

2024 Vermont Equity & Justice Grant Recipients



[Acorn Youth Arts Inc](#)

\$5,000

Community Youth Activist Theater and Film Production Program

EAST CORINTH, VT

Acorn Youth Arts is a new 501c3 nonprofit arts education organization which seeks to empower youth to find and share their unique voices and take a stand for what they believe in through art, theater, film, and literary arts. We endeavor to create opportunities for rural VT youth to access high-quality arts educational experiences free of charge, to provide childcare and nutrition services to families in need, and to create high-paying employment opportunities (in an area with limited job options) in the process. We are working to create a Summer Arts and Humanities day camp, biweekly Saturday Arts Sessions, Weekly Wednesday production-based Theater and Film Workshops, and a Regional Literary Arts Program for Topsham, Corinth, and surrounding area Orange County communities where no such opportunities currently exist. In an area where so many youth feel isolated and disconnected and feel like their voice doesn't matter, we endeavor to utilize the arts as a platform to empower their confidence, creativity, and activism. We are seeking funding to support our free youth theater arts and film production programs which seek to empower youth to use the stage and screen as platforms for activism and consciousness-raising.

[Addison County Relocalization Network](#)

\$10,000

ACORN General Support

Bristol, VT

The Addison County Relocalization Network (ACORN) is a 501c(3) non-profit based in Vermont's Champlain Valley. Since 2009, ACORN has served as a nimble catalyst for developing local, sustainable, and collaborative solutions to the challenges facing Addison County communities. ACORN reimagines a better food system, one that is regenerative, equitable, and resilient. Our network continues to build relationships that heal the land and connect the community across cultural bridges so we can collectively envision and work towards a different future.

ACORN's work to strengthen the food and farming community in the Champlain Valley includes: Creating a network of climate-resilient and adaptive growers who can learn from each other about what's working and what's not working in the ever-changing climate;

Increasing the demand for local food;

Providing infrastructure for farms and food producers to sell, aggregate, and distribute their products to meet increased demand;

Continuing to collaborate with a network of community organizations who support ACORN's mission and can work together to reimagine and build a better community. ACORN is requesting \$10,000 for general operating costs to support our work uplifting farmers and food producers in the Champlain Valley. This work includes creating a network of climate-resilient farmers, increasing demand for local food, providing the necessary infrastructure for farms and food producers to sell, aggregate, and distribute their products, and collaborating with other Addison County community organizations.

[Burlington Bicycle Project Corp DBA Old Spokes Home](#)

\$10,000

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 rides so everyone can shape the community of bicyclists. OSH believes that any child wanting a bike should have access to one. Not only does every child deserve a bike but also the self-sufficiency that comes when they gain the skills to maintain that bike. On an ongoing basis OSH are focused on expanding their Youth Shop, Mobile Repair Unit, apprenticeship programs, school collaborations and Bike Bonanzas to provide bikes and impactful programs to youth who wouldn’t have access otherwise. The bicycle is a simple, resilient, magical object with the power to transform lives and communities. We believe that any kid wanting a bike should have access to one. Not only does every kid deserve a bike but they also can benefit from the self-sufficiency that comes when they gain the skills to maintain that bike. For 2024 we are continuing to focus on strengthening our youth-focused programs including Youth Shop, the Mobile Repair Unit, apprenticeship programs, school collaborations and Bike Bonanzas to provide bikes and impactful programs for children who wouldn’t have access otherwise.

