



# Better Connections Grant Program 2021-2022 Application Form & Instructions

## 2021-2022 Grant Timeline

- **Letter of Intent deadline: January 15, 2021 @4:00 pm**
- **Application deadline: February 19, 2021 @ 4:00 pm**
- RPC confirmation of municipal planning process: February 19, 2021
- Award decisions: March 19, 2021
- Project started: June 1, 2021
- Project completed: December 1, 2022
- Final report due: December 31, 2022

## Application Instructions

### 1. Submit Letter of Intent Electronically

All applicants are required to submit a [Letter of Intent Form](#) by January 15, 2021 at 4:00pm to [Jackie.Cassino@vermont.gov](mailto:Jackie.Cassino@vermont.gov). Program Managers, Jackie Cassino or Richard Amore, may follow up directly with applicants if clarification is needed related to information provided in Letter of Intent.

### 2. Prepare and Submit the Grant Application Form

Complete the [Grant Application Form](#) and develop required documents outlined in the Grant Application Checklist. Read the [Better Connections Program Overview](#) to better understand the purpose, objectives, and scoring criteria of the Better Connections Program and to ensure the project is eligible for grant funding. Guidance on how to develop a project approach, budget and final master plans from previous years are available on the [Better Connections Program web page](#). 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 19, 2021.** Email applications to [Jackie.Cassino@vermont.gov](mailto:Jackie.Cassino@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

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

- 1) Letter of Intent Form (2 pages)** To be completed by the local project manager by January 15, 2021.
- 2) Grant Application Form (11 single sided pages)** 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:

- 3) Resolution Form(s) (1 page)** A letter of support from the legislative body of the municipality, such as Selectboard, village trustees, or city council. [Sample Resolution](#).
- 4) 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](#). For consortium applications, each municipality must have a letter stating that the planning process is confirmed.
- 5) District Contact (1 page)** Documentation of contact with VTrans District Office **if** project is on the State Highway System.
- 6) Project Area Map (1 map)** Include a clearly annotated map that delineates the project area, key features, issues, and opportunities.
- 7) Photographs (1-3 pages)** Include photographs of the project area, key features, issues, and opportunities.
- 8) Additional supporting documents, including:** letters of support; previous planning studies; capital improvements; private investments, and ongoing grants and projects.

# 2021 Better Connections Grant Letter of Intent

The Better Connections Grant program application process is a two-step procedure. Interested parties submit the Letter of Intent Form electronically by 4PM on January 15, 2021 under the signature of the Town Manager or Selectboard. Letters of intent are evaluated by the Program staff by January 22, 2021. Eligible applicants will then be invited to complete a full application package, due February 19, 2021. Program staff and the Selection Committee will then review the applications based on the BC Program project selection criteria. More information on the program, eligibility requirements, and program contacts can be found on the Program website: [vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections](http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections)

<b>Primary Applicant   Municipality:</b>	
<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Total Better Connection Funds Requested:</b>	
<b>Total Project Local Match:</b>	
<b>Total Clean Water Funds Requested (if applicable):</b>	
<b>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.</b>	<b>Contributing Match (if applicable)</b>
<b>Project Management Approach:</b> MUNICIPAL <input type="checkbox"/> REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (RPC) <input type="checkbox"/> AOT <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Project Manager Name &amp; Title:</b>	
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Municipal Contact Name &amp; Title (if not Project Manager):</b>	
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b><u>VTrans District:</u></b>	
<b><u>Regional Planning Commission:</u></b>	
<b>Accounting System (CHECK ONE):</b> AUTOMATED <input type="checkbox"/> MANUAL <input type="checkbox"/> COMBINATION <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>DUNS#:</b>	<b>FISCAL YEAR END MONTH:</b>

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

**Project Location.** In no more than 300 words, describe the project location. Include key features (i.e. project area is within the designated Village; 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.

**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:

**Does the primary municipal applicant have an approved Town Plan:** YES  NO

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**Municipal Manager or Selectboard Name:**

**Municipal Manager or Selectboard Signature\*:** \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Electronic signatures accepted*

# 2021 Better Connections Grant Application Form

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

**Primary Applicant | Municipality:**

**Project Title:**

## 1. Project Purpose and Need (20 points)

### a. Project Purpose (10 points)

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

**b. Community Need (5 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.).

**c. Building of 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.

**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.

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

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

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

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

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

- b. 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.



**c. Community Capacity and Project Management (10 points)** *Leads directly to project implementation (demonstrated by community capacity and readiness to implement).*

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, and 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. If seeking Agency of Transportation Project Management assistance, please provide description of need.

**d. 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.

### 3. 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 [here](#). 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:

<b>Total project cost (TPC):</b>	\$75,000
<b>Grant funds requested:</b>	\$67,500
<b>Local cash match (10% of TPC minimum):</b>	\$7,500
<b>Additional cash match (if applicable):</b>	\$

#### a. 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 follow of the project major activities and outcomes.

**b. 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.

**c. Schedule (5 points)**

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

#### 4. 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 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, virtual engagement during the pandemic, etc.) score the highest under this criterion.

**a. Public Outreach (10 points)**

Describe how the public engagement plan is developed with activities that educate and involve the public in the process and are integrated into the work plan. Explain how the project will engage the community in equitable, meaningful and multiple ways from the start, and how the project will engage and reach under-served, under-represented, and harder-to-reach constituents.

**b. 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, or complementary local activities, or initiatives). Please explain the project partnerships through evidence of partners in the work plan, and evidence of coordination and partnerships with state agencies with regulatory oversight and implementation funding.

**5. Priority Consideration Bonus Criteria (20 points)**

- a. 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)

- b.** 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)

- c.** 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)

- d.** Does the project support public health including increasing access to healthy food 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)

## 6. 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.*

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### Certifications

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

- 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 [jackie.cassino@vermont.gov](mailto:jackie.cassino@vermont.gov) and it constitutes an official submission of your application. No signature is required.
- I understand that consultant selection will follow the policies and requirements of the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Procurement Procedures. <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/contract-admin>
- This application was prepared by staff of the primary municipality or Regional Planning Commissions **OR**
- 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, \_\_\_\_\_ **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.**

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## 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):

2. Please list the [watershed](#) (waterbody identification number) the project is located 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](#)).

3. 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]



4. 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]

5. 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]

6. 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]

## 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]

Task	Deliverables	Responsible Party	Schedule	Total Cost
<b>Total Cost</b>				