

VOREC COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM



2023 APPLICATION FAQs

Updated 12/12/23.

*Note: This document reflects questions received during past grant cycles, recent grant program workshops, and email and phone inquiries. Newly added or updated questions are marked with an *.*

For any questions or concerns, please email ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: When will the full application be available for applicants?

A: The application will be open from October 9, 2023, until 11:59 PM on December 15, 2023.

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

A: There is one online application that will be used for applicants in all [four tracks](#). Applicants are asked to fill out the application and provide any necessary additional information through the online portal. You can open the application portal and save your progress. It does not need to be completed all at once. This is also how you can preview questions.

Open Application Period: October 9 – December 15

Grant Review and Selection: December 15 – February 28

Grant Agreement Development: March 1 – May 31

Project Implementation: June 1, 2024 – December 31, 2025*

**Please note that Flood Recovery grants can be reimbursed for eligible expenses starting July 11, 2023.*

Q: If awarded a VOREC Community Grant, when will the work need to be completed?

A: For the 2023 grant program, grant winners will have two field seasons to complete work and the deadline for completing work will be 12/31/25.

***Q: If awarded, when can I start?**

A: For all tracks outside of flood recovery, **project work within the grant's scope of work and any payments can start only after grant agreements are signed.** Depending on the complexity of the project, how responsive applicants are to requests for additional information, and the results of any compliance reviews, grant agreements may be executed any time in April or May 2024, but we recommend grantees plan for a June 1, 2024, start date.

Contractors are permitted to be selected before agreements are signed, so long as 1) there was a competitive, documented bid process that meets the requirements set forth in [Bulletin 3.5](#) (see RFP/Contracts FAQ below for more), and 2) no work or payments that will be funded by VOREC Community Grants are started before the grant agreement is signed.

Flood Recovery grants can be reimbursed retroactively for work and eligible expenses starting July 11, 2023.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for a VOREC grant?

A: Municipalities and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for any of the four tracks (Implementation, Project Development, Outdoor Equity, and Flood Recovery). Businesses are eligible to apply for the Outdoor Equity track only.

Q: Are organizations/communities that have received current or previous VOREC grants eligible to apply?

A: Yes, if you have received a VOREC community grant in the past, you are eligible to apply for this year's funding. The goal of this program is to make the biggest impact possible for outdoor recreation across the state, so if you have received a previous VOREC Community Grant, especially in the last round and in fiscal year 2022, it is likely that we will consider the percentage complete that your project is at the time we review your application, as well as the other applications that we've received in our decision making.

Q: Can a non-profit apply on behalf of multiple municipalities for a shared project?

A: Yes, because of the focus on community impact, you can submit a regional or statewide proposal from a single connecting organization.

Q: Does this grant program favor rural areas?

A: Not necessarily. In the past, top applicants have ranged in size and location around the state.

Q: Can this grant be used for expansion of an existing project, or does it need to be a new project?

A: Yes, your proposal can include an expansion of an existing project so long as the project fulfills the priorities of this year's grant program.

Q: If we had a project that we wanted to pursue in conjunction with private businesses would that preclude us from applying?

A: Since grants are meant to be community-based, only municipal entities and non-profits are eligible to apply for the Implementation, Project Development and Flood Recovery tracks as the lead or sponsor applicant. That does not preclude a private business from joining an applicant team as a project partner.

Businesses, as well as municipal entities and non-profits, are eligible to be the lead applicant for outdoor equity grants.

Q: Are applicants required to identify project partners?

A: No, project partners are not required. In some cases, such as flood recovery projects, they may not be necessary. However, for most projects a project team will help ensure that the project is successful. Projects with developed teams that match the scope of work of the grant will rank higher than those without the teams needed to make the project successful.

Q: How should we submit a proposal for a project being led by a partnership or coalition? Should we submit a single application, or should each coalition member submit their own?

A: Each proposal needs to be submitted by a lead applicant. In your proposal, you are required to describe the project team; the more complex a project, the more clearly defined your project team needs to be. The lead applicant will be responsible for communicating the requirements and deliverables to partners, developing agreements with partners, coordinating partner efforts, ensuring all the deliverables in the proposal are successfully completed, and submitting all reports. All partner agreements or subagreements must adhere to the same policies and requirements as the main grantee, as outlined in the grant agreement. Based on these factors, coalitions should review their project needs and capacities to make their own assessment whether they want to submit a single collective proposal

Q: Is there a list of past VOREC grantees / projects available?

A: In 2020 VOREC partnered with VOBA on [an article published in VT Sports](#), linked. This article highlights communities that have received past VOREC Community Grants. Take a look at the bottom of each page for the "What the VOREC Grant Will Do" section to see what projects received funding.

Learn about the 2022 recipients by reviewing [The Next Outdoor Playgrounds](#) and the [Next Outdoor Playgrounds II](#), published by VT Sports magazine.

