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| MOM vert 2C | Better Connections Grant Program  2025-2026 Application Packet |

# 2025-2026 Grant Timeline

* [Pre-Application Form](https://forms.office.com/g/bHmn1QCY10): January 24, 2025
* Pre-Application Interview: January 24, 2025
* **Application deadline: February 21, 2025 @ 4:00 pm EST**
* RPC confirmation of municipal planning process: February 21, 2025
* Award decisions: March 21, 2025
* Grant Agreement documents due: April 11, 2025
* Project started: July 14, 2025
* Project completed: July 31, 2026
* Final report due: August 29, 2026

# Application Packet Contents

1. Application Instructions
2. Application Checklist
3. Application Form
4. Application Packet Appendix

# Application Instructions

## Submit Pre-Application Form Electronically and Schedule Pre-Application Interview

All applicants are required to complete a [pre-application form](https://forms.office.com/g/bHmn1QCY10) and interview by January 24, 2024 at 4:00pm with Program Managers, Faith Dall and Natalie Elvidge.

## Prepare and Submit the Grant Application Form

Read the [Better Connections Program Overview](https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections) to better understand the purpose, objectives, and scoring criteria of the Better Connections Program and to ensure the project is eligible for grant funding. Complete this Grant Application Form and develop the required documents outlined in the Grant Application Checklist. A sample project schedule and budget from a previous awardee are in the Application Packet Appendix. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Completed grant application form must not exceed 11 single-sided pages, less attachments.

**Electronic applications are due 4:00pm, Friday February 21, 2025**

Email applications to [faith.dall@vermont.gov](mailto:faith.dall@vermont.gov). If your materials exceed 10MB, divide them into two emails. Put the municipality’s name and project in the subject line, along with *1* of *2* and *2* of *2*. Set your email to automatically request a read or delivery receipt if you want confirmation that your application has been received. **Application materials MUST be submitted electronically.**

# Application Checklist

**1)** [**Pre-Application Form**](https://forms.office.com/g/bHmn1QCY10)Due by **January 24, 2025**

**2) Pre-Application Interview (virtual)** To be completed by the local project manager by January 24, 2025.

**A complete grant application package shall include the following documents and attachments:**

**3) Grant Application Form** Complete application form must not exceed 11 single sided pages, with a minimum of 11-point font. Excess pages will be discarded.

Projects that are applying for additional funding from the Clean Water Fund to support water quality improvements must include the following additional attachments, which do not count toward the main grant application form page limit.

**☐ Clean Water Project Application Questions**

**☐ Clean Water Project Work Plan, Schedule, and Budget**

## Attachments:

**1.) Resolution Form(s) (1 page)** A letter of support from the legislative body of the municipality, such as Selectboard, village trustees, or city council. A sample resolution document can be found in Packet Appendix.

**2.) Confirmed Planning Process Letter (1 page)** A letter from the municipality’s Regional Planning Commission must state that the municipality’s planning process is “confirmed” under [24. V.S.A §4350](http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04350). For consortium applications, each municipality must have a letter stating that the planning process is confirmed. A sample letter can be found in Packet Appendix.

**3.) District Contact (1 page)** Documentation of contact with VTrans District Office **if** project is on the State Highway System.

**4.) Project Area Map (1 map)** Include a clearly annotated map that delineates the project area, key features, issues, and opportunities.

**5.) Photographs (1-3 pages)** Include photographs of the project area, key features, issues, and opportunities.

**6.) Additional supporting documents, including**: letters of support; previous planning studies; capital improvements; private investments, and ongoing grants and projects.

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| 2025-2026 Better Connections Application (Part I) – Project Overview |

Applicants must complete a full application package, due on February 21, 2025. Program staff and the Selection Committee will then review the applications based on the Better Connections Program project selection criteria. More information on the program, eligibility requirements, and program contacts can be found in the Program Overview located on the Better Connections Grant Program Website.

