts of the, umm, application.

The VOREC Community Grant program is a part of the VOREC program, but it's certainly just one part.

The VOREC program also is a connector of many different organizations and has done a lot of work to to lift up their outdoor recreation economy beyond the grant program.

Polfus, Claire 20:29

The grant program began in 2018 and has been supported extensively by the legislature and has grown to this year, providing up to $6 million to to communities across Vermont through all of the grant rounds that we've had so far, we've learned a lot.

Polfus, Claire 20:48

And so this grant round will look different than previous grant rounds, but there are a lot of similarities as well.

And we're really we really strive to listen to applicants as well as our communities to learn, learn what they need to promote, promote those pillars of VOREC.

And that's what this grant program represents.

As I said, the grant program is really lifting up those five pillars of VOREC and giving communities of resources they need to achieve what they view as their outdoor recreation economy.

We encourage projects that are across sector, so projects that include both the recreation resources, the communities, the schools, the health centers and the downtowns, and connect them.

Those are those projects are highly encouraged for this grant round, particularly in the implementation and the project development tracks you have with this application.

You have to choose one track, but we know that there's a lot of projects out there that could fall into multiple tracks and that's OK we're not alloting a certain amount of money per track.

Polfus, Claire 22:03

And we want to find out what the communities tell us they need through their applications.

And so you're not gonna be.

There's not going to be any negative consequences to choosing a track if we feel that your track that your project would be better suited for another track will tell you and will work with you to see if we can switch it.

The four tracks that I mentioned are implementation, project development, outdoor equity and flood recovery.

Polfus, Claire 22:40

Implementation Track projects are the most like previous VOREC community grant projects.

Polfus, Claire 22:46

Of all the tracks, they should be ready to implement starting in summer 2024.

That means that if you have any construction, you should have permits and hand or have a plan for having permits in hand.

By the time that construction happens in the summer of 2024, any engineering plans, any outreach to people in your community base that would.

Polfus, Claire 23:16

Help you decide what the project should look like should have already happened for these project implementation track projects.
The minimum for these is $50,000, which again is very similar to our previous grant rounds and also municipalities and nonprofits are eligible as lead applicants.
We encourage, especially for the more complicated multifaceted projects to have a really cross sector project team, but the lead applicant should be a municipality or a nonprofit.
Project development track projects aren't quite ready to be implemented in the summer of 2024, and in particular this should go for projects that have a significant planning process that needs to unfold in order to be ready to implement.
We got a lot of really good project applications last round that just weren't quite ready.
And so we wanna be able to fund those projects and make sure that they can be ready for future grant rounds.
So this these projects would support things like making architectural or engineering plans for new buildings or renovated buildings that support the outdoor recreation economy.

Polfus, Claire 24:32

Doing a public scoping and planning process for your community.
There is a $20,000 minimum for these projects, and municipalities and nonprofits are eligible as lead applicants.
Again and again, because it mirrors the implementation track projects, but is an earlier stage of those projects.

Polfus, Claire 24:54

We encourage multifaceted cross sector teams.
Outdoor equity track projects.
Another new track, our projects that reduce barriers and expand opportunities for

people to get outside.

In particular, these should be projects that support BIPOC, LGBTQ plus people, people with low incomes, speakers of languages beyond English, and people with disabilities.

We really wanna see projects that engage with those populations and ideally our led by people in those populations.

There's no minimum for these grant tracks, and this is the only grant track in which businesses are eligible to apply.

Municipalities and nonprofits are also eligible.

We are doing this grant track in partnership with the State Office of Racial Equity and they will be helping with the.

Assessment of the grants and hopefully as well with support for applicants through the grant agreement stage.

Finally, we pivoted this summer as we were planning for VOREC to also incorporate flood recovery into this VOREC grant round.

We are using this already planned grant round to expand to flood recovery.

So flood recovery projects look a little bit will look a little bit different than the other three projects.