Q: How does the VOREC Community Grant program define outdoor recreation?

A: VOREC and the grant program define outdoor recreation as leisure, sport and therapeutic recreation activities pursued outdoors, mainly in a natural setting. Compelling projects will therefore include clear connections between a community's natural outdoor recreation assets (e.g., forests, rivers, trails) and the community / business benefits their project will provide. The VOREC grant program supports outdoor recreation on both public and private lands.

Q: How does the VOREC Community Grant define community?

A: The VOREC Community Grant program is focused on supporting community-based needs for outdoor recreation – but how your community is defined by the people in it. Communities might be geographic (e.g., a single town or region), or communities can be based on shared user groups or identities (e.g., mountain bikers, people with physical disabilities, members of the LGBTQ+ community). Your proposal should clearly explain the community you plan to serve, and your project team and engagement should include members of the community you plan to serve.

Q: If a community has multiple projects, is it better to submit one application or multiple applications?

A: The goal of the VOREC Community Grant Program is to help communities get what they need to achieve their vision for what economic recovery development looks like with outdoor recreation at their center. Since the grant program's intent is to support communities as a whole, VOREC's preference is for a community to collaborate and submit one application for all proposed work. The application will need to clearly communicate how the community is achieving the [five pillars of VOREC](#) and/or how the proposed work will help them reach those pillars. The application will also need to communicate how the work leverages the community's natural outdoor recreation assets (e.g. rivers, forests, trails) for the community's benefit and greater economic vitality.

The applications process is very robust, as is the grant agreement process; in addition, grantees will be required to submit reimbursements and reports for each awarded project. Thus, if you have several smaller projects around a central theme (e.g., if you manage multiple places that were damaged and plan to apply for flood recovery or if you want to improve the accessibility of your signage across multiple properties you own), we strongly encourage you to incorporate those into a single proposal.

That being said, if you have separate projects that very distinctly fit different tracks, for example, if you are submitting a proposal for flood recovery and have a different project that would fit the implementation track, you can submit separate proposals.

We also recognize the interconnected nature of the outdoor recreation network in Vermont, so you could be a lead application on one proposal, while serving as a partner or advisor on another organization's application.

Q: How do I choose a track? Which types of projects are eligible for each track?

A: Applicants should choose the track they think is best suited for their project. We understand that some projects may fit into multiple tracks. You can find a list of priorities by track in the [Application Guidance](#). The narrative questions are slightly different for each track, so you can also review the [application questions](#) in advance to help you decide. We do not have predetermined allocations for each track in terms of dollars or numbers of projects, so there is no inherent advantage or disadvantage in selecting one track over another.

If the review committee thinks a project should be considered under a different track that was applied to, program staff will work with an applicant to find a way forward for the application.

Generally, the tracks are described as follows:

TRACK	DESCRIPTION
Implementation	Projects that support local outdoor recreation economies and will be ready to implement in Spring 2024. Any necessary permits, engineering plans or designs should be secured or in the process of being secured before submitting the application.
Project Development	Projects that will support local outdoor recreation economies, but need design, scoping, or planning work done in order to be ready to implement.
Outdoor Equity <i>(implemented through a partnership between the Office of Racial Equity (ORE) and FPR)</i>	Projects that will reduce barriers and expand opportunities for people to access Vermont’s outdoors. In particular, this track will fund projects that support BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, people with low incomes, speakers of languages beyond English and/or people with disabilities. Businesses are an eligible applicant in this track.
Flood Recovery	Projects that repair or replace outdoor recreation infrastructure that was damaged due to flooding between July 10, 2023, and August 15, 2023. Infrastructure should be repaired or replaced in a manner that is more resilient to natural disaster.

The full list of eligible activities for each track is available in the [application guidance document](#).

Q: What if I have a project that is mostly in the Project Development Track but includes some Implementation Track aspects that are shovel-ready?

A: You should submit separate proposals or choose which one aspect of the project you want to apply for at this time. This is the only example where the allowable expenses for these tracks are in direct conflict – you may not use Project Development track funds for any kind of Implementation work, and you cannot use Implementation Track funds for planning, unless it is a very small component of your work plan and you can explain why it is necessary. If you need to invest in planning, it may be worthwhile to pursue funding from the VOREC Community Grant Program for that step first, which may help you develop a more competitive application for future [recreation grants](#).

Q: How will the VOREC Community Grant program measure success?

A: There are many ways of measuring success. This can look like numbers of participants, amount of tax revenue from increased visitors, and other results; but this can also include factors like increased interest in returning next year or plans to tell a friend about their experience. We are open to you capturing impact in a way that is meaningful and relevant to your community. Review the example under “Measures of Success” under “SECTION 1 : Background Information” in the [Application Guidance](#).

Q: How often can I submit for reimbursement? Can I get a cash advance to pay for expenses?