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| **Primary Applicant | Municipality:** Click here to enter text | | |
| **Project Title:** Click here to enter text | | |
| **Total Better Connection Funds Requested:** Click here to enter text | | |
| **Total Project Local Match:** Click here to enter text | | |
| **Total Clean Water Funds Requested (if applicable):** Click here to enter text | | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **If applicable, please list other engaged partners such as the Regional Planning Commission, local planning commission, conservation commission, other community based organizations, neighborhood associations, local businesses, elected officials, local health department/hospital, local transit providers, etc.** | **Contributing Match (if applicable)** | | Click here to enter text | Select an item | | Click here to enter text | Select an item | | Click here to enter text | Select an item | | Click here to enter text | Select an item | | | |
| **Project Management Approach:** MUNICIPAL  REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (RPC) | | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Project Manager Name & Title:** Click here to enter text | | | **Mailing Address:** Click here to enter text | | | **Telephone:** Click here to enter text | **Email:** Click here to enter text | | | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Municipal Contact Name & Title (if not Project Manager):**  Click here to enter text | | | **Mailing Address:** Click here to enter text | | | **Telephone:** Click here to enter text | **Email:** Click here to enter text | | | |
| [**VTrans District:**](https://vtrans.vermont.gov/operations/districts)  Select a VTrans District | |
| [**Regional Planning Commision:**](https://www.vapda.org/regions.html) Select Your REgional Planning Commission | |
| **Accounting System (check one)**: Automated  manual  combination | |
| **UEI#:** CLICK HERE TO ENTER TEXT | **Fiscal year end month:** CLICK HERE TO ENTER TEXT |

**Project Description**. In no more than 300 words, describe the project purpose and approach, project deliverables, and the expected short- and long-term outcomes.

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| Click here to enter text |

**Project Location**. In no more than 300 words, describe the project location. Include key features (i.e. project area is within the designated Village Center or Downtown; project area is along State Highway anchored by two downtowns; etc.). To the best of your knowledge, please detail what portions of the project area are state, municipal, and privately owned.

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| Click here to enter text |

**Do any applying municipalities have an open Municipal Planning Grant (ACCD) or Bike/Ped Grant (AOT)?**   
YES  NO  If yes, please describe project, funds awarded, year awarded, year anticipated to complete, etc.:

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| Click here to enter text |

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| **Does the primary municipal applicant have an approved Town Plan:** YES  NO |
| **Municipal Manager or Selectboard Name:** Click here to enter text  **Municipal Manager or Selectboard Signature\*:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  *\*Electronic signatures accepted* |

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| 2025 Better Connections Grant Application Form (Part II) – Application Questions |

# *This form cannot exceed 11 single-sided pages, with a minimum of 11-point font.*

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| **Primary Applicant | Municipality:** Click here to enter text |
| **Project Title:** Click here to enter text |

## Project Purpose and Need (25 points)

1. **Project Purpose (10 points)**

Clearly identify the project scope, purpose, and expected outcome.

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| Click here to enter text |

1. **Community Need (10 points)**

Describe and document the relevant transportation, land use, water quality, housing and/or economic development needs the project will address (reference applicable data such as demographic, transportation, land use, safety, health, economic data and previous plans and studies such as municipal plan, regional plan, scoping studies, etc.).

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1. **Building Off Past Efforts (5 points)**

Explain how this project implements the ideas and actions identified in municipal and/or regional plans or builds on previous planning efforts or other complimentary community efforts or activities. Please provide a brief history of the community and stakeholders working together on planning projects and implementation projects.

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Previous planning efforts. List all current and previous planning efforts within the last 10 years, including but not limited to municipal plans and regulations, economic development studies, and scoping studies.

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Previous investment. List all relevant capital improvements, implementation projects, and public and private investment that have occurred in the study area related to the project scope and work plan.

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## Alignment with Better Connections Program Objectives (30 points)

Demonstrate how the project supports the Better Connections Program Purpose and Objectives.

1. **Transportation (5 points)** *Provides a safe, multi-modal and resilient transportation system that supports the Vermont economy.*

Please explain and document how the project will advance the transportation objective:

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| Click here to enter text |

1. **Land Use and Economic Development (5 points)** *Supports downtown and village economic development and revitalization efforts.*

Please explain and document how the project will advance downtown or village revitalization efforts, economic and community development initiatives, and local land use policy.

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1. **Community Capacity and Project Management (10 points)** *Municipal and project leader capacity to manage a robust and engaged community planning process.*

Describe the community’s capacity, support, and readiness to manage and conduct a robust planning process. Please explain your project management approach, how many hours a week the project manager is available to allocate for this project. Please indicate if there is the commitment to remain the project manager for the duration of the project, including implementation. Include a description of the identified project manager’s ability, experience, and past efforts to lead dynamic and engaging planning projects that lead to implementation.

