



# Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing Transformational Tourism, Events, and Regional Marketing Grant Program

The Transformational Tourism, Events, and Regional Marketing (T-TERM) Grant Program launched on May 17, 2024, as part of the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing's strategic implementation of a federal funds award under the American Rescue Plan Act, administered through the Economic Development Administration. The grants are intended to increase the ability of regional or statewide organizations to attract visitors to Vermont, demonstrate the potential of tourism to transform the economic vitality of local communities, and enhance the visitor experience of travelers to Vermont. T-TERM projects were funded to support long-term economic recovery and sustainability of travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation in Vermont in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on these sectors.

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## Program Design and Use of Funds

The Transformational Tourism, Events, and Regional Marketing (T-TERM) grant program was designed to fund projects that could have long-term, transformational impacts on increasing out-of-state visitation. Priority was given to projects that included specific details on how the project would reach new and diverse, and historically underrepresented, communities of visitors.

Specific types of projects eligible for T-TERM funding included:

- **Destination Tourism Events:** Expansion of existing events or development of new events that would generate out-of-state attendance, increase visitor spending, and generate community revenue.
- **High Impact Marketing Projects:** Marketing campaigns targeting an out-of-state audience, including strategic approaches to attract more overnight visitors as well as asset procurement and creative development of video and photography for tourism promotion and media use.
- **Destination Development Projects:** Innovative approaches or concepts to enhance tourism experiences and drive visitor engagement, including initiatives that promote destination stewardship and/or sustainable practices, diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion programming/training, and development of culturally relevant and/or targeted programming to support visitation for communities that have traditionally been underserved or under-resourced.

Applicants for the T-TERM grants were encouraged to ensure that their projects were long-term, transformative investments in their community including, when applicable, creating assets and collateral that could be used beyond the grant period. Priority consideration was given to projects that would increase overnight and new out-of-state visitation and that specifically outlined how they would target diverse communities of visitors. Applicants were also encouraged to collaborate with partners to leverage additional financial investments when possible.

The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing received an overwhelming response to the Request for Proposal, with 49 applications totaling over \$6 million in funding requested. Originally \$1.25 million was allocated to the grant program, with a maximum grant amount of \$150,000 per grantees. After this response, the Department received approval from EDA to increase the amount of overall funding available for the program to \$1.5 million to allow awards for more projects to be approved for funding.



Through this highly competitive bid process, 16 proposals were awarded funds. Projects were selected with statewide coverage in mind, as well as representation across types of organizations and approaches.

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## **Types of Award Recipients**

Awarded grant recipients represent four types of nonprofit organizations:

- Arts and Culture Organizations **(5)**
- Chambers of Commerce **(3)**
- Downtown or Regional Organizations **(5)**
- Outdoor Recreation Organizations **(3)**

## **Grant Project Categories**

Awarded grant projects fell into five primary categories:

- Arts and Culture Event, with promotional marketing **(1)**
- Development of Creative Assets and Targeted Marketing Campaigns **(5)**
- Outdoor Recreation and Promotion **(3)**
- Festivals and promotional marketing **(2)**
- Destination Development **(5)**



## Project Descriptions

Grant projects are distributed across the state, creating transformational tourism opportunities within many different communities.

Projects are currently underway, and grant recipients must complete all activities by September 1, 2025. Program outcomes will be shared in a final report at the end of 2025.

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### Recipients by Region

The 16 grant recipients are described below, including the award amount.

#### Northwest

Projects in this region will have a direct impact in Chittenden, Grand Isle, Franklin, and Lamoille counties.

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#### ECHO Center

The ECHO Center (Leahy Center for Lake Champlain Inc) on the Burlington Waterfront is creating an expanded and immersive 'Champ' experience to celebrate Lake Champlain's legendary lake monster and attract new visitors to the museum and the region. Funds will be used to create augmented reality assets that will create an immersive experience for visitors, as well as a range of creative assets highlighting the new exhibit to be used for marketing efforts.

Award Amount: \$117,800

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#### Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce (Hello Burlington) will invest in the creative development of videography assets across two content pillars, Culinary Experiences and Outdoor Activities. These assets will result in a series of finished elements to be used in targeted advertising in the traditional markets of Montreal, Boston, and New York as well as to new direct flight markets. The investment will result in a



strong collection of raw footage that can be repurposed for other promotional activities in the future as well as being utilized by the State to increase overnight visitation.

Award Amount: \$50,000

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### Shelburne Museum

Shelburne Museum plans to take 'Winter Lights' and transform it from an event serving a majority of residents to a true destination event to attract out-of-state visitors. To achieve this, Shelburne Museum will implement a robust, targeted marketing and public relations plan to attract visitors, and expand the campus lighting and event programming to deepen the immersive experience of the event for participants.

Award Amount: \$131,000

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### Stowe Area Association

The Stowe Area Association will launch two high-impact marketing projects to promote Stowe as an inclusive, four-season destination. This project will create new photography and video assets that reflect the Association's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility while highlighting Stowe's diverse activities throughout the year. A four-season campaign strategy will be developed to reach additional out of state markets.

Award amount: \$50,000

## Northeast Kingdom

Projects in this region will have a direct impact in Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties.