A: All VOREC Community grants except Flood Recovery Grants are reimbursement grants. This means your organization will need to pay for expenses related to the grant and then seek reimbursement from FPR; we cannot offer any cash advances to cover any costs up front. Reimbursement can take 4-6 weeks. Please confirm your organization’s ability to incur these expenses in your project planning.

Grantees can submit a single reimbursement at the end of their project for all costs incurred or can submit reimbursement requests throughout the project period to recoup expenses to date. Grantees can seek reimbursement as frequently as once per quarter.

Q: What are the reporting requirements?

A: Each time a grantee submits a reimbursement request, they must also submit a progress report. The progress report template will be provided by FPR. For the final report, the grantee must complete the report form and submit documentation (ex: photos, links) to show completion of all deliverables, as outlined in the grant agreement. Thus, the frequency grantees submit reports is driven by the frequency by which they request reimbursement.

***APPLICATION TECHNICAL QUESTIONS**

Q: Where can I find templates online?

A: You can find the budget worksheets, VOREC workplan templates and other permission forms in the [online application portal](#). A [MS Word version of the application questions](#) is also available to help you draft your responses.

***Q: How do I log back in to continue working on or view a previously started application?**

A: To view your previously started and/or submitted applications:

1. Go to <https://anonline.vermont.gov/>
2. Log into your account using the "Sign In" button on the right.
3. Go to "My Submissions"
4. Find the application you are interested in. Click the pencil icon on the right to edit or click the arrow icon to view.

- a. To delete duplicate applications, click the “three little dots” on the right for the application you wish to remove.

Q: Is there an LOI deadline?

A: This year, there is no letter of interest (LOI) process – applicants will only submit their full applications. This was an intentional decision to expedite the timeline, especially for the flood recovery grants.

***Q: Can you provide feedback on my project/proposal materials?**

A: No. We are trying to provide every applicant with an equal opportunity to receive support. Due to our team's capacity, providing general feedback is not a level of coaching we can provide to all applicants for the VOREC Community Grants, and therefore, we cannot do this for any applicant. However, if you have specific questions about your application, eligibility, how to use the templates, etc., we are happy to answer those questions via [email](#).

***Q: I need to upload additional files, but I’m only limited to one. What should I do?**

A: We've recently been alerted to a technical issue for some of the questions where the text says to upload as many documents as you need, but the application only allows a single file. If you have multiple documents that all should go in the same section (for example, if you have multiple landowner permission forms), you can either combine your forms into one PDF if you have that ability or you can upload your additional files in “Section 6: Supplemental Information.” If you do upload it under "Supplemental Information," please use the comment box below the upload box to help remind reviewers your additional forms are there.

BUDGET QUESTIONS

Q: What are the minimum and maximum amounts that can be requested?

A: There are no maximum budget amounts for any track. The minimum budget amounts are as follows. However, please keep in mind that we will be trying to fund as many high-quality projects as possible and projects with large budgets may be partially funded.

Implementation: \$50,000 minimum

Project Development: \$20,000 minimum

Outdoor Equity: No minimum

Flood Recovery: No minimum

Q: What is the maximum amount of funding I can request?

A: We have up to a total of \$6 million to award in this round of funding. This offers an opportunity for applicants to think big for their communities, but we will work to ensure these funds are distributed across the state. Grantees will have up to two field seasons to complete projects for this grant, and all the funding must be spent within that time. Because of this, we have not set specific maximum requests, but applicants should consider these factors in developing realistic budgets.

Q: What are the eligible project expenses?

A: The eligible project expenses vary by track. A full list of eligible expenses is available in the [Application Guidance document](#).

Q: Can I use VOREC grant funds for scholarships, mini-grants, cash awards to partners, etc.?

A: The VOREC Community grant is not intended to be used for any type of pass-through fund. All payments and contracts for services that are associated with the grant agreement must comply with the required procurement process (See RFP and contracts question below for more information). Thus, cash payments to individuals, free or reduced tuition for select individuals to participate in general registration events, mini-grants, and other such distributions of funds are not allowed. However, you can underwrite the costs of an event or program to make it free or low-cost for all participants.

Core partners on your project team that are non-profits or governmental entities who are completing designated aspects of your scope of work are permitted to receive funds as subgrantees, but they must be identified in the scope of work and must comply with the same requirements as the main grantee, as outlined in the grant agreement. Any element within the scope of work allocated to a contractor or for-profit business must go through proper procurement channels (see RFP/Contract question below for more).

Lead applicants must maintain ownership of any purchased equipment (items valued over \$5000); equipment purchased with VOREC funds cannot be transferred to any other entity. However, lead applicants can purchase equipment, which they then provide access for partners (public or private) to utilize through an agreement, so long as the equipment is maintained and available for public benefit.

For example, the lead applicant purchases a 15-passenger van to help overcome transportation barriers for people with low incomes in a specific community who have indicated this barrier; the lead applicant can develop agreements with a set of partners who will be allowed to use the van when they host free or low-cost events for that community.