We would like to see projects that repair, replace and make more resilient infrastructure that was damaged during the floods of this summer, anytime between July 10th and August 15th, and we are willing to, we will reimburse for expenses starting in July.

Polfus, Claire 26:54

This is the only grant track that will do that.

All the rest of the grant tracks will reimburse from expenses starting at the signing of the grant agreement.

And we really are looking for for folks to be thinking about resilience.

And so we want to fund projects that are.

Replacing for example, if a culvert was washed out during the floods.

Replacing that with a bridge that can better withstand large amounts of water going underneath.

We are also willing to.

Reimburse for expenses that were a quick repair and then a better replacement.

So if for example, you replace that culvert with another culvert really quickly in the fall, but then our using the winter to plan for engineering plans for a bridge we can reimburse for all of those expenses.

Just note that we will need documentation of those expenses and so if your organization isn't prepared to provide the documentation that those funds were expended on flood recovery, we're not going to be able to reimburse.

Polfus, Claire 28:06

If you have questions about that, we have an open office hours specific to flood recovery and I'd recommend coming to that.

If you have super specific questions about what documentation is required for that track.

Each of these grant tracks has priorities that we're asking you to answer in your project narrative.

The implementation track priorities are community planning that the projects should demonstrate that the Community would like.

It supports this project.

Economic and community need sustainability and environmental stewardship, innovation and creativity and inclusivity.

And increased participation.

These are really important and they're in the grant application guidance that we have posted on our website for each of the grant tracks.

But Please note that projects that explain and clearly articulate how they are advancing these priorities will score higher.

The this is what we want to see these projects.

Do you'll see that the project development track priorities are exactly the same, again, because these are the same types of projects, just in an earlier stage of development.

The outdoor equity track priorities are slightly different.

Obviously the increase, inclusivity and increased participation is the number one priority of the outdoor equity track.

We also are.

Umm.

Promoting or prioritizing projects that have partnership and public engagement,

particularly as I mentioned for the communities that they are intended to serve, sustainability and environmental stewardship, is critical in all of our outdoor recreation grants and innovation and creativity.

We always wanna through the VOREC program, umm, prioritized projects that are innovative in their communities.

Finally, in the flood recovery again, I just want to call out that resilience is gonna be a really high priority for us.

We really wanna see how these projects are going to replace infrastructure in a more resilient way.

If that's not possible, we wanna hear why that infrastructure is so important to your community that we're replacing it, even though it may be damaged again in the future, future future flood event.

Again, all of these priorities are listed both in the application and in the application. Guidance posted on our website.

So for the timeline we launched last week.

And the applications are open through December 15th.

They're, as I mentioned, multiple open office hours between now and the application due date, which is again December 15th.

Remember that December 15th, after that we will go through a significant grant review and selection period.

We are expecting a lot of applications.

We have up to $6 million to disperse to communities across the state, but we are planning to announce those grants by the end of February.

Then we have through the end of May, to develop the grant agreements and are planning to have all of them signed by the end of May.

That means that project implementation will be.

We always give at least 2 field seasons, so the first field season will be this next summer 2024.

The second field season will be the the field season for 2025 and then will be ending on December 31st, 2025.

Again, I had already mentioned flood recovery track projects are eligible for expenses starting from July 11th, 2023.

Really important date that's coming up for small rural communities of people less than 5000.

You can potentially get support from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

Rural Economic Development Initiative program, or I guess just initiative.

Please email Mariah and I see her emails up here.

It's also on our website by this Friday because what she does then is connects at eligible communities to grant writers who can help through the grant process for the next two months of figuring out how to best articulate the needs of your community.

Another potential municipal assistance program is through the state. Umm.

And this is new.

It was clear during COVID when federal monies were coming in that some towns needed help because they just didn't have enough staff to apply for grants.

And there's a like a proximately 30 communities on the list.

So if your communities on that list, then you can apply and you should email that email up there, which is also on our website and again open office hours.

The themed open office hours will be covering that theme for the first half an hour and then open to all questions for the second half.

