



# ACRPC

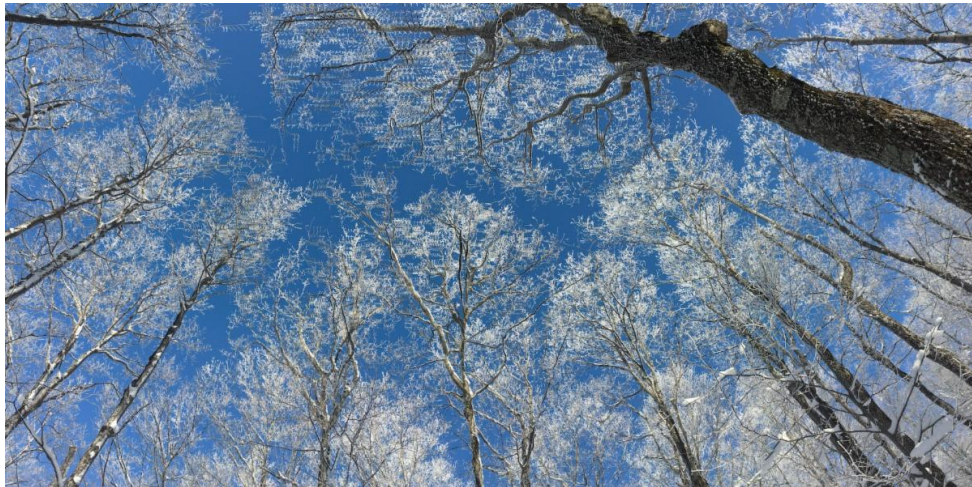
## *Monthly Newsletter*

February 2025

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## ACRPC Welcomes New Staff



**Danelle Birong**  
Community Planner

Danelle Birong is a real estate broker with 14 years of experience serving clients in the transfer of residential, land, and commercial properties in Addison County. Previously, she spent 6 years in marketing and communications, and was also co-owner of 3 Squares Cafe for 17 years.

Additionally, Danelle immersed herself in the Vergennes community and was a member of the Planning Commission for 5 years, has served on the Vergennes Partnership Economic Development Committee since 2015, and is currently a Vergennes Lister and member of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Green Mountain Youth Facility.

Danelle received a B.A. in Economic/Business with a minor in Spanish from Lafayette College, and spent many years studying, teaching, and traveling abroad before settling in Vergennes.

Danelle is excited to assist our county with responsible and resilient growth while utilizing her project management, problem solving, and customer service skill set. She will be focusing on projects in the natural resources sector, land use and housing, and grant outreach and management.



**Rebecca Elder**  
Community Planner

Rebecca Elder brings a range of experience in municipal administration, land use planning, and strategic communications. Before joining the ACRPC, Rebecca served the Town of Starksboro for seven years in a variety of roles including Zoning Administrator and Town Administrator.

Previously, Rebecca worked for the Vermont Land Trust on the community relations team supporting land conservation efforts in communities throughout the state. She has also managed a graphic design business, RTE Designs, with a focus on branding and marketing for nonprofits and small businesses.

Rebecca received a B.A. in English Literature and Philosophy from Muhlenberg College, engaged in graduate studies at the University of Michigan, and lived in several states before choosing Vermont as her home.

Rebecca supports community efforts through volunteer roles in the local schools, youth athletic and academic programs, and various nonprofit organizations. At the ACRPC, she will focus her work with Addison County municipalities on land use planning, grant management, community outreach, and the update of the Regional Plan.



**Jolyon Larson**  
Energy Planner

Jolyon is the Energy Planner for the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, and he joins the RPC after completing more than a decade of public affairs study. He obtained his B.A. in Politics from Hendrix College in 2016, and studied public policy analysis and economics while completing his degree. He obtained his Masters in Public Affairs from Indiana University's O'Neill School for Public and Environmental Affairs in 2018, at which he specialized in Energy Policy analysis. Finally, he completed his Ph.D. in Natural Resources at the University of Vermont in 2024, for which he examined system governance from a policy-, process-, and structure-based perspective.

