



Thank you, Madame Chair and members of the Committee.

I'm coming before you today to discuss how continuing to fund HomeShare Vermont's most recent expansion both satisfies health goals set out by the legislature and saves individual Vermonters money in the process. Last year the legislature appropriated \$235,000 to extend our reach to the entire NEK as well as southern Windsor and all of Windham County. This request was for base funding and we received one-time funding, which is why we are back this year.

As you all likely know, HomeShare Vermont is a program that matches older Vermonters, Vermonters with disabilities, and anyone with extra room in their homes with folks looking for an affordable place to live. Hosts charge below-market rent in exchange for some assistance in the form of household chores that run the gamut from handling the shoveling to meal preparation. While our guests do not provide personal care, it's clear that the nearly 40,000 hours of assistance makes a real impact on the quality of life for hosts in the program. I've attached our outcomes report for you to look over at your leisure, but I wanted to zoom out a little today.

A little over five years ago the Older Vermonters Act was passed which in turn led to the Age Strong Vermont Plan: the goal of the plan is simple, making investments and policy changes to improve the quality and continuum of life here in Vermont. The act and the plan set out eight principles or pillars of aging strong:

1. Self Determination
2. Safety and Protection
3. Financial Security
4. Housing, Transportation and Community Design
5. Family Caregiver support
6. Optimal Health and Wellness
7. Social Connection and Engagement
8. Coordinated and Efficient System of Services

I would invite you to keep those eight pillars in mind as I tell you the story of just one of the hundreds of people, we were able to match last year.

Shirley was 94 years old living alone with six grown children nearby, she's lucky.

The kids were rotating through living with mom for a few days at a time as it was clear to them that living alone was less feasible than it had been. Shirley says "they were starting to get on my nerves"

Enter Beth. Health care worker who was having a hard time affording rent anywhere and was interested in saving up money for a condo.

The two get along swimmingly, Beth does most of the cooking with A LOT of advice and oversight from Shirley, including instructions on her famous salmon wiggle!

On Mondays they go out for bingo, which is much less worrisome with Beth in the picture. Other nights, the pair makes sure to be done with dinner in time for Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune. They have a regular reality show schedule and are not above throwing things at the TV if emotions run hot.

Shirley's kids are able to focus on their relationship with their mom, and have more capacity to deal with issues, advocacy and appointments as they come up. Shirley has her home back as she sees it and has made a new friend of Beth (who she refers to as her 7th child.)

Rather than paying the high cost of assisted or supportive living, Shirley has remained in her home, has kept up (and improved) her social life and everyone's peace of mind greatly improved.

(you can [hear more about this on Vermont Public if you're interested](#))

I wanted to bring this story to your attention because it's a great example of how the HomeShare model really gets at all 8 pillars, all of which are difficult to tackle. Number four alone (housing, transportation and community design) is a massive undertaking, but here we have a way to satisfy that goal (and all the others) in one simple and affordable step. No construction, no zoning, just making a good match.

As you can see from our impact report, Vermonters saved over \$1.4M last year as a result of their participation in HomeShare and believe me that is just the tip of the iceberg. We have not included the savings to meals programs, health care centers, Medicare and Medicaid spending that each one of our clients has generated, partially because it's hard to track but mostly because there are so many knock-on effects of this work that we'd have a hard time pinning all the impacts down.

We are painfully aware of the fiscal challenges this body is grappling with, and we appreciate all the work you're doing to keep Vermonters healthy. What's clear to us, however, is that our work will only become more important as federal cuts continue to shake the fabric of our social safety net. More and more older Vermonters and Vermonters with disabilities will need more options for making ends meet in the coming years and if interest in the new service areas are any indication, they see HomeShare as one of those options.

I don't know if there are many programs that reach Vermonters in such a holistic manner or that tackle multiple community issues as efficiently as HomeShare does. One of the keys to that success is the partnerships we've forged with the Thompson Senior Center, the Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging and Windham & Windsor Housing Trust. By sharing case managers with these regional partners, we're able to save taxpayers' dollars on start-up and overhead costs while leveraging the on-the-ground experience of these groups to carry the message of homesharing more effectively.