An hour of the open office hours.

So we're starting with flood recovery, then moving to the outdoor equity track construction projects because construction projects have additional documentation needs and the application.

And then our last one will be just an open question and answer period.

We have added to the application guidance how we the point system for how we'll be waiting the different parts of the application and you'll see that the project narrative for those priorities that I listed, which is connected to those priorities that I listed is the has the most weight of the entire application.

So please pay attention to that section and the online application.

It's the last section O don't get tired before you get there.

It's the most important part and.

All of the the whole application you know, including, say, the project, team management and urgency should be should match how complicated your project is.

For example, if there's a flood recovery project that is on, is being implemented by the town, the municipality on municipality owned lands, you won't need a project team nearly as large as a large scale implementation project that's bringing together multiple partners.

We understand that and so when you're filling in the application, Please note that we will be looking at your scope of work in your work plan and making sure that the other questions match the needs of your work plan.

We we put a lot of effort into the grant program application guidance.

Please read it.

I know it's like 15 pages, but I think it should be really helpful and answer a lot of questions.

We organize the application this year so that the work plan and budget are the how you're going to do something and the project narrative is the why.

So Please note that the work plan and budget are also really important parts of the application, because no matter how great your idea is, if you don't know how you're going to implement it, we're not gonna be able to fund it.

I already said the third bullet.

Umm.

And then just another note, that construction and land acquisition projects have additional questions on the application.

If you click yes to either of those whole other page of questions comes up.

All construction projects require permitting to be in place or a plan for permitting to be in place.

Again, we'll have a construction projects open office hours to answer specific questions about that.

I'm but just don't.

That's an important note.

This is similar to all of our grant programs, so if you've applied for other grant programs like the Recreational Trails Program and the, the requirements are similar.

Just a note on the online and our online, you can go back and edit your application multiple times before you submit, but once you submit you can't edit it anymore.

So make sure that it's all.

Everything's in place before you click submit.

There's a lot of information up on our website now.

There's a frequently asked questions document.

The application guidance document.

There's links to previously successful app projects.

Of course, those will be more like implementation projects, but they still are really good examples of cool projects that VOREC has funded across the state.

And so please check out our website.

The QR code goes to our website and again open office hours.

If none of these things work for you, please email us at

anr.fprrecreationgrants@vermont.gov that's our shared email.

And so that will make sure that it gets the question, gets to the right person.

And with that, all of that talking, it's time for questions and answers.

Yeah, that's so, umm, Lauren and Jackie are here to help me answer questions.

If they're the right ones, it looked like there was a lot coming in and chat as I was.

Doing my spiel, so maybe we can start with those.

Pyle, Lauren 38:54

Yeah.

And I've been trying to bundle them up.

Uh to get some light topics together.

So let's start with some eligibility questions that came out of the chat.

So we have a question from Leo, our organizations with current or active Borat grants eligible to apply.

Dagger, Jackie 39:13

Do you want me to take that one clear or?

Polfus, Claire 39:14

Yeah.

Sure.

Dagger, Jackie 39:17

Great.

So so yes, if you have received a VOREC community grant in the past, that just not preclude you from applying.

Umm, what it does do, so the the goal of this program is to make the biggest impact possible across the state, and if you have received of where it Community grant, especially in the last round and in fiscal year 2022, it is likely that we will consider your application the percentage complete that your project is at the time we review as well as the other applications that we've received because again we are trying to make the biggest impact are possible statewide and you know that that will be important as we review and consider applications.

Claire.

Anything else to add?

Polfus, Claire 40:18
No, that sounds good.

Pyle, Lauren 40:20
Alright, we got another eligibility question that this one is from Joe, can a nonprofit apply on behalf of multiple municipalities for a shared project?

Polfus, Claire 40:33
Yes.
And again, you know, the more complex a project, the more established we'd like to and may ensure that that project team is and that those plans are we're not anticipating that the.

