

Testimony to the Vermont House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

February 10, 2026

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University of Vermont
Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Outline

1. Introduction – UVM, CALS, Extension
2. History of Extension
3. The Work We Do & How We Do It
4. Funding Model
5. The Future

UVM - Vermont's Land Grant University

Land Grant Act (The Morrill Act) of 1862

- teaching, research, and extension
- intended to democratize higher education with a focus on practical applications

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CAL S)

- Departments:
 - Agriculture Landscape and Environment
 - Animal & Veterinary Sciences
 - Community Development and Applied Economics
 - Microbiology and Molecular Genetics
 - Nutrition and Food Science
 - Plant Biology
 - Extension

“...teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts as well as classical studies so members of the working classes could obtain a liberal, practical education.”

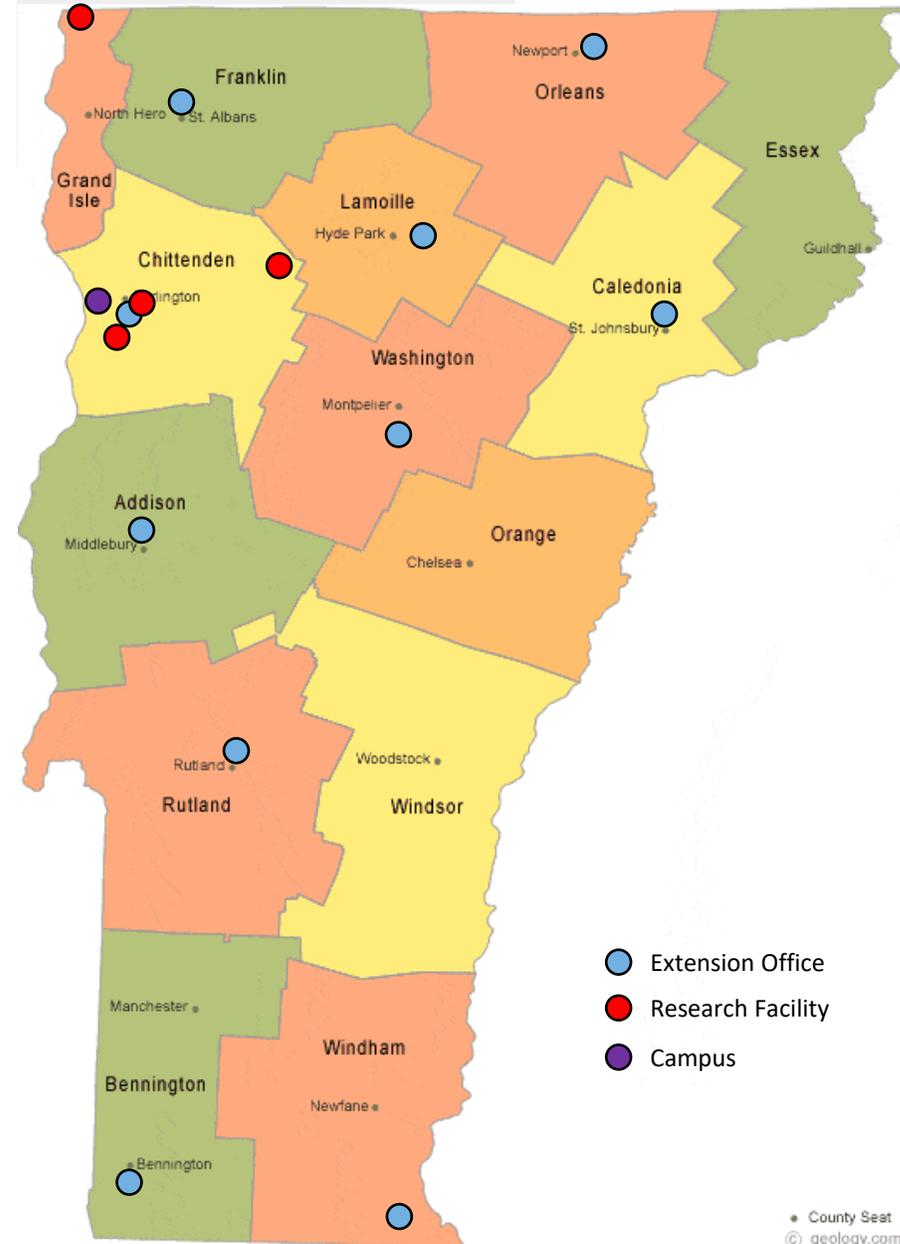
Justin Smith Morrill
Strafford, VT
1855-1867 US House
1867-1898 US Senate

Extension

“Putting Research-Based Knowledge to Work”

UVM Extension integrates higher education, research, and outreach to help Vermonters put knowledge to work for their families and in homes, farms, businesses, towns and the natural environment. Faculty and staff, located in offices around the state, help improve the quality of life of Vermonters.

