

U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Funds for Public Libraries

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U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Funds for Public Libraries

Agenda

- I. Overview of the program – Catherine Delneo
- II. Overview of the Application – Janette Shaffer
- III. Questions and Answers

U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Funds for Public Libraries

Background

The American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) Capital Projects Funds from the U.S. Department of Treasury provides states with \$10 billion for payments to eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Vermont has allocated \$16.4 million of its ARPA Capital Project funds toward this grant program which supports capital improvements at public libraries.

The Department of Libraries will administer these funds to support capital improvement projects at public libraries across Vermont.

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ARPA Funding for Capital Projects at Public Libraries

The U.S. Department of Treasury's program is intended to address specific concerns that emerged during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

For example, we know that in Vermont, many public libraries were forced to close or modify public service due to inadequate ventilation or lack of space for social distancing.

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Focus on Internet Access

During the COVID-19 public health emergency we also saw how important it was to have internet access for the purposes of education, work, and health monitoring.

For Vermonters who did not have home internet access, the impacts of the pandemic were more significant because they were not able to attend school, go to work, or connect with their doctors as easily.

In short, internet access became an equity issue for Vermonters during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

These funds are meant to help increase internet access and level the playing field in the communities that are awarded these grants.

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Program Goal

Enable public libraries to address critical building repairs and improvements so that Vermont communities will have continued access to **high-speed internet to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring** at their local public libraries through at least December 31, 2031.

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Types of Eligible Projects

Projects that expand or improve public access to the library – and specifically to the public computers and internet access at the library – are eligible for this grant funding.

Renovations and expansions of public library spaces are eligible for this funding, as is new construction.

Critical building repairs and improvements that ensure community members have continued access to their public library are eligible to apply for this funding including:

- projects that improve accessibility;
- HVAC system replacements;
- sound-proof rooms or booths; and
- building envelope and structural repairs (including water infiltration and roof repairs).

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Accessibility Improvements

Many public libraries in Vermont have not had significant renovations for decades, so haven't been required to make updates related to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Vermont's libraries should be easy to enter and move through for everyone – including those with physical disabilities.

The internet should be easy to access at all public libraries for all members of our community.

<https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/>

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Air Circulation and Filtration Improvements

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, library staff across the country became keenly aware of air circulation and air quality. In many cases, Vermont's public libraries were forced to close for long periods of time due to inadequate ventilation in their buildings.

The importance of fresh, clear air in library buildings is now better understood by the public health community – and by library staff and trustees.

Adequate air circulation and filtration is important to the general public, and even more so to Vermonters who are immunocompromised.

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Building Envelope Repairs

Building Envelope



If damage to a library building envelope isn't repaired, that library building may eventually become unusable and unable to provide internet access to the community.

This funding is intended to ensure that the public has *continued access* to the internet in their public libraries – so repairs to building envelopes are eligible for this funding.

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Expansions, Renovations, and New Buildings

Projects that increase public access to the internet through:

- Zoom Rooms
- Private spaces
- Reservable community rooms or meeting rooms
- Attached exterior spaces (e.g. porches with Wi-Fi access)
- Expansions
- Renovations
- New library construction

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Project Timeline Eligibility

Many applicant's projects will not have broken ground at the time of their application.

Some projects currently underway *may* be eligible to receive an award if the work began after March 15, 2021, depending on Treasury Guidance.

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Competitive Grants

These funds provide a transformational opportunity for awardees to complete capital projects that will make a significant impact on the Vermonters they serve. However, the available funds are not sufficient to meet all the needs reported to the Department through the 2023 Needs Assessment.

Therefore, the Department will use a competitive grant program to award approximately \$15.9 million dollars to public libraries in Vermont to complete capital improvement projects.

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The Competitive Grant Process

Public libraries will apply for the funds by completing grant applications.

A rubric will be used to evaluate applications according to a transparent process.

Funds will be awarded to selected public libraries based on the strength and score of their applications.

Because funding is limited, it is likely that some libraries that apply will *not* be awarded funds.

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Geographic Distribution of Competitive Grant Funds

The Department aims to support libraries across the state and aims to award capital grant fund from one of its two programs to at least one public library in each of Vermont's 14 counties.

Depending on the applications received, their relative merits, and their geographic distribution, the location of public libraries (e.g. county or geographic region) may factor heavily in the determination of awards.

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Equitable Access to Grant Funds

To increase equitable access to these funds, the Department will award additional points to libraries based on their score on the Vermont Community Index.

Libraries in towns that rank 75% and above in the VCI will have 175 points added to their final score.

Libraries in towns that rank between 50-75% in the VCI will have 85 points added to their final score.

Libraries in towns that rank 49% or below in the VCI will not have points added to their final score.

<https://finance.vermont.gov/content/vermont-community-index-results-workbook>

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Timeline

January 30, 2024: Application Launch Webinar

January 30, 2024 through March 12, 2024: Grant Application for the U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Fund for Libraries

Late Spring/Early Summer 2024: Grants awarded

Summer 2024-December 2026: Projects Underway

December 31, 2026: End of the period of performance for all U.S. Treasury Capital

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Program Guidance

Capital Projects Fund Guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury:

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/capital-projects-fund>

A Second and Separate Capital Project Grant Opportunity:
Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants

Goal: To provide resources to address repair and mitigation needs in small, rural public libraries that also serve as community meeting spaces and public facilities, with a focus on economically depressed areas.

Timeline:

Fall 2024 - The Department will launch the competitive grant application with a webinar.

Fall/Winter 2024 - Grant Application for Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants Open

Spring 2025 - Grant Awards will be made in the Spring of 2025.

August 31, 2031 - End of the period of performance for all FY2023 Community Project Fund grants.

Separate Grant Application: Due to the different performance periods and requirements of the two federal programs, this grant opportunity will have a separate application.

Questions?

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