

2019 Vermont Economic Justice Grant Recipients



[ANEW Place](#)

\$10,000

Chart ANEW Path

Burlington, VT

ANEW Place provides a group home and transitional housing for 26 otherwise homeless adults in Burlington, Vermont. Their mission is to provide a holistic continuum of services for the homeless that foster growth, cultivate community engagement, and provide tools for lifelong change so that each person may start anew. Beyond a temporary place to stay, program participants attain a positive and supportive community, addiction recovery assistance including a sober living environment, mental health support, personal finance training, and aid in finding long-term housing. The goal is to equip participants to escape the cycle of homelessness and chart a path forward. General support funding was provided to help sustain the Chart ANEW Path program, which annually serves 50-70 homeless adults. This program fosters personal long-term growth through a holistic, person-centered approach, to address the underlying causes of each participant's homelessness, helping individuals to gain the skills needed to move beyond homelessness and start ANEW.

[Building Bright Futures](#)

\$15,000

Building Bright Futures Regional Early Childhood Councils

Williston, VT

Building Bright Futures (BBF) is Vermont's early childhood public-private partnership established by law to monitor the state's early care, health and education systems and to advise the Administration and Legislature on policy and systems improvements. BBF operates as a backbone organization for collective impact at the state and local level by convening stakeholders and community members with a common goal of meeting the diverse needs of all Vermont children and families. Through its regional council network, Building Bright Futures serves thousands of children, their families, and communities across the state. Funding was provided to support Building Bright Futures and its twelve Regional Early Childhood Councils in their work to collectively identify gaps and improve equity in access to services and supports across early care, health, and education for young children and families in their communities around the state. BBF regional councils are made up of community stakeholders and serve as a vehicle to elevate regional concerns and systems challenges related to equity and access in state policy discussions. Funds would be utilized to help support council activities and coordination.

[GBICS](#)

\$20,000

Life is Better with Teeth: Improving Oral Health Outcomes for Bennington Area Children Year 2

Bennington, VT

GBICS is a community-based, non-profit organization that works with people who live in or near poverty in Bennington County. Originally started as a charitable food project in 1974, GBICS is now an organization that meets people where they are and provides needed resources to help them move on. By helping people meet their basic needs for food, shelter, clothing and access to health care. Recognizing that moving up and out of poverty requires not just a stream of income but also a reservoir of personal and community assets, GBICS takes actions in a way that treats others with genuine respect and in an equitable manner. Continued funding was provided in support of a free Dental Hygiene Clinic for Bennington children ages 3 to 10 at which a dental hygienist and a volunteer dentist screen children; apply fluoride varnishes, place dental sealants, provide oral health and healthy diet education to kids and their families; and work with parents to refer kids to dental homes for clinical care and ongoing services.

Green Mountain Farm-to-School, Inc.

\$15,000

Strengthening Local Food Systems for Brighter Futures

Newport, VT

Green Mountain Farm-to-School (GMFTS) works to restore and strengthen local food systems in Vermont by promoting positive economic and educational relationships between schools, farms, and communities. GMFTS provides capacity building support, resource development, and technical assistance to local schools and communities through their interconnected programs including school gardens, Farm-to-School program, food hub, food truck, and statewide marketing campaign. They partner with each community they serve to develop a comprehensive approach to improve access to healthy food and revitalize the local economy. GMFTS is addressing the economic, social, and environmental impacts of poverty by increasing access to healthy and affordable local food and promoting farm viability in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. GMFTS works hand-in-hand with farmers, educators, businesses, consumers, students, and the larger community to catalyze fundamental changes in the region's local food system.