Any construction projects on partner properties need documentation of landowner permission, and it is both the lead applicant's and subgrantee's responsibility to comply with all construction requirements listed in the grant agreement.

Q: How much of the project can be devoted to planning, marketing, and administrative activities?

A: There are no limits on the percentage of your project that can be devoted to planning (e.g., community planning, getting people together, master planning, etc.) and marketing. The only stipulation is that, if you are in the implementation track, these can't be the only activities you include in your proposal, there needs to be an element of implementation.

There are limitations to the percentage of overhead administrative activities that can be funded (e.g., Executive Directors, Administrative staff, office space rent, utility bills, printers, etc.) Grantees can add 10% of the total cost of the grant, up to \$40,000, to their budgets for administrative costs. This must be added as a line item in the budget.

Q: What's the difference between project management and administrative costs?

A: Project management includes the time spent by staff or contractors to do any project planning, coordination, or implementation. Administrative costs include time for administering the grant (e.g., submitting reports, sending payments, documenting progress) as well as a portion of general operating costs (e.g., utilities, bookkeeping, postage) that are necessary but cannot easily be itemized for this project.

There is no designated cap on project management costs, but this time must be documented in detail to be reimbursed. If you plan to use employee time for project management, review "SECTION 4: VOREC Project Budget" in the [Application Guidance](#) for additional information. Administrative costs *must* be broken out in your budget to be approved, but do not need any additional documentation outside of the approved percentage for reimbursement of administrative costs.

Q: Can I use funding from this program to purchase equipment and tools? What is the difference between the two?

A: Yes, grant funds can be used to purchase equipment and tools to support your project or program. For the purposes of an applicant's budget, "equipment" is defined as any item with a fair market value of at least \$5,000. Any item under that fair market value is considered "supplies." If a grantee uses these grant funds to purchase equipment at the end of the project period the grantee will be required to attest that they will continue to use the equipment purchased under this assistance agreement in the project or program for which it was acquired as long as needed, whether or not the project or program continues to be supported by State funds.

Q: Are matching funds required?

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

Q: Does having matching funds or in-kind services/donated materials benefit project applications?

A: Having matching funds or in-kind services/donated materials is not a requirement for the VOREC Community Grant Program. That said having match is one way to demonstrate readiness, as long as the match is for activities included in your grant proposal. There are other ways to demonstrate readiness without match which include showing things like community planning and support for the proposed work and having all necessary permits secured.

***Q: Does asking for more money hurt your chances of getting the grant? In other words, what would partial funding look like?**

A: Asking for more money does not hurt your chances. The grant minimum is set at \$50,000 for Implementation projects and \$20,000 for Project Development projects, with no maximum for any track and we are looking for projects to think big about the potential for grant funding. Depending on the applicant pool, VCGP staff and ranking committees may decide to partially fund projects.

If your project includes multiple, distinct components that could potentially be implemented independently from one another (for example, if your project includes trail improvements, map and brochure design, public programming, and purchasing gear for a lending library all in the same proposal), try and distinguish them clearly in your workplan and budget. This way, if your proposal is not selected for full funding for any reason, it makes it easier to potentially offer a partial award.

Q: What are the rules for issuing RFPs or contracts? If I am working with a consultant on researching pricing, can I choose that consultant to do the work?

A: All state funding must follow procurement procedures. If a grantee already has written procedures that obtain optimal solutions at reasonable prices through procurement efforts that are, efficient and cost effective, promote fair and open competition, guard against favoritism, fraud, and corruption, and protect the interest of the State and its taxpayers, they can use those procedures in procuring services under the scope of the grant. If not, they must use the state procedures outlined in [Bulletin 3.5](#)

The RFP is open to consultants or contractors that have worked with the grantee on pricing. However, the grantee must follow the procedure above and the consultant/contractor should be aware that they may not be chosen.

IMPLEMENTATION TRACK QUESTIONS

Q: What are the priorities for the Implementation Track?

A: Implementation projects should fulfill the following priorities.

- **Community Planning:** Projects should demonstrate public and partner engagement in the concept development, have a high positive impact and/or be deemed critical by the community.

- **Economic and Community Need:** Concepts should fill a demonstrated gap in recreation economy or strengthen the recreation economy. Intended impact must fulfill a public need.
- **Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship:** Projects should incorporate best practices to protect natural resources and increase resilience.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Projects that propose novel and imaginative solutions to revitalize or strengthen the outdoor recreation economy are encouraged.
- **Inclusivity and Increased Participation:** Projects should actively involve and benefit diverse communities, ensuring equitable access to outdoor recreation.

Q: Is building a play structure or improving a sports field an eligible activity for the VOREC Community Grant Program?