Burlington Yoga Equity Project

\$10,000

General Support

Burlington, VT

The Burlington Yoga Equity Project (BYEP) is a new non-profit that seeks to extend the benefits of yoga and mindfulness to the global majority (people who identify as Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialized as ethnic minorities). The BYEP radically breaks the barriers to access wellness spaces for the benefit of the whole community. Through their core offering of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) Affinity Space classes, the BYEP provides the greater Chittenden County BIPOC community a safe space to come together for wellness and healing. The BYEP believes that the legacy and continuation of systemic racism has resulted in complex, systemic, and inter-generational trauma, and that yoga can help those most impacted heal their body, mind, and spirit. Traditionally, yoga in the U.S. has been dominated by white-bodied people and has been financially prohibitive, with yoga studios charging from \$16-30 per class. The BYEP seeks to remove these barriers by providing BIPOC Affinity Space classes and offering financial stipends to members of the BIPOC community. Funding will help BYEP to continue their weekly BIPOC Affinity Space yoga class offering open to any individual who identifies as BIPOC, which requires funding for participant stipends and paying BIPOC yoga teachers. Their goal is to become financially sustainable and expand program offerings to the community.

We seek to continue our weekly BIPOC Affinity Space yoga class offering open to any individual who identifies as BIPOC, which requires funding for participant stipends and paying BIPOC yoga teachers. Additionally, we aim to be financially sustainable (\$30,000 fundraising goal for the 2024 fiscal year) to sustain and expand our program offerings to the community, creating more impact. Looking forward, we will use the funds to strategize and plan for the next 2–5 years of programming that will center the benefit of the local BIPOC community and consequently nourish the whole community.

Community Resilience Organizations

\$15,000

Climate Justice Grassroots Organizing Hub

Montpelier, VT

Community Resilience Organizations (CROs), founded in the wake of Tropical Storm Irene, is a non-profit organizing hub that supports communities in a transition era - in the face of climate crisis, pandemic, political and social instability, and unforeseen challenges in the future. CROs provide a climate justice organizing hub that enables pathways for equitable land access, BIPOC leadership, and food justice to expand in VT. CROs centers justice- and relationship-based collaboration and has played a vital role in establishing many important climate justice coalition initiatives in VT

including: the Just Transition Coalition and VT Renews Coalition (both are policy focused, organization-based networks); Extinction Rebellion VT (an international direct action climate movement); the Covid-19 mutual aid response in VT; Seeding Power and the creation of the Land Access & Opportunity Board within VT state government; and the Moving Money philanthropy and nonprofit cohort (to redistribute funding to BIPOC-led organizations and projects). Co-directed by a multi-racial, leadership team of two women, CROs collaborates on targeted systemic change projects with teams of multi-racial, intersectional organizers and provides essential technical services to the organizations that they fiscally sponsor. CROs is hoping to increase its capacity to sponsor new projects and continue to support individual grassroots organizers in their community-based pathways to change by offering equitable employment packages and an organizational home. We seek to expand the CROs Grassroots Organizing Hub: sustaining the essential technical services we offer as a fiscal sponsor; increasing our capacity to sponsor new projects; and supporting individual grassroots organizers by offering equitable employment packages and an organizational home. Last year we added 3 new fiscal sponsorships and a 4th at the start of 2024. Our services are growing and we hope to expand our capacity and opportunities to engage in social change coalitions across Vermont to weave this network together.

Education Justice Coalition of Vermont

\$15,000

General Support

Burlington, 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). In 2023, EdJ Coalition is working to expand their youth organizing opportunities. We are seeking general operating support and are excited to use this support this year to sustain and grow our youth organizing opportunities.

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 believes that the benefits of creative expression and engaging events that strengthen community ties should be equally accessible to all. To activate this core value they have launched an Outreach and Accessibility Initiative that offers sliding-scale tickets to events that require admission, with no one turned away at the door due to lack of funds. The Initiative also allocates organizational resources to support their free programming and increase their outreach in underserved communities, with the goal of reaching as many people as possible who could benefit from participation in their programming. Epsilon Spires believes that the benefits of creative expression and intellectually engaging events that strengthen community ties should be equally

accessible to all. To activate this core value of economic justice, we launched an Outreach and Accessibility Initiative that offers sliding-scale tickets to events that require admission, with no one turned away at the door due to lack of funds. The Initiative also allocates organizational resources to support our free programming with the goal of reaching as many people as possible who could benefit from participation in our empowering and life-enriching cultural programming. Since our Outreach and Accessibility Initiative began, we have substantially increased the event attendance of underserved populations.