A **bridge** between the University and communities.



The Work & How We Do It

Four Program Areas & Admin Team

Faculty & Staff

Embedded in Community

Participatory and Stakeholder Driven

In Close Partnership with State Agencies and other Organizations

UVM Extension Program Area Teams

Program Area Teams	Capable Communities	Healthy Families	Natural Environment	Sustainable Ag, Food, and Forests	Admin & Operations
Goal Statements	Engage with communities to support leadership development, capacity building, and diverse voices in decision making.	Increase the resilience of families and individuals around health, education, and personal and family well-being.	Integrate business and conservation to improve the quality of the natural environment where Vermonters live, work, and play.	Improve the financial, environmental, and social sustainability of Vermont's agriculture, food, and forest sectors.	Develop organizational strategies. Support program growth and development. Secure funding for Extension.

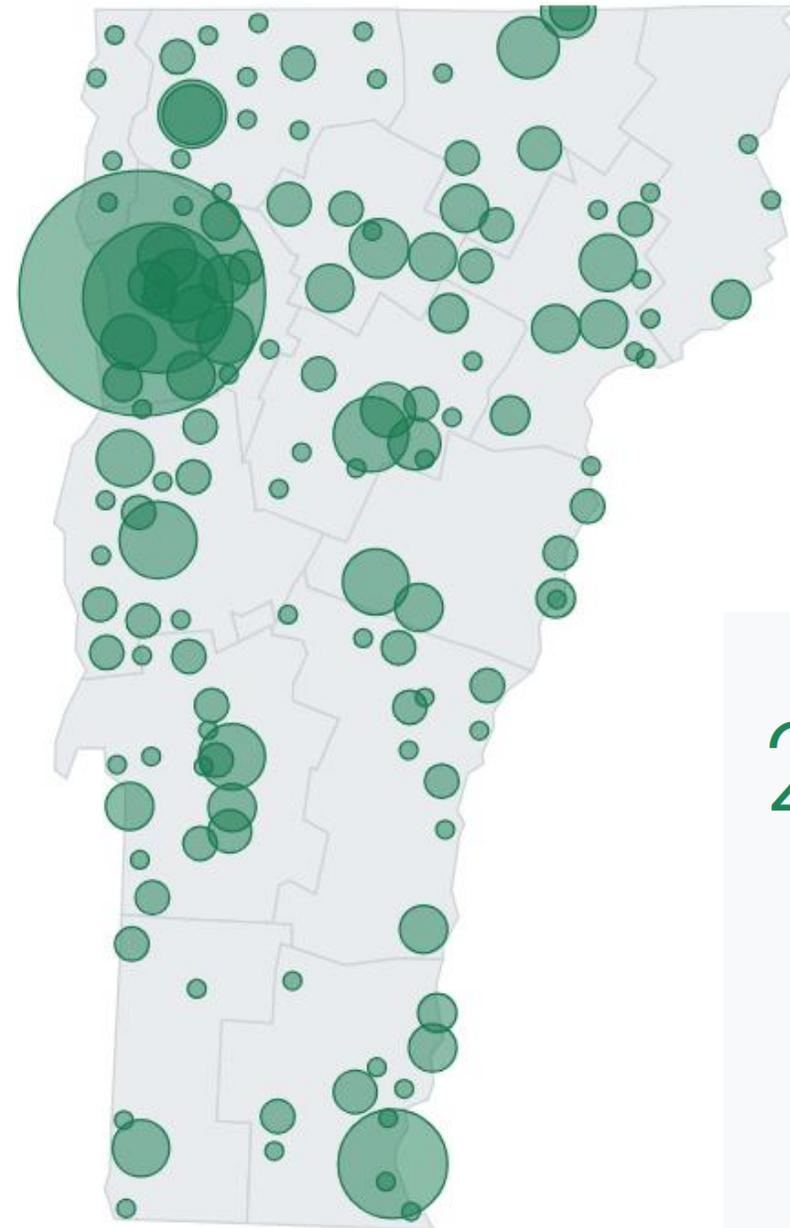
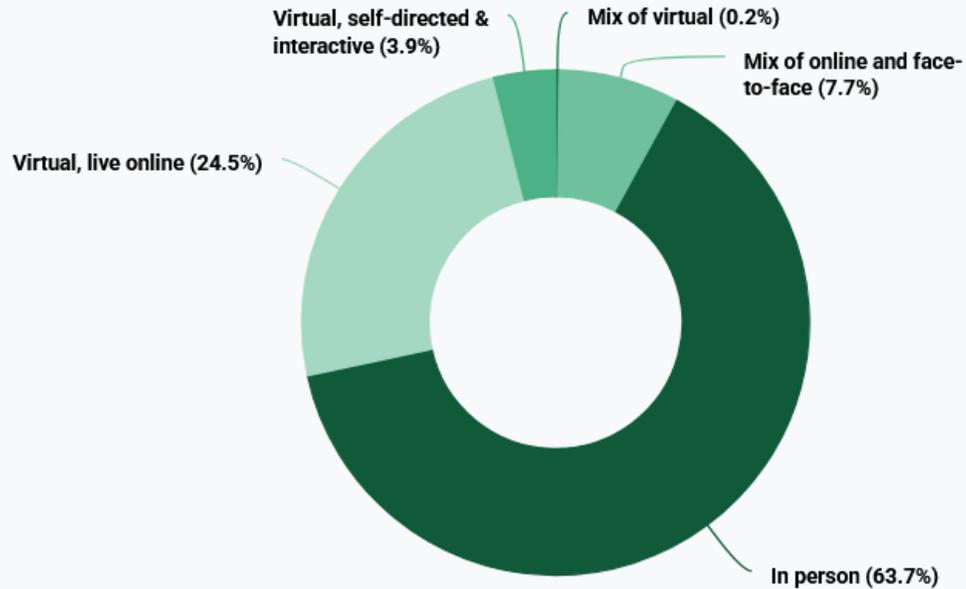
Goal statements have primary ownership within a program area team and are also cross-cutting.
Multiple program area teams and programs support each goal area.

