



Accessibility Modification Grant (AM)

Provides funding, on a first-come, first-serve basis for projects that bring existing municipally-owned buildings that serve a municipal function and non-school-community libraries into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Projects must be bid ready all decisions must be made that would impact the bid documents. Construction of new standalone buildings is not eligible for the AM program. The entire building that is open to the public must be brought into compliance with the ADA. **ALL VCDP FUNDED PROJECTS MUST COMPLETE AN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PRIOR TO SIGNING ANY CONTRACTS RELATED TO THE PROJECT AND IN SOME CASES PRIOR TO GOING OUT TO BID ON SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES.**

Grant Range: \$5,000 to \$100,000. A 10% match of cash or cash-in-kind goods or services is required for all AMs.

10% Match Requirement

Accessibility Modification Grants must include a cash or cash-in-kind contribution of goods and/or services of a flat 10% of the VCDP funds requested. The maximum VCDP request amount is \$100,000. In order to qualify for the maximum request of \$100,000, you must have at least \$110,000 of ADA renovations.

Release of Environmental Conditions

You must secure a Release of Funds letter from the Agency prior to obligating any funds, such as offering construction contracts, and requisitioning VCDP funds. The exception is that general administration costs such as, preparing the environmental review, engineering work, or architectural work, may be incurred prior to the Release of Funds. Environmental Review forms will become available in the Online Grants Management System after your application has been received by the VCDP. For further information and guidance with respect to the Environmental Review Process, please contact Quin Mann in our Grants Management Division (802-828-1357) and review our online Program Guide.

Budget Considerations for General Administration

Every project budget must include funds related to General Administration. These are costs relating to the overall management of the VCDP grant. These activities would be common to any VCDP grant and include environmental review, financial management, progress reports, requisitions, procurement, and final program reports/closeout to name a few.

- Up to eight percent of the VCDP request (not the total project cost) for all grant types and projects, other than scattered site housing developments, may be budgeted for general administration activities. If this amount calculates to be less than \$5,000.00, the grantee can request up to \$5,000 provided it does not exceed 12% of the VCDP request. However, AM projects are limited to 8%, even if this results in an amount less than \$5,000. More than 8% may be allowed, on a case-by-case basis, provided the applicant demonstrates that a larger amount is necessary for the project.

Please be aware that any unexpended General Administrative funds may not be used for other grant agreement budget line items, and must be returned to the Agency. An exception may be made by the VCDP under limited circumstances. See Program Guide for additional information on general administration.

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Budget Considerations for Program Management

Every project budget (other than those for Planning Grants) must include funds related to program management. VCDP funds or other funding sources may be used for what the VCDP refers to as “program management activities.” Program management expenses are directly related to accomplishing program tasks specific to the project being funded. Program management activities differ from project to project. Typical program management activities include clerks of the works, compliance with Davis-Bacon requirements, permit compliance, engineering and architectural services to name a few.

See Program Guide for additional information on Program Management, Fair Labor Standards and Davis-Bacon Wage.

The amount of federal funds used for general administration and program management of the grant must be “necessary and reasonable” for the proper and efficient performance and administration of the VCDP award. In order to be charged to the VCDP grant, all general administration and program management costs must comply with OMB Circular A-87 and VCDP policies and procedures.

Pre-Award Costs

Applicants who receive an award may be reimbursed through the Grant Agreement for pre-award costs such as the fees charged by professionals (architects, engineers, archeologists, lawyers, etc.) in the preparation of the applications. Such costs will not be reimbursable to applicants who do not receive an award. These costs should be clearly identified in the application.

Other Resources

The VCDP expects all applicants to vigorously explore all funding resources including local capital campaigns. These efforts will bear on the competitiveness of an application. A revolving loan fund controlled by an applicant should be considered as a funding source. Applicants will be expected to explain why a municipally-controlled revolving loan fund is not a source of funds for the project in those cases where such a fund exists.

In addition, communities are expected to provide financial support in the way of donated general administrative or program management services, waiving or reducing connection or local permit fees, or other cash-in-kind contributions relevant to the project or explain why such support is not possible. The application must include documentation for the status for every funding source included as Other Resources. There are several very important factors to keep in mind when providing evidence of the commitment of funds from other sources. These include:

- The commitment must still be firm when the money is needed.
- You must be able to comply with all conditions placed on the commitment.
- The commitment cannot be dependent on events beyond the control of the applicant
- Identify each resource individually and upload or mail its supporting documentation. Please note: All planning grants are required to have a 10% match for all VCDP funds requested.

