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**Report to  
The Vermont Legislature**

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**Developmental Disabilities Services Division  
Act 186  
Pilot Planning Grant**

**Submitted to:**

**The House Committee on Human Services  
The Senate Committee on Health and Welfare**

**Submitted by:**

**Monica White, Commissioner,**  
Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living

**Prepared by:**

**Jennifer Garabedian,**  
Director, Developmental Disabilities Services Division

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## Introduction

[Act 186 \(2022\)](#) states:

...On or before April 15, 2023, the Department [of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living] shall submit a report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare describing the pilot planning grant selection process, the implementation plan, and any resources necessary for implementation of selected pilots.

This Legislative Report provides a summary of the Act 186 Steering Committee; efforts made related to development of the Requests for Proposals for the pilot planning grants; and anticipated next steps for grants selection and award.

## Overview

Act 186 appropriated the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (“the Department” or “DAIL”), \$500,000 from the Global Commitment Federal Medical Assistance Percental (FMAP) home-and community-based services monies for pilot planning grants to develop residential and housing alternatives and options for individuals with developmental disabilities. This funding was appropriated for the State Fiscal Year 2023.

Act 186 laid out a framework for the Department for use in developing the Requests for Proposals (RFP) and making selections of the proposals:

- Planning grants require a partnership with a designated or specialized service agency.
- DAIL will approve pilot planning grants in at least three (3) different regions of the State. Regions are defined by [designated agency catchment areas](#).
- Planning grants are intended to develop new housing and/or residential options.
- These grants must be reflective of the varied needs of individuals with developmental disabilities—including options to support individuals with high support needs and/or alternative communication needs.

Through Act 186, the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council and statewide self-advocacy group, Green Mountain Self-Advocates, partnered to commission a report to review housing models available in other states for individuals with disabilities and identify the need across Vermont. This report, [Service Supported](#)

[Housing for Vermonter with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: 2023 Research Brief](#), provides valuable information to aid in the selection of pilot planning grants and implementation of residential options beyond the scope of this initiative. This Research Brief was released on March 13, 2023.

The key findings from this Brief indicate that service supportive housing, paired with Home- and Community-Based Service (HCBS) supports, as appropriate, would allow any individual the ability to access housing integrated in the community. Based on current estimates of the needs, Vermont should develop over 600 units for individuals receiving developmental disabilities services. This need represents individuals currently residing within the existing models offered in the Developmental Disabilities Services system, as well as with natural supports.

The review of service supported housing models in other states provide examples of models of both mixed settings for integrated living and settings that provide service-supportive housing exclusively for individuals with disabilities and special health needs.

### **Act 186 Steering Committee**

A key component of Act 186 (“the Act”) is the Act 186 Steering Committee (“the Steering Committee” or “Committee”). The Act specifies that this committee be comprised of:

- **Three (3) individuals with a developmental disability**, appointed by the Green Mountain Self Advocates.
  - *Nicole Villemaire—Co-Chair*
  - *Chad Cleverly*
  - *Lisa Rudiakov*
- **Two (2) advocates who are either individuals with a developmental disability or a family member of an individual with a developmental disability**, appointment by the State Program Standing Committee (established pursuant to 18 V.S.A §8733).
  - *Barbara Lee—Co-Chair*
  - *Max Barrows*
- **Two (2) family members of an individual with a developmental disability**, appointed by Vermont Family Network.
  - *Lauren Arcuri*
  - *Elizabeth Campbell*

- **Two (2) representatives of the designated and specialized service agencies**, appointed by Vermont Care Partners.
  - *Greg Mairs (Counseling Services of Addison County)*
  - *Julie Cunningham (Families First of Southern Vermont)*

The Committee receives administrative support from DAİL through Julie Abrahamson, the Developmental Disabilities Services Residential Housing Developer—the limited-services position created through Act 186, and Jennifer Garabedian, the Developmental Disabilities Services Division Director.

The Steering Committee came into existence on July 1, 2023, and the groups needed time to determine their representation. The inaugural meeting was held on October 18, 2022. At the time of this report’s submission, the Committee will have met seven (7) times (October 2022 through April 2023).

The Steering Committee has provided valuable input, advice, and guidance in the development of the RFP for the pilot planning grants. The Committee has helped the Department clarify the language and intent with a focus on innovative housing options. Additionally, the Committee has helped to ensure adequate timelines, as the respondents to this RFP will likely be less familiar with the process and benefit from additional time, while we balance the urgent need for additional housing options.

### **Pilot Planning Grants: Request for Proposals**

Using the information from the Act as the guide, DAİL used additional stakeholder input and the advice of the Steering Committee to develop the Pilot Planning Grant Request for Proposal (RFP).

The Department will be using a de-identified scoring process to review the proposals. Bids will be submitted electronically (via email) to the Department and be reviewed by an Agency of Human Services team that includes subject matter experts and scorers. The Department will work with members of the Steering Committee to balance the Committee’s review of submitted proposals and the potential conflict of interest that may exist. Committee members will be expected to recuse themselves from the review process if they have been involved with an organization that submitted a proposal.

As of this writing, the tentative RFP timeline (subject to modification per the Steering Committee) is:

Request for Proposal Posted	May 14, 2023
Bidders' Questions Due	May 28, 2023
Department's Response to Questions Due	June 12, 2023
Closing Date/Proposals Due	July 16, 2023, 11:59PM
Selection Notification	August 21, 2023
Anticipated Commencement of Grants	September 15, 2023

The selection criteria are based on the applicant's qualifications, application elements, and draft budget. Included in the proposal, DAIL will evaluate elements including, but not limited to, the strength of the partnership with a designated/specialized service agency, how the proposed model reflects the diversity of needs expressed by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, the description of intended supports provided, the draft budget and the sustainability and feasibility of the proposed model.

### Conclusion

It is important to note while individuals, families and key stakeholders are voicing the need for additional housing options and alternatives from what Vermont currently offers, implementing service supported housing models such as those presented during the testimony that led to the passage of Act 186 may cost more than the current, prevailing model of shared living.

The Research Brief indicates that permanent supportive housing options are sustainable and cost-effective. Incorporating this option, among the other options available to individuals receiving developmental disabilities services, may be appropriate. The Research Brief discusses the partnerships to create these housing alternatives. While successful residential options are often possible through existing public funds and authorized DS HCBS support, some models include positions such as "Residential Coordinator" or "Inclusion Concierge".

Additionally, permanent service-supported housing is one alternative to the current predominant model. The pilot planning grant process will identify additional choices individuals receiving developmental disabilities services and

families are interested in exploring. This process allows the Department, stakeholders and organizations the opportunity to ensure that models pursued adhere to state and federal regulations, notably preserving the basic rights of individuals that provide privacy and respect, choice and control, and community integration.

One of the Principles of Services in the Developmental Disabilities Act is “Meaningful Choices.” Expanding residential and housing options to create additional choice for individuals is built on this principle. However, to honor this principle and the initiative laid out in Act 186, the Department will likely require additional funding to meet the needs of individuals who choose these options in the future. Through the pilot planning grant, the Department will identify new models to pursue, and the additional resource needs required. Additionally, through the planning phase, work to make certain the models are sustainable can be done. DS HCBS have significant limitations related to funding of “brick and mortar” housing costs. Working to make sure that appropriate connections and relationships with available public funding entities are fostered, technical assistance is offered to understand the complexities of DS HCBS funding and support is provided through the DDS Residential Housing Developer, the Department is available to help grantees succeed.