

Vermont Historical Society

Mission

Vermont Historical Society believes understanding the past changes lives and builds better communities. Our purpose is to engage Vermonters and Vermonters-at-Heart with outstanding collections, state-wide outreach, and dynamic programming.

Further detail on mission, vision, and institutional values can be found here:

<https://vermonthistory.org/mission-and-strategic-plan/>

Strategic Goals:

1. **Provide** Vermonters and Vermonters-at-Heart the resources to access Vermont's rich historical collections from anywhere in the world.
2. **Recognize** and support local history efforts; understanding that local societies are an integral part of sharing and preserving Vermont's story.
3. **Build** resilient and connected communities, so Vermonters will understand Vermont's history and its place in the broader world.
4. **Enrich** guests' experience through deeper understanding of Vermont and its people.

Summary plan document can be found here:

[https://vermonthistory.org/client_media/files/About/Strategic%20plan%20flyer%20\(3\).pdf](https://vermonthistory.org/client_media/files/About/Strategic%20plan%20flyer%20(3).pdf)

A unique collaboration – VHS and The State of Vermont:

- Chartered by the legislature in 1838, and thus the oldest cultural heritage organization in the state, VHS collects, preserves, and exhibits objects and documents related to Vermont's past (22 V.S.A., sections 281-285). The Vermont Historical Society is the only institution in Vermont that collects artifacts and documents that reflect the entire history of the state, every geographical area, and every chronological period, including the present.
- In the event of dissolution of VHS, management of its collection and related property will become the responsibility of the State (22 V.S.A., section 284).
- Employees of VHS are classified by the state classification system as if they were state employees and receive all general pay increases granted state employees (22 V.S.A., section 285).
- The State of Vermont requires participation in the Vermont State Employee Retirement System by qualified employees of VHS, as well as access to group coverage for health, dental, and life insurance. The premium for this coverage is paid entirely by VHS and its employees.
- VHS is both tenant and a landlord of the State of Vermont. Fee for space is assessed annually to VHS for the area occupied by the Vermont History Museum in the Pavilion Building. The State of Vermont leases space in the Vermont History Center for the Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center and Vermont State Library.
- With the change in scope and purpose of the State Library, VHS has become the primary research library for study of our state's history. Much of the VHS collection is searchable online, with more materials added daily.
- VHS provides secure, climate-controlled space and curatorial oversight for the state's collection of historic flags and other select holdings.

- VHS provides access to meeting rooms in both the Pavilion space and History Center without charge to state agencies.
- The Vermont History Center in Barre is delegated for use by state agencies as an alternative worksite in the event of natural disaster or other emergency.
- VHS provides curriculum support and supplemental learning for students and teachers throughout Vermont. VHS education staff work closely with State House staff to coordinate field trips that include tours of the State House and Vermont History Museum.
- VHS supports approximately 200 local historical societies and museums throughout Vermont and advances their vitality in the communities they serve.

Key Budget Issues:

The Vermont Historical Society has eliminated structural deficits endemic to prior operations. Upward pressure on expenses continues to be exerted by fixed staff salaries and benefits as defined through the state employee contract, pension obligations that grow each year, maintenance of a 50,000 square foot historically important building in Barre, and operating costs associated with running the Vermont History Museum and serving Vermont students free-of-charge.

VHS continues to see an outsized budget impact by pension and health insurance obligation growth. Though staff size has remained constant and new employees have replaced longer-tenured employees, the personnel cost is rising faster than the recommended cap of 3% on departmental expenses. With regular annual health insurance premium increases of 15%, as well as additional staff taking advantage of the benefit have resulted in a sizeable increase in this benefit cost in recent years. VHS continues to see an outsized budget impact by pension obligation growth.

The Trump administration executive orders may be affecting federal funding allocations, which could interfere with payments related to current projects. We are learning that some current grant funding may be delayed or revoked. Additionally, we anticipate that changing funding priorities with this administration may hinder our ability to access new federal grant funds during the term. Though private fundraising remains robust, we are starting to see signs of fatigue, especially with donors turning their attention to natural disasters, climate change, healthcare needs, and the political donation cycle.

Results:

Please see attached summary annual report. The report may also be found at:

https://vermonthistory.org/client_media/files/About/FY24%20AR%20for%20website.pdf