Fund Vermont's Future

\$15,000

FUND VERMONT'S FUTURE CAMPAIGN -- General Support

Montpelier, VT

Fund Vermont's Future (FVF) is a coalition of Vermont organizations and individuals including Vermont Natural Resources Council, the ACLU of Vermont, Public Assets Institute, Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance, Rights and Democracy, the Vermont-NEA, Voices for Vermont's Children, and Vermont Conservation Voters. It also includes several individual members of the BIPOC communities. FVF is aiming to fundamentally change the way that state spending priorities and budgets are developed and funded. The Campaign will be successful when the Legislature and the Administration build a state budget based on the needs of all Vermonters, raise sufficient revenue to make needed investments, and secure a future where people in Vermont are safe and healthy. This year, Fund Vermont's Future will advance its goal of changing the state budget-making process to put people's needs first. It will promote a proposal for collecting revenue progressively; hold the state to its commitment to gather and respond to public input about how to spend the money, especially from marginalized communities; and grow and strengthen the coalition itself through a three-pronged strategy of grassroots outreach and statewide community engagement, legislative outreach, and revenue policy and policy reform research and proposal development. This year, Fund Vermont's Future will advance its goal of changing the state revenue-raising process to raise sufficient revenue to meet the needs of all Vermont residents. It will further promote a proposal to increase taxes on Vermont's wealthiest residents to raise progressive revenue; advocate for a state budget-making process that puts people's needs first; and grow and strengthen the coalition itself.

Greater Falls Connections

\$5,000

Community Justice Program

Bellows Falls, VT

Greater Falls Connections (GFC) is a public health community coalition made up of a diverse group of community members including parents, youth, educators, social service providers, business owners, health care providers, civil servants, artists, and others. Through education, peer support, meeting needs of community members, and collaborating to create positive life experiences (PLEs) and promote equity, Greater Falls Connections works to prevent substance misuse, with a focus on youth substance misuse prevention. The Community Justice Program encompasses multiple issues of equity and justice in our community, such as empowering youth and youth leadership, LGBTQIA+ community building, access to resources for survivors of interpersonal violence, and anti-stigma work within the scope of substance misuse prevention and the focus of this grant. This will include education campaigns as well as collaborations and training with community partners such as other nonprofit groups, the school district, the police department, and other public health coalitions focused on substance misuse prevention.

GunSense Vermont Education Fund

\$15,000

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. Funding this year will be used to help GunSense VT professionalize their operations, including making the Executive Director a full-time position, hiring an organizer, and bringing on a financial consultant.

We are seeking funding to elevate the professionalism of our operations, with a primary focus on advancing our campaign to ban assault weapons in Vermont. This includes implementing strategic recommendations from our consultant, whose expertise was bolstered by last year's grant. Additionally, we intend to procure trigger locks for statewide distribution as part of our broader initiative. By allocating resources to increase staff hours, we aim to intensify our efforts in curbing gun violence and promoting responsible gun ownership. Our comprehensive strategy involves robust public education initiatives, grassroots organizing, and vigorous advocacy for pragmatic gun legislation.

Habitat for Aviation

\$10,000

WOMEN BUILD PLANES: Accelerating Equity for Vermont Women in Aviation

Highgate/Swanton, VT

Habitat for Aviation is promoting gender and equity in aviation through apprenticeship opportunities that are anchored in relationships, relevance, and practice in an inclusive, welcoming environment where girls and women come to know themselves and become deeply known by supportive female aviation professionals. Our mission is urgent in view of the fact that only 2.6% of airplane maintenance technicians are women, and research shows that industry role models visible to young girls helps cement career aspirations. If they can see it, they can be it. Our all-female team of Modern Rosies are building an airplane to show folks everywhere that WOMEN BUILD, FIX, and FLY planes. We inspire youth and adults, especially girls, to pursue skilled trades, and we are addressing systemic barriers and perceptions to open doors to industry career paths, especially in aviation. We seek general operating support so we can continue to deliver and expand our high-quality programming for our WOMEN BUILD PLANES team. This grant is vital to cover our costs which include: build tools (e.g. rivet guns, drills), participant stipends (mentors and WOMEN BUILD PLANES team members), transport to promotional engagements and outreach events (e.g. Statehouse, Girls in Aviation Day, partner sites), photography/video/website/newsletter expertise to make our work more visible and to address systemic barriers.

