CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

Launch Year Progress



A Note From Our President

These are challenging times. Communities seem deeply divided in how we view the world, and the opportunity gap in Vermont seems wider than ever before. In an era of strong economic growth, too many Vermonters are struggling to make ends meet.

Despite these challenges, I am still more hopeful than ever. Vermonters are taking action on the critical challenges we face. From growing businesses by creating incubator spaces to training the workforce of the future to addressing the opiate crisis infecting our communities, citizens are seeking and creating solutions. It is an inspiring reminder of how much leadership is local.

Our goal at the Vermont Community Foundation is to enable and accelerate those solutions. It's working. Over the past year, we've seen lives transformed by the efforts of the nonprofit organizations we support. We've seen our partner organizations, fundholders, and staff engaging deeply in communities with a clear commitment to ending the opportunity gap that threatens Vermont's prosperity. We've witnessed the extraordinary power of community and unity to overcome challenges small and large.

Last year, we laid out a vision for our future work that focused on four areas: **Early Care and Learning**, because the opportunity gap starts—and can be narrowed—in a child's earliest years. **Support for Youth and Families**, because a strong family foundation leads to success later in life. **College and Career Training**, to enable Vermonters of all ages to gain critical life and job skills. And **Community and Economic Vitality**, because people need to see the potential that lies in the places they live, and we believe deeply in the power of community to overcome the opportunity gap.

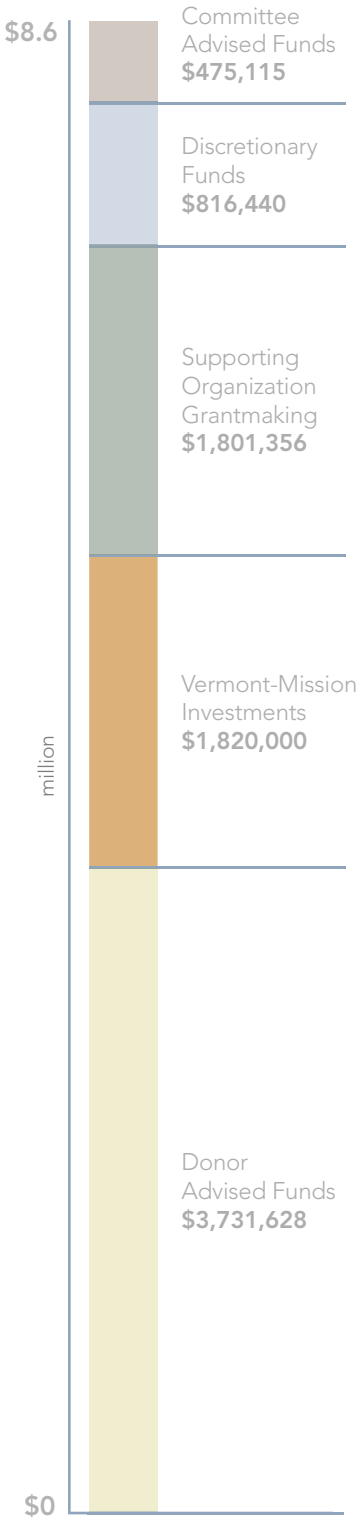
We're proud of our work and even prouder of the work of our many partners. And as you'll see in these stories of partnership and community engagement, we're just getting started.

Dan Smith
President & CEO

WE'RE WORKING IN COMMUNITIES IN NEW WAYS

$8.6 million

AT WORK IN THE COMMUNITY



October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018

The stories in this report are just a sample of what we have accomplished working with our partners.

Supporting Organizations

- Addison Community Athletics Foundation
- The Curtis Fund
- High Meadows Fund
- The McClure Foundation
- The Permanent Fund

Our work is coming to life across the state. We're sitting down in communities, learning their priorities, and putting money behind great ideas. **Cornerstone Partnerships** are collaborations with other organizations that are both grantees and thought partners for the Foundation, serving as implementers and sounding boards for our statewide work. **RALI (Regional and Local Impact) grants** are all about how we can empower communities by identifying pressing needs and supporting promising work. **Spark! grants** are based on the idea that a little money can go a long way towards closing the opportunity gap in our state. Finally, we make **Vermont-mission investments** (such as loans and equity investments) in projects that strengthen local businesses and communities and offer a likely financial return.