Polfus, Claire 40:55
This would be like a sub granting program like the the project should be planned at the time of the application, but there can be an entity that is then you know dispersing the projects across a region.
Again, we'd like to like focus on communities.
And so we understand that it doesn't have to be specific to a town in order for it to be a community, but we are really looking to support, you know, community based projects if that makes if that helps with like if you're thinking, you know statewide that would be a little bit different than a region, multiple towns within a region.
Umm there are like if you have specific questions about your project, of course we can look at that.
A little bit more specifically, but generally the answer is yes, we will accept those applications.

Pyle, Lauren 41:59
Thanks, Claire.
The next bundle of questions are around really about people putting together their concepts.
And so first question that we had was can applicants submit proposals for more than one project?

Polfus, Claire 42:16

So this is a tricky one with with the multiple grant tracks this year. So.
I if you have a flood recovery track project and another track project, yes, we will accept that the flood, as I mentioned, the flood recovery track is really an opportunity to support that recovery from the devastating floods.
And we don't want people who suffered in those floods to not have the opportunity to also apply for grants that build their outdoor recreation economies.
And in the flood recovery track specifically, if you have multiple places that you manage that were damaged, we are asking you to put those all into one application.
We want one application per entity and because that way we can get the money out to you faster.
Umm.
Through the other tracks I'm I I would encourage you to think of 1 project across those 3 tracks.

Dagger, Jackie 43:27

They're all just also add that you know these applications are pretty robust to fill out as well as one of our criteria in reviewing applications is you know to consider project statewide.
Like I was saying before.
Uh, it is to your benefit to.
Try to submit your project to the right track and for your organization or your community. Uh.
Trying to spread those out over multiple applications isn't doesn't really up your chances or you know, change the opportunity because again, we are looking to spread this money out across the state.
So trying to to make the most of the application that you submit, I is to your benefit.

Pyle, Lauren 44:28

Thanks to that I'm gonna pop in one that just came at the end that I think is a direct follow up to that is in terms of the mention of Community.
Sharon asked.
Is community strictly defined by geography or can it be also defined by specific user group?

For example, the accessibility people with physical cognitive visual barriers to get to and enjoy trails.

Polfus, Claire 44:50

And I'm going to follow up one more thing on what Jackie said is that if you are a lot of organizations across Vermont work like with different people and so you could be a lead applicant on one project.

And then in advisor or a project team member on another application and that's fine.

But we're asking for the lead applicants, as Jackie said, to focus on that application and making the most out of that application.

I just know that there's a lot of people working with a lot of partners and so we don't.

We certainly wouldn't limit you in that way.

That's the project team, though not the lead application.

To answer the question about like what is a community, I think we all know that people's communities are defined by the people who are in them.

And so we're not limiting things to just towns.

Like I said, like there are sometimes our groups of towns that act as a community geographically, and there's certainly communities that exist.

Umm, within user groups within.

Needs within, you know, experiences, life experiences.

So and again the.

Polfus, Claire 46:15

Community is are we want to make sure that there's an engagement with the Community that you're saying that this project supports.

If you are part of it, whether you're part of it or whether you're learning about it, you know, like you need to show that this is something the community you're talking about wants to see.

And umm, solves a a problem.

A potential problem for them and we want to see that articulated in the application.

Pyle, Lauren 46:49

Ain't the next bundle of questions are around budgets, so there's a a whole pocket of them that are asking at things like what is typical spending within the grant like

allowances for material salaries, equipment subcontracting, et cetera, what a project need to have only 25% VOREC funding and as viewed as more favorable as say than like 75%.

Polfus, Claire 46:54
Mm-hmm.

Pyle, Lauren 47:14
So kind of getting at that match piece and then there was another follow up link of like budget resources for grant pieces.
So since all of those are kind of tied together, I figure it out.
I'll give them all at once.

Polfus, Claire 47:27
Eligible expenses are listed in a table on the application guidance document.