Northeast Kingdom Organizing

\$15,000

Construction and Housing Justice in the Northeast Kingdom

Newport, VT

Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO) is a member-led coalition of community and faith-based organizations united by a shared purpose: to improve the quality of life of the people and the places of the three counties of the Northeast Kingdom. We do this by building pathways so that each of us has a voice in the decisions that impact our lives. NEKO has nine founding member groups, and its members use constituent-led community organizing strategies to work toward economic and social justice in the region. Those directly impacted by poverty, food insecurity, and systemic forms of

oppression lead NEKO's campaigns. The Construction Justice Cooperative will be a social enterprise that offers a multifaceted approach to addressing the housing issues affecting the NEK. Flood impacted homes: Through carpentry training sessions and engaging in rebuild projects across the tri-county area, we will assure that our neighbors' homes will be safe and secure, nullifying their potential displacement.

Zoning and creative housing solutions: We will work with municipalities toward creative solutions that will add to the housing pool with plans for tiny house communities, housing cooperatives, and mobile home parks.

Building skills and connections: By working in tandem with established master builders to offer free or low-cost building and carpentry training, we hope to increase the amount of skilled contractors who can take on building and rebuilding projects in the Northeast Kingdom. We will prioritize compensating people traditionally underrepresented in building trades for their time and participation.

Rural Vermont

\$15,000

General Support

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. Rural Vermont is dedicated to building communities that embrace regenerative agriculture and wise use of all resources in meeting the needs of people and the environment and believes that a just transition to regenerative agriculture is essential to ensure economic viability for small-scale diversified farms in Vermont. Rural Vermont 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. Rural Vermont envisions a just and equitable world rooted in reverence for the earth and dignity for all; and we move closer to this vision through a diversity of approaches within an intersectional, grassroots, and collaborative framework. Toward this end, in the next year, we will build policy literacy and advocacy skills, amplify community-sourced solutions with policymakers, offer peer-to-peer education and exchange, and prioritize solidarity with allies within and outside our state and sector.

Rutland County Pride, Inc

\$10,000

Rutland County Pride Center General Support

Rutland, VT

We are Rutland County Pride, an emerging queer-led and queer-centering non-profit organization serving Rutland County. We have existed for just under two years, and in that time our positive impact has been felt across Rutland's LGBTQIA2S+ community and beyond. One of our community members states "Rutland County Pride has helped create a feeling of welcoming and acceptance to all." At Rutland County Pride, our organization is built on foundational principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. As an organization we break down barriers to access to safe, affirming, and equitable LGBTQIA2S+ programming for all residents of Rutland County. Our Pride Center in downtown Rutland is the first openly safe and affirming LGBTQIA2S+ focused organization in most of southern Vermont. We provide education, outreach, events, referrals to both LGBTQIA2S+ residents and the community at large. In this unprecedented time of national backlash and injustice against members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community Rutland County Pride Center strives to center and uplift the voices and experiences of Rutland's LGBTQIA2S+ residents. For this coming year our plan is as follows: Celebrate Rutland's second annual Pride Festival; continue offering support groups including AA/NA and general support groups; continue to host regular events including queer working hours, book clubs, game nights, drag shows, and other social offerings; continue partnering with the Vermont Department of Health to offer vaccine clinics; facilitate educational opportunities for the Rutland community.

Technology for Tomorrow

\$5,000

T4T Together

Williston, VT

Technology for Tomorrow, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, empowers individuals from underserved communities (main focus: older adults and New Americans with refugee background) by providing affordable technology and supporting skills training, and enabling virtual opportunities through various local, state, and national collaboration efforts to help individuals and organizations reach their goals.