PARTNERSHIP

CORNERSTONE

STATEWIDE
$50,000

Make Way For Kids

One of the biggest challenges facing parents in the workforce is the lack of affordable, high-quality child care. Right now, 70% of Vermont kids under age six have all available parents in the labor force, 80% of infants and toddlers likely to need child care in Vermont do not have access to high-quality programs, and 90% of Vermont families cannot afford high-quality child care.

In partnership with our supporting organization, the **Permanent Fund**, and its **Vermont Birth to Five** (VB5) initiative, the Foundation provided seed funding for VB5's **Make Way for Kids** program aimed at addressing this critical shortage of high-quality child care across the state. **Make Way for Kids** provides funding and technical expertise that by spring 2019 will result in the creation of 363 new child care spaces and 429 existing spaces achieving the highest quality recognition levels of 4 or 5 stars from the **STep Ahead Recognition System** (STARS), Vermont's quality recognition and improvement system for early care and learning programs.





PARTNERSHIP

CORNERSTONE

STATEWIDE
$180,000

Vermont Afterschool

Closing the opportunity gap means investing in kids early, starting at birth. But with so much public attention rightly paid to these important early years, we must not forget another crucial time in a child's life: the middle and high school years, when young people need to be engaged in active learning beyond the school day.

Unfortunately, over the last five years, Vermont has seen a steady decrease in afterschool programs serving this age group, which widens the opportunity gap. When young people participate in afterschool programs, their academic performance, work habits, and school attendance improve. These programs also introduce youth to new activities, offer healthy snacks and meals, and provide safe places to hang out with friends.

We're supporting Vermont Afterschool, a statewide nonprofit working to ensure that all Vermont youth have access to high-quality out-of-school learning opportunities. This three-year grant, an example of the Foundation's Cornerstone Partnerships, helps Vermont Afterschool grow a statewide infrastructure that they would not be able to do otherwise. We choose Cornerstone Partners deliberately, in a way that brings organizations together instead of increasing competition for resources.

"Funding is often given to work on a specific project in a specific way; however, children don't all fit the same mold and learn within predetermined project parameters," says VT Afterschool Executive Director Holly Morehouse. "What's so powerful about the Cornerstone Partnership is that it gives us the opportunity to work on a complex issue with both local and statewide programs—creating significant and long-lasting change for all kinds of kids."



INVESTMENT

BENNINGTON
$500,000

Putnam Block

Many communities in Vermont don't have thriving downtowns and can't attract businesses, young professionals, and economic activity. That is about to change in Bennington, thanks to an ambitious project known as the **Putnam Block Redevelopment. The Putnam Block** is a community-led development that will create a space with offices, retail, residential units, restaurants, and a hotel in the heart of Bennington.

With Bennington being a particular focus of the Foundation's discretionary giving, we asked community leaders how we could make the biggest difference possible in Bennington. Time and again, we heard: invest in the **Putnam Block**. So that's what we did. We invested $500,000 in the project, a key step in helping the project close out its fundraising needs, and providing the Foundation with an equity position in a project that is already creating jobs and opportunities for the Bennington community.



RALI GRANT

RUTLAND
$32,664

NewStory Center

Survivors of domestic and sexual violence often fall into the opportunity gap. Abusers often limit or prevent their victims from pursuing professional opportunities, compromising their ability to re-enter the workforce after, in many cases, years of abuse. As important as it is to get victims out of violent settings, equally important is thinking of what's next.

That's why the **NewStory Center**, a Rutland-based nonprofit, is partnering with **Green Mountain Power** (GMP) to provide hands-on job training and skills development to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. This training can lead directly to jobs, as **GMP** and other local employers understand the value that these participants can bring to their workplaces. The Community Foundation is proud to be providing two years of co-funding for this program in partnership with the **Vermont Women's Fund**.





RALI GRANT

BURLINGTON
$25,000

Pediatric New American Clinic

Many New Americans in Vermont are refugees settling in our country after experiencing years of trauma and displacement. In Chittenden County, more than 400 refugees—half of whom are children—are resettled every year from countries all over the world. Many of them lack basic medical care, and most are unfamiliar with navigating the American healthcare system.

