

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

FY2026

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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.

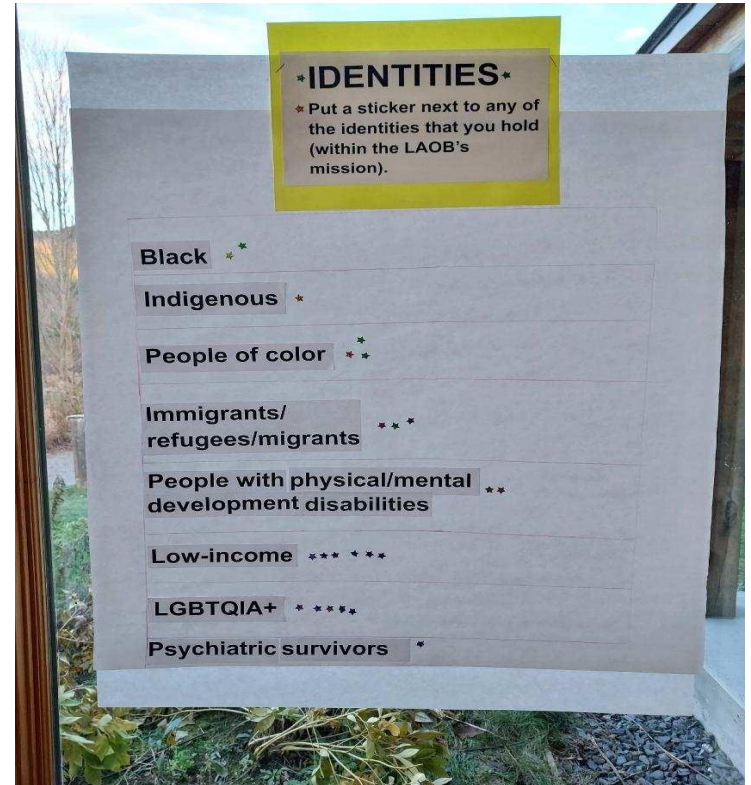
LAOB Priority Objectives

*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 dark shore and looking across a wide, 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 will 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
- Submitted RWJ Foundation "Reimagining Land Use & Zoning for Health Equity" LOI \$250K to support Northeast Kingdom cluster housing project

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
- Emergency Preparedness and Safety Mini-grants - March 2025 launch
- Secure Housing Coaches Program - April 2025 launch
- Emerging Developer TA Program with VHFA - April 2025 launch
- Down Payment Assistance Grants - FY26
 - Housing
 - Land Access
- Flex Capital and support for New & 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**

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

Governor Scott's FY26 budget includes \$1,631,582 for the LAOB.

- \$1.6M allows LAOB to continue to offer the same programs and services that we are offering in FY25.

An appropriation of 25% of cannabis revenue allows the LAOB to expand the current program offering to include

- \$3.65M additional direct economic investments into Vermonters' abilities to secure housing and land via
 - down payment assistance grants for land and housing
 - capital for emerging developers to build community scale housing projects.

