

Vermont WCC Expansion through American Rescue Plan Investment

Overview

- The Working Communities Challenge (WCC) is a **funding competition to strengthen Vermont’s rural towns, regions, and small cities**. At present, four (4) communities are part of the WCC – Greater Barre, Lamoille County, Springfield Area, and Winooski. See addendum for more on these communities.
- The Governor’s budget proposes **using \$3,000,000 in ARPA investment to expand the WCC and invite four (4) new communities** to be a part of the WCC.
- The four communities to be invited are those from the **Northwest Region, Northeast Kingdom, Southern Vermont, and White River Valley** - cross-sector leadership teams from each of these communities were selected as finalists in the WCC process and have already completed WCC’s 8-month Planning Phase. Those invited will need to meet criteria to demonstrate interest, capacity, commitment, and quality of their efforts, so that funds invested are judged likely to lead to desired outcomes.
- The **Federal Reserve Bank of Boston** (Boston Fed) will continue to staff, manage, and support the WCC under the guidance of a **18-person, Vermont-based Steering Committee** and in partnership with the State of Vermont, national and local philanthropy, private sector businesses and Vermont communities.
- **Vermont Council on Rural Development** will provide ongoing coaching and technical assistance given to the 4 communities.

WCC Expansion in Brief

Desired Impact	WCC expands to include 4 additional communities so that multi-sector leadership teams can drive long term systemic change, address persistent demographic challenges, and unlock new economic opportunity for their residents
Structure	Each of the 4 communities receive 3 years of WCC grants plus ongoing coaching, technical assistance, and Boston Fed management, evaluation, and support to achieve their system change goals.
Communities	Northwest Region, Northeast Kingdom, Southern Vermont, White River Valley will be included in the WCC, provided they meet criteria to assure quality, capacity, interest and commitment to engage in WCC process and principles that drive multi-sector leadership and systems change outcomes in their communities. An independent jury (not including Fed) will make final determination of participation.
ARP Funding	<p>Total of \$3,000,000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2,020,000 in direct grants to 4 communities @ \$505,000 each (includes implementation, action & tactical grants) • \$300,000 in VCRD coaching and technical assistance @ \$75,000 each (includes ongoing coaching and technical assistance given to 4 communities over 3 years by Vermont Council on Rural Development and other expert consultants) • \$320,000 in evaluation to track progress and gather lessons of what works • \$360,000 in implementation awards boost across 4 existing WCC communities @ \$90,000 each to bring Vermont implementation awards in line with other WCC states <p>State investment of ARP dollars will join other investments committed by national and Vermont philanthropic partners. The Boston Fed receives no funding and will continue to contribute staffing, management, and support to Vermont’s WCC effort. See addendum for budget detail.</p>
Leadership	Boston Fed and 18-person WCC Steering Committee confirm quality, potential of impact, and commitment of 4 communities to WCC principles. Boston Fed staffs, manages, and supports

	the WCC. Steering Committee continues to provide design oversight, guidance, and assistance to all 8 communities in the WCC. See addendum for Steering Committee membership.
Timeline	Implementation Grants awarded ASAP to the 4 new communities (once quality, impact, interest, capacity and commitment thresholds confirmed) and then ongoing grant and implementation support continues through the end of Q2 in 2024.
Evidence of Impact	WCC model based on foundational research sponsored by Boston Fed plus support of third-party evaluation to track progress and derive lessons. Boston Fed will support teams to use data for learning and measuring team-by-team progress against goals.
Financial Structure	ARP investment goes through ACCD to a Boston Fed managed WCC pool of funds. Funds are distributed to 4 communities by Boston Fed and its fiscal agent, BlueHub Capital, a certified Community Development Financial Institution. Distribution of funds is contingent upon Fed approved 6-month work plans, budgets and demonstrated progress against measures for each community. Financial controls are managed by BlueHub Capital to assure sound financial stewardship.
Quality Assurance	As stewards of a public investment, the Boston Fed and WCC Steering Committee commit to maintaining high standards and research-based interventions that develop community teams to drive impact. Before acceptance into full participation of the WCC and receipt of ARPA funds, each of the 4 community teams will be required to demonstrate that it meets threshold criteria for participation, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-sector leadership team demonstrating commitment to ambitious systems change • High-level commitment to WCC principles and goals as demonstrated through prior engagement and submitted materials, as well as a draft work plan, budget, and other evidence • Capacity and desire to engage effectively in initiative. See addendum for quality assurance process and measures of threshold criteria.
Leverage	Boston Fed provides ongoing leadership, backbone staffing, and knowledge transfer of best practices. ARP investment leverages existing raised funds of \$1.9M, of which 50 percent come from national philanthropy. Vermont communities have access to lessons from implementation of WCC in four other states and 16 other communities as well as participate in a managed learning cohort.

