

Land Access and Opportunity Board Touchstones:

1. Listen generously. Speak your truth from your heart & mind.
2. Make the way we work together an example of what's possible.
3. Trust that we all hold a piece of the puzzle & we need each other's pieces to understand the whole picture



Land Access & Opportunity Board

January 30, 2025

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Act 182, 2022

Created the Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board to promote improvements in access to woodlands, farmland, and land and home ownership for Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities who continue to face barriers to land and home ownership.

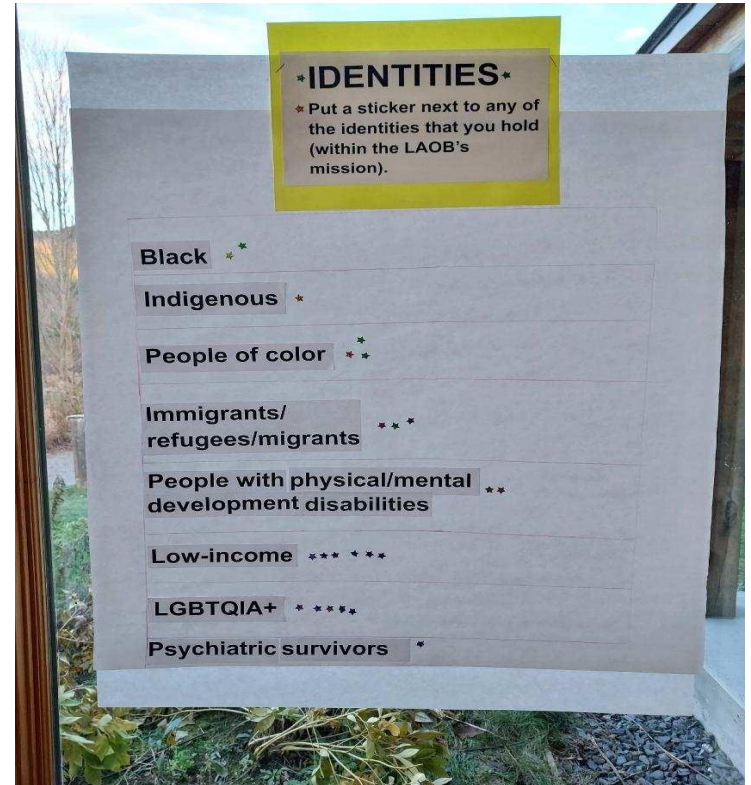
LAOB Priority Objectives

*The Land Access
and Opportunity
Board was
Created to:*

1. **Address historical barriers** that continue to exist within systems of legal oppression and exclusion, economic domination of people and exploitation of land.
2. **Promote opportunities to access land, home security and welcoming communities** for Vermonters from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities, and all those living at the intersections of marginalization.
3. **Seek out, create, fund, and build alternative models** for land access, finding home, and mobilizing a network of safe, welcoming communities.
4. **Create the economic and social conditions to make Vermont a haven** where individuals, families, & collectives of historically marginalized & disadvantaged communities can live, grow & thrive.

LAOB Appointing Authorities

1. Vermont Office of Racial Equity
2. Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs
3. Vermont Branches of the NAACP
4. Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
5. Liberation Ecosystem
6. Vermont Every Town Project
7. National Association of Social Workers (Vermont Chapter)
8. Pride Center of Vermont
9. U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants, Vermont
10. Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council
11. Vermont Psychiatric Survivors



A person is seen from behind, standing on a shore and looking across a calm lake. The lake's surface is perfectly still, acting as a mirror for the sky and the surrounding mountains. The sky is a gradient of light blue and white, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The mountains are dark silhouettes against the bright sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Invitation

How would you make Vermont a haven for underserved communities to live, grow and thrive?

Our
community
engagement
events
identify the
following
needs:

Financial Resources

- Purchasing supports, help accessing loans, diversifying qualifying requirements, appraisal and inspection
- Climate adaptation resources and supports
- Supports to help lower income individuals stay in and repair homes
- Down payment assistance programs

Navigation Accessibility

- Language accessibility
- Legal and advisory support
- Catalog of available state programs
- Technical assistance-support navigating grants, town permits, laws, and ordinances.
- Liaison with banking and financial institutions

Welcoming & Safe Communities

Policy systems that value the legitimacy of our experiences

What problems are we seeing?

- Vermont needs more people power: families, workers, participation in public processes.
- Disconnect between public institutions and the people they are supposed to serve.
- Silos prevent us from unlocking creative solutions.
- Compounding crises are threatening our communities materially and emotionally.
- Those who are most vulnerable are hit hardest by all crises.
- The lack of effective solutions is inefficient & expensive

Strengthening
Vermont's
Human
Infrastructure

Stabilizing
Housing

Improving
Land Access

LAOB Approach

- Hired 2 Co-Directors in January 2024. Hire 3 support and program staff in FY25.
- Build trust and confidence with communities across Vermont. Encouraging community members to believe their participation and leadership matters.
- Establish credibility and value with housing and land access institutions. Using our advisory powers to offer fresh perspectives and encouragement of growth mindset.
- Research and identify the most effective ways for LAOB to add value into the system. Looking for leverage points that unlock new community potential, very careful to avoid duplication and program redundancy.
- Identify and secure opportunities to leverage complementary/new funding sources for our communities: federal, private, etc.