The Older Adults and New Americans with refugee backgrounds are the community residents that commonly fall below the federal poverty level. The Covid-19 pandemic led to these residents, in particular, experiencing a deterioration of quality of life, such as social engagement and worsened social isolation, and widened the gap between digital skills needed to participate in the modern world. The critical digital skills training can help to bring equity in education in these communities. This education include standard communication tools such as email and zoom to digital health tools such as access to health records and appointments. This digital literacy training will provide the necessary education that provides them with the skills and confidence to access the world of information and enable them to stay connected to their community. The proposed project seeks to support those hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic directly. "T4T Together" will increase digital literacy through the statewide deployment "Digital Navigators," people trained to provide classes, workshops, and one-on-one coaching. T4T will work closely with strong network of nonprofits and Vermonters who play visible and trusted roles in targeted communities, such as community health equity ambassadors.

The Barra School, Inc

\$5,000

General Support

East Corinth, VT

The Barra School is a small 501c3 nonprofit educational organization founded and run by a board and staff of LGBTQIA+ individuals who are dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk and otherwise marginalized rural VT youth, especially neurodivergent and LGBTQIA+ youth and their families. We work with youth in the justice and foster care systems, as well as youth with significant trauma histories, mental health, and substance abuse issues, BIPOC youth, youth with disabilities, and youth from communities where there are limited opportunities or access to programming. Our primary mission is to support a deepening awareness of, connection with, and utilization of the powers of nature to foster individual and collective growth, development, healing, and resiliency. We specialize in nature-based somatic trauma-recovery, and work with multiple cohorts of youth and their families a year, providing year-long base-camp, expedition, and workshop-model programming, fostering on-going mentorship and communities of support for some of Vermont's most vulnerable youth. We are in the process of expanding our services to provide programming and educational outreach at area schools and to offer LGBTQIA+ specific Therapeutic Empowerment Self-Defense workshops. We are seeking funding to support the expansion of our forest and wilderness work with at-risk LGBTQIA+ youth to include school-site outreach and youth empowerment workshops, and to develop our LGBTQIA+ specific Therapeutic Empowerment Self-Defense program.

The Ishtar Collective

\$15,000

2024 New England Sex Work Summit

Montpelier, VT

The Ishtar Collective (TIC) is a sex worker rights and anti-trafficking organization. We fight for things like safe labor, access to fresh food, and inclusive healthcare. Specifically, we are made up of a collective of volunteers who advocate for the rights of sex workers and survivors of violence and labor exploitation. The vast majority of us have deeply personal lived experience in these areas and are LGBTQI+ people living with disabilities. We also provide fresh veggies, educational offerings, and policy advocacy, and skills-building opportunities to marginalized people in Vermont. We fight

to prevent human trafficking and for sex workers and survivors to thrive in order to create multi-pronged equity in housing, food, racial, disability, labor, health, gender, and sexuality justice.

2024 The Ishtar Collective (TIC) is a grassroots no-fee membership-based nonprofit collective of mostly poor current and former sex workers, survivors of violence, criminalization, and trafficking, overwhelmingly led by trans and queer folks who live with disabilities. Our leadership is also made of formerly incarcerated and/or Black, Asian, and Indigenous folks. Our purpose is to center, empower, and support the most marginalized communities in Vermont.

Less than 1/2 of one percent of all human rights funding goes towards people involved in the sex trade, because of this lack of funding and hyper-stigmatization against even legal forms of sex work, sex workers experience disproportionate amounts of poverty, food instability, violence, exploitation, and criminalization in addition to discrimination in housing, healthcare, and other equitable work outside of the sex industry. In 2022, we saw a tremendous need to be bold and have sex workers and survivors themselves address these issues and so we created the first summit in New England by and for sex workers and survivors of exploitation in the sex industry and this year will be the second summit installment, hosted in Burlington, VT from November 14-17, 2024.