Polfus, Claire 47:33
They are different for each grant track, so please look at that.
Umm the for example land acquisition is an eligible expense for the implementation and the outdoor equity tracks, but not for project development or for flood recovery.

Polfus, Claire 47:54
That's just what I had up off the top of my mind, but all of those things that Lauren just mentioned are listed in that eligibility table and.
The other thing to note in your project is we have a minute, a maximum administrative costs and so please call that out in your budget.
Don't just incorporate it into the cost for each line item.
It should be a separate line item, administrative cost 10%.
Up to $40,000.

Dagger, Jackie 48:33
And clear, just to be clear about what, when we say administrative costs, what we're talking about.

So there is the project management which is eligible to include, but that administration costs can only be up to 10% of the total requested amount.

What we mean when we say administrative cost is the cost of coordinating with FPR on the grant, the cost of managing the actual, you know, reimbursement requests, those kinds of things related to the grant.

So that's different in our minds from project management.

It's something that has been a little unclear in the past, so we want to try and be as clear as possible.

About this grant round.

Polfus, Claire 49:26

Yes.

And just as a note, it's up to 10% and up to $40,000.

So if your grant is for more than $400,000 to the CAP is at 40 for administrative costs.

Umm, so last you had one last another question on the budget questions, Lauren and I can't think of it right now.

Pyle, Lauren 49:51

Yeah, it came down to.

I would describe it as like a preferred match or a preferred percentage of the budget that we'd like to see Forex funds cover out of the total project cost.

Polfus, Claire 49:59

Yeah.

So there's no match requirement for any of the project tracks, so match can show community support, and it certainly does so if you have a project that you've been working on funding through different means and you have some funding secured, by all means, that doesn't mean you shouldn't finish it up with a VOREC grant, but also we're not requiring anyone to have that so.

Ohh, there's there's no budget specific budget priority given to projects that have matched versus projects that don't.

Like I said, the project match just shows that there's community support, and so that's a part of that fulfilling the Community need that we have as priorities across all the grant tracks.

Dagger, Jackie 50:55

And I just want to add you know that that match not having a match requirement is on purpose.

We're trying to make this funding as easy to access and use as we can.

It is a benefit of this program that you don't always get with federal funding.

Umm, the other thing to know in the past with applicants who have applied is we've decided to fund projects that that had showed a lot of match and and it was certainly something that made them competitive in the review round.

It's, you know, it's a good sign of community support and buy in into the work you want to do, but we've also funded projects that didn't bring a lot of match to the table, but we're able to describe that community by an an input in a different way.

Polfus, Claire 51:51

The other thing to note that I didn't call out in my presentation is that we don't have a maximum amount for any of the grant tracks, so.

Well, obviously I guess our maximum would be $6 million, but we're not gonna give $6 million to one community either.

So we know that it's somewhere less than that.

We encourage people to think big with these projects and this is a great opportunity given to us by the legislature and the funds from.

One of the COVID relief bills.

I'm not sure which one?

Umm, so like, let's take advantage of this opportunity like think big for your communities, but don't send in projects that aren't doable by your community either.

So they should be within the scope of effort that you can extend for the next two years from now and really make a big splash in your communities.

So umm, think big but think possible too.

Pyle, Lauren 52:56

The next uh bundle of questions I've got before we go to, I know there's a lot if you're putting stuff in the chat.

I'm still watching it come in, but I want to try to get these put together as best I can are really around application preparation and so one of the questions is like is there an LOI that's gonna be a part of this process?

Polfus, Claire 53:16

In the past, we've had LOIs and we're not requiring LOIs this year.
This is in part because of our desire to get the applications through and the grants out the door quickly, especially in response to the floods, and so all of the applications will be coming in as full applications.

Pyle, Lauren 53:40

And as people are putting these applications together, do we have templates online for them?
So there were questions in the chat asking like if we have a word template of all the application questions that people can use to to be able to copy and paste into the online portal and the same way.
Do we have a budget template that's available online?