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1. **Project Readiness to Implement (10 points)** *Leads directly to project implementation (demonstrated by community capacity and readiness to implement).*

Describe the project’s readiness and articulate how the project will be implemented and integrated in the municipal capital plan and support and inform the implementation of capital projects identified in the regional and municipal plan, municipal capital plan or the VTrans Capital Program. Please describe your approach to project implementation and the town’s history of pursuing funding and implementing local projects.

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## Quality Work Plan, Schedule, and Budget (25 points)

Provide a detailed work plan, schedule, and budget for the scope of work. The work plan must clearly articulate the expected outcomes of the projects, deliverables, responsible parties for each task, project schedule, and public engagement timeline. Applicants may submit a separate combined work plan, budget, and schedule if preferred to developing separate answers to items (a) through (c) below.

Sample work plan and budget template in Packet Appendix. If applicable, document other resources (beyond required cash match). In-kind staff contributions and other federal or state funds are allowed but may not be used toward the local cash match requirement. Include an estimated cost using the following format:

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| **Total project cost (TPC):** | $75,000 |
| **Grant funds requested:** | $67,500 |
| **Local cash match (10% of TPC minimum):** | $7,500 |
| **Additional cash match (if applicable):** | $ |

1. **Work Plan (15 points)**

Provide a detailed work plan and description of tasks for the scope of work including desired deliverables and outcomes. The work plan should be clear, focused, and implementable. Please include all task and deliverables in the work plan that explain the project activities and expected outcomes.

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1. **Budget (5 points)**

Provide a detailed budget broken down by task and deliverables that aligns with the project work plan and provides adequate funding for each task. If RPC project management is used, the budget should clearly reflect these costs.

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1. **Schedule (5 points)**

Provide a detailed schedule with project timeline, public engagement and stakeholder activities, and state agency technical review and coordination.

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## Equitable Engagement, Public Outreach, and Partnerships (20 points)

Demonstrate how the project will engage with and serve community members and partners in an equitable and inclusive process, connecting with diverse socioeconomic groups, under-served, and under-represented populations in the community, in addition to relevant local, regional and state organizations and partners including the local VTrans District office, the regional development corporation, regional planning commission, the local business community, local, regional and state stakeholders, and the general public. Projects that inclusively engage the public and stakeholders from the start and propose multiple innovative outreach activities that are integrated into the work plan (i.e. charrettes, community events, pop-up demonstration projects, online engagement, etc.) score the highest under this criterion.

1. **Equitable Public Engagement and Outreach (10 points)**

Explain how the project will engage and serve the community in equitable, intentional, and inclusive process from the start, connecting with diverse socioeconomic groups, and how the project will engage and reach under-served, under-represented, and harder-to-reach constituents throughout the project timeline. Describe what types of activities will be included in the public engagement plan that educates and involves the public in the process. Ensure that multiple outreach methods, approaches and activities are included throughout the project timeline

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1. **Project Partnerships (10 points)**

Explain how the project will engage and partner with local, regional, and state stakeholders and partners. The application should show strong community, business, and partner support to help the project succeed (evidenced through letters of support, complementary local activities, or initiatives). Please explain the project partnerships proposed in the work plan, and evidence of coordination and partnerships with state agencies with regulatory oversight and implementation funding.

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## Priority Consideration Bonus Criteria (25 points)

1. Is the project located within (or adjacent to) a state designated downtown, village center, neighborhood development area, new town center or growth center? If so, describe how the project will support the state designated center. (Up to 5 points)

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1. Does the project represent an inter-municipal effort? An inter-municipal effort is defined as the joint effort of two or more applicants to address a common issue. If so, explain. (Up to 5 points)

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1. Does the project support water quality improvements that reduce nutrient and sediment pollution (Yes or No)? If yes, complete the Clean Water Fund Project Application Questions section on the pages below in the Clean Water Fund Supplement. (Up to 5 points)

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1. Does the project support public health including, increasing access to healthy food, recreation opportunities, and/or opportunities for physical activity for all people (Yes or No)?  If yes, please explain the health benefits of this project to the community.  (Up to 5 points)

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| Click here to enter text |

1. Does the project support complete streets principles? Incorporating multi-modal resource planning (public transit, rail, aviation, or rail trails) or active transportation (walking, biking, rolling, etc.) in the project goals. (Up to 5 points)

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| Click here to enter text |

## Application Quality & Previous State Grant Performance (+/- 5 points)

The application submission is complete, well-written, clearly identifies the project, and is internally consistent. Up to 5 points may also be deducted for poor performance (e.g. not adhering to deadlines for progress reports, invoices) on previous state grants. *No response necessary.*

# Certifications

Please check each box indicating that you understand and will comply with the following provisions.  I understand and agree:

☐ That all named key project leaders and organizations have agreed to be included in this project

☐ That the applicant understands that no information contained in this submission shall be deemed confidential and such information may be shared with other governmental entities or Better Connections partners

☐ That the applicant has the permission and hereby grants to the State of Vermont an unrestricted license to use and publish your submitted photographs in any and all manners of communications and media.

