

2022 Vermont Equity & Justice Grant Recipients



Burlington Bicycle Project Corp DBA Old Spokes Home \$20,000

Old Spokes Home Youth Enrichment and Empowerment Programming

Burlington, VT

Old Spokes Home (OSH) is a non-profit bike shop in Burlington's Old North End. They are a community hub for bike access encompassing youth and adult programs, a retail bike shop, an active volunteer base, and a community workshop. OSH refurbishes, sells and gives away nearly 1,000 bikes each year. Their Everybody Bikes Program reduces the cost of bikes, bike repair and bike accessories so that they are accessible to everyone. Their youth programs include drop-ins for free fixes, bikes and locks, mechanic apprenticeships, collaborations with local high schools, and annual Kids Bike Bonanzas. OSH brings bike service to the community with the "Mobile Repair Unit" (MRU). They host weekly Volunteer Nights, seasonal workshops and social. OSH believes that any kid wanting a bike should have access to one. Not only does every kid deserve a bike but also the self-sufficiency that comes when they gain the skills to maintain that bike. For 2022 and beyond, OSH is focused on expanding OSH's Youth Shop, Mobile Repair Unit, apprenticeship programs, school collaborations and Bike Bonanzas to provide bikes and impactful programs for those who wouldn't have access otherwise.

Education Justice Coalition of Vermont \$20,000

General Support

Montpelier, VT

Education Justice Coalition of Vermont (EdJ Coalition) is a statewide coalition led by BIPOC, disability and LGBTQIA advocacy organizations and individuals working for education justice in Vermont. EdJ Coalition calls for truthful representation of historically marginalized groups in school curricula and for equitable school policies and practices. They partner with community groups to build power, connection, and knowledge concerning ethnic studies and education justice. EdJ Coalition is working to transform curriculum inequity, identity-based bullying, disparate discipline, and lack of representation of educators of color. Their goal is to build just and inclusive schools through building a strong and healthy education justice movement in Vermont. They are building an education justice movement through grassroots organizing, relationships building, and education through several organizing projects that are all powered by volunteers including: the Police out of Schools Coalition, the Education Organizing Committee, Act 1 ethnic studies support, an emerging youth organizing program, and the Vermont Educators of Color Association (an independent group that is co-facilitated and supported by EdJ Coalition).

Epsilon Spires \$10,000

Outreach and Accessibility Initiative

Brattleboro, VT

Epsilon Spires is a non-profit organization illuminating the relationships between creative arts, natural sciences, social justice, and sustainability using multimedia platforms. Epsilon Spires operates out of a renovated historic church in the heart of the Brattleboro Downtown Historic District, where they provide a community space for engaging in creative experimentation, social justice, and critical thinking through innovative performances and events, community gatherings, educational workshops, and art installations. Since opening in 2019, Epsilon Spires has hosted nearly 200 events, and their renovated

artist studios support 17 local artists working in a variety of disciplines. Epsilon Spires plans to launch a new pay-what-you-can option for all of their events, as well as embark on a campaign to substantially increase their community outreach, focusing on local school children, their families, and underserved populations. The goal of this initiative is to increase community engagement with the creative arts, social justice and equity, and environmental sustainability without the barrier of cost.

Greater Falls Community Justice Center

\$15,000

General Support

Bellows Falls, VT

Greater Falls Community Justice Center (GFCJC) is a non-profit community organization that works with community volunteers to divert criminal court cases to restorative justice processes, reduce recidivism, and educate the public and policymakers about the effects of harsh punishment and incarceration. Their staff also engages in “upstream” prevention, offering parenting courses for fathers and training programs to area schools to reduce punitive measures that disproportionately criminalize poor youth, disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. GFCJC serves those in northern Windham and southern Windsor counties who have been impacted by crime and/or incarceration. Restorative Justice Panels and COSAs (Circles of Support & Accountability) partner community members and offenders to identify past harm, review actions to heal and prevent future harm. GFCJC provides Restorative Practice Training for Schools in southwestern VT and Parenting with Respect courses across the state. They recently acquired Restorative Spokes, a Springfield bike shop which provides volunteer opportunities, skill development, and transportation for community members in need.