Polfus, Claire 54:01

There is a budget template.
That's the easy one.
If you go to and if you click on the application link and make an account with a NR online.
That's where the budget template is.
I'd encourage you to do that and look at the application when you're deciding it doesn't, you know, cost anything to just make ANR online account and then look at the application.
We don't currently have a Word document template of the application.
We can consider whether we wanna work on that.
I would encourage you all to.
To work on your pride like your questions outside of the online application.
So you can share it across your project teams and you can retain your answers as you went.
Once you put them in, so maybe we can look into transferring it out.
Bird as a resource.

Pyle, Lauren 55:10

Thanks.

And then at last, kind of, uh, additional support as people are putting things together, it was just asking about the open office hours again and if those sessions are gonna be followed by a posted queue and a.

Polfus, Claire 55:26
So.
So we are gonna record all of those and post the recordings and transcripts on our website.
And after each session, umm and any other questions that we get outside of this webinar and the I'll open office hours will add to the frequently asked questions document.
So if questions come in on email, for example, we want to be as transparent as possible with all of our answers, and so we'll add them to the frequently asked questions document probably weekly.

Pyle, Lauren 56:06
All right, now we're going to go into some rather specific questions that folks have that are really awesome that I think are going to be applicable across.
But I'm just going to kind of work through them.
And so they're going to jump around.
So this one from Sharon, if a grant is proposed by multiple organizations, each of whom will deliver a big chunk of the deliverables, is it better to have one organization apply and disperse funding as contracts out or to have multiple applicants?

Polfus, Claire 56:34
If it's all within the same project.

Polfus, Claire 56:38
There should be a lead applicant who then contracts to project partners and that should be laid out in the budget.

Polfus, Claire 56:48

Umm.

Polfus, Claire 56:51

If they are separate projects, obviously they they should be different lead applicants.

Dagger, Jackie 57:00

But also add an I totally like.
What Claire said.
And is accurate and I think if you are in the position of, you know you're you're considering being this lead applicant and you're having conversations with multiple groups.
I think considering you know this is a two year timeline Umm being the lead applicant on a project means that you're taking on the responsibility of communicating about the deliverables of the grant you are taking on.
The coordination of reimbursements that means coordinating getting materials from your partners to organize and then communicating with the Department of Forest Parks and Recreation on those reimbursement requests.
Once you receive the once the grant agreement is executed and you start to do the work.
I mentioned that because it's worthwhile to think about your capacity and how you're going to support having that capacity.
Just be thoughtful about, you know, what is it really going to take to be in this partnerships and and we are encouraging that.
We are encouraging people to to collaborate and and that is something that we're excited about these grants, but we also want those lead applicants to be realistic in that capacity and have a plan for being able to accomplish those things once the grant agreement is executed.

Polfus, Claire 58:39

And and as a note, the lead applicants responsible for the sub agreements and they need to fulfill all of the requirements of of the grant agreement.

So anything that the lead applicant signs and agrees to in the application, the sub agreements need to fulfill that as well.

That's a state policy.

Pyle, Lauren 59:06

OK, I think the next flurry of questions are gonna hop around, but it's all about tracks and how things fit into different tracks.

Pyle, Lauren 59:13

So we have a question here about really about the the, the planning one looking with someone who says they're looking to create a master plan and using the grant to get a consultant to assist, but they haven't done an RFP yet thinking that the grant would help them do that.

And so how do they price their budget when they apply for the grant?

Polfus, Claire 59:41

I'd encourage you to reach out to some possible.

Contractors, because we The thing is that, you know, if the sky is the limit, like the sky is the limit and you could, you could make a master plan for you know $1,000,000 in some cases that maybe isn't necessary for your community depending on how what the size is.

Polfus, Claire 1:00:07

So yes, you don't have to do an RFP necessarily, but if you reach out to a few contractors, tell them what your scope of work is and ask them for a budget, that is something that they do that is a, they may may not always like it, but they they have to do that in order to keep their clientele so.

