



January 20, 2026

RE: FY2026 BAA Public Hearing

My name is Michelle Eddleman McCormick and I'm the Director of Cooperation Vermont, an organizer with the Marshfield Resilience Hub and the General Manager of the Worker Owned Cooperative at the Marshfield Village Store. I am writing to express strong support for the Land Access and Opportunity Board in the Budget Adjustment Act, with a particular focus on funding two essential programs: the Beginning Developers Pre-Development Grant Fund and Resilience hubs.

These programs are not abstract line items. They are strategic investments in community stability, economic mobility, and long-term disaster preparedness. The Beginning Developers Pre-Development Grant Fund fills a critical gap in our development ecosystem. Too often, emerging developers — especially those from historically marginalized communities — cannot access the early-stage capital required to compete for projects or bring community-driven visions to life. Pre-development costs like architectural studies, environmental assessments, and legal work can be prohibitive. By funding this program, the Board empowers local talent, expands the pipeline of community-rooted developers, and ensures that the benefits of growth are shared more equitably. This is how we build generational wealth and diversify who gets to shape our neighborhoods.

Equally important is funding for Resilience Hubs. As climate-driven emergencies become more frequent, our communities need trusted, accessible spaces that provide power, cooling, communications, and essential services before, during and after emergencies. Resilience Hubs do exactly that — and they also serve as year-round community anchors, offering programming, resources, and connections. There are possibilities here about tying in services and technical assistance support for town and municipalities that host them.

Investing in these hubs is not only a climate adaptation strategy; it is also a public engagement strategy and a community well-being strategy. Every dollar spent now reduces the human and financial costs of future emergencies.

Together, these two programs reflect strategic investments in community transformation: supporting the people who want to build in their communities, and protecting the communities themselves from the challenges ahead.

I urge the committee to fully fund these initiatives and affirm the Land Access and Opportunity Board's role in creating a more equitable, resilient, and opportunity-rich future.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to this work.

Sincerely,

Michelle Eddleman McCormick
Director, Cooperation Vermont
Thank you,

Michelle Eddleman McCormick

Michelle Eddleman McCormick
Director/ Lead Organizer
Cooperation Vermont