GunSense Vermont Education Fund

\$20,000

General Support

Burlington, VT

Founded in 2012, GunSense Vermont is a non-partisan group that works to ensure that all Vermonters are free from gun violence through education, outreach and advocacy. GunSense believes that the many gun deaths in Vermont are preventable tragedies, which can be reduced through common sense policies that address negligent and reckless behavior. After helping to pass landmark legislation in 2018 which mandated background checks on most gun sales, raised permitted age of purchase to 21 years old; limited magazine capacity; improved the ability of law enforcement to remove weapons from the scene of domestic violence; and provided a process to limit access to firearms when a person is adjudicated as a danger to self or others, GunSense Vermont is now poised to rebuild the organization in a time when more Americans are dying of gun violence than any other year on record. GunSense Vermont is professionalizing their operations, growing their membership and playing an active role in state-wide gun safety policy with a newly-hired executive director. This legislative session, they worked with a broad coalition of stakeholders to pass a law banning guns in hospitals and increasing the period to perform background checks from three to seven business days. Current initiatives include a Safe Storage Initiative to advocate for state subsidies and tax incentives to help low-income gun owners purchase gun storage lockers. GunSafe Vermont is also developing a state gun violence database/virtual map to compile the information needed to examine trends in race, age, gender and socioeconomic status.

Northwest Healthy Roots Collaborative

\$20,000

Northwest Healthy Roots Collaborative

St. Albans, VT

Housed at Northwest Regional Planning Commission, the Healthy Roots Collaborative is a collective impact partnership of community organizations addressing food access, education, and farm viability by connecting farm and food businesses with new buyers and distribution options, increasing the amount and variety of produce available at food shelves, meals sites, and health clinics, and providing on-farm learning opportunities for students and volunteers. Partners include Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation, Franklin and Grand Isle Community Action, South Hero Land Trust, Northwestern Medical Center, and the Abbey Group, along with a network of over 160 growers and

makers. The Northwest Heathy Roots Collaborative is the sole program across Franklin and Grand Isle Counties that is focused on increasing the overall economic and physical health of the community by creating lasting connections to the agriculture economy.

Out In The Open/Green Mountain Crossroads

\$15,000

Out in the Open Summits for Rural & Small Town LGBTQ+ Folks

Brattleboro, VT

Out in the Open (OITO) is a capacity and movement building organization run by a cross class, multi-racial, all rural LGBTQ+, staff and board of directors, focused on working with and building the power of rural LGBTQ people while also engaging in local and regional organizing. OITO works towards the collective liberation for all people, manifested through and led by rural LGBTQ people, by creating spaces to learn, heal, and dream together so that we can act together. OITO creates resources, art, media, training resources, and political education opportunities that support rural LGBTQ people to organize wherever they are.

In 2022 OITO will create and host three themed Out in the Open Summits for Rural LGBTQ+ Folks: Health Justice, Farming & Food Justice, and Alternatives to Policing. Their vision for the Summits is as incubators for LGBTQ rural leadership where they will explore and organize around liberatory/oppressive issues facing their communities. In order to effectively hold and realize this vision they will fund travel, stipends, Indigenous land tax, childcare, and food so that cost is not a barrier to participating.

Peace & Justice Center

\$20,000

General Support

Burlington, VT

The Peace & Justice Center (PJC) works to advance the interconnected issues of peace and human rights as well as economic, social, and racial justice in Vermont and beyond. PJC operates through three initiatives: 1) Offering educational programs predominantly on racial justice, bias, and allyship but also on peace and ethical consumerism; 2) The store at the PJC serves as both a hub for activist swag and local artisans, but also as a resource on how to challenge capitalistic systems from within; and 3) the Community Engagement program supports and leads grassroots campaigns to promote systemic change throughout Vermont and beyond, and much like an enterprise hub supports entrepreneurs to help their businesses grow, the PJC's Allied Group Program supports organizers for an outsized social impact.