Please, please come to us with something realistic.

That's what we're asking you to do that.

So that's why we're asking you to do that research.

But it doesn't have, you know, you don't have to have, like, a proposal already accepted by any means.

Dagger, Jackie 1:00:54

I'll just add.

Yes, we want you to be as realistic as possible and and explore with potential consultants what that cost might be.

In exploring that cost, I think something we often see is that a cost change and so as you're talking with those consultants as you're getting those RFP's and an idea of cost, I think it's worthwhile to ask you how those costs have changed maybe over the past year.

Umm so that you can understand how that might change as we get you know if if your project is awarded and as we get closer to executing a grant agreement how that cost might change.

So so try and get a sense of you know what that buffer is on on that RFP cost.

Polfus, Claire 1:01:46

Yeah.

And that's especially true for construction projects.

Construction costs have skyrocketed in the last five years, let alone just since the floods.

And so please don't use estimates from even spring of 2023.

Those will not be accurate going into next year.

Pyle, Lauren 1:02:09

What?

And just to follow up from the chat, one of our participants, uh offered for people looking for consultants that common good Vermont just put together a list of consultants to reach the could be a potential starting place.

And the next question that I'm seeing as I'm working down from the top, I is a about choosing tracks.

If an organization has two discrete projects on two different properties, would it be advantageous to, say combine projects into one application or pursue a separate applications for each project?

Polfus, Claire 1:02:49

That really depends on the project.

Again, like we encourage people to apply for just for one project and because we wanna.

Extend the scope of our giving across the whole state.

But if the projects are similar enough, you know like for example, if you're working on better.

Accessibility through your signage.

You would want to do that across multiple properties that you own, like if you're adding translation or making more accessible signs, and so there it's just very.

Polfus, Claire 1:03:36

I feel like that project that question really depends on what you're defining as your project on each property.

Do you have a specific question like that?

You either come to an open office hours or give write us an email please.

Pyle, Lauren 1:03:59

When in that we've got another question about tracks about combining tracks, you mentioned that many projects probably will fit into multiple places, but.

A question in the taxes, you know, like can a project combined tracks for instance?

Can a project be mostly in the project development track?

But includes some implementation aspects of the projects that are shovel ready.

Polfus, Claire 1:04:24

No.

So project development you'll see in the eligibility table that project development tracks do not have implementation components because if we don't know what the planning scoping is going to say, we're unwilling.

We don't want to fund the results that we don't know are the results we really believe in planning and we think that it's a really important component of all of these projects and we want to fund that.

So project development track projects are for planning. Umm.

And unfortunately, because of that, if you have planning involved, you have to be in that track.

And if you have implementation involved, you have to be in the implementation track in this grant round.

Dagger, Jackie 1:05:25

Claire, I'll just add to that because you know we again going back to the presentation earlier, we have been through three grand rounds with this grant program and we've tried every round to learn from the you know, the feedback we've got in the applications we've received.

Dagger, Jackie 1:05:49

Umm, the execution of those grant agreements to successful projects.
And one thing we've learned going back to what clear said previously is that there is a lot of value in funding the that project development work in supporting that.
And what we're trying to do is create a continuum where you know if if you invest in project development and you get your project to the point of implementation, you're much more competitive in a future application for an implementation project.
And so from our perspective, it is really worthwhile to take the time to invest in that project development.
Umm, move your project forward to that point I and then reapply for funding.
Umm.
Our our hope is that the VOREC Community grant program continues.
You know, we have been using one time funding to date, but it is a pretty popular program and we are hopeful this funding continues.
So you know, our expectation is that you go through that project development work and then you're able to come back and apply for an implementation grant.

Pyle, Lauren 1:07:10

When that's a great transition, we've had a couple of questions really about like progress and impact, UM to kind of continue to tell that story and continue to learn from this.
And so the first one is about progress reports.
Umm, so it's just asking I guess, about the mechanics of it.
So in in the 2022 grams, they were not able to save a progress report.
They're working on to continue later and is that gonna be something that's gonna continue forward?
Do we know anything about that at this point?