A: The VOREC Community Grant Program is focused on funding project ideas and communities that will show measurable success supporting and growing their local economies through leveraging outdoor recreation. VOREC and the grant program define outdoor recreation as leisure, sport and therapeutic recreation activities pursued outdoors, mainly in a natural setting. Compelling projects will therefore include clear connections between a community's natural outdoor recreation assets (e.g., forests, rivers, trails) and the community / business benefits they will provide. Projects that focus solely on building a play structure or improving a sports field will not make as compelling an application without additional connections to the community's natural outdoor recreation assets and a clear narrative for how those activities will grow local communities and economies.

Repairs to play structures and sports fields that were damaged during the flooding of summer 2023 are eligible under the flood recovery track.

Q: Would a simple trail improvement project be eligible for the VOREC Community Grant Program?

A: In general, projects that only include trail improvement or construction will not score highly in the Implementation Track. We strongly recommend you consider looking at the [RTP grant](#) (pre-applications due 12/30/23) for simpler trail projects. If your trail was impacted by the 2023 flooding, you may be eligible through the Flood Recovery Track.

Q: For my project, design/build contracts are standard. Can I apply for the Implementation track?

A: If it is a standard practice for your project that you would contract a single firm for a design/build using the parameters you have already determined, you are permitted to apply for the Implementation Track if the entire scope of work will be completed before 12/31/2025. We recognize that for some specialized outdoor recreation assets, it is not a common practice to separate design from construction.

Please be sure to just name and describe this in your proposal and outline your defined parameters for the project. For example, if you're planning to contract a firm to design and build a treetops adventure course for kids, design parameters might include: building a large central

covered platform with up to three swinging bridges, a climbing element, an ADA-accessible ramp to the platform, and multisensory nature-themed activity panels that do not require cutting any trees more than 8 inches in diameter.

Q: A town is hoping to have New Town Center designation within 18-24 months. Does this affect their eligibility?

A: Towns without the New Town Center designation can apply to grant program but having that designation already will strengthen your application.

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

A: No. A trailhead is not required to be near a downtown, but FPR will be looking to understand how the applicant's outdoor recreation assets connect to the businesses and community that they are intended to support (e.g., population that lives there, that may visit, amenities and services). The applicant must be able to make the case for the connection between outdoor recreation assets and businesses/community. If there is no relationship, the project will not be as compelling and may not receive an invitation for a full application.

Q: Is it possible to secure grant funding to market and promote existing infrastructure?

A: Marketing activities are an eligible use of VOREC Community Grant Funds under the Implementation Track but can only be part of the overall project.

Q: In past grant cycles the emphasis was on communities that can demonstrate success that other communities can learn from. Is that still the case?

A: Yes and no. We are expanding the grant program this year to include more grant tracks. Implementation grants that demonstrate success are only one component of the program. Implementation projects that can demonstrate a level of readiness and innovation/creativity that hits on as many of the five pillars of VOREC as possible have a better chance at demonstrating success and receiving funding. There are varying levels of demonstrating success and applicants do not need to be part of a community that is close to having the "perfect" outdoor recreation community to have a compelling project. The enthusiastic embracing of the idea of demonstrating success is most important.

***Q: My project involves land acquisition. Would you accept an option agreement in place of the Purchase and Sale Agreement?**

A: Yes, if you have an option agreement, you can upload it in place of the Purchase and Sale Agreement in the online application. Having a Purchase and Sale Agreement in place is one way of showing readiness and high potential for successful project completion during the grant timeline, but we understand that sometimes there are other factors influencing this process. For example, if the grantee is pursuing additional funds outside of VOREC Community Grants to fund the acquisition, we are aware that some federally funded grants do not permit Purchase and Sale Agreements to be in place until after an award is made. If applicable, please briefly describe why the option agreement is more appropriate for your project in the comments below

the upload field to help the review committee better understand the current status of your project.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TRACK QUESTIONS

Q: Why was a Project Development track added to the VOREC Community Grant Program?

A: In the 2021 grant round, we received multiple applications for great ideas that needed some element of planning or project development to get to the level of project readiness that we could fund. Furthermore, we realized there is very limited funding available for planning and project development. We wanted to give communities like these the chance to strengthen their outdoor recreation economies, so we created the Project Development track for this grant round.

We hope this grant track will help fund things like engineering and/or architecture plans, public input processes and outdoor recreation-based community planning. We can't wait to see what ideas you all have and are eager to help the ideas come to fruition!

Q: What are the priorities for the Project Development Track?

A: Project development track projects should fulfill the following priorities:

- **Community Planning:** Projects should demonstrate public and partner engagement in the concept development, have a high positive impact and/or be deemed critical by the community.
- **Economic and Community Need:** Concepts should fill a demonstrated gap in recreation economy or strengthen the recreation economy. Intended impact must fulfill a public need.
- **Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship:** Projects should incorporate best practices to protect natural resources and increase resilience.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Projects that propose novel and imaginative solutions to revitalize or strengthen the outdoor recreation economy are encouraged.
- **Inclusivity and Increased Participation:** Projects that actively involve and benefit diverse communities, ensuring equitable access to outdoor recreation.