☐ That the applicant emailed one (1) required electronic copy of the application to [faith.dall@vermont.gov](mailto:faith.dall@vermont.gov) and it constitutes an official submission of your application. No signature is required.

  That consultant selection will follow the policies and requirements of the Vermont Agency of Transportation’s Procurement Procedures*.* <http://vtrans.vermont.‌gov/contract-admin>

That this application was prepared by staff of the primary municipality or Regional Planning Commissions **OR**

That this application was prepared by the following compensated consultant: CLICK HERE TO ENTER TEXT

*Consultants may assist in preparing the municipality’s application. However, to satisfy federal and state requirements, use of an appropriate means of consultant solicitation and selection is required prior to selection of a consultant. To avoid conflicts of interest, applicants should be aware that if consultant assistance is used in the preparation of the Program grant submission (i.e. in the development of the scope of work for the study), that consultant will not be eligible to conduct the work.*

**I, \_ENTER YOUR NAME certify that the statements in this application are true and the information provided is complete and correct.  There have been no misleading statements or omission of any relevant facts.**

# Clean Water Fund Project Application Questions

***Only complete this section if you are applying for additional Clean Water Funds.***

1. List the amount of funds (up to $30,000) requested. (No local match required):

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| Click here to enter text |

1. Please list the [watershed](http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra5/) (waterbody identification number) the project is located in and describe any water quality planning or implementation projects completed in the municipality in the past 10 years (see a list of clean water projects on the [Clean Water Dashboard](https://anrweb.vt.gov/DEC/cleanWaterDashboard/WPDSearch.aspx)).

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1. Please explain the purpose, need and the desired outcomes of the water quality planning project. In addition, please describe how the project will improve water quality and manage stormwater to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution. [Up to 15 points]

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| Click here to enter text |

1. Please describe how the project builds upon and implements prior planning efforts and community goals related to water quality (regional plans, municipal plans, tactical basin plans, stormwater master plans and/or assessments, inventories, flow reduction plans, phosphorous control plans, or river corridor plans). [Up to 10 points]

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1. Please describe how the project will engage the public, project partners, and stakeholders in developing and planning the water quality projects. Please also explain how the project will educate and inform the community about the importance of clean water projects. [Up to 10 points]

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1. Please describe how the clean water planning project supports the Better Connections Program Purpose and Objectives related to multimodal transportation, downtown and village revitalization, and project implementation (see Program Overview for purpose and objectives). [Up to 10 points]

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| Click here to enter text |

# Clean Water Project Work Plan, Schedule, and Budget

***Only complete this section if you are applying for additional Clean Water Funds.***

Provide a detailed budget broken down by task, deliverables, responsible party, schedule, and cost. Applicants may submit a separate combined work plan, schedule, and Budget. [Up to 10 points]

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Deliverables** | **Responsible Party** | **Schedule** | **Total Cost** |
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|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Cost** | | | | |

# Appendix

1. Sample Resolution
2. Sample RPC Confirmation Letter
3. Sample Budget
4. Sample Schedule

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| Resolution for Better Connections Grant |

**WHEREAS,** the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is applying for funding as provided for in the FFY 2025-2026 Budget and may receive an award of funds under said provisions; and

**WHEREAS,** the Agency of Transportation and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development may offer a Grant Agreement to this Municipality for said funding; and

**WHEREAS,** the municipality is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for planning purposes or the municipality has voted at an annual or special meeting to provide local funds for planning purposes,

**Now, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**

1. That the Legislative Body of this Municipality enters into and agrees to the requirements and obligations of this grant program including a commitment to provide a cash match of 10% of the project cost:

2. That the Municipal Planning Commission recommends applying for said Grant:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Name of Planning Commission Chair) (Signature)*

3. That (Name) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Title\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

is hereby designated as the Local Project Manager, the person with the overall administrative responsibility for the Better Connections program activities related to the application, and any subsequent Grant Agreement provisions.