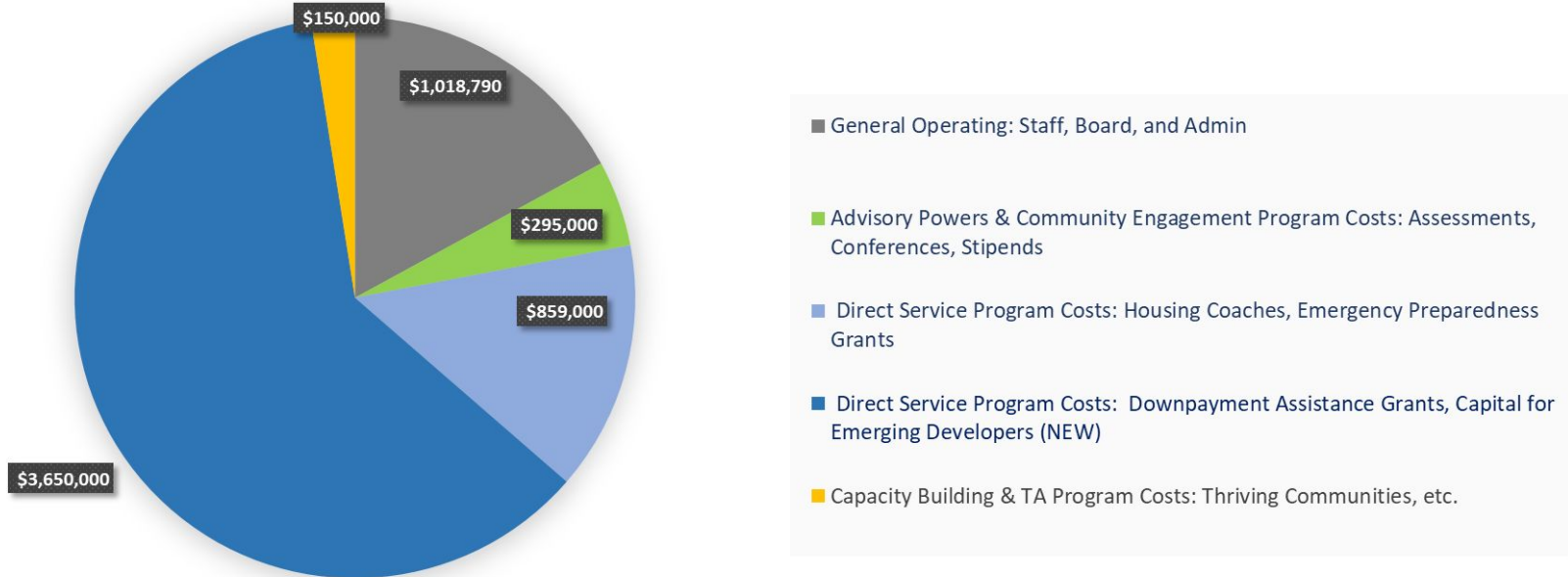
The excise tax allocation provides an ongoing funding stream for the LAOB, reducing the staffing costs of securing annual, one-time appropriations

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
	\$860,000 Direct Service Program Costs: Housing Coaches, Emergency Preparedness Grants
	\$3.65M Direct Service Program Costs: Down Payment assistance grants, capital and TA for emerging developers
	\$150,000 Capacity Building & TA Program Costs: Thriving Communities, etc.

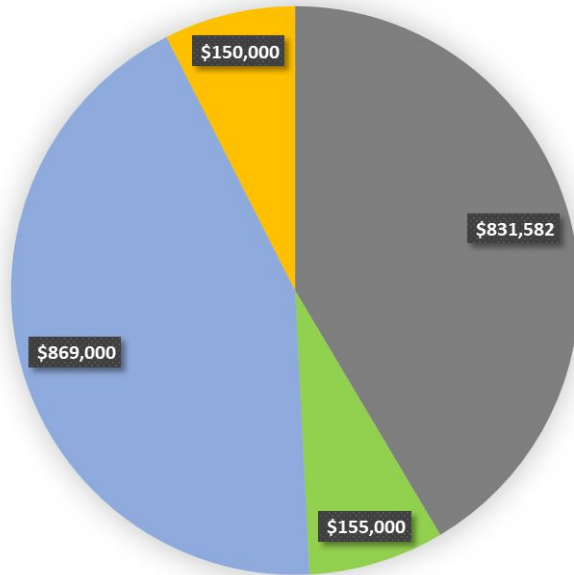
LAOB FY26 - funded at \$5.6M (25% cannabis excise)

Budget - \$5,972,790 (FY26 appropriation \$5.6M + \$224k FY25 carry forward + \$150k EPA contract)



LAOB FY26 - funded at Governor's recommend of \$1.6M

Budget - \$2,005,582 (FY26 appropriation \$1.6M + \$224k FY25 carry forward + \$150k EPA contract)



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

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*

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](#)

Background (cont'd)

Given the inherent barriers to accessing the industry and the on-going challenges to achieving sustainable success, the CCB and the Cannabis Advisory Committee concluded that the Social Equity Program alone is inadequate to mitigate the harm caused by historic drug policies and has called for the creation of a community reinvestment fund in prior legislative reports

[Cannabis Control Board Report - January 15, 2022](#)

Economic Opportunities & Social Equity – Legislative recommendations

Beyond the work of the Board to foster an equitable cannabis marketplace, the General Assembly can create far-reaching policies to mitigate the long-standing social and economic inequities fueled by cannabis prohibition. The Board encourages the legislature to adopt these policies.