Quality, culturally sensitive medical care is an urgent challenge. That's why we are partnering with the **UVM Medical Center** to support the **Pediatric New American Clinic**, a group-based model of caregiving that serves every New American under the age of 18 living in Chittenden County. The goal of the clinic is not only to improve health outcomes, but also to create a sense of community, reduce isolation, and empower parents. Our grant provides early stage seed funding, which helps the clinic update its space and hire staff—including community health workers who are themselves New Americans.





RALI GRANT

NEWPORT
$75,000

Bluffside Farm

So many things were lining up right for Newport; then the EB-5 scandal hit. The project had promised much-needed economic revitalization to this border community situated on the shores of Lake Memphremagog, but instead delivered a gaping hole the size of a city block in its downtown. In response, we worked with our partners at the **Vermont Council on Rural Development** and the **Vermont Land Trust** to identify the community's priorities for rebuilding.

What emerged from a process of deep community engagement was a project with broad support: a seven-mile recreation trail coming out from the waterfront in downtown Newport, passing through a remarkable former dairy farm known as **Bluffside**, and eventually connecting north to existing bike paths in Canada. Recreation trails are more than just ways for people to get exercise; they are engines of economic growth, tourism, and social cohesion. The **Bluffside trail** is a shared space that's accessible by all—where all community members, regardless of income or background, can share a set of experiences and a pride of place that can begin to stitch together the fraying fabric of community.



Early Care and Learning
So that every family in Vermont has access to high-quality, affordable care and education.

College and Career Training
So that working-age Vermonters have a postsecondary degree or credential of value.

Support for Youth and Families
So that youth and families have a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment outside of the school.

Community and Economic Vitality
So that Vermonters see their communities as places of opportunity.

"Partnering with the Community Foundation in new ways allows us to connect local programs, community initiatives, and statewide systems for greater impact."

Holly Morehouse
Executive Director
Vermont Afterschool,
a Cornerstone Partner

Vermonters are taking action on the critical challenges we face.

RALI GRANT

SPRINGFIELD
$8,703

Hunger Free Vermont

Kids can't succeed when they are hungry. For decades, **Hunger Free Vermont** has been working to address the persistent issue of food insecurity throughout our state. In Springfield, a place where we have focused much of our community engagement work, the problem is especially acute. Not only is there great need for out-of-school food options in Springfield, it's also a part of the state where the infrastructure for such programs is lacking. Providing food is the easy part; setting up infrastructure is much harder.

To address this urgent need, the Foundation is supporting **Hunger Free Vermont** in Springfield—and two other Vermont communities—as they expand their summer food program and work to build a permanent infrastructure that offers a consistent source of healthy foods for kids in and out of school.



SPARK! Connecting Community Grants







Even a small grant can make a big difference. Our **Spark! Connecting Community Grants** of up to $3,000 are aimed at reducing the opportunity gap by creating stronger social connections.

The **Brattleboro Skate Park**, for example, was an idea hatched from a local teenager that quickly became a community organizing effort—one that became a reality with Spark! support.

When the **Audubon Center** wanted to lead groups of children from the **King Street Youth Center** on weekly excursions to local parks—helping connect children living in poverty with our woods, fields, and exploration—we pitched in. In Hardwick, we helped a group of committed citizens and a local arts organization create a **downtown mural** that celebrates the town and its history.

We supported **Addison Allies,** an Addison County-wide effort to integrate migrant workers and their families—creating the kind of cultural exchange and learning that strengthens local communities. And when **Outright Vermont** told us about their statewide program to create Friday Night group nights for LGBT youth, we were proud to support them in helping these youth feel connected, seen, and appreciated for being themselves.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As organizations and as individuals, there's never been a more critical time to be part of solving the opportunity gap challenge. That challenge is too important for any of us to stand on the sidelines.

We invite you to get involved on a personal level by volunteering with organizations in your community or making a contribution to our **Opportunity Fund.**

Donate online at **vermontcf.org/OpportunityFund**. Or call **Jane Kimble at 802-388-3355 ext. 286** to discuss ways to contribute to this work.

Take Action!

The Vermont Community Foundation
3 Court Street
Middlebury, VT 05753

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION +YOU BETTER TOGETHER

Cover photo and VT Afterschool photo by Cassie Willner/VT Afterschool, Bluffside Farm photo by Caleb Kenna, all other photos used with permission from grantee organizations.