

Vermont Historical Society

Budget Submission FY23

Department/Program Description

Through its rich collections, dynamic programming, effective outreach, and resolute leadership, the Vermont Historical Society preserves the past, informs the present, and promotes Vermont's shared legacy for future generations. We believe that an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities.

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 provides access to the Vermont State Employee Retirement System to qualified employees of VHS, as well as 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 now available 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 education staff work closely with State House staff to coordinate field trips that include a tour of the State House and Vermont History Museum. VHS provides curriculum support and supplemental learning for students throughout Vermont.
- 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 continue 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. As with all programs in the state, the COVID pandemic has provided unique pressures on the income streams used by VHS to meet expenses beyond those covered by the appropriation. In-person fundraising events, earned revenue from visitation and on-site sales, and personal memberships all declined substantially during the pandemic and their return is still now in question. Federal programs such as the PPP loan program and recovery funds awarded through NEH and IMLS have filled income gaps for the past two years. At this time, Federal funds are not anticipated for FY23 while some prior income streams remain in doubt.