The Unheard Stories Project

\$15,000

Unheard Stories After School Program : "Storytelling & Student Leadership Initiative"

Northfield, VT

As Vermont grows in diversity, communities across the state face critical challenges pertaining to equity, justice, and inclusion. One of the most diverse cities in Vermont, Winooski, is a leader in challenging racism, oppression, and injustice. Unheard Stories exists to support the health and wellness of Black and Brown immigrant youth and their families in Winooski. By engaging youth in Winooski Middle and High School, Unheard Stories facilitates peer support networks, develops spaces for creative expression, promotes mentorship, cultivates student leaders, and fosters community healing. This organization centers marginalized student voices to promote community, support, and belonging amongst our New American students, while also increasing awareness and systemic change in the larger Winooski community.

We do this through the following initiatives:

1. Storytelling & Student Leadership Initiative includes weekly student-led after-school sessions aimed at promoting healing through affinity, affirmation and sharing narratives of their lived experiences. This program empowers student leaders to facilitate meaningful connection, trust, and dialogue between students and adult mentors. This culminates in a yearly community-wide artistic performance which includes storytelling through poems, cultural dance, and a fashion show highlighting different cultural clothing.
2. Tutoring Initiative includes affinity-based after-school tutoring providing academic support with adults from the same cultural background.
3. Community-wide education & awareness events shed light on the experiences of Black and Brown students, revealing important aspects that are often overlooked by the wider Vermont community.

4. School-based dialogue and advocacy empowers students to seek accountability from school administrators to address the needs of Black and Brown youth at the Winooski School District.

Unheard Stories seeks to build upon the success of our afterschool program : The "Storytelling & Student Leadership Initiative" with both middle school and high school students. This program has begun to build a legacy of student of Black and Brown student leaders at the school, and serves to provide space for communal healing for the immigrant student population within the school community. At present, we currently have 6 student leads, 19 student participants, and a diverse team of 5 adults supporting the program. This funding is needed to be able to continue and sustain this program for the 2024/2025 school year. As we build for the longer term of this organization, continuity of The Storytelling & Student Leadership Initiative is crucial to build continuity of student advocacy at the school and to sustain impact the larger community of the work that has already begun.

Unlikely Riders

\$15,000

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. For the past three years, Unlikely Riders' leaders and community collaborators have been leading alpine ski, snowboard, backcountry, snowshoe, Nordic ski, and other winter events.

UR is now strategically expanding 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.

Unlikely Riders programs reduce or eliminate the barriers to mountain sports for BIPOC Vermonters while also creating a community for us to exist fully and authentically outdoors. We bring together an often isolated community that shares the collective experience of "being the only one on the mountain" together in spaces where we are centered and celebrated. Support from the Ben and Jerry's Foundation will support our general operations to offer year round programming including skiing and snowboarding, backcountry touring, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, bikepacking, hiking, and other outdoor recreation events for all ages and abilities, as well as outdoor leadership education courses and space for community connection and development. For fall 2024 through spring 2025, we will continue to develop community leaders for our winter programming, support our leaders in leading their own community supported programming, and support mentoring and access to resources, gear, and education.

Vermont CHW Association

\$10,000

VT Association of Community Health Workers - General Support

St. Johnsbury, VT

The Vermont Community Health Worker Association is a developing membership-based organization representing a broad cross-section of Community Health Workers (CHWs) and ally organizations from across Vermont, to unite the diverse voices of CHWs and ensure that this essential and nationally recognized workforce becomes better recognized and a more sustainable part of the health care and safety net systems in our state. Through a representative 8-member CHW Leadership Team, formed in December of 2023, the Association is actively building the organizational infrastructure and operational tools necessary to advance a more diverse, trained and integrated CHW workforce in Vermont, ensuring its sustainability. The forming Association and Leadership Team represent a major accomplishment in uplifting the promise and capacity of this growing profession, born of the Vermont CHW Workforce Initiative, a two-year health equity driven statewide project led by Southern Vermont Area Health Education Center (AHEC) with federal funding awarded by the VT Department of Health, set to expire on May 31, 2024. Community Health Workers (CHWs) are the fastest-growing members of the public health, healthcare and social services workforces and uniquely represent the communities they serve. They are uniquely positioned to address barriers to care and support services, having often overcome similar challenges rooted in health inequity. They have been shown to effectively improve both access to and quality of care among underserved, historically marginalized and at-risk populations. CHWs are essential to the health of our communities.

