



February 27, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Institutions

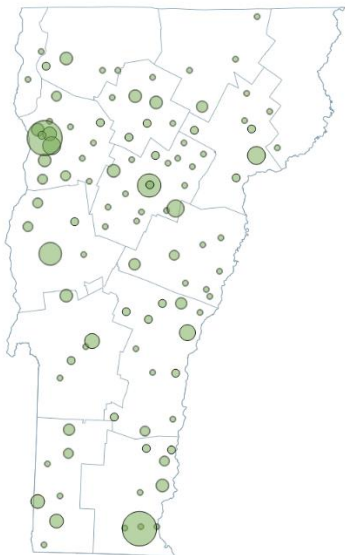
FROM: Susan Evans McClure, Executive Director, Vermont Arts Council

RE: Vermont Arts Council's Cultural Facilities Grant Program

The Vermont Arts Council board and staff are grateful for the strong support that Vermont's arts and culture sector has received from the legislature, as we work together to build a creative, inclusive, vibrant Vermont for everyone. As the new Executive Director of the Vermont Arts Council, I look forward to meeting with the Committee to discuss our work.

### **Organization Background**

The Vermont Arts Council has been the state's primary provider of arts funding, advocacy, and information since 1965. Our work is based on the understanding that the arts transform individual lives, connect people more deeply to each other, energize the economy, and sustain the vibrant cultural landscape that makes Vermont a great place to visit and live. The Council invests in artists and the creative process, arts-integrated learning in K-12 classrooms, and cultural organizations that engage audiences and creatives across the region in outstanding arts experiences and opportunities. The Council is supported by private and public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the State of Vermont. A total of \$8,009,602 in Arts Council funding was distributed in FY23, which included unprecedented support through the Vermont Creative Futures pandemic relief program (a part of [Act 183](#))



All FY23 grantees

In FY23, Grants were awarded to 85 individual artists, 201 organizations in every county, and 100 towns across Vermont in FY23. Some of our key programs include:

- [Cultural Facilities](#) grants that help Vermont nonprofit organizations and municipalities enhance, create, or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public.
- [Creation grants](#) that support outstanding Vermont artists with time and resources to imagine new work.
- [Artist Development grants](#) which foster individual artists' professional development.
- [Arts Operating](#) grants which provide critical operating support to build the capacity of arts nonprofits to affect change to 30 arts organizations.

- [Arts Impact grants](#) that fund nonprofit organizations, municipalities, and schools in their efforts to add vibrancy to Vermont communities through projects that provide equal and abundant access to the arts.
- [Animating Infrastructure](#) grants that support unique community projects that integrate public art into infrastructure improvements.
- Teaching artist residencies that engage students from [pre-K through high school](#) and in [Head Start Arts Partnership](#) programs in active, arts-integrated learning.
- The [Creative Aging Initiative](#) which provides older Vermonters with meaningful arts learning experiences that provide rich opportunities for social engagement and community building.

Other highlights from the past fiscal year (FY23) may be found in our [Annual Report](#).

### **The Power of the Arts and Culture**

We have all seen the power that the arts have in bringing our communities together, especially during times of crisis. But not only do the arts build our communities, the arts are also Vermont's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economic sector, providing over \$1.1 billion in value to Vermont's GDP in 2021. When audiences attend live arts and culture performances and events, they are spending money in our local economies. This year, we released the results of the nationwide Arts and Economic Prosperity 6 survey that looked at the economic and social impact of nonprofit arts and culture organizations on our state. We learned that, on average, 75% of audiences are local and 25% are nonlocal, meaning that they travelled from outside the county to attend a live performance or event. And of those nonlocal audiences, 80% of them reported that the primary purpose of their visit was "specifically to attend the performance, event, exhibit, venue, or facility."

Local visitors spend, on average, \$29 per person on top of the cost of their ticket every time they attend a live cultural performance. Nonlocal visitors, on average, spend \$52 per person on top of the cost of their ticket.

We know that strengthening Vermont's creative economy will strengthen Vermont's overall economy, and we are working to do just that. And in order for those community and economic benefits to flourish, Vermont's cultural organizations need the physical infrastructure to make that happen, which is made possible through the Cultural Facilities grants program.

### **Cultural Facilities Grants**

Cultural Facilities Grants help Vermont nonprofit organizations and municipalities enhance, create, or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public. Applicants must own a facility that is at least 10 years old, and it must be physically located in Vermont. Cultural activities are defined broadly as activities that enhance artistic, creative,

aesthetic, historic or scholarly appreciation by members of the public. This includes performances, exhibits, readings, film screenings, displays, workshops, etc.

