

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 details 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:

VHS continues to face upward pressure on expenses due to several fixed and growing cost drivers: staff salaries and benefits determined by the state employee contract, annually increasing pension obligations, the ongoing maintenance of our 50,000-square-foot historic building in Barre, and the operational costs of running the Vermont History Museum and providing free educational programs to Vermont students.

We anticipate that shifting federal funding priorities under the Trump administration may limit our ability to secure new federal grant opportunities during this period. Vermont Historical Society has annually secured, on average, \$165,000 in competitive federal grants over the past five years. While private fundraising remains strong, we are beginning to see signs of donor fatigue, as many donors are redirecting their support toward urgent causes such as natural disasters, climate change, healthcare, and national cultural organizations formerly funded through federal dollars.

Calendar years 2026 and 2027 are especially important to history organizations throughout Vermont. Vermont Historical Society is taking a leadership role through exhibit development, publications, small museum and local historical society support, and much needed curriculum development around both the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the independent Vermont Republic. As our mission states, we believe understanding the past changes lives and builds stronger communities. Though this work is very important, national grant support is exceedingly weak. Initiatives in support of these anniversaries can be found here:

<https://vermonthistory.org/vermont-history-united-states-250th/>

Historically, the Vermont Historical Society has aligned its appropriations requests with the Governor's recommendations. While this approach has demonstrated short-term fiscal responsibility, it restricts rather than grows, or even maintains, program services to Vermont.

VHS continues to experience significant budget pressure due to rising obligations for pension and health insurance benefits. Although our staffing levels have remained consistent in recent years, and newer employees have replaced long-term ones, personnel costs are increasing at a rate that exceeds the recommended 3% cap on expense growth. Annual health insurance premiums have risen by approximately 15%, and with more staff electing to participate in available benefits, VHS has seen a substantial increase in associated costs. As an organization required, per statute, to compensate our employees under the terms of the state employee system, we do not have the flexibility to manage these costs. For FY27, we are requesting appropriations that reflect our projected obligations for salaries, health insurance, and pension contributions, ensuring we can meet our statutory obligation to staff while continuing to deliver high-quality public service.

Results:

Vermont Historical Society annual report may be found at:

https://vermonthistory.org/client_media/files/About/FY25%20Annual%20report%20for%20website.pdf