UVM Extension Program Area Teams

Program Areas	Capable Communities	Healthy Families	Natural Environment	Sustainable Ag, Food, and Forests	Admin & Operations
Program Teams	Agritourism Diverse, New & Small Farm Viability Housing	4-H Family Programs (COPE & PROSPER) Migrant Education Migrant Health	Forestry Integrated Pest Management Plant Diagnostic Clinic Pesticide Education Urban and Community Forestry	Agricultural Engineering Agriculture and Forest Business Agroecology Center for Sustainable Agriculture Champlain Valley Crop, Soil and Pasture Team Community Nutrition Maple Northeast Center to Advance Food Safety (NECAFS) Nutrient Management and Soil Health Pollinator Support Vegetables and Berries Northwest Crops & Soils Northeast Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education (NE-SARE)	Admin State Office

2025 Activities

Delivery Methods



Participants
29,247

Sessions
1,621

Hours
5,320

So What?

Capable Communities



“We ... have taken an emergent approach,” the chair of the ... Conservation Commission said. “We focused on developing relationships with people in the community and UVM, and now the invasive species ecologists from UVM. We are just confident that by bringing in different people and different perspectives and voices that will inform what we do next.”
– Participant in Ecological Planning Laboratory

Healthy Families



“First, let me say THANK YOU!!! For my 9-year-old, it certainly was about feeling welcomed and feeling some success in the process. For my 12-year-old, he was captivated by your bringing in the real-world aspect of cost of materials. For me, having my boys interact with those wonderful, positive, enthusiastic college students was absolutely the best!”
– Parent of STEM Showcase Participants

Natural Environment



“The conference was wonderful. One of the best conferences I've ever attended. The content was incredible, the speakers brought insightful and memorable presentations... I not only met a lot of great people but had serious discussions that will move the needle on actual [old growth] conservation—which I think is the entire point. I think you and the team did a really masterful job being inclusive with speakers but also curating the event so it wasn't just a radical echo chamber—if you know what I mean. ... You did it right and you succeeded.”
– Participant in Northeastern Old Growth Conference