Addendum 1: Budget Detail

Expense by Category	New ARP Investment	Notes
Implementation Awards	1,600,000	Add 4 Communities @ \$400k each (baseline implementation grant to each new team to support 3 years of implementation)
Action & Innovation Grants	300,000	Add 4 Communities @ \$75k each (pool per community to help w community engagement, leadership development, state level systems change, prototypes/early pilots, etc.)
Tactical Grants	120,000	Add 4 Communities @ \$30k each (small amounts available to each team to hire training and consultants to help with team strategy and learning)
Coaching and Technical Assistance	300,000	Add 4 Communities @ \$75k each (ongoing coaching, technical assistance given to each team over three years by consulting team)
Learning Evaluation	320,000	evaluation to track progress and gather lessons to institutionalize Vermont transformative economic development; Required by FRBB and national funders (average of \$80K each team, from 4 to 8 to include in evaluation)
Implementation Awards Boost	360,000	Boosts implementation awards across 4 existing Communities @ \$90K each (increases baseline implementation grant for existing communities to comparable support in other states)
Total	3,000,000	

Addendum 2: WCC Steering Committee

Name	Current/Most Recent Affiliation	Title
Becca Balint	Vermont State Senate	Senator
Ben Doyle	Preservation Trust of Vermont	President
Beth Rusnock	National Life Group/National Life Group Foundation	Asst VP of Corporate Marketing and Community Relations
Betsy Bishop	Vermont Chamber of Commerce	President
Ellen McCulloch-Lovell	EML Consulting	President/Owner
Emma Marvin	Butternut Mountain Farm	Owner
Gary Holloway	Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development	Downtown Program Coordinator
Hal Colston	Vermont State House of Representatives	State Representative
Joan Straussman Brandon	Neighborworks America	Regional Vice President, Northeast Region
Katrina Badger	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	Program Officer
Rebecca Foster	Vermont Energy Investment Corporation	President/CEO
Lola Adedokun	Doris Duke Charitable Foundation	Program Officer
Molly Lambert	Lambert Consulting and Mediation	President/Owner
Nicole Grant	Avangrid/Avangrid Foundation	Director
Sarah Waring	Vermont Community Foundation	Vice President for Grants and Community Investments
Steve Patterson	Northeastern Vermont Development Association (retired)	Executive Director (former)
Ted Brady	Vermont League of Cities and Towns	Executive Director
Tom Donahue	BROC Community Action	CEO

Addendum 3: Process to Assure Quality

The Boston Fed and WCC Steering Committee are committed to maintaining the value of the WCC model, high-quality implementation for impact, and good stewardship of public investment. Before acceptance into full participation of the WCC and receipt of ARPA funds, leadership teams from each of the 4 communities will be required to demonstrate it meets threshold criteria to be determined by the Steering Committee, which will include the following:

- **Cross-sector leadership that is committed to ambitious systems change.** This may be measured by Boston Fed-sponsored meetings with the community teams that show leadership from different sectors able to articulate an ambitious shared goal that drives enduring change and better economic outcomes for residents,
- **High-level commitment to WCC principles and goals.** This will be measured by consistent participation in and learning from the completed 8-month Planning Phase, review of scored responses in prior written application and Jury interviews, demonstrated commitment to areas of learning and improvement to achieve strong impact using WCC principles and goals. Steering Committee may ask for teams to address specific areas of improvement based on review of prior application and jury interview.
- **Articulated work plan and budget that builds on the WCC core principles to achieve community goals for impact.** This will be measured by submission of 6-month and 12-month work plans and budgets that reflect WCC core principles and articulate steps to achieve the community's ambitious shared goal.

The Boston Fed will also conduct a review at the end of year 1 of implementation using similar criteria to assure that community teams continue to demonstrate interest, capacity, commitment, and quality that aligns with WCC principles and make progress toward community outcomes.

Working Communities Challenge



A partnership between Vermont, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, private sector, philanthropy & communities

A 3-year funding competition to **strengthen Vermont's rural towns, regions and small cities**

Cross sector team of leaders from private, public, nonprofit and community work toward an ambitious shared goal

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WCC Shared Goal and Principles

The Vermont WCC supports local community leadership working together to improve economic outcomes for all people in Vermont towns, cities, and rural communities. Successful leadership teams address economic growth and reduce inequity of opportunity through ambitious systems change in their local economies.



Cross sector team of leaders from private, public, nonprofit and community work toward an **ambitious shared goal**



Engagement of **community residents** in setting direction and decision-making



Economic **inclusion, racial equity, and diversity** across age, gender and sexual orientation important part of process and shared goal



System solutions, not just programs, to achieve team's shared goal



Learning and adaptation through research, data, and peer exchange



Connections to ideas, people, and markets within and across local economies and communities

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Greater Barre

Goal:

Lower the rate of single female head of households in poverty by 15% in 10 years.



Partners:

- Green Mountain United Way
- Barre Mayor's Office
- Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation
- Capstone Community Action
- Family Center of Washington County
- Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice
- Central Vermont Medical Center
- Barre Area Development, Inc.
- Community College of Vermont
- Central Vermont Adult Basic Education
- Vermont Agency of Transportation
- Barre Partnership
- And more...

Lamoille County

Goal:

Reduce unemployment to lower than the state average and see improvements in workforce transitions and reductions in systemic barriers to economic opportunity



Partners:

- United Way of Lamoille County
- Capstone Community Action
- Racial Equity Alliance of Lamoille
- Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Town of Johnson
- Creative Workforce Solutions
- Lamoille Economic Development Corporation
- Lamoille Restorative Center
- N. Central Vermont Recovery Center
- Northern VT University
- Green MT Tech & Career Center
- Vermont Department of Health
- And more...

Springfield Area

Goal:

Increase workforce participation by matching unemployed residents with quality jobs and matching underemployed workers with quality jobs that meet their skill level.



Partners:

- Springfield Regional Development Corporation
- River Valley Technical Center
- Reach Up, Agency of Human Services
- Vermont Packinghouse, LLC
- Springfield Restorative Justice Center
- VT Department of Labor
- Creative Workforce Solutions/VABIR
- And more...

Winooski

Goal:

Ensure the strategic advantages diversity brings are accompanied by a future in which all voices are heard in decision-making and represented in the seats of power.



Partners:

- City of Winooski
- Association of Africans Living in Vermont
- US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- Winooski Housing Authority
- Winooski School District
- And more...