Passed this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**LEGISLATIVE BODY**

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| *(name)* |  | *(signature)* |
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**INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESOLUTION FORM**

1. The Legislative Body of the Municipality must adopt this resolution or one that will have the same effect. This Form may be filled in or the adopted Resolution may be typed on municipal letterhead, filling in the name of the municipality, the Legislative Body (e.g., Board of Selectmen), and the name and title of the Municipal/ Authorizing Official(s)(M/AO(s)); and the Local Project Manager.
2. Following formal adoption, the Resolution must be signed by a majority of the legislative body. The Chair of the Planning Commission must also sign upon endorsement by vote of the Planning Commission.
3. For consortium applications, each municipality must complete a separate Resolution form. All municipalities must designate the same Municipal/Authorizing Official(s) and grant Local Project Manager.

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| RPC Confirmation Letter |

*DIRECTIONS: TEMPLATE TO BE INSERTED INTO RPC LETTERHEAD*

{DATE}

TO: {APPLICANT NAME}

CC: {OTHER APPLICANTS & INTERESTED PARTIES}

FROM: {RPC REPRESENTATIVE}

SUBJECT: Approved Town Plan and Confirmed Planning Process for Better Connections Grant

Following the necessary public hearing, the {ENTER RPC NAME} voted on {ENTER VOTE DATE} to approve the {ENTER TOWN PLAN NAME} and confirm the planning process pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4350.

Town plan approval is based upon the criteria in 24 V.S.A. §4350(b), including:

1) Consistency with state planning goals (24 V.S.A. §4302);

2) Addressing town plan required elements (24 V.S.A. §4382);

3) Compatibility with the regional plan; and,

4) Compatibility with other approved town plans in the region.

Confirmation of the local planning process is based upon criteria in 24 V.S.A. §4350(a), including whether the town is:

1) Engaged in a continuing planning process that, within a reasonable time, will result in a plan that is consistent with state planning goals (24 V.S.A. §4302);

2) Engaged in a process to implement its town plan; and,

3) Maintaining efforts to provide funding for municipal and regional planning purposes.

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| Sample Budget | | | | |
| **Task Name** | **Deliverables** | **Task Cost** | **Local Match (10%)** | **SCBS Funds (90%)** |
| 0. Project Management | Project schedule, team directory and work plan; Public Outreach Plan, memorandum outlining the goals and critical success factors for the project | $5,000 | $500 | $4,500 |
| 1. Kick-off Meeting | Meeting minutes | $5,000 | $500 | $4,500 |
| 2. Existing Conditions Analysis | Maps, tables, illustrations concerning key metrics for the project for use during stakeholder meetings and workshops | $10,000 | $1,000 | $9,000 |
| 3. Workshop | Agendas, presentation graphics, meeting minutes, feedback documentation | $5,000 | $500 | $4,500 |
| 4. Evaluate opportunities | Summary report/matrix | $10,000 | $1,000 | $9,000 |
| 5. Concepts for streetscape and safety improvements | Plan view and concept sketches of streetscape, safety, and other improvements | $15,000 | $1,500 | $13,500 |
| 6. Workshop | Agendas, meeting notes, presentation, identification of critical actions | $5,000 | $500 | $4,500 |
| 7. Implementation Plan | Summary outlining recommended funding strategy | $5,000 | $500 | $4,500 |
| 8. Final Presentation | Power point presentation, meeting minutes | $5,000 | $500 | $4,500 |
| 9. Final Plan | draft report, final report | $5,000 | $500 | $4,500 |
|  | Total Project Cost | $70,000 | $7,000 | $63,000 |

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| Sample Schedule | |
| Task 0. Project Management   * Kickoff meeting – August 2023 * Project coordination meetings – bimonthly throughout the project     Task 2. Existing Conditions Analysis – October 2023    Tasks 3 and 6. Public Outreach   * Stakeholder Interviews – September/October 2023 * Walk Audits – September/October 2023 * Informal Community Tabling – September/October 2023 * Workshop 1 – November 2023 * Workshop 2 – May 2024 * Final Presentation – July 2024     Tasks 4 and 5. Opportunities and Concept Plans – April 2024    Task 7. Implementation Plan – June 2024    Task 8. Final Presentation – July 2024    Task 9. Final Report – August 2024    We anticipate state coordination and consultation throughout the duration of the project. State project managers will be invited to the project kickoff, all steering committee meetings, and public outreach activities. Key check-ins with the state will be conducted following the existing conditions analysis, the initial round of public outreach, implementation plan, and when a draft report is available. |