Procurement Obligations

With public funds come the obligations to follow and document a full and open competitive process for the procurement of goods and services. Applicants should not hire any entity prior to completing the required environmental review process and receiving an award, and if a compelling need to hire exists,

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be certain to contact Grants Management of the VCDP first for guidance. Otherwise, you may create a situation where the VCDP cannot consider funding the project. Please refer to Chapter 6 of the VCDP Grants Management Guide for detailed guidance before you enter into any arrangements for the provision of goods or services for your project (e.g., architects, consultants, engineers, construction contractors). For instance, you must ensure and document that all prime contractors and subcontractors are not on the HUD debarment list by checking the following website: www.sam.gov.

In addition, the Grantee or Administrator must verify and document that the prime contractor has been certified and registered with the [Vermont Secretary of State's Office](http://www.vermont.gov) website.

Fair Labor Standards and Davis Bacon Wage Rates

Any housing project of more than seven units or any other construction project of more than \$2,000, where federal funds are all or part of project funding, triggers the requirements of the Davis Bacon Act, the Copeland anti-Kickback Act, and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act. These federal laws impose considerable record keeping obligations, and impose requirements on your contractors and subcontractors. Please refer to Chapter 7 of the VCDP Grants Management Guide. To ensure that workers receive no less than the prevailing wage rate for similar work in each specific locality, the communities if awarded must secure the wage rates at the following website: www.wdol.gov (prior to publishing any Request for Bids (RFB)).

For further information and guidance with respect to the Davis-Bacon process, please contact [Juliann Sherman](mailto:juliann.sherman@vermont.gov) in our Grants Management Division (802-279-4619).

Environmental Review Process

Normally the environmental review can be conducted after there is an award. BUT if the project is on a schedule that mandates the expenditures of funds, either VCDP or Other Resources, prior to or immediately following an award, the environmental review should be conducted sooner. Often it can be done in the time period prior to the Community Development Board meeting while VCDP staff is reviewing the application.

The [National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C § 4321 et seq. \("NEPA"\)](http://www.ecfr.gov), and related regulations, apply to all VCDP-funded projects. An assessment is required to determine the entire project's impact on the environment. All activities involved in a project must be assessed; those funded with VCDP funds as well as those funded with other resources.

This assessment and the Department's Environmental Release of Funds must be completed before any non-general administration project funds (excluding acquisition in certain situations) are obligated or expended. For instance, this means that a construction contract(s) cannot be executed prior to completion of the environmental assessment and release, and that construction cannot be commenced prior to the release. Only expenditures for administration, management and sometimes acquisition can be incurred prior to environmental release.

The assessment involves a review of the project under several laws, regulations and other authorities which become applicable to the project through NEPA. The types of projects typically funded through the VCDP trigger a more in-depth response in certain areas which may require hiring a consultant, and may take more time to complete. Specifically, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 470 et seq. ("Section 106"), and related regulations, and the Flood plain

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Management Executive Order 11988, 42 FR 26951; May 25, 1977, may impact your project budget and readiness to go forward with your project.

(a) Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Under the environmental review process, an assessment must be made as to the impact the project will have on historic resources. This assessment includes both architectural and archaeological historic resources. To determine the applicability of Section 106, please review the following questions:

- Does the project involve any structure that is 50 years old or older?
- Will there be an activity that may cause any disturbance of the ground?
- Is your site eligible for or on the National Historic Register or located within an historic district?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, please refer to [Section 106 Review \(doc\)](#) and [Authorized Consultants \(doc\)](#) for further guidance. Specifically, refer to the sample memo for obtaining input from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (DHP). It is important to submit all the information listed on the memo to ensure accurate input from the DHP and allow for appropriate budgeting for the project. The memo to the DHP and all accompanying documentation should be submitted at least 45 days prior to the application deadline.

NOTE: Hiring an authorized Historic Preservation Consultant is a grant-eligible expenditure and should be included as a line item in your program management budget in the application.

(b) Flood plain Management. Under the environmental review process, an assessment must be made as to the impact the project may have to a designated flood plain. Contact the relevant municipal clerk, regional planning commission, or the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (241-3770) to obtain a copy of the flood plain map covering your project area. If the project is located within a designated flood plain, you will be required to demonstrate that there is no practical alternative to the location of the project ([See 24 CFR 55.10](#)).

To demonstrate that there is no practical alternative, an [eight step process](#) must be completed prior to submission of an application to the VCDP for funding. The process that must be followed involves an early public notification with a fifteen calendar day comment period, evaluation of alternatives, identifying direct and indirect impacts to the flood plain, and an additional public notification of determination of “no practicable alternatives” with a seven calendar day comment period.

For further information and guidance with respect to the Environmental Review Process, please contact [Grace Vinson](#) in our Grants Management Division and review our online [Program Guide](#).