His research includes studies on the democratic advantages of wildlife habitat conservation via public land trusts in the U.S., on the impact of governance process contexts on the frequency of environmental justice conflict reports globally, on the impact of the federated energy planning structure in Vermont on energy plan cohesion, and on a variety of similar energy and environmental governance topics.

He has obtained membership in both the political science and the public administration academic honor societies, and is a member of the American Political Science Association and the Project Management Institute as well. Jolyon is interested in good governance theory and practice, in socially responsible and environmentally sustainable energy systems, and in systems thinking more broadly.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Does your town need a part-time zoning administrator?



ACRPC recently met with several towns within the region about the possibility of aggregating their part-time zoning administrator positions into one full time position administered through ACRPC.

ACRPC would hire a full-time position to serve each of the towns for the hours that each town needed. The salary, benefits, and overhead for the position would be paid by each town in proportion to the amount of work they contracted. Potential benefits of this approach would include a full-time, long term, professional zoning administrator supported by and administered through ACRPC.

If your town is interested in discussing this possibility, please contact [Adam Lougee](#) at (802) 388-3141 or [alougee@acrpc.org](mailto:alougee@acrpc.org).

Please be prepared to discuss a description of the services your community requires your zoning administrator to fulfill, the hours your community would require including specific office hours or days of the week in town, a preferred hourly wage, and any other conditions of employment that your community would be interested in.



## GRANT & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### Municipal Planning Grants

**Applications Due March 31, 2025**

Municipal Planning Grants help Vermont's cities, towns and villages adapt to change and prepare for the future. This flexible State funding for planning and resilience can pay for a variety of eligible projects, such as:

- A new or updated municipal plan;
- New or updated bylaws that that implement Act 47 of 2023 (HOME Act) and Act 181 of 2024 (Resilience, Biodiversity & Land Use Act), including **zoning & subdivision bylaws**;
- Climate resilience and flood recovery projects;
- Projects related to housing development;
- New or updated capital programs and budgets for infrastructure maintenance and improvements;
- Physical improvement plans or other planning for a State Designation in coordination with Department of Housing & Community Development program staff; and
- Projects that support communities for all ages that align with Age Strong Vermont: A Roadmap for an Age-friendly State.

**Individual towns may apply for up to \$30,000, and multi-town applications (a consortium) may apply for up to \$45,000.** A local cash match of 10% of the total project costs is required, except for zoning/subdivision bylaw projects in municipalities without zoning/subdivision bylaws.

Please review the [Program Description](#) for eligibility requirements and the [Application Guide](#) for application questions. A wide variety of municipalities access this funding, including the Vermont's [smallest towns](#).

#### Application Schedule for FY2025 Grants:

- Regional Planning Commission confirmation of municipal planning process (to be eligible to apply for projects other than a municipal plan): **December 31, 2024**
- Online application opens for use: **January 27, 2025**
- **Application Deadline: March 31 @ 6:00 p.m., 2025**
- Award Decisions: April 30, 2025
- Project completion: April 30, 2027 (2-year grant term to complete a project)

If you have any questions about the Municipal Planning Grants or wish to discuss project ideas, please contact ACRPC's Katie Raycroft-Meyer [kraycroftmeyer@acrpc.org](mailto:kraycroftmeyer@acrpc.org) or 802-388-3141

## TRANSPORTATION GRANTS

### Downtown Transportation Fund

The Department of Housing and Community Development is pleased to announce the availability of the Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF) to support revitalization efforts in Designated Downtowns and eligible Designated Village Centers.

#### Eligibility for Designated Village Centers

The Downtown Transportation Fund has expanded eligibility to Designated Village Centers that have participated in the **Better Connections Program** and Designated Village Centers within Chittenden County that have completed a comprehensive downtown/village center/community area planning process with public input, comparable to the Better Connections Program. See the program application for a full list of eligible municipalities.