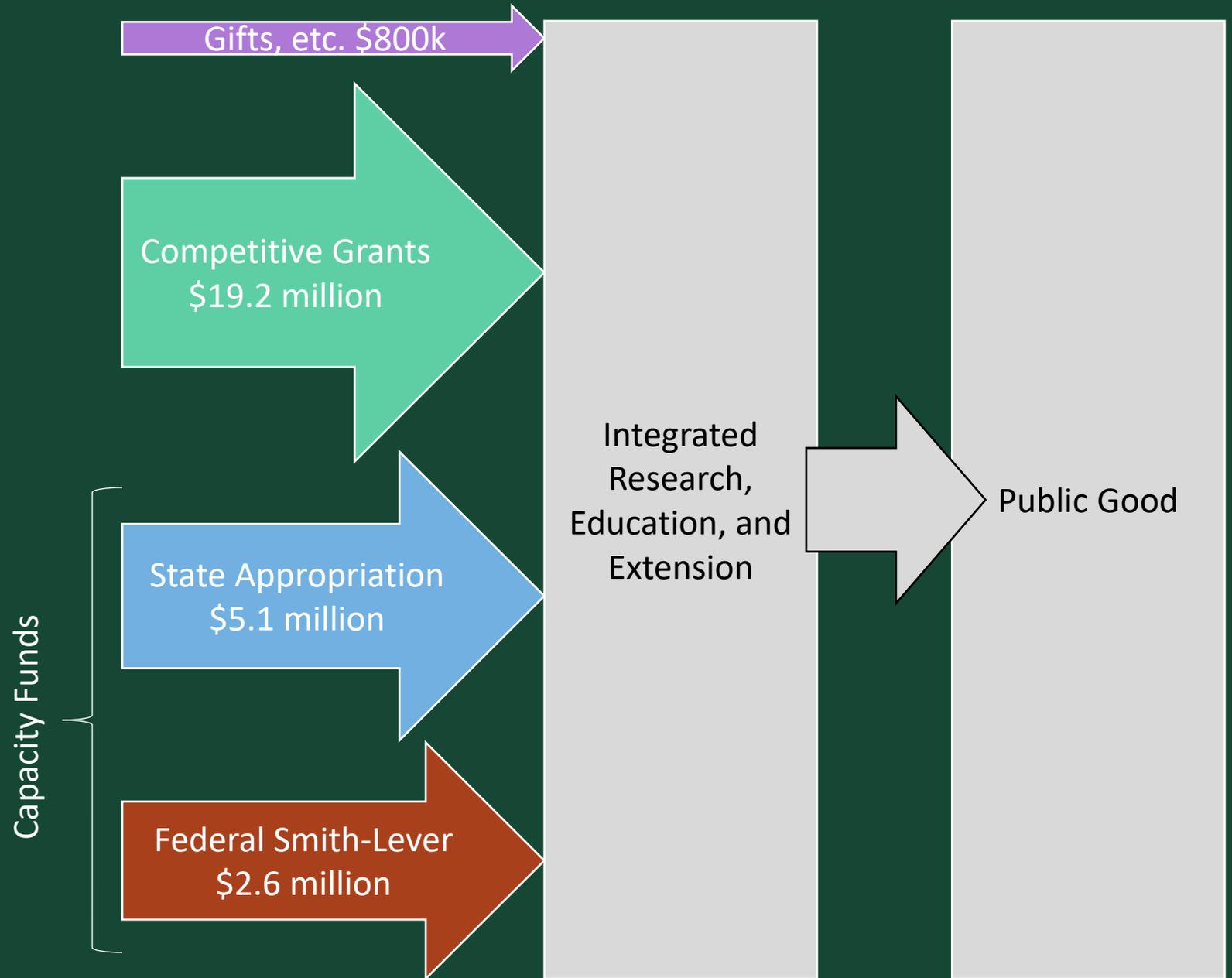
Ag, Food, and Forests



“I have never done any [...] professional development to date and this class was awesome. It connected me to other growers. I obtained invaluable information and materials that will assist in my growth for years to come. It was essential for my growth as a [...] farmer in the industry as I try to navigate a quickly growing market and begin to make decisions that are best for me and my business.”
– New Farmer Program Participant

Funding Model

1. Federal Capacity Funds
(Smith-Lever Act)
2. State Appropriation
(partial, General Fund)
3. No County Funding in
Vermont
4. Foundational, "Capacity"
Funds are Leveraged for
Project-specific Grant
Funds



The Future

- Funding
- The Work & How We Do It
 - UVM Strategic Plan – Four Pillars
 - Vermont Assessment of Assets & Needs (VAAN)

The Future - Funding

- Capacity Funding has largely stayed flat with modest increases
- Expenses have grown
- Federal funding landscape is dynamic

The Future – UVM Strategic Plan

Pillar 1 — **Forge Bold Futures:** Student Connection, Purpose, and Impact

Pillar 2 — **Study What Matters:** Values-Driven Learning, Research, and Practice