- The Cannabis Business Development Fund is not adequately funded to provide meaningful economic opportunities to social equity applicants and businesses on an ongoing basis. The Board recommends that the legislature allocate a portion of the cannabis excise tax revenue annually to the Cannabis Business Development Fund. The Control Board's Advisory Committee recommended that 5-10% of the cannabis excise tax revenue be dedicated to the Business Development Fund.
- The Board recommends that the legislature create a Cannabis Community Reinvestment Fund to funnel cannabis revenue to communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition and allocate a percentage of cannabis tax revenue to the fund annually. Not all individuals from communities harmed by prohibition want to participate in the adult-use industry. Reinvesting cannabis revenue into these communities is a more comprehensive approach to mitigating the harms caused by disproportionate criminal legal enforcement. The Control Board's Advisory Committee recommended that 20% of the cannabis excise tax revenue be dedicated to a Reinvestment Fund.

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[7 V.S.A. § 989 Social Equity Report - January 15, 2023](#)

Recommendations: community reinvestment

- The General Assembly can also create policies to mitigate the long-standing social and economic inequities fueled by the drug war.
- Not all individuals harmed by prohibition want to participate in the cannabis industry.
- The Board recommends that the legislature create a Cannabis Community Reinvestment Fund to funnel cannabis revenue to communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition and allocate a percentage of cannabis tax revenue to the fund each year. Reinvesting cannabis revenue into these communities is far-reaching approach to mitigating the harms caused by disproportionate criminal legal enforcement of cannabis laws.

Community Reinvestment Programs

Currently 8 states have enacted Community Reinvestment Programs that direct cannabis revenue into communities disproportionately impacted by state and federal drug policies:

Arizona (10% of cannabis revenue)

Purpose: Support public and behavioral health; restorative justice, jail diversion, workforce development; and addressing the underlying causes of crime

Administration: The Arizona Department of Health Services - Office of Health Equity

California (\$50M annually)

Purpose: Award grants to Local Health Departments and qualified Community-based Nonprofit Organizations to support job placement, mental health treatment, substance use disorder treatment, system navigation services, legal services to address barriers to reentry, and linkages to medical care for communities disproportionately affected by past federal and state drug policies.

Administration: The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development

Community Reinvestment Programs (cont'd)

Connecticut (60% of cannabis revenue)

Purpose: Provide financial assistance to enhance programs and services for communities disproportionately harmed by cannabis prohibition and enforcement; support broad-based economic development in disproportionately impacted areas; increase the quality of life, vibrancy, accessibility, and equity in communities disproportionately harmed by cannabis prohibition and enforcement.

Administration: Social Equity Council

Delaware (7% of cannabis revenue)

Purpose: Provide grants, contracts, services, or initiatives that focus on restorative justice, jail diversion, workforce development, industry-specific technical assistance or mentoring services for economically-disadvantaged persons in disproportionately-impacted areas; addressing the underlying causes of crime, reducing drug-related arrests, and reducing the prison population in this State; creating or developing technology to assist with the restoration of civil rights and expungement of criminal records; supporting social equity applicants with select business-related expenses; supporting or providing reentry services for justice-involved individuals.

Administration: Criminal Justice Council

Illinois (25% of cannabis revenue)

Purpose: Address the impacts of economic disinvestment, violence, and the historical overuse of criminal justice responses in communities with resources to support local design and control of community-based responses; substantially reduce gun violence and concentrated poverty in the state; protect communities from gun violence through targeted investments and intervention programs; Promote employment infrastructure.

Administration: Recover, Reinvest, and Renew (3R) Program Board

Community Reinvestment Programs (cont'd)

Maryland (35% of cannabis revenue)

Purpose: Provide funding to local jurisdictions to support community-based initiatives that benefit low-income communities and communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the enforcement of cannabis prohibition

Administration: Community Reinvestment and Repair Commission allocates funds to counties that further distribute the funds for allowed purposes

New Jersey (70% of cannabis revenue; Social Equity Excise Fee)

Purpose: Provide investment, including through grants, loans, reimbursements of expenses, and other financial assistance, in municipalities defined as “impact zones” and for direct financial assistance to qualifying persons residing therein.

Administration: Funds appropriated by the legislature as recommended by the Cannabis Regulatory Commission

New York (40% of cannabis revenue)

Purpose: Provide grants for qualified community-based nonprofit organizations and approved local government entities for the purpose of reinvesting in communities disproportionately affected by past federal and state drug policies, with an initial focus on mental health, workforce development, or housing for people 0-24 years old.

Administration: Cannabis Advisory Board

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>