

Vermont Historical Society

Mission

The Vermont Historical Society engages both Vermonters and "Vermonters at heart" in the exploration of our state's rich heritage. Our purpose is to reach a broad audience through our outstanding collections, statewide outreach, and dynamic programming. We believe that an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities.

Further detail on mission, vision, and institutional values can be found here:

<https://vermonthistory.org/mission-and-strategic-plan/>

Strategic Goals:

1. Provide Vermonters and Vermonters-at-Heart the resources to access Vermont's rich historical collections from anywhere in the world.
2. We will recognize and support local history efforts; understanding that local societies are an integral part of sharing and preserving Vermont's story.
3. Vermonter's will increase their knowledge of our state's past and understand how their unique experience impacts and shapes this ongoing narrative. Guests will enrich their visit through deeper understanding of Vermont and its people.
4. To build resilient and connected communities, students will understand Vermont's history and its place in the broader world.

Summary plan document can be found here:

https://vermonthistory.org/client_media/files/Strategic%20Plan%202019-2024_ExternalUse_WebB.pdf

A unique collaboration – VHS and The State of Vermont:

- Chartered by the legislature in 1838, and thus the oldest cultural heritage organization in the state, VHS collects, preserves, and exhibits objects and documents related to Vermont's past (22 V.S.A., sections 281-285). The Vermont Historical Society is the only institution in Vermont that collects artifacts and documents that reflect the entire history of the state, every geographical area, and every chronological period, including the present.
- In the event of dissolution of VHS, management of its collection and related property will become the responsibility of the State (22 V.S.A., section 284).
- Employees of VHS are classified by the state classification system as if they were state employees and receive all general pay increases granted state employees (22 V.S.A., section 285).
- The State of Vermont requires participation in the Vermont State Employee Retirement System by qualified employees of VHS, as well as access to group coverage for health, dental, and life insurance. The premium for this coverage is paid entirely by VHS and its employees.
- VHS is both tenant and a landlord of the State of Vermont. Fee for space is assessed annually to VHS for the area occupied by the Vermont History Museum in the Pavilion Building. The State of Vermont leases space in the Vermont History Center for the Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center and Vermont State Library.
- With the change in scope and purpose of the State Library, VHS has become the primary research library for study of our state's history. Much of the VHS collection is searchable online, with more materials added daily.

- VHS provides secure, climate-controlled space and curatorial oversight for the state's collection of historic flags and other select holdings.
- VHS provides access to meeting rooms in both the Pavilion space and History Center without charge to state agencies.
- The Vermont History Center in Barre is delegated for use by state agencies as an alternative worksite in the event of natural disaster or other emergency.
- VHS provides curriculum support and supplemental learning for students and teachers throughout Vermont. VHS education staff work closely with State House staff to coordinate field trips that include tours of the State House and Vermont History Museum.
- VHS supports approximately 200 local historical societies and museums throughout Vermont and advances their vitality in the communities they serve.

Key Budget Issues:

The Vermont Historical Society has eliminated structural deficits endemic to prior operations. Upward pressure on expenses continues to be exerted by fixed staff salaries and benefits as defined through the state employee contract, pension obligations that grow each year, maintenance of a 50,000 square foot historically important building in Barre, and operating costs associated with running the Vermont History Museum and serving Vermont students free-of-charge.

VHS is seeing an outsized budget impact by pension obligation growth. It was determined that even though VHS is required to participate in the pension program, it was not eligible for the relief provided by last year's legislative action. Therefore, VHS contribution to employee pension has risen to over 28% this current fiscal year and over 29% in the next, a huge obligation for an organization of its size.

COVID-era Federal grants were put to good use by VHS in retaining staff and growing digitization and education programs that benefited residents statewide. These programs and grants are largely behind us so we must look to State support and private fundraising to fill gaps. We anticipate private fundraising to be challenging as inflation and rising interest rates impact Vermonters' ability to give.

Results:

Please see attached summary annual report. The report may also be found at:

https://vermonthistory.org/client_media/files/About/FY22%20Annual%20Report.pdf