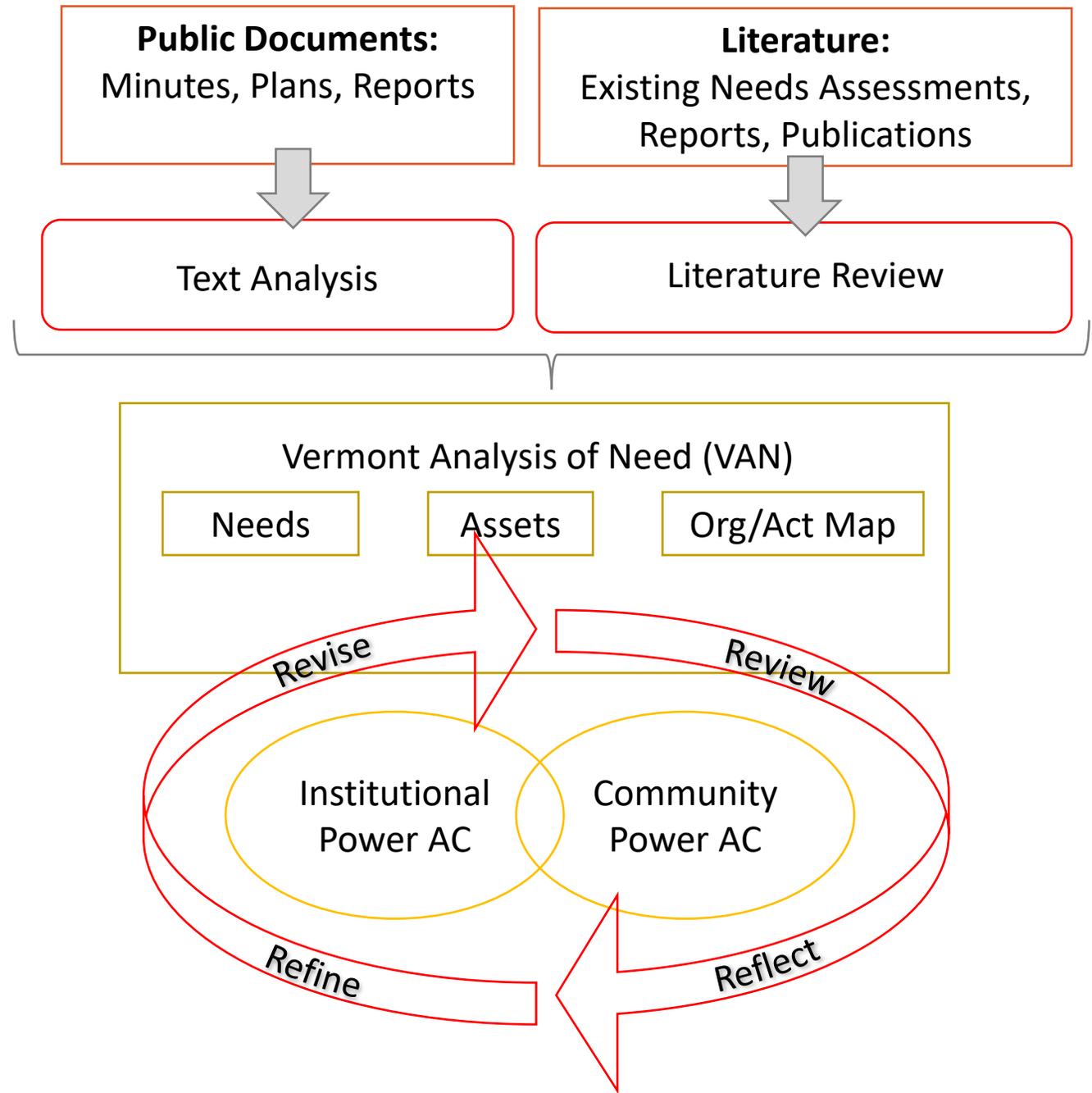
Pillar 3 — **Create Opportunity:** Access, Engagement and Partnerships

Pillar 4 — **Enable Excellence:** Campus Community, Systems and Infrastructure

Next step: Expansion to CALS and Extension specific plans

The Future: Vermont Assessment of Assets and Needs (VAAN)

- Assessment of need, articulation of problems to be solved, and definition of research and educational needs are often isolated and varied.
- Vast array of community-level needs and approaches to addressing them, which makes effective coordination and prioritization challenging for organizations, governments, and other entities concerned with social and environmental change.
- Need for a complementary asset-based lens.
- Extension's expertise and breadth of program areas positions us for facilitating a holistic assessment of need that can help guide our own work and that of others.
- 1st 12-month phase of 2 projects in 2026.
 - Articulate the needs, assets, and angles.
- Next phase - 2027 - Plan for coordinated action.



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