For less than \$250,000 dollars we can continue to serve 12 of Vermont's 14 counties and be in a position to scale that service up as need demands. As you can see from our impact report, participants feel safer, happier, less lonely, and enjoy their homes more when they are homesharing. We hope you'll consider our request with them in mind.



FY 2025: Improving Lives and Communities by Bringing Vermonters Together to Share Homes

WHAT: HomeShare Vermont helps the State of Vermont meet two important goals by assisting our aging neighbors to stay at home, where they want to be, while helping others find an affordable place to live.

WHO: While there are no age or income restrictions for homesharing, most people sharing their homes (hosts) are elders or persons with a disability while most people looking for housing (guests) can't afford market rents.

HOW: We provide a comprehensive screening and matching service with ongoing support.



Those Who.....	Shared Their Home	Found Housing
Age Range	28-100	19-82
Average Age	72	47
% Low Income (HUD)	70%	92%
% Reporting Disability	33%	9%

Results Based Accountability (RBA) Outcomes

How Much?	Unduplicated # of Persons in Match	300		
	# of Housing Units Created	198 homes available to share		
	# of Service Hours Exchanged	37,989 hours of assistance to seniors and others		
How Well?	Homeshare Average Match Length	632 days or 21 months		
	Participant Satisfaction	100% satisfied with HSVT 100% would recommend us to family or friends		
Is Anyone Better Off?	Affordability of Housing	Average Rent	\$379	
	Ability of Seniors to Stay Safely at Home	37% of seniors sharing their home reported they would not be able to live safely and comfortably at home without a homesharer		
	Improved Quality of Life: Those having someone live with them report they.....	Feel Happier	80%	
		Feel Safer in Their Home	79%	
		Feel Less Lonely	79%	
		Enjoy Their Home More	71%	
		Worry Less About Money	55%	
Sleep Better	46%			

(See back of page for Return on Investment)

FY25 Return on Investment



In FY 2025 the State of Vermont provided \$318,076 and \$161,924 of matching federal funds to HomeShare Vermont. **This investment of state funding allowed Vermonters to save a total of \$1,441,370.**

Homeshare guests provided approximately 37,989 hours of assistance to seniors and others. This represents a **savings of over \$560,700 for those sharing their home and their families if they had to hire help.**¹

By sharing their homes, low-income seniors and others received over **\$395,300 in rental income to help them make ends meet.**

The average rent in a homesharing match was \$379 with 30% of guests paying \$0 rent. Using the difference between market rents and actual HomeShare agreement rents, it is estimated that **HomeShare guests saved over \$880,670 in rental expenses.**²

HomeShare Vermont: We Make The Match, You Make A Friend

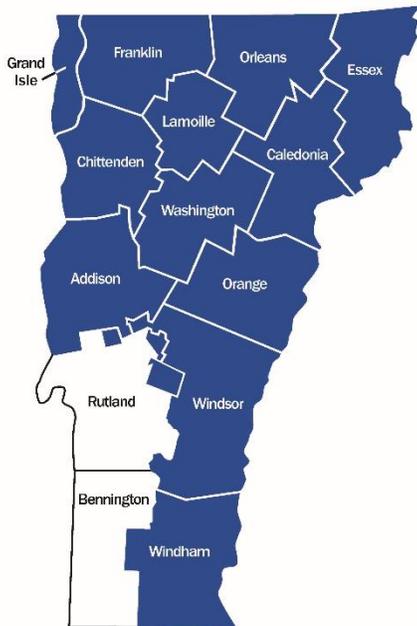
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HomeShare Vermont currently provides our matching services to residents in 12 Vermont counties including Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orange, Orleans, Washington, Windham, and Windsor and several towns in Rutland County.

A Vermonter's Guide to Homesharing is a do-it-yourself guidebook that we currently provide to assist Vermonters outside of our service areas. In addition, we are available to provide consultation to all Vermonters who call with questions or need guidance.



¹ Calculation based on personal care assistant median wage - Bureau of Labor Statistics, VT State Occupation & Employment Wage Estimates

² Calculation based on fair market rents by county as determined by the US Department of Housing & Urban Development