Social Tinkering Corp.

\$20,000

General Support

Rutland, VT

Founded at the start of the pandemic, Social Tinkering is a non-profit focused on preventing and healing chronic loneliness. Chronic loneliness is detrimental to physical and mental health and communities and prevents people and places from thriving. Social Tinkering breaks down barriers to shift the cultural status quo to create sustainably inclusive, equitable, and diverse communities where people can feel seen and valued and experience belonging. Social Tinkering facilitates tangible social experiences for all people to gather together to make communities thrive through meaningful connection and centers people who are marginalized and underserved by facilitating collaborations to further justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for greater belonging. This year Social Tinkering is building collaboratives, offering monthly socials, building capacity, and increasing community engagement and partnership building. They host monthly Gather Together and LGBTQ+ socials and are growing their following and community support for these to help people gather together to experience meaningful connections. They are facilitating the Rutland County JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) Movement, coordinating BIPOC, LGBTQ+ folks, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups to center their voices for community based JEDI work. Social Tinkering also facilitates the Rutland+ LGBTQ+ Collaborative, meeting monthly with partners and community leaders and coordinating projects and activities.

Special Needs Support Center of the Upper Valley

\$20,000

General Support

White River Junction, VT

Founded in 1979 as an informal support network by parents of children with autism, the Special Needs Support Center (SNSC) believes relationships are resources; honors the people they serve as experts, partners, and decision makers; supports resiliency in families; fosters knowledge sharing and collaboration; creates a culture of dignity, respect, and compassion; and embraces diversity as an essential component of community well-being. Drawing on their broad and diverse experiences as parents, professionals, and disability rights advocates, SNSC works to transform the culture of their community by adopting, promoting, and supporting a disability lens into their work in the community. SNSC offers a broad array of adult and youth services, as well as Parental Educational Support and Advocacy services.

Unlikely Riders

\$20,000

General Support

Burlington, VT

Established in 2020, Unlikely Riders (UR) is a Vermont non-profit rooted in creating intentional space for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residing in Vermont to come together to experience joy on snow and has recently expanded to include all-season outdoor offerings. UR leadership consists of the community they represent: BIPOC folks who are LGBTQ+, women and other marginalized genders, disabled, working class, and who exist at multiple intersections. Their work is to promote equity, belonging, accessibility, and joy in the outdoors through developing folks from within their community to lead programs, events, and more in the outdoors. UR is planning to strategically expand their programming, community leader development, and education opportunities as they offer biking, rock climbing, hiking, and other outdoor recreation events for all ages and abilities, during the summer and fall while offering outdoor safety education courses and space for community connection and development. They will continue to develop community leaders for winter programming, offering mentoring and access to resources, gear, and education. These leaders and community collaborators will lead alpine ski, snowboard, backcountry, snowshoe, Nordic ski, and other winter events.

UP for Learning

\$20,000

Transforming Community Through Youth Voice, Youth-Adult Partnership & Restorative Justice Practices

Montpelier, VT

UP for Learning is a dynamic non-profit that supports educational systems and communities as they fully engage youth in reimagining and transforming education. UP provides coaching, facilitation, and training to youth-adult teams so that learning and leading are founded on equitable cross-generational relationships characterized by shared power, voice, and responsibility. UP for Learning advocates for policies to elevate student voice in learning and decision-making on the state and national levels. They believe that educational equity is a human right and that all young people deserve access to a meaningful and engaging education. Collective decision-making, between youth and adults, is the key to a sustainable and just future. With continued and persistent disparities in discipline practices in Vermont, it is critical that schools implement a whole school restorative approach to create institutions where all youth are known, valued, and welcome, regardless of race, abilities, identities, as equitable members of the community. Funds will enable UP to expand their restorative justice practices program beyond their current partners, contributing to a systemic culture change in schools across the state.