Inclusive Arts Vermont

\$20,000

Start With The Arts

Essex Junction, VT

Inclusive Arts Vermont (formerly VSA Vermont) is a statewide organization whose mission is to use the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities. They partner with community organizations of all kinds, in all regions of the state to engage thousands of participants in arts education, professional development, training, and exhibition programs. Inclusive Arts Vermont (IAV) is a member of the VSA international network, an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. They serve 1,000 Vermonters each year, from birth to seniors, at 70 sites in every county, providing arts education programs, professional development workshops, and cultural access services. Every program is collaborative and supports the goals of partnering organizations, enhancing their skills in providing inclusive education programs. Funding was provided in support of Start with the Arts (SWTA) IAV's largest program. It is considered a statewide model for literacy education. SWTA is an award-winning program that focuses on improving the quality of early childhood education in Vermont. It gives Vermont children of all abilities the literacy and creative learning strategies they need to succeed in school while also helping low-income childcare providers advance in skills, recognition, and access to increased subsidies. The program reaches 27 childcare sites and approximately 250 individuals in every region of the state each year.

Lamoille Housing Partnership, Inc.

\$18,450

Housing Awareness and Education Outreach Program

Morrisville, VT

Lamoille Housing Partnership develops, rehabilitates and maintains safe, decent, energy efficient affordable housing through rental, home ownership, or other means to low and moderate income persons and families living within Lamoille County and the Town of Hardwick. Lamoille Housing Partnership provides such assistance without discrimination or prejudice using a combination of private and public funding partnerships. Funding was provide in support of efforts to proactively address reducing homelessness and evictions, eliminate the stigma and NIMBYism surrounding housing insecurity and homelessness, address the disparity between incomes and rents, and work with communities to ensure that affordable housing is an integral variable within community planning.

Mercy Connections

\$15,000

Justice Initiative (previously called Stand By Me)

Burlington, VT

Mercy Connections is an educational, values-driven, social impact organization with an enduring focus on advancing women and others who are marginalized. Mercy Connections promotes self-sufficiency through education, mentoring, entrepreneurship and community. They empower people with formidable challenges to make significant life changes through their three program areas: Justice & Mentoring, Education & Transition, and Women's Small Business - which allow participants to take advantage of research-based programs that incorporate differentiated instruction, gender-responsivity, multicultural sensitivity, and trauma-informed practices. Beyond the individual level, Mercy Connections takes action in the community to address injustice in the judicial and economic systems and fight for basic human rights for all. Funding was provided for the Justice Initiative (previously called Stand By Me) which is embedded in Mercy Connections' Justice and Mentoring Program and operates in collaboration with Vermont's criminal justice stakeholders. By leveraging volunteers to serve as mentors and focusing on risk-reduction behavior interventions, the project provides gender-sensitive, trauma-informed education and community that engages and supports incarcerated and criminal-justice involved women as they transition from the criminal justice system and work to build sustainable and healthy lives. This project provides alternatives to incarceration, reduces recidivism and increases successful life change for the women and their families.

Milk with Dignity Standards Council Inc.

\$10,000

Milk with Dignity

Burlington, VT

The Milk with Dignity Standards Council (MDSC) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to implementation, monitoring and enforcement in the Milk with Dignity Program. The Milk with Dignity Program brings together farmworkers, farmers, buyers and consumers to secure dignified working conditions in dairy supply chains. The Milk with Dignity Program is rooted in the MD Code of Conduct, which was created by the very workers whose rights it protects. The Code sets standards for conditions relating to wages, health and safety, housing, schedule and rest, non-retaliation, non-discrimination, and other labor conditions. The MD Program is designed to encourage and support farmer compliance seeking to build participatory, fair and dignified workplaces characterized by mutual respect, improved communication and collaborative problem solving. The MDSC works with farmers and farmworkers to understand, participate in and achieve compliance with the labor standards in the Code. MDSC accomplishes these goals through detailed annual farm audits that consist of thorough interviews with all farm employees and ownership or management, as well as review of payroll records and visual inspections of worker housing. They also operate a 24-hour worker support line. The Milk with Dignity Program is working to resolve systemic human rights abuses of a precarious workforce excluded from many labor protections. Because of the MDSC's work, farmers have agreed to resolve problems ranging from sub-minimum wages, lack of essential personal protective equipment, extremely overcrowded housing, lack of smoke detectors. and more.