Advisory Powers & Community Engagement

- Conference workshops
 - VBSR Annual Conference- Panel on Housing Legislation
 - UVM Food Systems Summit- Panel on LAPIs, Research and Community Engagement
 - Statewide Housing Conference - Shelter for All Workshop
 - Farm to Plate Network - Land Access Workshop
- Act 166 Study Group
- Act 181 Study Group
- LAOB Growing Our Roots Conferences
- Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative Work Group
- VHCB Farm Disposition Work Group
- Regional Planning Commission Land Use Mapping - Community Engagement
- Land Access Innovations - VAAF, Farm to Plate Network, VHCB, etc
- Act 59 30x30 Phase 2

Capacity Building

- Co-authored \$13M grant submission to EPA Community Change Grant for farmworker housing (*pending*)
- Serving as EPA Thriving Communities Grantmaker Anchor Org for Vermont to support Vermont projects accessing \$48M in available grants
- Active participant in State Treasurers Climate Resilience Roundtable
- Steering Committee for ACCD's *Rural Collaboration Network Assessment and Recommendations* Project with Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships
- Participant in New England Direct Pay Blueprint Consortium led by Climate Jobs Rhode Island

Direct Services

- Community Sponsorships
 - New Suns Community Center (Thetford)
 - Richard Kemp Center (Burlington)
 - BIPOC Financial Empowerment Program (Statewide)
 - Liberation Ecosystem (statewide)
 - Environmental Justice Network (statewide)
- Community Garden Grants in partnership with VHCB
- Secure Housing Coaches Program - April 2025 launch
- BIPOC Developer TA Program with VHFA
- Emergency Preparedness and Safety Mini-grants
- Down Payment Assistance Grants - FY26
 - Housing
 - Land Access
- Flex Capital for BIPOC and emerging Developers - FY26

Legislative Priorities

Legislative Priorities

- **Securing Appropriation**
The recently submitted report from the Act 166 study group (pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 987) on Cannabis Social Equity Programs recommends to allocate 25% of the Cannabis Excise Tax to the Land Access and Opportunity Board for community reinvestment purposes.
- **Housekeeping:** Board appointed authorities change request
- **Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont Policy Platform**
- **Food Security Road Map Policy Platform**
- **People's Demands for Just Recovery Platform**

We are also keeping our eyes on:

- Fair housing laws
- Funding for HRC and TRC
- Ongoing act 250 reforms
- Equal protection clause
- Just Recovery Demands
- The real costs to those most marginalized

LAOB FY26 Budget

FY26 Budget - \$5.97 Million

Projected Revenues

\$5.6M = 25% Cannabis Excise Tax Community Reinvestment Fund (pending)

\$150,000 EPA Thriving Communities Grantmakers Anchor Org (year 1 - secured)

\$224,000 projected FY25 carryforward

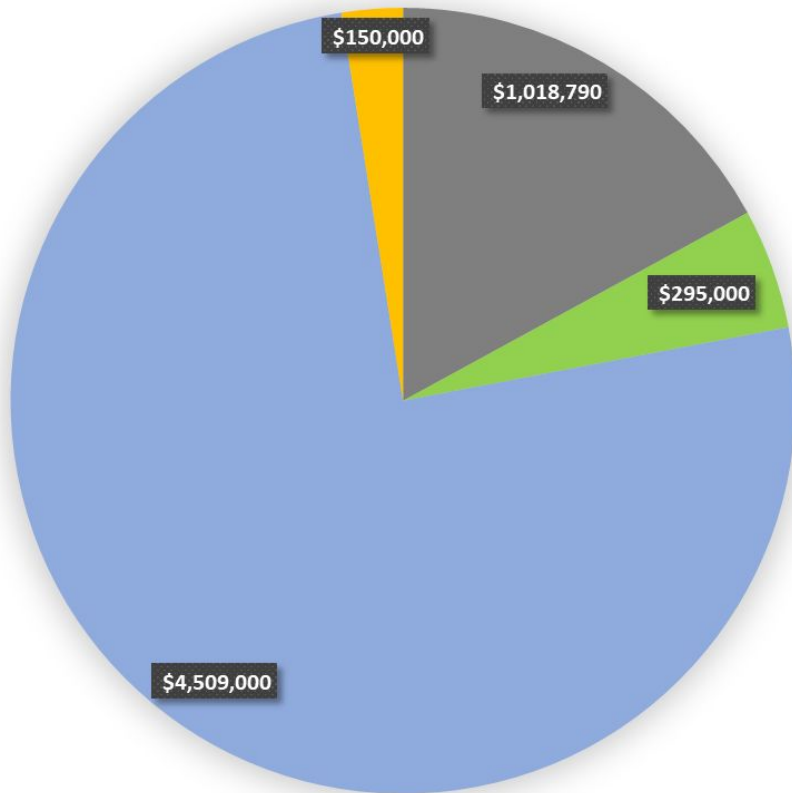
Projected Expenses

\$1M General Operating: Staff, Board, Admin

\$295,000 Advisory Powers & Community Engagement Program Costs:
Assessments, Conferences, Stipends