Vermont Professionals of Color Network

\$20,000

General Support

Burlington, VT

The Vermont Professionals of Color Network (VPCN) is a People of Color-founded and led non-profit organization that exists to advance the economic, professional, and social prosperity of all Black,

Indigenous and People of Color in Vermont. VPCN believes that systems that are failing communities of color fail all of us alike - Black, Brown and white, and that a prosperous BIPOC community is beneficial for all of Vermont. Their goal is to eliminate the economic and professional gaps between white people and people of color. VPCN works to promote economic opportunity for their BIPOC members by enabling them to meet with other professionals, to exchange ideas, to find opportunities for work or business, all in a network of trusted relationships. In addition, VPCN partners with various organizations such as VtSBDC, Vermont Community Foundation, UVM EPSCoR, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, and UVM Medical Center to develop new career opportunities for the BIPOC community and establish programs and workshops for workforce acquisition, development and retention.

Vermont Roots and Wings Alliance

\$15,000

General Support

South Burlington, VT

Vermont Roots & Wings Alliance (VTRWA) is a non-profit organization established to provide financial support for Vermont Treatment Court (VTC) participants, to enhance program quality and to aid in providing equitable access to Treatment Courts across the State. VTC dockets have continuously operated since 2002, serving individuals involved with active criminal justice cases, who demonstrate a moderate to severe substance use disorder and are likely to reoffend should their substance use and/or mental health remain untreated. Vermont Roots & Wings Alliance was established in 2020 to provide financial support for Vermont Treatment Court Programs (VTC) and participants with a focus on enhancing program quality and equitable access to treatment. VTCs realize consistent identified funding gaps, as identified by treatment team members from community providers, which impact overall success rates. VTRWA will fill these funding gaps in two ways: 1) provision of incentives for use in contingency management, and 2) direct participant support to address barriers to accessing treatment (e.g., assistance with transportation costs/vehicle repair, assistance with rental costs, etc.).

Vermont Workers' Center - Jobs With Justice, Inc.

\$20,000

Building a Leader-Full Movement for Healthcare Justice

Burlington, VT

The Vermont Workers' Center (VWC) is a statewide organization of low-income and working people with the shared goal of an economically just and democratic Vermont. VWC's methodology is to bring people together into organizing committees that carry out new organizing, campaign activities, political education, and group reflection. They have organizing committees in six counties, with approximately 200 active members who carry out the bulk of our activities - carpooling to public hearings, hosting workshops and meals, participating in group studies, and organizing rallies and marches. Their work is coordinated through statewide base-building and political education committees, as well as an elected Coordinating Committee and volunteer Coordinators team. Funding will support the ongoing work of developing leaders and campaigning for the human right to healthcare in Vermont and enable VWC to reach thousands of people affected by the post-pandemic Medicaid cutoffs while taking their transformation toward a member-run grassroots organization to the next level.

Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative, Inc.

\$20,000

General Support

Jericho, VT

Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative (WJFI) is a non-profit organization founded and led by Vermont women directly impacted by incarceration. Using a racial and social justice lens, WJFI addresses the inequitable systems and policies that disproportionately impact women, girls, and members of the LGBTQ+ community including but not limited to incarceration, child welfare, mental health/addiction, violence, and reproductive health. WJFI achieves its goals through several strategies including community organizing, public education, advocacy and direct service and works across issue areas to address the glaring gaps in systems and services that are amplified by economic, racial, and social inequities. WJFI partners with other grassroots organizations, allies, policymakers and others

who support their mission and goals. WJFI Educates the Community by communicating the harmful effects of incarceration and develop alternatives to incarceration through community accountability and transformative justice training; Redefines Harm and Rehabilitation by shifting priorities to address harm before it occurs including the persute of decarceration by releasing elders, primary caregivers, and those incarcerated for technical violations; and decriminalize the actions survivors of domestic and sexual violence take to protect themselves; and Centers Directly Impacted Voices by taking the lead of currently and formerly incarcerated people, their families, and disproportionately impacted communities.