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### Catamount Film & Arts

Catamount Arts is launching a 12-month destination marketing initiative to promote LGBTQIA+ Arts Programming and Events in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom aimed at attracting out-of-state visitors and promoting inclusivity within the community. The project will include a diverse range of events, collaboration with local lodging establishments to enhance visitor experience, and targeted marketing to reach out of state visitors.



Award Amount: \$150,000

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### Highland Center for the Arts

Highland Center for the Arts will increase the viability and reach of their proven winter event, 'Curds & Curling,' an event that encapsulates the identity of the region through combining art, recreation, and agriculture. This event is an imaginative twist on the sport of curling where a wheel of cheese is used as the curling stone. This project includes purchasing a synthetic ice rink which can be used regardless of season or weather, and a marketing campaign focused on reaching out of state visitors and highlighting the accessibility of the event.

Award Amount: \$78,318

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### Newport City Renaissance Corporation

The Newport City Renaissance Corporation is launching a destination development initiative, the Newport Peddlers Project, to draw visitors from across New England and Quebec. The project will create a unique, destination shopping experience utilizing transportable, custom 'peddler carts' to showcase local businesses around the downtown area, taking advantage of the scenic beauty of the nearby Lake. A targeted marketing campaign will support the launch.

Award Amount: \$112,000

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### St. Johnsbury Works!

St. Johnsbury will be launching a promotional campaign to establish the region as an easy to reach and enjoyable destination for all kinds of visitation, with particular attention paid to promoting the walkable downtown, world-class performing arts series, and arts and culture experiences. A publicity and social media outreach campaign will develop messaging, pitch traditional media outlets and work with social media content creators to cultivate media exposure and social media buzz on St. Johnsbury as an easy place to get to for a day or overnight trip.

Award Amount: \$65,000





## Central

Projects in this region will have a direct impact in Addison, Washington, and Orange counties.

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### Mad Valley Sports

Mad Valley Sports will expand their signature event, the Mad Marathon, to be inclusive of a wider audience, and increase overnight stays by runners and their families. The marathon will be expanded to include a Kids Fun Run, a Mad Mile for teenagers, and a new category for adaptive athletes to participate in the Mad Half, 10K and 5K events. Videos promoting “the place before the race” and the stories of hearing-impaired guided runners and athletes on hand cycles will be created to be used as part of a targeted promotional campaign.

Award Amount: \$52,970

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### Montpelier Alive

Montpelier Alive’s (Montpelier Downtown Community Association) Bridge Illumination Project is a destination development initiative that will transform Montpelier’s historic downtown, attracting visitors to the capital city from near and far. The project will illuminate six key historic bridges that serve as gateways into and through Montpelier and establish a new identity for the capital city as “The City of Bridges,” through a paid marketing campaign.

Award Amount: \$150,000

## South

Projects in this region will have a direct impact in Rutland, Bennington, Windham and Windsor counties.

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### Come Alive Outside

Come Alive Outside, Inc. aims to elevate the Winterfest experience in Rutland into a major multi-day destination event to increase out-of-state attendance, improve visitor satisfaction, promote inclusivity, and boost the visitor economy of Rutland County. Some of the event enhancements include transforming the local snow carving event into the US Nationals Snow Sculpting State of Vermont qualifier and adding a Chili Cook-Off,



expanding the Winterfest Drag Show, and adding a 'Rail Jam' freestyle snowboarding competition and a snowmobiling expo.

Award Amount: \$79,000

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### Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce will be launching a marketing campaign which includes multichannel messaging incorporating social media, influencer storytelling and digital marketing to both increase overnight stays and out of state visitors, as well as reach new and diverse markets. The influencer and social media aspect will be used to coordinate virtual and real familiarization tours of the region and promote 8 regional events to illuminate the Okemo Valley brand. Regional photography assets will be updated as a foundation to the marketing efforts.

Award Amount: \$78,000

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### Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce

Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce will implement a high impact marketing campaign to promote the unique attractions of the Shires region, especially its cultural diversity, to increase brand recognition with out-of-state visitors with a focus on BIPOC and other diverse communities. This project will include the development of new photography and video assets, as well as a comprehensive marketing campaign.

Award Amount: \$85,000

## Statewide

The following projects will have statewide impact.

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### Kelly S. Brush Foundation

The Kelly Brush Foundation will be developing a multifaceted campaign to showcase adaptive-accessible mountain biking opportunities in Vermont to engage and inspire individuals with disabilities to enjoy the freedom of recreating in an inclusive space. This unique campaign will draw visitors to Vermont who may have never realized all the state has to offer and encourage additional adaptive recreation development in Vermont.



Award Amount: \$62,750

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### Vermont Cheese Council

The Vermont Cheese Council will evolve the Vermont Cheesemakers Festival into “Vermont Cheese Week” to attract visitors during a typical lull in out-of-state tourism after Labor Day and before ‘leaf-peeper’ season. This project will encourage statewide visitation and attract younger and more diverse out of state visitors through an advertising and social media campaign targeting these markets. New photography assets will be procured to support marketing efforts.

Award Amount: \$85,000

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### Vermont Mountain Bike Association

The Vermont Mountain Bike Association will be creating a new destination-focused resource to encourage multi-day tourism for people interested in mountain biking. The digital and print-on-demand guide will be launched with an aggressive media push and will feature communities in all regions of Vermont that have mountain biking trails and facilities nearby that are welcoming to all abilities.

Award Amount: \$150,000