Northeast Kingdom Collaborative

\$10,000

Increasing Connectivity in the Northeast Kingdom

Craftsbury, VT

The Northeast Kingdom Collaborative (NEKC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a vibrant, thriving Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. The NEK Collaborative's mission is to improve the quality of life for all residents of the NEK through coordinated economic and community development. Funding was provided in support of the implementation of their detailed action plan to advance broadband in the region, developed through a year-long community engagement process which included multiple community listening sessions and a Task Force of leaders and experts. This project will provide technical assistance and financial resources to: build community capacity to expand broadband access and digital literacy; and accelerate implementation of community-owned broadband infrastructure projects.

Northeast Kingdom Organizing

\$20,000

Transportation Justice Campaign

Hardwick, VT

Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO) is a new, member-led coalition of community and faith-based organizations united by the shared purpose to improve the quality of life of the people and the places of the region by building pathways so that each has a voice in the decisions that impact their lives. NEKO has nine founding member groups and one neighborhood organizing chapter. NEKO is based in the poorest and most rural region of Vermont, made up of Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties. NEKO's members utilize constituent-led community organizing strategies to work towards economic and social justice in the region. Those directly impacted by poverty, food insecurity and systemic forms of oppression lead NEKO's campaigns. Funding was provided in support of their first campaign developed after a year-long listening and issue identification process, which identified lack of access to transportation in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom as a critical root cause of poverty and economic injustice. NEKO's Transportation Justice Campaign seeks to advance economic and social justice by creating a comprehensive, accessible, equitable transportation system that is environmentally responsible. In the short term they will address inequity in Vermont's civil fine and driver's license laws and policies that are harmful to people who are low-income, and work to expand public transportation services and improve rider experience provided by Rural Community Transport (RCT).

Public Assets Institute

\$20,000

General Support

Montpelier, VT

Public Assets Institute is the Vermont member of the State Priorities Partnership, a national network of 42 state organizations—supported by the DC-based Center on Budget & Policy Priorities—that collaborate on behalf of low- and moderate income people. Public Assets researches and analyzes state tax, budget, and economic data and policy from the perspective of low- and moderate-income people. They publish clear, easy-to-read reports, op-eds, blogs, and briefs that connect historical trends and government activities and policies with Vermonters' daily lives in school, work, families, and communities in order to ensure that Vermont's policymakers are making the state work for everyone. In addition to their core state tax, budget, and economic work, Public Assets focuses on three issue areas: education finance, health care finance, and family economic security. General operating support funding was provided to expand their capability both to defend essential public services and equitable distribution of resources and to craft and advance proposals for fair and just economic and fiscal laws and practices that improve the lives of Vermonters.

Rural Vermont

\$17,000

A Just Transition to a Sustainable Vermont Agriculture and Economy

Montpelier, VT

Rural Vermont is a statewide membership organization that educates, organizes and advocates for family farmers and supports their vital role in sustaining rural communities while creating a fair and resilient food system for everyone. RV works to inform farmers, and the people they feed, about public policies that affect their lives and livelihoods and help empower them to participate effectively in the decision-making processes that create those policies and change them when necessary. They address issues at the local, state, and national level that affect the economic viability of family farms, impact the land and other natural resources on which they depend, or hinder community-based control of our food systems. Funding was provide to support RV's continued efforts to collaborate, organize, and advocate for a just transition to a Vermont agriculture and economy that takes care of our farmers and our ecosystem. Their work includes a robust outreach campaign to connect with farmers to share and gather information, a concerted effort to strengthen their grassroots network and build leadership among their farmer constituency, and continued advocacy for public policy that fosters an equitable farm and food sector that delivers health, vitality, and resilience to the state's farmers, communities, and ecosystems.