Examples of projects eligible for funding include:

- improvements to wiring, heating, lighting, and plumbing
- accessibility features such as elevators, lifts, assistive listening systems, ramps, and bathrooms
- stage improvements such as curtains, lighting, sound, and rigging
- permanent display panels or exhibit cases affixed to the building
- fixed equipment
- improvements to environmental controls, storage, or lighting for collections care
- hazard mitigation efforts such as flood gates, sump pumps, rain gutters, sprinkler systems
- energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, heat pumps, renewable energy systems, LED lighting

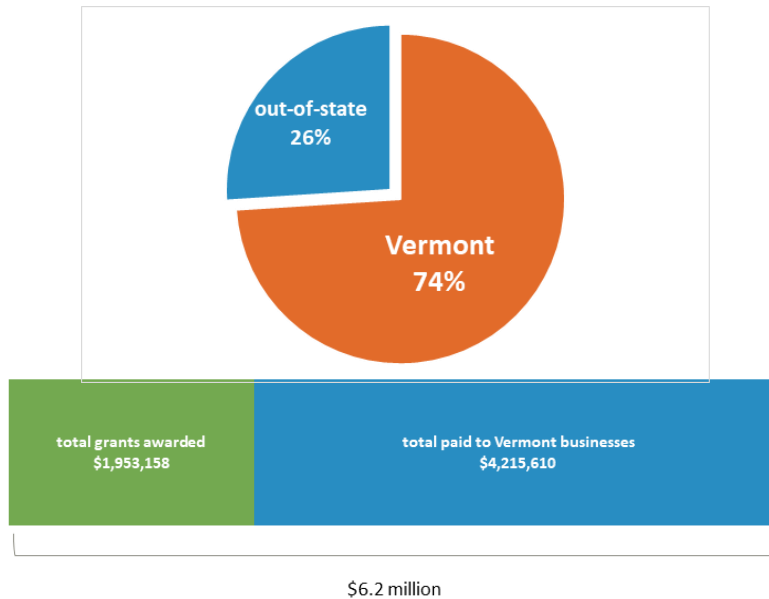
Grants are from \$1,000-\$30,000 and require a 1:1 match of non-state funds.

This is truly critical funding, and Cultural Facilities grants are some of the very few funds in Vermont, public or private, that fund capital projects at cultural organizations and municipalities.

Since 2001, Vermont has invested more than \$4 million to support theaters, museums, town halls, community arts centers, and municipalities across Vermont. And because these are capital projects, it means that these grants are facilitating the employment of Vermont businesses.

From 2014-2022, 74% of the money spent on these projects stayed in Vermont and went directly to Vermont businesses. The out-of-state spending that occurred was mainly to highly specialized contractors or supplies. These state investments are largely staying in Vermont and supporting local small businesses. We are all part of building the economy of Vermont, and the arts and culture are a crucial part of that economic ecosystem.

## Investing in Vermont's economy for cultural facilities improvements



Data source: grantee final reports from 2014-2022

### Cultural Facilities Grants, Emergency Preparedness, and Climate Change Mitigation

Many of the improvements funded by Cultural Facilities grants are required for ADA compliance or address critical safety issues in Vermont's historic structures. And this year, we are learning just how important these updates are. In FY20, the Capital City Grange Hall in Berlin received a Cultural Facilities grant to install sump pumps in the basement and make other drainage upgrades. This summer, they let us know that these improvements kept the basement dry during this year's historic floods.

"I just wanted to share good news from the Capital City, Grange Hall that we didn't have any flood damage and we can thank the Vermont Arts Council Cultural Facilities Grants for that outcome. We used to experience water coming into the basement during big storm events. Thankfully due to the sump pump and drainage that we installed that no longer happens. Amid all of the challenging news, I thought you might like to know of this little success story." reported Friends of the Capital City Grange Hall board member Nancy Turner in the summer of 2023.

This is a story of a small government investment upfront having a substantial long-term payment. The Friends of the Capital City Grange received a \$26,000 grant. And as we saw this summer, the cost of flood damage could easily exceed that amount, by many multiples.

This year, we are adding additional examples to what the grant funds to encourage organizations and municipalities to use these critical capital funds to make physical improvements and increases to energy efficiency that will set them up to withstand emergencies and climate change's impact, including flooding and extreme weather events.

