



SMALL AND INSPIRING GRANT PROGRAM – GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

At the Community Foundation, we know the critical role that strong personal connections can play in keeping communities healthy and thriving—especially in the face of a challenging economy and or even a devastating tropical storm. We see it in the organizations and groups working and volunteering to help people and bring communities together. We see it in the work we do with donors who want to make a difference in their own towns and villages. It's a spark-of hope, perhaps. And it's part of the strong sense of community we all say we love about Vermont. It's what makes us feel good about ourselves and our neighbors and the world around us.

It's not just about feeling good. More and more research is demonstrating the quantifiable community value of *social capital*. Simply put, social capital is the crux of social relations and refers to the benefits that come from cooperation between individuals and groups of people. Studies show that higher levels of social capital are correlated with better health outcomes, higher educational achievement, and higher levels of civic engagement.

That's the intention of the Small and Inspiring grants program: to help foster the spark and hope that keeps Vermonters healthy and happy in all those ways. We want to find and support projects in every town in Vermont where a small grant can make a big difference. We want to collect stories and share them widely to create even more sparks that will inspire greater philanthropy. It may be a small grants program, but its potential in our communities is exponential.

This program will fund projects that:

- connect people to each other through volunteer work or community-building efforts
- connect people to the environment around them in new ways
- bring people together and provide opportunities for positive social interaction and benefit

This program will not fund:

- capital campaigns
- debt reduction
- individuals
- expenses that have already been incurred
- programs with religious purposes

Who May Apply

Applications will be considered from nonprofit organizations, schools, municipal entities, or groups with a fiscal sponsor for projects that address the above purposes.

Grant applications will be accepted from organizations that are located in or serve the people of Vermont. Organizations must be tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or be a public agency or municipality in the state of Vermont. Nonprofit organizations or community groups who do not have 501(c)(3) status may apply for grant awards if another tax-exempt organization acts as a **fiscal sponsor**. Applicants must employ staff and provide services without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Typically, applications will be accepted from groups or organizations working in one community. Some examples include:

- a volunteer transportation program for seniors and house-bound individuals
- a group of people working to restore a town building for community use and benefit
- a project that aims to increase civic participation in Town Meeting efforts
- a group of people working to protect a parcel of land for community benefit
- a landscape painting class for town residents taught outdoors in a field
- a community dialogue about diversity in a town experiencing changing demographics

Note: Given the focus of our resources on Food and Farm issues in our Big Impact program, we are providing limited funding through our other grant programs towards local food sourcing to low income Vermonters. If you have a project related to local food, food insecure populations, or Farm to School, please contact one of our grant staff to discuss its eligibility before applying.

Process for Applying

This grant round will have monthly deadlines on the 15th of each month. In 2012 the first deadline is May 15 and the final deadline is November 15; see below for exact dates. Applicants will be notified about decisions 6–7 weeks after the deadline.

Groups and organizations may apply multiple times but may only receive funding once in a calendar year, even if the organization is applying for funding for projects in different communities or towns.

Grant Size

The Community Foundation will award approximately 15% of this year's discretionary resources to Small and Inspiring projects. Grants will be in the range of \$500–\$2,500.

Resources

Watch our [10-minute online video](#) about the new Small and Inspiring grants. Thanks to CCTV/Common Good Vermont for producing this video that summarizes the goals, eligibility, and indicators of success for this new grants program.

Read the [archived online Q&A chat](#) at CommonGoodVT.org.

Apply Online

The Small and Inspiring grant application includes fourteen questions and requires attachments. All applications, including attachments, must be submitted through the online application system in order to be considered.

- [Click here to start a new Small and Inspiring grant application in our online system.](#)
- [Click here to log in to your online account to access your in-progress application or a submitted application.](#)

Deadlines and Notifications

May 15—June 29

June 18—July 31

July 16—August 31

August 15—October 1

September 17—October 31

October 15—November 30

November 15—December 31

We're Here to Help

If you have any questions or would like to set up a meeting, please contact Jen Peterson at atjpeter@vermontcf.org or 802-388-3355 ext. 288.