This funding request for general support will allow the CHWs leadership of the emerging association to continue building its foundational organizational and financial structures, governance model, and to identify and adopt the operational tools needed to establish and sustain a healthy

CHW statewide association for the benefit of its members—CHWs and CHW allies (individual and organizational).

Vermont Community Wash and Learn Inc

\$15,000

General Support

Williston, VT

Vermont Community Wash and Learn Inc (VCWL), a nonprofit group with a board of 9 individuals with connections to Burlington, is dedicated to the creation of community around equal access to the dignity of clean clothes. This new organization was formed as an extension of King Street Laundry (KSL) in Burlington and seeks to both amplify and broaden the scope of the community social-support initiatives that have been hosted by the laundromat since 2022.

VCWL's programming is oriented around three core domains: poverty relief, arts and education and workforce development. Programs and events dedicated toward each of these areas take place at the King Street Laundry and all intersect with the universal need to have the dignity inherent in clean clothes. Poverty relief work is centered around a weekly free laundry event for unhoused individuals, facilitated by an array of volunteers from different municipal and nonprofit organizations (these events also often feature "add on" programs including a food truck with free food, a Covid/Flu mobile clinic, among others). Arts and education programming can be seen in regular community art events, read aloud events with the Fletcher Free Library, and a financial literacy series for New Americans. Workforce development consists of a 6-week training program, "Hospitality 101," designed to prepare individuals for roles in the hotel industry. Recently VCWL has developed a social enterprise to operate a wash, dry, fold (WDF) service and employ individuals who face barriers. Each of the core areas of programming is overseen by a separate committee of the VCWL Board that collaborates with the VCWL Directors and any relevant external stakeholders. VCWL is a new charity that has been fortunate to receive some support from a small group of partnering organizations, however, gaps and shortfalls in the budget remain around the new wash, dry, fold (WDF) social enterprise. The requested grant funds would be used to cover expenses associated with the WDF program and also expand VCWL's array of community support initiatives including the support of a Designated Laundry Fund.

Vermont Rural Education Collaborative

\$15,000

VREC Mini Grant Program with some General Operating Support

Derby, Vermont, VT

The Vermont Rural Education Collaborative (VREC) is a non-profit, peer-to-peer network that works to elevate the voice of rural schools and communities; connect and empower isolated educators, administrators, community members and students; leverage limited resources to tackle pressing issues; provide opportunities for all students in and outside of school; and move rural education forward.

VREC serves a region stretching from the Canadian Border in northeastern Vermont, along the Connecticut River southward to Thetford, Vermont. Representing all the schools in Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties, and some schools in Orange County, 44 schools within seven Supervisory Districts or Supervisory Unions are members of the collaborative. The schools served are remote rural, even by Vermont standards.

VREC is in a "ramp up" phase after hiring their first full-time Executive Director this past year and developing new programs in the 2022-23 school year as they are finalizing a new three-year strategic plan and taking steps to both sustain and initiate new programs from 2023 through 2026. Funding will be used to help support Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Training programs for VREC member school communities; Equity Literary Grants to support both diverse school libraries and classroom collections; service learning grants that promote civic engagement and responsibility; and some funds in support of general operations.