## **FY2025 Budget**

The FY24 and FY25 capital budget, as passed last year, includes \$300,000 per year for the Cultural Facilities grant program. And it is at the same amount in the Governor's recommended FY24 and FY25 capital budget adjustment.

## **FY2023 Grantees**

### [Barre Historical Society](#), Barre

\$30,000 to support the installation of an upgraded accessible lift for the second floor of the Old Labor Hall

### [Bethany United Church of Christ](#), Montpelier

\$11,405 to support the installation of theater and gallery lighting in performance and gallery spaces

### [Dorset Players](#), Dorset

\$11,837 to support the installation of a wireless intercom system

### [Friends of the Capital City Grange Hall](#), Northfield Falls

\$26,949 to support the installation of a vertical platform lift

### Geothe Community Trust, Burlington

\$7,198 to support the installation of a new HVAC system

### [Kimball Public Library](#), Randolph

\$24,913 to support improvements to the HVAC and climate control systems

### [Ruth Stone House](#), Goshen

\$18,538 to support the installation of a new heating system

### [Saint Albans Museum](#), St. Albans

\$4,192 to support the installation of dehumidifiers in the basement collection storage area

### [St. Johnsbury Athenaeum](#), St. Johnsbury

\$19,414 to support the installation of an audio/visual and assistive listening system on the second floor

### [Thetford Library Federation](#), Thetford

\$24,913 to support the installation of an accessible lift

### [Town Hall Theater](#), Middlebury

\$30,000 to support a new sound system that integrates with current assistive listening devices

[Town of Chelsea](#)

\$22,100 to support the installation of a new furnace

[Town of Moretown](#)

\$1,848 to support the replacement of all exit and emergency lights, repair the exterior rear door, and replace the exterior side door

[Town of Sharon](#)

\$17,320 to support the installation of an accessible ramp

[Windsor Public Library](#), Windsor

\$30,000 to support the installation of an accessible lift

[Winooski Valley Park District](#) & [Vermont Indigenous Heritage Center](#), Burlington

\$30,000 to support the construction and installation of custom exhibit cases and lighting for display of American Abenaki artifacts at the Indigenous Heritage Center

**FY2024 Grantees**

[Center for Arts and Learning](#), Montpelier

\$25,000 to support the replacement of the old flat rubber membrane roof on the Convent/West Side of the building

[Chandler Center for the Arts](#), Randolph

\$19,196 to support an overhaul of the audio amplification environment

[Corner School Resource Center of Granville](#), Granville

\$4,751 to support the installation of storm windows and insulating shades

[Friends of Fletcher Free Library](#), Burlington

\$10,759 to support fixed audio/visual equipment to improve arts experiences at the library

[Friends of the Brandon Town Hall](#), Brandon

\$17,675 to support replacing the over 100-year-old wooden floor in the main hall

[Friends of the Vergennes Opera House](#), Vergennes

\$30,000 to support the installation of an accessible three-level lift

[Greensboro Historical Society](#), Greensboro

\$1,665 to support the installation of light-protecting window shades

[New England Youth Theatre](#), Brattleboro

\$13,223 to support re-decking the flooring in the main theater space

[Next Stage Arts Project](#), Putney

\$3,563 to support the installation of temperature-regulating curtains on the theater windows

[Paramount Center](#), Rutland

\$30,000 to support the expansion of the stage counterweight system and installation of a new main curtain

[Robert Frost Stone House Museum](#), Shaftsbury

\$18,750 to support the installation of electricity and plumbing to the historic barn

[Starksboro Public Library](#), Starksboro

\$30,000 to support the installation of a vertical lift in Starksboro Town Hall

[The Four Corners Schoolhouse Association](#), East Montpelier

\$30,000 to support mitigating mold issues that require insulation, HVAC, and a dehumidifier in the facility

[The Robinson Sawmill](#), Calais

\$15,000 to support the rebuild of the penstock intake

[Thetford Academy](#), Thetford Center

\$18,000 to support an upgrade to the digital projection, sound, and lighting in the theater

[Town of Franklin](#), Franklin

\$27,000 to support the replacement of an ADA-accessible lift and heating system in the Haston Library

[Town of Plainfield](#), Plainfield

\$8,480 to support audio reinforcement, an assisted listening system, and a large-format video projection with secured storage

West Fairlee Community Club, Inc, Fairlee

\$4,371 to support the installation of an ADA-compliant restroom

[Weston Theatre Company](#), Weston

\$6,413 to support the replacement of curtains and other theater soft goods