Q: Can Project Development track funding be used to implement the activities that are planned through the grant?

A: No. Project Development budgets and work plans should include only project development activities, and any staff or administrative support needed for those activities.

OUTDOOR EQUITY TRACK QUESTIONS

Q: Why was an Outdoor Equity track added to the VOREC Community Grant Program?

A: Ensuring that all people can safely access outdoor spaces is critical to supporting communities and the outdoor recreation economy. However, there are many barriers that prevent people from recreating. The Outdoor Equity track is one way that VOREC and FPR are hoping to support organizations, communities and businesses to address these barriers and create more opportunities for all people.

Q: What are the priorities of the Outdoor Equity track?

A: Outdoor equity projects should fulfill the following priorities:

- **Inclusivity and Increased Participation:** Projects that actively involve and benefit diverse communities, ensuring equitable access to outdoor recreation.
- **Partnership and Public Engagement:** Projects should be supported by the communities the project intends to serve. Projects with partnerships among multiple organizations are encouraged.
- **Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship:** Projects should incorporate best practices to protect natural resources and increase resilience.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Projects that propose novel and imaginative solutions to improve access to the outdoors are encouraged.

Q: What is the partnership with the State Office of Racial Equity?

A: VOREC program staff reached out to the State Office of Racial Equity (ORE) with interest in forming the Outdoor Equity track. ORE staff have advised VOREC and FPR staff on the formation of the track and will continue engage with the program through the project development and project selection phases of the project.

Q: What communities is the Outdoor Equity track focusing on?

A: Applications should focus on reducing barriers and creating more opportunities for BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, people with low incomes, speakers of languages beyond English and/or people with disabilities.

Q: Can we buy gear and equipment with this grant? Is there a maximum?

A: Yes, you can buy a variety of items for outdoor recreation to help reduce barriers and expand opportunities for access. We consider these eligible expenses under the supplies and tools category listed in the [Application Guidance](#). This could look like purchasing outdoor clothing and footwear, bikes, helmets, skis, snowshoes, boats, trailers, gear, adaptive equipment, and more.

Whatever your equipment needs, just be sure to share the rationale for why that purchase is critical to the success of your program in your application. This is especially true for large purchases. For example, if you are writing a proposal that includes the purchase of a new accessible sailboat, be sure to briefly describe what is different about boats that were built with accessibility in mind in terms of achieving your desired result, versus the options available as retrofits.

Q: Is my project too small?

A: No. This grant track intentionally doesn't have minimum. We encourage you to think big in your proposals, but we recognize that sometimes in order to make a massive impact, you don't need a massive budget. If you are doing great work to reduce barriers and expand opportunities for people to access Vermont's outdoors, we encourage you to apply.

Q: If we have several equity-focused partnerships/programs that support different audiences, should we focus on one partner/program or multiple partners/programs?

A: Be intentional about how you are defining your community for this proposal. It should be clear and consistent to the reviewers – which means sometimes it might make sense to cover multiple audiences (e.g. if you already have an existing program that supports multiple groups or if you're convening a coalition around a specific outdoor resource or place) and sometimes it will make a stronger case to focus on just one audience.

Similarly, your list of partners should be right sized for your project's goals, previous relationships, community, capacity, and operational requirements. Be strategic about when you are engaging partners at different stages in your project and explain why their involvement at that stage will be important and impactful to the project goals. In the project management section of the application, be sure to describe how your partners will be involved and how much representation/input/decision-making power they will have before, during and after the project.

Q: What if I have more than three partners? The application has a limit of three letters of support.

A: We love seeing a broad network of support for proposals and having commitments from partners can help demonstrate readiness, but we recommend that you are strategic and focus on quality over quantity. The reviewers will all be reading a good number of proposals, so we recommend showing the depth of your relationships rather than the breadth through your letters of support. The application includes a project management section which provides the space to name who will be involved and how they will help do the work, so your letters of support don't necessarily need to validate the commitments you have from those partners. When possible, we recommend getting letters from groups/people who will be most impacted by the work showing their support for your plans and that they agree with your project's intended impact and goals.

FLOOD RECOVERY TRACK QUESTIONS

Q: Why was a Flood Recovery track added to the VOREC Community Grant Program?

A: Vermont communities experienced catastrophic flooding that impacted homes, businesses and community spaces in many parts of the state. When the flood waters receded, the outdoor recreation community gathered data on the significant impacts to recreation infrastructure. In

response to the clear need for additional funding to repair important assets, we created the Flood Recovery track.

Q: What are the priorities of the Flood Recovery track?

