



Memo

To: Vermont House Human Services Committee

From: Paul Dragon

Subject: Funding History and Ongoing Needs of the Community Resource Center (CRC)

Date: 2.18.26

Purpose

This memo provides an overview of the establishment, funding history, and current financial needs of the Community Resource Center (CRC), Vermont's largest daytime resource center serving individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Background

The CRC was established following the closure of the state-run COVID-19 emergency shelter at the Holiday Inn in Burlington, operated by CVOEO. During the pandemic, this site housed up to 165 individuals daily, making it the largest shelter in Vermont.

When the emergency shelter program ended, the City of Burlington, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), and other state partners recognized the need for a centralized daytime resource hub to support individuals who were displaced. The CRC was initially located at the VFW in Burlington.

From its inception, the CRC has relied on a complex combination of federal, state, municipal, and private funding sources. These funds allowed the CRC to provide meals, housing navigation, service coordination, basic needs support, and a safe daytime space for individuals experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are unsheltered.

In August 2022, due to increasing demand and space limitations, CVOEO relocated the CRC from the VFW to its Burlington Food Shelf. This move enabled the program to utilize an on-site commercial kitchen to provide daily hot meals and distribute food boxes. The space has since been expanded to accommodate the high number of individuals served each day.

Operational and Funding History

December 2020 – October 2024

The CRC operated through a braided mix of temporary funding sources, including:

- City of Burlington funds
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development CDBG-CV (CARES Act) funds
- ARPA funds
- Congressional Directed Spending funds
- Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) funding
- Private donations to CVOEO

August 2022

The CRC relocated from the VFW to CVOEO's Burlington Food Shelf. Funding continued to consist of short-term and non-recurring sources.

2024–2025

The CRC was supported through one-time allocations from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and private donations.

2025–2026

Operations continue to rely on DMH funding and donations, without guaranteed recurring support.

Funding Limitations and Challenges

The reliance on temporary and non-recurring funding has created ongoing instability for the organization, staff, and the individuals served. This funding structure is not sustainable for a critical public service.

- **OEO Limitation:** OEO has clarified that it may fund overnight shelters through the Housing Opportunity Program but cannot support daytime shelter operations.
- **Department of Mental Health (DMH):** OEO recommended seeking funding through the Department of Mental Health due to the alignment between CRC services and DMH's work with individuals experiencing homelessness who are living with mental health conditions—particularly those not connected to designated agencies.
- **One-Time Allocations:** While DMH has provided essential one-time funding over the past two years, these allocations are not recurring and do not offer predictable financial stability.

Scale and Community Impact

- The CRC is the largest daytime site serving unsheltered individuals in Vermont.
- Monthly data and reports are submitted to DMH to ensure transparency and accountability.
- The CRC benefits not only individuals experiencing homelessness but also the broader community, including residents, businesses, and municipal partners who rely on stable and coordinated services.

Current Need

To sustain essential daytime services for Vermont's largest population of unsheltered residents, the CRC requires predictable, recurring annual funding.

Stable funding is necessary to:

- Ensure continuity of services
- Support public health and safety
- Retain trained staff
- Provide stability for surrounding neighborhoods and businesses

Establishing reliable annual funding would allow the CRC to function as a stable and integrated component of Vermont's homelessness response system, rather than operating under ongoing financial uncertainty.