



Create Better Places Grant Program to Spark Community Revitalization

WHAT: Establish a scalable, 50/50 matching community grant program that strategically coordinates the efforts of several funders who support place-based economic development projects like walking and biking trails, public art, parks, and farmers markets.

WHY: Existing grant programs have incompatible timelines and administrative requirements which often means it can take several years to secure the funding needed to launch projects. The Better Places proposal aims to simplify the funding process by creating a one-stop-shop for funders to collaborate and provide communities a more nimble, flexible source to quickly fund, and launch local placemaking projects.

WHO: This proposal supports local leaders across the state working on projects to improve the livability and quality of life in their communities. The [new funding platform is aimed at smaller 'quick build' projects](#), that create a shared community focus, help build social capital, and empower local leaders. Tackling small projects together can restore confidence, rebuild capacity, and renew local pride of place – critical elements proven to spark larger community transformations that attract businesses, new workers, residents, and visitors to Vermont.

HOW: Through a partnership between state, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations, the Better Places proposal utilizes an innovative 'crowdgranting' funding model to support community development efforts in Vermont's downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods. Specifically, the proposal:

- Establishes enabling legislation to create the Better Places program to accelerate local projects that improve streets and parks, walking and biking trails, and vacant properties.
- Streamlines and integrates grantmaking of multiple funders so residents, businesses, and community organizations achieve more immediate results.
- Empowers local leaders to play an active role in shaping their communities, building social capital, local pride, and community leadership.

FUNDING: \$250,000 in grant funds will leverage an additional \$250,000 from program partners and private philanthropies.

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Better Places

A Place-Based Crowdgranting Program for Vermont



Local leaders across the state are deploying grassroots, “quick-build,” placemaking projects to improve the livability of their communities. From neighborhood parks in Bennington, to pop-up galleries in Bethel, “placemaking” projects inspire and engage residents to re-value, re-imagine, and re-make Vermont’s downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods – to places where people want to live, visit, and work. Through a partnership between AARP-VT, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Vermont Arts Council, and the Department of Health, local placemaking efforts were recently showcased at three statewide workshops. Representatives of 85 communities across the state attended and learned how to deploy “lighter, quicker, and cheaper,” placemaking projects to spark community revitalization.

To support the growing demand for placemaking projects, Vermont needs access to a flexible source of funding. Traditional grant programs are often too complex, with incompatible timelines and administrative requirements. The partners explored collaborative grantmaking models in other states that were nimble enough to help local volunteers rapidly activate public spaces such as streets and parks, create public art, support farmer’s markets, and put vacant buildings back into productive use. The winning model pairs “crowdfunding” platforms like “GoFundMe,” where individual community members donate to a local project with matching funds from state and philanthropic sponsors. This is referred to as “crowdgranting” which empowers local residents, demonstrates community buy-in, and advances local projects faster.

The “Better Places” Place-Based Crowdgranting Program:

- Supports place-based, citizen-led, economic and community development efforts
- Spurs entrepreneurship, business development, and job growth in downtowns and village centers
- Advances locally driven projects quickly so people see immediate results
- Connects viable projects to sponsors and provides an easy way to raise matching funds
- Streamlines and integrates grantmaking of multiple funders (as project initiators or supporters)
- Scales to both small and large projects in towns of any size
- Improves public health and reduces social isolation by fostering social connectivity
- Stimulates the creative economy and/or supports public art in downtowns and villages
- Empowers people to play an active role in shaping their communities, building social capital and local pride

Positive Change, One Project, One Community at a Time.

A place-based crowdgranting program in Vermont would enable small and large communities to build “Better Places” where people want to live, visit, and work. The success of [Michigan’s Public Places](#), [Community Places grant program](#), [Massachusetts Commonwealth Places](#), and [Indiana’s CreatINg Places](#) program demonstrates that crowdgranting cultivates place-based economic development that quickly transforms communities and attracts the workforce and businesses needed to help communities thrive.

For more information, please contact:

[Richard Amore](#), Community Planning + Revitalization

Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

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Locally-Driven Placemaking Projects

Local placemaking projects spur economic development, strengthen community identity, and build social cohesion. Crowdgranting will help more residents, businesses, and local organizations come together to initiate projects that improve livability, create pocket parks, trails, outdoor plazas, public art, pop up spaces, farmers markets, art centers, and more. The type of placemaking project is only limited by the community's imagination.



Public Art



Demonstration Projects



Pop-Up Galleries



Farmers Markets



Pocket Parks



Community Centers



Walking and Biking Trails



Downtown and Village Events



Parklets

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