A: Flood recovery projects should fulfill the following priorities:

- **Economic and Community Need:** Projects should fulfill a demonstrated need (e.g., a critical link or access point for a trail system), have high positive impact or be deemed critical by the community.
- **Resilience:** Projects should implement an increased resilience (e.g. projects that replace culverts with bridges) as well as a well-described and considered design.
- **Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship:** Projects should incorporate best practices to protect natural resources and adequately address the cause of damage or failure of asset (e.g. an undersized culvert).
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Projects that propose novel and imaginative solutions to revitalize outdoor recreation spaces to be more resilient will be prioritized.
- **Inclusivity and Increased Participation:** Projects that actively involve and benefit diverse communities, ensuring equitable access to outdoor recreation.

Q: Are all flood recovery projects construction projects?

A: Yes. All flood recovery projects should be construction projects, so be sure to click “yes” in the application about whether or not your application includes construction in the “Work Plan” section of the application so you can answer the appropriate questions.

As of November 14, 2023, there was a change to the landowner permission requirements for the Flood Recovery grants. You now need at least five years of landowner permission for all flood recovery projects that include trail rehabilitation/repair projects, including major reconstruction projects. If your proposal includes permanent infrastructure, such as engineered bridges and bathroom facilities, 25-year easements are required; this has remained consistent since the original announcement. Review the [Application Guidance](#) for more information.

Q: What if we already spent money on repairing the damaged infrastructure?

A: We can reimburse eligible expenses starting from July 11, 2023. Please note that we want to refund replacement and repair that leaves the asset more resilient to future rain events. If you repaired damage in order to re-open the trail or recreation asset ASAP but would like to go back to repair it in a more resilient way, we can fund both activities.

Q: What do you mean by resilient?

A: Much of the damage we saw to trails and other recreation infrastructure was because the trail was not designed to modern standards and/or the water crossing was not adequate for modern rain events. On the flip side, we saw that many of the trails and water crossings that had recently been updated or rehabilitated withstood the rain event without as much damage.

In other words, we know what we need to do to make trails better able of withstanding lots of rain. We want this track to help fund repairs that implement these strategies.

Q: Can I apply to make significant upgrades to the trail, in addition to repair?

If you can make case that the improvements contribute to resiliency, that project may be eligible for this track. Even if only a portion of the trail was impacted by the floods, you can still potentially apply for a bigger improvement project that promotes resiliency (ex: only a portion of the trail washed out, and you'd like to reroute the trail so it's no longer near the river instead of just rebuilding). If not, you should consider other tracks or funding opportunities.

Q: What if I have a trail that wasn't damaged by the rain events last summer, but I know is not designed to modern standards?

A: In order to be eligible for this funding, the asset must have been damaged during the rain events between July 11 and August 15. However, we are so glad that you are thinking about preparing your trail in anticipation of future events. Depending on the readiness of your project and whether it links to other VOREC pillars, your project might be a fit for the Project Development or Implementation tracks. We also have other funding sources, including the [Recreational Trails Program](#), that can be used to rehabilitate and repair existing trails.

Q: Are trails on municipal, state or federal land eligible for funding through the VOREC grant program?

A: This funding is meant for projects that aren't able to be funded by other funding sources. Federal, state and some municipal land managers have access to funding through FEMA. If your trail or recreation asset is on these types of lands, please explain in your application why FEMA or other funding sources aren't available for this project.

Q: Can I apply for lost income as well as recovery expenses?

A: All flood recovery projects we are funding are construction projects. We cannot cover lost revenue from programming, but we can cover staff time spent doing the recovery work, including increased staff capacity due to dispersed damage (ex: increasing part-time trail builder from part-time to full-time).

Q: If an organization devoted staff time to recovery projects, how should that be documented?

A: Flood Recovery grants can be reimbursed for eligible expenses starting July 11, 2023. To document staff time for recovery, grantees will need to show on a time report that documents those hours were allotted to flood recovery (validating time spent on the project). We recognize that this will be easier for contractors and organizations whose staff reports already include this and that it will be more challenging to retroactively claim for smaller applicants, but this is an important safeguard that is required as stewards of taxpayer funds.

As much as possible, applicants should capture photographs of the damage and repair to validate the work that was completed. We recognize that in many cases the "before" images are

not always available because the recovery work has already been completed, but we will need to see images as proof of completed work.

Q: What if I have more photos of the damage? The application only allows you to upload five.

A: If you can't capture the impact of your damage in just five images, you can consider consolidating the images into a PDF and uploading that in Section 6: Supplemental Information. Please be intentional in your additional images, so that each image supports a different aspect of the need. For example, we don't need to see multiple images of the same eroded trail – but if you have a damage to 4 different sections of trail, 3 stream crossings with culverts, 2 bridges, and one parking area, you can consider submitting one photo of each impacted space.

Q: Are the flood recovery proposals “all or nothing”?

A: No. Because we're encouraging applications to combine multiple smaller projects into a single application, there is a chance that the review committee may approve funding for only a portion of your proposal. If you are combining multiple projects, try to bundle projects into cohesive units that are not too granular for our review team to consider.

