

**Date:** March 25th, 2022



**Re:** 2022 Funding Request for Administrative Support

**To:** Senate Committee on Appropriations

**From:** VTGC Board of Directors: Nick Bennette and Danny Hale, Co-Chairs; Abby Long, RJ Thompson, Caitrin Maloney, Mariah Keagy, Rachel Fussell, Eric Remick, Matt Williams, Greg Western, Cindy Locke, Rosy Metcalfe

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**Summary:**

In order to more effectively fulfill our mission to ensure that people will always have access to the trails and landscape of Vermont, and our commitment to foster trails that are both environmentally sustainable and community supported, the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC) is requesting \$200,000 in one-time funds for a Program Manager and programmatic improvements. These funds would support a part-time (0.5 FTE) staff member employed by the VTGC for three (3) years, along with enhanced member tools, materials, and communications.

**Context:**

Over the past several years and as the popularity of recreational trails has boomed, the VTGC has identified a clear need to increase our operational capacity and develop clearer, stronger best management practices (BMPs) for trails. Recognized in statute, the VTGC serves as the consolidated, expert voice for trail groups in Vermont, including the nonprofit stewardship organizations responsible for developing and maintaining the vast majority of public access trails in our State. The VTGC currently operates with no paid staff, relying on a volunteer board to recruit and communicate with membership, advise on policy and legislation, and co-manage the Vermont Trails System (VTS) with VT-FPR.

**Need:**

While strong BMPs are independently employed by our member organizations, there is a clear need to consolidate, clarify, and better communicate these practices, as well as to work with other stakeholders to address gaps that may exist. Our vision is to develop a unified set of BMPs to which members of the VTGC can look and which can be embedded in the membership requirements of the VTS. We also endeavor to provide technical assistance to our members to help them implement these practices and more efficiently build and maintain sustainable trails in Vermont. To accomplish these goals, we require a Program Manager who can:

- Collect and codify existing BMPs and develop these into an initial unified platform
- Lead the development of a more rigorous set of BMPs, as needed, and process for validating compliance across trail organizations

- Help administer the VTGC, under the direction of the Board, including membership recruitment and support, communication, and resource development
- Manage the VTS, in collaboration with FPR, including the application process, BMP guidance, and technical support

**Request:**

To address the need and responsibilities outlined above, we seek one-time funding - applied over a three-year period - to fund the following:

- 0.5 FTE Program Manager: \$35,000 annual salary (\$105,000 total)
- Employment expenses (health stipend, Medicare and SS taxes, retirement match): \$10,500 annually (\$31,500 total)
- Staff travel for meetings and to convene partners: \$2,500 annually (\$7,500 total)
- New membership tools, including an updated website and Manual: \$35,000 one-time
- Biannual convening of the Council and key stakeholders to workshop BMPs, legislative priorities, and other trail-related issues: \$5,000 annually (\$15,000 total)
- Contracted support and/or platforms for member management and communications, and other administrative services: \$2,000 annually (\$6,000 total)

Given the present, unprecedented availability of public funds for recreation, we believe this is an ideal time to invest in the sustainable future of Vermont's trail systems and hope for your assistance in obtaining this much needed support.

Respectfully submitted,

Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Board of Directors