#### Application Deadline: February 17, 2025 @ 5:00 pm

Please note that the application includes a preliminary project review by Historic Preservation, which **must be submitted at least 30 days in advance** of the application deadline.

See the **2025 Downtown Transportation Fund Guidance and Application** for complete details of the program. The maximum grant amount is \$200,000 with a 20% match requirement.

Please contact Natalie Elvidge at [Natalie.Elvidge@vermont.gov](mailto:Natalie.Elvidge@vermont.gov) if you have questions or need assistance. Applicants are strongly encouraged to set up a pre-application meeting to discuss project ideas.

Learn more about the Downtown Transportation Fund

### Better Connections Program

The Better Connections Program provides technical assistance and funds to local communities to help them achieve their goals and plan for growth. The program funds planning efforts to increase multi-modal transportation options and to improve

land use, water quality, public health, and economic vitality in Vermont communities.

The Program is open to new applications biennially. A 10% local cash match is required. The Program funds physical plans focusing on:

- improved multimodal connectivity;
- active transportation and complete streets;
- access management;
- traffic calming;
- parking;
- wayfinding;
- rehabilitation of buildings;
- redevelopment of sites;
- housing;
- land use planning;
- stormwater management.

**Important Dates:**

- **January 24:** [Pre-Application Form](#) and Meeting Deadline
- **February 21:** Application Deadline

Learn more about the Better Connections Program

## AARP Community Challenge grants

AARP Vermont invites local eligible non-profit organizations and governments across the state to apply for the **2025 AARP Community Challenge** grant program, **now through March 5, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.** AARP Community Challenge grants fund quick-action projects that help communities become more livable by improving public places, transportation, housing, digital connections, and more.

This year, the AARP Community Challenge is accepting applications across three different grant opportunities:

- **Capacity-building microgrants** are paired with additional resources, such as one-on-one coaching from national nonprofit organizations, webinars, cohort learning opportunities and more for improving walkability, bikeability; implementing safe, accessible home modifications; and disaster preparedness training.
- **Demonstration grants** fund projects that encourage replication of exemplary local efforts. This year's focus is on improving pedestrian safety with funding support from Toyota Motor North America; expanding high-speed internet access and adoption with funding support from Microsoft; reconnecting communities divided by infrastructure; and implementing housing choice design competitions.
- **Flagship grants** support projects that improve public places; transportation; housing; digital connections; and community resilience.

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## Natural Resources

### Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Conference

When? May 29, 2025

Where? Vermont State University

Randolph Campus

[VT U&CF Website](#)

Registration will be available in March.

# Build a Better Project

VLCT Training Series



## Build a Better Project: Team Building

### Future dates and topics:

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 –  
Assessing Project Feasibility

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 –  
Framing Your Case through  
Storytelling

Tuesday, August 12, 2025 –  
Developing Project Schedules

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 –  
Building a Budget

Tuesday, December 16, 2025 –  
Recovering from Setbacks

VLCT info &  
registration

This chat is the first in a bi-monthly series to help members learn about different elements of developing strong projects.

Each meeting focuses on a different topic. After a brief presentation, there's a participant Q&A, where attendees can ask questions of the presenter and each other. Bring your questions, share your challenges, and learn from other communities.

### February's topic is TEAM BUILDING.

- Do you have a project idea and need a team to help you explore and develop it?
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- Do you have a team and want to build community support for the project?
- 
- Is your project ready for funding but you need internal support for grant management?

Project development is not a solo sport. It takes teams – a team to explore and develop the idea, a team to build community support for a project's eventual long-term operations and maintenance, a team to find and manage funding. While every team begins with one person, if you are feeling alone, join us! Together we'll explore how to build internal and external teams, the importance of communications, and the building blocks for successful community engagement.

### Presenter

Bonnie Waninger, Project & Funding Specialist,  
VLCT

Julie McKenzie, Assistant General Counsel, PACIF  
Labor and Employment, VLCT

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ask us a question?

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