QUESTIONS FOR PROJECTS WITH CONSTRUCTION

***Q: Is my project construction?**

A: If you are repairing, building or creating any asset, whether it is a building, trail or bridge, with the grant funding, it probably is. Here are some common examples of projects that include construction:

- Building, remodeling, renovating, or repairing any outdoor recreation asset (e.g., trail, bike park, ski hill, water crossing, etc.), physical structures (e.g., play structures, kiosks, buildings, facilities, etc.) or other infrastructure (e.g., parking lots, fences, etc.)
- Any type of work that involves digging either by hand or by machine.
- Any type of work that involves heavy construction equipment (e.g. backhoe, bobcat, excavator, bulldozer, etc.).
- Any type of work that involves cutting down trees more than 4 inches in diameter.
- Permanently installing any physical item or resource on a piece of land, including trails, whether it is owned by the applicant or another entity.
- Doing any type of maintenance or physical improvement on land you do not own in full.
- Completing any of the above with either staff or hired contractors.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, so use your best judgment when evaluating your specific project. If your project or any aspect of it is a construction project, be sure to click “yes” to the question asking whether or not it's a construction project in the application, so you answer the appropriate required questions. If you click “no” and our staff determines that *any part* of your

project is in fact a construction project, your application will be considered incomplete and may not be advanced to the review committee.

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

A: Yes. For projects that include construction, including flood recovery grants, FPR will require grantees to provide a Permit Navigator Report (for single site projects) or Project Review Sheet (for multi-parcel projects) to determine any state permits needed, written landowner permission in the format we need, and assurances 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.

If your project spans multiple parcels and requires a Project Review Sheet, you do *not* need to also complete the Permit Navigator. For the online application, upload your Project Review Sheet in place of the Permit Navigator report.

This grant program is not purely for construction though and your narrative should tell the full story of how any construction is part of a community-wide effort to become a recreation-friendly community.

Q: Do I have to have permits when I submit the application?

A: Having permits already is one way of demonstrating readiness for a project, but we do not require you to have permits in place by the time you submit your application – only that you have permits in place before you begin construction. Implementation projects do require you to have permits in place or in the process of being secured, but projects involving construction in other tracks do not have this requirement.

If you have permits, please upload those under “Supplemental Information” section of the application. If you are currently in the process of securing permits, be sure to describe that in your application in the “Required for Construction” section. If you have not yet started the process of securing permits, be sure to note in your workplan when you plan to secure them and account for that in your timeline. Permit costs are an eligible expense across all grant tracks.

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

A: A map and a basic design/site plan will be required to show what is being proposed. These materials should allow the applicant to confidently describe their project intentions to FPR.

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

A: No, however having written landowner agreements will strengthen your application and show your project readiness. FPR will also need to see and approve landowner agreements before a project grant can be signed.

If you do not have permission in place, for the required for the required landowner permission question in the application, please upload a brief list of the landowner(s) whose permission you need and a brief (1-2 sentence) description of where you are in the process of securing the landowner permission. For example: "Patty Smith, who owns 123 Main Road in ABC town, verbally confirmed permission for the project and just needs to sign the form. ABC Township owns the adjoining 456 Main Road and has expressed their support of this project; they will vote to officially approve the project at their next selectboard meeting on Month Day, Year."

***Q: What if my organization owns the land. Do we need to submit something?**

A: If your organization owns the land in full where the project will occur, you do not need to submit any type of landowner permission form. For the required landowner permission question, you can upload a Word document with a brief statement along the lines of: "[entity name], who is submitting this application, owns 100% of the land in full where the project will occur."

If any portion of your construction project takes place on a parcel that isn't owned in full by your organization, you will need to provide landowner permission for that parcel during the grant agreement process. Examples of not owning land in full can include land with conservation or public access easements or leases in place.

Q: I have a different landowner permission form. Can I use that instead?

A: If an applicant has signed landowner permission forms that include all the same information as our template, you are welcome to submit those instead. Be sure to check your document carefully against our template to ensure it covers the exact same information, as even slight differences in interpretation can potentially be challenging later. For example, if your existing agreement gives public permission for a trail, that is not the same as agreement to build infrastructure to improve public access for that trail – so it is always better to check in advance with landowners to confirm they agree to the specific scope of work in your application.

Q: How do I document a 25-year or permanent easement for permanent facilities or structures like engineered bridges? The provided form doesn't include this.

A: Easements are legally binding documents. If one already exists, it should be on file in your local courthouse. If you do not already have an easement, you may need to seek legal counsel to develop this document. Please email us with a description of your particular situation and we will happily recommend your next steps – anr.fprrecreationgrants@vermont.gov.

Q: Are projects on US Forest Service lands eligible?

A: Yes. Grant program staff would need to make sure that the US Forest Service has already done its environmental documentation, that there are no additional conversations that need to happen, and that the proper permits have been acquired.