Steps to End Domestic Violence

\$15,000

Economic Justice Program and Tracking Trends Project

Burlington, VT

Steps to End Domestic Violence (Steps) works to assist in the transition to a safe, independent life for all those who have been affected physically, sexually, emotionally, or economically by domestic abuse and to promote a culture that fosters justice, equity, and safety. Steps offers a wide range of services designed to have a positive impact on the safety and well-being of domestic violence (DV) survivors and their children. In addition to helping survivors protect themselves from abuse, they work to increase their sense of self-efficacy and hope for the future, and directly increase their access to legal advocacy, community resources, opportunities, and supports. Steps uses a culturally sensitive, trauma-informed approach that offers encouragement, empathy, and respect to DV survivors. Steps uses an empowerment model that allows survivors to decide what opportunities and services to pursue. Many fleeing DV have suffered economic abuse along with physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse, which can leave them with poor employment, credit, and housing histories. Funding was provided in support of Steps' Economic Justice program which develops tools and connects with systems that support survivors as they reestablish personal finance, build employment readiness, and secure housing. The impact of domestic violence is complex and resonates throughout the community. Steps to End Domestic Violence is leading a group of 24 community partners in the Tracking Trends Project to systematically evaluate survivor and community needs and advocate for the best strategies to address them. Funding will help underwrite the costs of program planning and development for this work.

United Way of Lamoille County

\$10,000

New Foundations Transitional Housing Program

Morrisville, VT

The United Way of Lamoille County is not a traditional pass-thru agency but rather is a direct service/ community impact organization administering many of its own programs, including New Foundations (NF), the Lamoille Firewood Program, CARE (Citizens Assistance Registry for Emergencies), Shoveling for Seniors, HOPE (Holiday gifts for local seniors), Prescription Discount Program, Teen Gift Card Program for Holidays, and a Community Food Drive. They also invest in community programs run by other agencies which meet their funding criteria. Continued support was provided for New Foundations (NF), an innovative, residential program designed to provide educational and employment opportunities to low-income, single parents to enable them to earn higher wages to support their families. While in the NF program, participants receive a furnished apartment for up to two years while they work on furthering their education and gaining employment to their maximum potential.

Vermont Works for Women

\$15,000

Step In to Work (SITW) Plus: Expanding Employment Support for Women

Winooski, VT

Vermont Works for Women (VWW) is a local economic justice nonprofit with a mission to help women and girls recognize their potential and explore, pursue and excel in work that leads to economic independence. From equipping incarcerated women with employability skills to prevent recidivism and increase family stability to teaching STEM to help middle school girls expand their possibilities, VWW's array of programs provide a unique combination of coaching and skill-building that prepare women and girls for economic stability. VWW offers programs that are especially designed for women living in poverty who have barriers to employment, and all girls, who benefit from early opportunities to explore their future career options. Funding was provided in support of Step In to Work (SITW), a work readiness and job placement program that engages women to address employment barriers and prepares them to acquire and sustain employment that puts them on a path to long-term economic stability. Through this innovative and effective program, VWW addresses both individual women's needs and fosters systems change by collaborating with employers to improve the workplace culture for women. Using their extensive experience and relationships, VWW will design and deliver new employment support services to reach

more women who struggle financially, to increase awareness, knowledge, skills, and access to work that advances economic equity through geographic expansion and new partnerships.

Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform

\$20,000

Re-Imagining Justice

Burlington, VT

Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform (VCJR) is an education and advocacy organization committed to transforming Vermont's criminal justice system into one that is more fair and effective. VCJR works for a more restorative and effective criminal justice response with a vision for a coordinated criminal justice system that values the humanity in all people, aims to restore relationships and communities, and uses incarceration as a last resort for public safety. They seek to limit collateral consequences of criminal convictions and incarceration that too often contribute to inter-generational cycles of trauma and poverty. VCJR uses a range of grassroots strategies including public advocacy, education, outreach, coalition building, media campaigns, and leadership development (among directly-affected individuals) to address systemic issues like mass incarceration, racial disparities, gender inequities, inadequate mental health and drug treatment services, and inadequate opportunities for education and job training. Continued funding was provided in support of VCJR's efforts to end unnecessary incarceration in Vermont (incarcerating more people for longer periods of time than necessary to ensure public safety) including among low-income Vermonters, women, Vermonters of color and Vermonters struggling to live with and overcome mental illness and substance use disorders. They will be building on their groundbreaking drug policy reform work addressing the opioid crisis in Vermont and will shine a light on how unnecessary incarceration especially hurts parents, their partners and children as they continue to implement their incarceration diversion program for parents.