**Vermont Regional Priority Project List Process**

**2023**

**Goal**: To produce a list of high priority economic and community development projects that meet certain eligibility requirements (see below). The regional lists are considered living, dynamic documents that are continually updated and edited. The lists will be used by regional and local organizations to understand the funding needs of the region and allow regional economic and community development staff help match federal and state funding announcements to projects.

The regional lists express the highest priority projects for each region and the top ten projects from each region will be included in a consolidated statewide list submitted annually by December 15 by the RDC fiscal agent to the Agency of Commerce. Regions may submit a revised list, through the RDC fiscal agent by May 15 each year. The RDC fiscal agent will revise the consolidated statewide list and re-submit to the Agency of Commerce by May 31. The Agency of Commerce will share the Statewide List with other agencies and funders, to be used by state and federal funders when making funding decisions.

**Process**: The Regional Priority Project process consists of three major steps to be implemented on an annual basis (see process detail below):

1. Regional solicitation and input.
2. Regional scoring and prioritization.
3. Consolidation of top ten regional projects into a statewide priority list to be submitted to the Agency of Commerce.

**Eligibility and Scoring Criteria**: Projects should address the following criteria to be included on the Regional Priority Project list. These are the criteria that will be used to score and prioritize each project. Scoring and prioritization is conducted on a continuum for each criterion regarding the degree to which the project meets each criterion. For example, a project that is truly “shovel-ready” (no obstacles to implement except the funding gap) will score higher than one that requires permitting or the project managers do not have site control. A second example is a project that creates 20 new, high-paying jobs will score higher than a project that retains a few jobs. Projects that meet the criteria to a higher degree will score higher and be placed in a higher priority. Because the lists are living and dynamic, projects can be added to the list each year and move up in priority as the project is more fully developed and more fully meets criteria. Projects should, at a minimum be able to address the following on the Project Information Form:

**Project Purpose and Benefits to the Region**: The project should build capacity in the region for improved economic and community development. Projects that advance economic and community development, that will advance the goals and objectives of CEDS and regional plans, and address the most pressing needs of the region, will score highest.

**Project Timeline, Milestones, and Status:**  The project should be prepared to get underway if funded, including factors such as site control, engineering and design, permitting, and funding identification and commitment. Project should also have identified milestones and measurable outcomes. Projects that are considered “shovel-ready;” that is, the project is underway, ready to implement or close to ready, and identifies milestones and outcomes, will score highest.

**Project Principal Experience:**  The project should involve an entity that has successfully executed similar projects, managed federal or state grants, and/or successfully developed similar business models, or involve a partnership or collaboration that provides adequate experience. Projects showing experienced project managers or a collaboration/partnership that provides experience, will score highest.

**Project Support and Regional Need**: The project should address and advance local and regional economic and community development goals and objectives, as identified by a CEDS and/or the regional plan or other studies and reports and have community support and engagement. The project should not be redundant or duplicate ongoing projects or programs in the region unless there remains a need, such as with housing or childcare; rather, projects should fill a need in the region. Projects that address a regional goal as expressed in the regional plan and are not duplicative, will score highest.

**Project Cost, Identified and Committed Funding/Financing, and a Funding Gap**: The project should have a budget developed that includes total project cost, identified sources and uses, and a clearly identified funding gap. The project description should state the funding sources the project is pursuing, the status of those funding/financing sources and, if not secured, identify when the sources are expected to be committed. Also, identify the type of resource (cash, grant, loan, sponsor in-kind, third party in-kind, etc.) and describe which resources can serve as a match, noting that, for example, some grant sources do not allow matching federal funding with other federal funds. Projects that include a budget, all funding information, have an identified gap that may be addressed by available state and federal resources, and have firm funding commitments and a match, will score highest.

**Job Creation and Retention**: The project should create or retain jobs. The project description should estimate the number of permanent and temporary jobs to be retained and/or created, including the period of time over which the jobs will be created. Projects that retain jobs and/or create new jobs, will score higher.