\$4.5M Direct Service Program Costs: Housing Coaches, Emergency Preparedness Grants, Down-payment Assistance Grants, Capital for Emerging Developers

\$150,000 Capacity Building & TA Program Costs: Thriving Communities, etc.



- General Operating: Staff, Board, and Admin
- Advisory Powers & Community Engagement Program Costs: Assessments, Conferences, Stipends
- Direct Service Program Costs: Housing Coaches, Emergency Preparedness Grants, Downpayment Assistance Grants, Capital for Emerging Developers
- Capacity Building & TA Program Costs: Thriving Communities, etc.

Reference: CCB Report to the
General Assembly Pursuant to 7
V.S.A § 989

Vermont Cannabis Control Board

Report to the General Assembly
Pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 989

January 15, 2025



Community Reinvestment

- *Background*
- *Community Reinvestment Programs*
- *Recommendation*

Recommendation

Recommendation 4: Dedicate a portion of the cannabis excise tax* to the Land Access and Opportunity Board (“LAOB”) for community reinvestment in the following initiatives:**

- 1. Down payment assistance grants to support homeownership and land access for disadvantaged Vermonters.**
 - a. Work in partnership to expand and complement existing downpayment assistance programs, e.g., VHFA First Gen Homebuyer, CHT Homeownership Equity Program, FHL Bank of Boston LIFT UP Program.
 - b. Develop Vermont’s first downpayment assistance grant to support farmland access for disadvantaged communities
- 2. Financing and technical advising support for BIPOC and other emerging developers**
 - a. BIPOC Developer technical assistance program in partnership with VHFA
- 3. Seed and implementation grants for community-led affordable housing and community development projects including land trusts, landbanks, etc.**
- 4. Strengthen community leadership of disadvantaged communities through advisory powers and community engagement.**
 - a. Allocating resources to strengthen and sustain community-led initiatives.
 - b. Supporting underrepresented community members’ participation in public policy processes with stipends, childcare, travel costs, and language access.
 - c. Advising public policies and programming on how to dismantle ongoing barriers that prevent the participation and benefit of disadvantaged communities.

*The LAOB indicated that 25% of the cannabis excise tax annually will allow it to effectively implement its priority initiatives. Based on the cannabis excise tax projections contained in the [JFO Consensus Revenue Forecast \(July 2024\)](#), 25% of the cannabis excise tax would equate to \$5.6M in FY25 and \$6M in FY26

** For more information on the LAOB, please visit: <https://vhcb.org/our-programs/land-access-and-opportunity-board>

Background

“There is widespread agreement that the War on Drugs has disproportionately impacted the poor and communities of color. Disproportionate arrest rates and convictions for possession offenses have a negative effect on access to work, housing, and education, as well as decrease participation in civic life.”

[The Social Equity Paradigm: The Quest for Justice in Cannabis Legalization](#)

See additional studies regarding the disproportionate impact of drug arrests and sentencing on minority communities in Vermont and the economic impact of these convictions: [Incarceration Rates of People of Color](#); [Justice Reinvestment II Racial Equity Sentencing Analysis](#); [A Tale of Two Countries: Racially Targeted Arrests in the Era of Marijuana Reform](#); [Cannabis Legalization And Social Equity: Some Opportunities, Puzzles, And Trade-offs](#); [Conviction, Imprisonment, and Lost Earnings: How Involvement with the Criminal Justice System Deepens Inequality](#); [The Long-Term Economic Impact of Criminalization in American Childhoods](#)

Background (cont'd)

There is an enduring legacy of economic insecurity that stem from disproportionate enforcement of drug laws in Vermont and nationally which compound other discriminatory policies and practices (e.g., redlining, exclusionary zoning, chattel slavery, etc.). This legacy is exemplified by:

- [Home ownership among black Vermonters is 27%](#)
- [Only 0.006% of farmland in Vermont is owned by black people](#)
- [The national median wealth of a black family in the U.S. is 1/10th that of the median wealth of a white family](#)
- [16% of Vermont's homeless population is BIPOC, despite making up only 5% of the total VT population](#)
- [BIPOC Vermonters are 3x more likely to experience food insecurity than white neighbors](#)
- [Black Vermonters per capita income is half that of white Vermonters](#)