VREC is continuing to develop new programs and expand upon those created over the past couple of years. Our board approved new three year strategic plan last July and we are taking steps to both sustain and initiate new programs through 2026. In order for programs to be developed and successfully implemented, we need to increase our access to "unrestricted funds" or general

operating funds to allow the ability to us to braid funds with specific program funds that might be limited while also meeting our overall organization needs. Our intended use of funds would be to support: Inclusive Schools Mini Grants, Service Learning Mini Grants & Student-Led Place-Based Learning Mini Grants. Our Inclusive Schools grants support activities such as DEI training for staff or students, artists in residence, performers and ensuring diverse school libraries and classroom collections; service learning grants that promote civic engagement and responsibility and some funds to support our larger Student-Led Place-Based Learning initiatives that have a social justice focus. We are also asking for small portion of the overall grant funds to support of our general operations.

Village Hydroponics

\$10,000

General Support

Burlington, VT

The primary work of Village Hydroponics (VH) will be to grow and distribute hydroponic produce inside of a shipping container. VH is an offshoot of The Peoples Farmstand (TPF), a collective of farmers and community members supplying over 60 underserved families with produce during Vermont's bountiful growing season. With shared leadership between the organizations, VH will continue to supply these families with free mutual aid shares throughout VT's cold and dark "off-season". Produce will also be distributed to support the work of the Vermont Food Bank and Intervale Center, filling a need for fresh leafy greens of partner organizations. Finally, produce will be sold at market value to local grocery stores to allow VH to pay operational and utility costs while decreasing food miles and increasing Burlington's local food resiliency. Once established, VH will also participate in experiential learning opportunities for local schools, entrepreneurs, and anyone else who has an interest in agriculture, community-engaged projects, hydroponics, etc.

2024 Village Hydroponics is a community-focused, non-profit organization established to combat food insecurity through innovative agricultural practices in Burlington, Vermont. Our work centers on the use of hydroponic technology within a repurposed shipping container, allowing us to provide fresh, local, and culturally relevant produce year-round to underserved communities, particularly during the harsh winter months. We collaborate extensively with local organizations, such as The Vermont Food Bank and The Intervale Center, to enhance food distribution networks and promote sustainable, climate-resilient agricultural practices. Our approach integrates community participation, education, and mutual aid, empowering residents through direct involvement in food production and environmental stewardship. Village Hydroponics is seeking funding to support a community-engaged research and development phase that focuses on selecting culturally relevant produce and refining community participation methods, alongside initiating our first full winter production season. This work aims to enhance food equity and justice by ensuring all community members have access to fresh, locally-grown produce throughout the year, particularly during Vermont's challenging winter months.

Voices for Vermont's Children

\$15,000

General Support

Montpelier, VT

Voices for Vermont's Children (Voices) is the only independent, multi-issue, non-profit children's research and policy advocacy organization in Vermont. Voices shapes the landscape around child wellbeing in Vermont by: Organizing and working in state and regional coalitions to catalyze equity-driven systems change; Serving as a convener and thought partner with an array of stakeholders, from impacted people to national policy experts; Providing up-to-date information, policy briefs, reports and other resources on matters impacting children and youth; Engaging with media and the public to promote awareness and engagement with the lived experiences of the state's most impacted communities; and Advocating with elected officials and representatives of state government.

General support funding was provided as Voices works to drive a shift to a reparative approach to family safety concerns and economic justice. Voices is committed to replacing the harmful child welfare system, which is rooted in anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and classism, with an

equitable family and community ecosystem that prioritizes justice and prevention, and where people with lived experience direct the system to meet their needs.

2024 Voices is a statewide, multi-issue child policy research and advocacy organization that has shaped the landscape around child wellbeing in Vermont by:

Organizing and working in state and regional coalitions to catalyze equity-driven systems change;
Serving as a convener and thought partner with an array of stakeholders, from impacted people to national policy experts.

Providing up-to-date information, policy briefs, reports and other resources on matters impacting children and youth.

Engaging with media and the public to promote awareness and engagement with the lived experiences of our state's most impacted communities; and

Advocating with elected officials and representatives of state government. Voices is driving a shift to a reparative approach to family safety concerns and a stronger commitment to economic justice.

We are committed to replacing the harmful child welfare system, which is rooted in anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and classism, with an equitable family and community ecosystem that prioritizes justice and prevention, and where people with lived experience direct the system to meet their needs.