**Regional Priority Project Process Detail**:

1. **Solicitation for Projects**:
   1. RDCs will post on their websites information about the Regional Priority Project process with an explanation of the purpose, process, and how to add a project to the list, a copy of the Project Information Form (preferably in a format that can be filled out and submitted, including on-line forms), and information on the scoring criteria
2. Using the Regional Priority Project Information Form, RDCs will collect project information.
3. Regions with a system in place to collect project information for their CEDS may use that system as long as the same information is collected as required on the RPP Information Form.
4. Annually, RDCs will:
   1. post a solicitation for project descriptions and provide access to the Regional Priority Project Information Form through newsletters, website postings and other means of reaching the general public, regional organizations, developers, etc., including sharing the information with regional partners and asking that they share the information with their constituencies.
   2. hold at least one public meeting that involves all municipalities in their region, regional organizations, developers, and the general public to communicate the Regional Priority Project process and purpose; and,
   3. present the Regional Priority Project process and purpose to their partner RPC and RPC member municipalities by attending an RPC meeting.
5. As local and regional plans are updated and reports issued, RDCs will consult the following to identify local and regional priorities and potential projects. The RDC will communicate with the municipality or entity and solicit project descriptions based on:
   1. adopted Regional Plans;
   2. "Report and Priority Action Plans" for communities within their region that have participated in VCRD's *Community Visit* process;
   3. reports and project lists developed by the Working Community process;
   4. adopted municipal plans within their region and, in particular, those communities with state-designated areas (downtowns, village centers, industrial parks, etc.); and
   5. adopted municipal capital plan/budgets or published priorities and goals.
6. RDCs, in consultation with partner RPCs, may add other projects to the region’s list as they become aware of them throughout the year, but the top ten priority projects will only be submitted to the state, through the RDC fiscal agent, in December, with the option to submit an update in May.
7. **Scoring and Prioritization Process:**
   1. RDCs will establish a scoring and prioritization team of at least 5 individuals, representing regional organizations involved in economic and community development, one of which must represent the regional planning commission. Other individuals can represent chambers of commerce, other business organizations, housing organizations, non-profits, municipalities, the general public, and under-served populations.
   2. The RDC will populate, from the Project Information Forms or their CEDS process, the Regional Priority Project Scoring Matrix with the basic project information and compile all Project Information Forms into one PDF.
   3. The RDC will provide a familiarization and training session with the scoring and prioritization team.
   4. The scoring and prioritization team will use the Regional Priority Project Scoring Matrix and the Project Information Forms to individually score each project.
   5. The RDC will collect the Scoring Matrix from the team members and compile the results.
   6. The RDC will convene the scoring and prioritization team to discuss the scoring results and work out any ties or issues, resulting in a list that prioritizes all projects based on the needs and priorities of the region.
   7. The team may use the average scores as the basis for the prioritization of the projects or use the scores as one factor in the prioritization. If other factors are used, the team should document them and maintain a justification on file for the resulting prioritization.
8. **Alternative for Regions with an Active CEDS**: Providing that the CEDS process to collect project information collects the information required by the RPP Project Information Form, regions that have an approved CEDs May use the CEDS process to collect project information and then shall use the Scoring and Prioritization process in Section 2.
9. **Submission to State**:
   1. In accordance with the schedule below, each RDC will submit to the RDC Regional Priority Project fiscal agent:
      1. the scoring matrix (in Excel format) with the top ten projects in order, including the average scores and prioritization order, and
      2. The Project Information Forms for the top ten projects on the scoring matrix, in order, with all ten forms compiled in one PDF document.
   2. The RDC fiscal agent will compile all regional lists into one statewide list that incorporates the top ten projects from each region and submit that list to the Agency of Commerce.
   3. For projects that cover multiple regions or statewide projects proposed by the RDCs of VT, the regions involved in a multi-region project must complete a project form and may include an 11th project on their list and in the Project Form PDF. Each RDC shall include a Project form and an 11th project on their list.
10. **Publication of Regional Priority Project Information and List:**
    1. Annually, each RDCs will post the Regional Priority Project list and the top ten Project Forms that were submitted to the State on their website and share it with appropriate regional partners.

**Regional Priority Project Process Timeline**:

[Note: if date falls on a weekend or holiday, the deadline falls on the closest previous weekday.]

**January-April**: Project solicitation and outreach.

**May- September**: Project Information Forms Submitted; RDCs communicate with project sponsors.

**October 14**: Last day to submit Project Information Form.

**October 15**: Project scoring and prioritization started.

**November 1**: Project scoring and prioritization completed.

**December 15**: Regional Priority Project List, containing top ten prioritized projects, and one PDF containing top ten Project Information Forms submitted to RDC fiscal agent by each RDC.

**January 15**: Consolidated Statewide Priority List submitted to the Agency of Commerce by RDC fiscal agent.

**Notes to RDCs from RDC Fiscal Agent (Priority Project Lead):**

Do **NOT** send your RPP report directly to ACCD. Send it to ACEDC (Fiscal Agent) **no later than December 15** for inclusion in the statewide report.

Send two documents:

1. the scoring **and** prioritization matrix in excel format (remember to prioritize projects 1-10); and
2. one PDF with all the project forms in prioritized order.

Please do the following to improve the matrix:

1. Include a Project Description that is **no more than** a 1-3 sentence summary.
2. Be sure to score **AND** prioritize projects.
3. Fill in the last row in the matrix with the prioritization of the projects, 1-10.