

Vermont Foodbank's 2024 Competitive Capacity Fund F.A.Q.

The 2024 Competitive Capacity Fund being offered by the Vermont Foodbank is an opportunity for organizations working to eliminate hunger in Vermont to transform their organizational capacity. The Foodbank understands that the charitable food system is a vital source of nourishment and connection for so many throughout Vermont, and that the primary mission of providing food for communities can at times feel overwhelming all on its own. It is also important to recognize that in order to truly reduce hunger in our communities, we must also intentionally address the root causes of hunger and poverty. The current world increasingly demands from us a multifaceted definition of capacity, one that continues to efficiently provide food for communities while also being responsive to new solutions and ideas that create more equitable food security for everyone.

In that spirit, this grant strives to provide organizations with the resources they need to:

- increase organizational capacity to expand or pilot new ways to eliminate hunger and poverty
- foster or deepen relationships with peer organizations and/or community members
- cultivate sustainable, community-driven programming which supports reducing hunger
- dismantle structural barriers to food security that disproportionately impact certain communities

Grant timeline:

There are two submission deadlines for this grant window. This year, the Vermont Foodbank is experimenting with shifting the grant window earlier in the calendar year due to participant feedback. **The submission deadlines this year are on 03/8/24 and 05/24/24.** This two-part process is designed to allow applicants who need ample time to craft their application materials to do so while also allowing organizations with already developed ideas the ability to access funding in a timely manner. All applications are judged based on their ability to comprehensively answer the application questions and on their alignment with the scoring criteria. There is no additional benefit in applying in either round over the other round.

Applications are due by 4pm on 03/08/24 and 05/24/24. Funding decisions can be expected within four to six weeks of the submission deadline. If you are selected to receive funding, funds will be available no later than 12 weeks after the submission deadline.

All applications must be submitted by 4pm on the final review date of May 24th, 2024.

Have questions or experiencing barriers to accessing this grant application? Please feel free to contact Zach Hebert: Manager of Community Engagement, at zhebert@vtfoodbank.org or 802-989-8739.

Grant size and scope:

Grant amounts will vary based on the scope of the initiative but may range up to \$20,000. Organizations should apply for the appropriate amount of funding needed for their initiative. Applications will be evaluated based on the case they make for how their full request will be utilized. The grant review team may offer partial funding amounts for projects. Organizations may only submit one application during the grant window. The total grant pool for this grant window is \$550,000.

What we fund:

Any expenses necessary to increase your organization's capacity to pursue transformative programming, strengthen critical systems or practice new ways of engagement which align with the values identified in the grant scoring rubric. Grant funds are intended to expand upon existing programming or initiate emergent projects. Funding may contribute to staffing or personnel expenses that are necessary for the success of your project or initiative. A small portion of funds may be used to reimburse expenses already incurred in the past twelve months, but the majority of the funding request should support current or new efforts. Please see the final chart below for specific details of types of projects which we are unable to fund. There is no matching funding requirement for this grant.

If you have a pressing capacity need which aligns with the criteria within the scope of this grant we readily encourage your organization to apply and we will support as many organizations in their efforts as we possibly can. If you have a pressing capacity need which falls outside of this grant opportunity, we may still be able to provide other forms of support, advocacy opportunities, or 3SquaresVT outreach assistance. If your organization is in that situation, please reach out to any Vermont Foodbank staff member for a follow-up conversation. While we can't possibly provide the financial needs necessary for all of our partners we still want to help you however we can.

Are there any reporting requirements?

One page of reporting will be due upon completion of your initiative or no later than one year from the date of the grant agreement letter. If you'd like, you can see the report form on our website before applying. There are no financial accounting requirements.

What documents do I need for a complete application?

In order for the grant review team to accurately review all applications you must submit:

- A Capacity Fund grant application
- An initiative budget which summarizes the anticipated costs of your project

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How to submit your application:

Complete the application and submit as a Word document or PDF to vfcapacityfund@vtfoodbank.org no later than May 24th, 2024 by 4pm. Applicants are required to supply a draft budget attachment of their project initiative. They are also encouraged to supply supplemental narrative documents, as necessary, to illustrate their proposal.

Electronic applications are strongly preferred and no paper applications received after the submission date will be considered! If you do not receive a confirmation email within 5 business days of your application submission please check the email address spelling and submit again. If an electronic application presents a challenge for you, please call Zach Hebert at 802-989-8739 for assistance.

Who will be reviewing applications? Who decides how funding is awarded?

Once applications are submitted, they will be reviewed by a six person review team made up of Vermont Foodbank staff who represent various roles at each distribution center and department throughout the organization. This review team operates on a consensus decision making model and has final authority on grant awards at the organization. The grant review team recognizes that communities themselves have the truest understanding of how these funds could be most impactful and we continue to learn and grow in our grantmaking practices. The grant review team hopes to continue making adjustments moving forward. We hope that communities will continue to hold the Foodbank accountable to true and transparent decision making. If you have any feedback about the application or decision making process, please reach out to Zach Hebert at zhebert@vtfoodbank.org.

Is there a way for us to know how the funding is allocated? Do we get to know what projects are receiving support?

Yes. This year a comprehensive report of 2023 awards and project descriptions can be found on the grants page of our website. If a project on that list raises questions or inspires anything for your organization, you can reach out to Zach Hebert at zhebert@vtfoodbank.org and he can help facilitate a connection to a recipient organization to learn more about their project, if they are interested in connecting.

What should a group do if it doesn't need or cannot spend the full grant within one year?

Our partners in reducing hunger are experiencing many simultaneous challenges and there is a great need for this funding throughout the state. Therefore, these funds are intended for timely projects in the community. All applications should have a clear budget and realistic timeline of how funds will be utilized within one year. If at any point after receiving funding you anticipate not being able to spend all funds as intended, please reach out to zhebert@vtfoodbank.org so that we can chart the best path forward in supporting your project's timeline.

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Who we fund:	Who we don't fund:	What we prioritize:
<p>Organizations fighting hunger who make a strong case for how their request will increase their organizational capacity</p> <p>501(c)3 organizations or organizations with a 501(c)3 fiscal sponsor</p>	<p>Work outside of Vermont</p> <p>Re-granting programs</p> <p>Lobbying or partisan political activity</p> <p>Activities which violate recommended food safety practices (such as unmonitored, self-service distribution sites or the distribution of self-directed/at-home canning products)</p> <p>Acquisition of land or buildings</p> <p>Individual organizers</p>	<p>BIPOC-led organizations</p> <p>Community-driven initiatives</p> <p>Collaborative projects</p> <p>Organizations that are entirely volunteer-run or particularly under-resourced</p> <p><i>For the full scoring criteria on which applications will be evaluated please see the "Vermont Foodbank's Capacity Fund Scoring Rubric".</i></p>

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