Polfus, Claire 1:07:43

And I think that we have, if that isn't, if the Microsoft forms aren't working for you, if you're a 2022 grant recipient, let's talk about that when we talk about the 2022 grants.

If that is the main reason that you wouldn't want to apply for a 2023 grant, please email us and let us know that and we'll prioritize fixing that issue with not being able to save.

Pyle, Lauren 1:08:10

When another person in the chat asked about the, you know, the purpose of the grants are to make the most impact, how will work measure impact a number of participants annually?

Amount of tax revenue from increased visitors, et cetera.

Polfus, Claire 1:08:25

There is so many ways of measuring impact in one of the questions on the application is how you will measure impact and I wanna be clear that we're not just looking for.

Numbers.

Umm, you'll see in our example that we wrote up.

Polfus, Claire 1:08:43

There are some numbers of how many people reached by our example project, but like another, umm, impact like way of measuring impact was whether people were interested in returning the next year or whether people heard about it in like told their friends if they got referrals, you know things like that that you know aren't necessarily easily measurable, but part of a community and part of the fabric of a community.

So please tell us how you will measure the impact.

We are open to many ways, but we want you to be thinking about that in your application.

Pyle, Lauren 1:09:33

And the question I'm seeing here is goes back to the the contracting piece that we

talked about in the sub agreements that came up earlier.

Is FPR involved in a developing the language at the sub agreements or is that something that the applicants put together?

Polfus, Claire 1:09:51

I have.

That's the responsibility of the applicants and you know a contractor would be a different.

You know, scope of agreement.

Then you know a partnership agreement.

So I think.

There's so many possibilities.

There are some requirements that are listed in the grant agreement.

Like I said that need to go into sub agreements.

Great.

Yeah.

Good question.

We are going to post the link to we'll probably upload it to YouTube and then post that link on our website.

The VOREC Community Grant program website.

Umm.

Which is are at the FPR website, but if you Google it you'll get there.

I'm and we'll also post the transcript.

So it will be both the video and the transcript because sometimes it's easier to read than to listen.

Dagger, Jackie 1:11:11

All thoughts so linked on the VOREC program website.

So if you find your way there, there's also multiple links on that page to the work community grant Web page.

Pyle, Lauren 1:11:25

As then going back through the chat, the kind of lingering questions that I'm seeing that we haven't touched on yet are really specific to particular applicants, like how do we need to validate budget pieces for flood recovery?

How the specifics of like trail maintenance and trail trail work for different proposals and so if folks do have those really specific questions that they they wanna ask, what's their best strategy moving forward?

Polfus, Claire 1:11:53
Great question.
So please, please, please come to our open office hours because we're designing them so other people with those specific trail construction questions or flood recovery questions will be there to also listen.
And if those times don't work for you, please email us at ANR.fprrecreationgrants@vermont.gov.

Polfus, Claire 1:12:24
That is, I can't.
I am go back a second.

Polfus, Claire 1:12:37
So you can see all of our contact information.

Polfus, Claire 1:12:46
Well, with that I totally understand if you're specific questions weren't answered, we know that there's a lot and so again, umm, come to open office hours or shoot us an email.

Polfus, Claire 1:12:59
If those don't work for you and we'll try and get specific questions, back up, back out to you as well as post on our frequently asked questions.

Polfus, Claire 1:13:07
If they come in through email, we're really excited to see all of the great ideas that I

know so many of you have and we're really pleased to provide this opportunity to communities across Vermont.

Polfus, Claire 1:13:22

So please if you are confused about any of the language, any of the explanations on our website, on our materials, please let us know and we'll try and fix it.

Polfus, Claire 1:13:33

And we are just like I said, excited to see what's in store with applications due December 15th, two months.
So good luck in all of your application development.

Dagger, Jackie 1:13:52

Thanks everyone.