

# Better Places

*Empowering Vermonters to Create Vibrant Public Places*



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Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

Vermont Community Foundation | VT Department of Health | Patronicity

April 8, 2022

House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

# Community Planning + Revitalization

**Providing tools, training, grants,  
and incentives for local leaders  
to plan and implement projects  
that support thriving, inclusive,  
and walkable communities.**

# Program Overview

Better Places is a community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to **create inclusive and vibrant public places** serving Vermont's [designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas](#).

The Better Places program provides one-on-one project coaching, local fundraising support, and two to one (2:1) matching **grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000** to make your community-led placemaking ideas happen.



# Better Places Legislation

Act 74 enacted in June 2021 and appropriated \$1.5M

## The General Assembly finds:

- Public spaces are **essential for supporting economic activity and health and well-being**..... throughout the pandemic and for building **engaged, equitable, and resilient communities** in the future.
- Placemaking projects **intentionally leverage the power of the arts and cultural assets** to strengthen the economic and social fabric of communities.....

## It is the intent of the General Assembly to:

- Help local leaders identify, develop, and implement placemaking projects by creating the Better Places Program **to advance local recovery efforts, rebuild local economies, boost local capacity, and reconnect Vermonters to one another**....

# Co-Created and Collective Action



The Better Places program was **co-developed and co-created** by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development in partnership with:

- The Vermont Legislature
- The Vermont Community Foundation
- Vermont Department of Health
- Patronicity

Better Places relies on the expertise and **generous support** of the Better Places Partners which include:

- Vermont Arts Council
- AARP Vermont
- Local Motion
- Preservation Trust of Vermont
- National Life Group Foundation
- Vermont Agency of Transportation
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets.

A photograph of a community event in a park. In the foreground, there is a paved walkway and a landscaped area with tall grasses. In the middle ground, several white and grey pop-up tents are set up on a grassy area, with people walking around. Large, leafy trees are scattered throughout the scene. On the left, a black lamppost has a green banner that says "SAINT ALBANS" and "MEET".

**A new grant program  
that's about **building  
community,** not just  
implementing projects.**

# Inclusion and Equity as a CORE VALUE

The Better Places partners believe that all Vermonters deserve access to vibrant and welcoming public places in their lives and communities. We are **committed to lifting up placemaking projects, policies, and practices which contribute to social and racial equity for a more just, inclusive, and equitable Vermont.**





FOOD  
DRINKS  
GIFTS

MOON  
DOG  
CAFE  
CAPPUCCINO  
AND  
JUICE BAR

Place-based  
People-Focused

# Core Program Partners

Vermont Department of  
Housing and Community Development

Vermont  
Department of  
Health

Vermont  
Community  
Foundation

Patronicity



Richard Amore | Claire Tebbs | Gary Holloway | Jenni Lavoie

Suzanne Kelley

Kate McCarthy

Jonathan Berk | Camryn Greer | Ebrahim Varachia



# Pilot Program Success



Essex, VT



Northfield, Vermont



White River Junction, VT



Rutland City, VT



Wilmington, VT



**63** application submitted, **Jan. 2021**



**\$989K** grant funds requested



**54** Vermont communities interested



**\$130K** grant funds awarded, **March 2021**



**8** pilot projects completed, **Dec. 2021**

# Springfield, VT



# Springfield, VT

Comtu Falls Park





**“Many locals did not realize that the Black River was literally right there, and were amazed this beautiful resource goes right through their downtown corridor.”**

**- Springfield participant**



Zoom

# Barton, VT

Barton Community Giving Garden



**“Our community’s generosity and resilience are not a surprise, but nonetheless the extent of support and enthusiasm for this project was wonderfully affirming.”**

- Barton participant

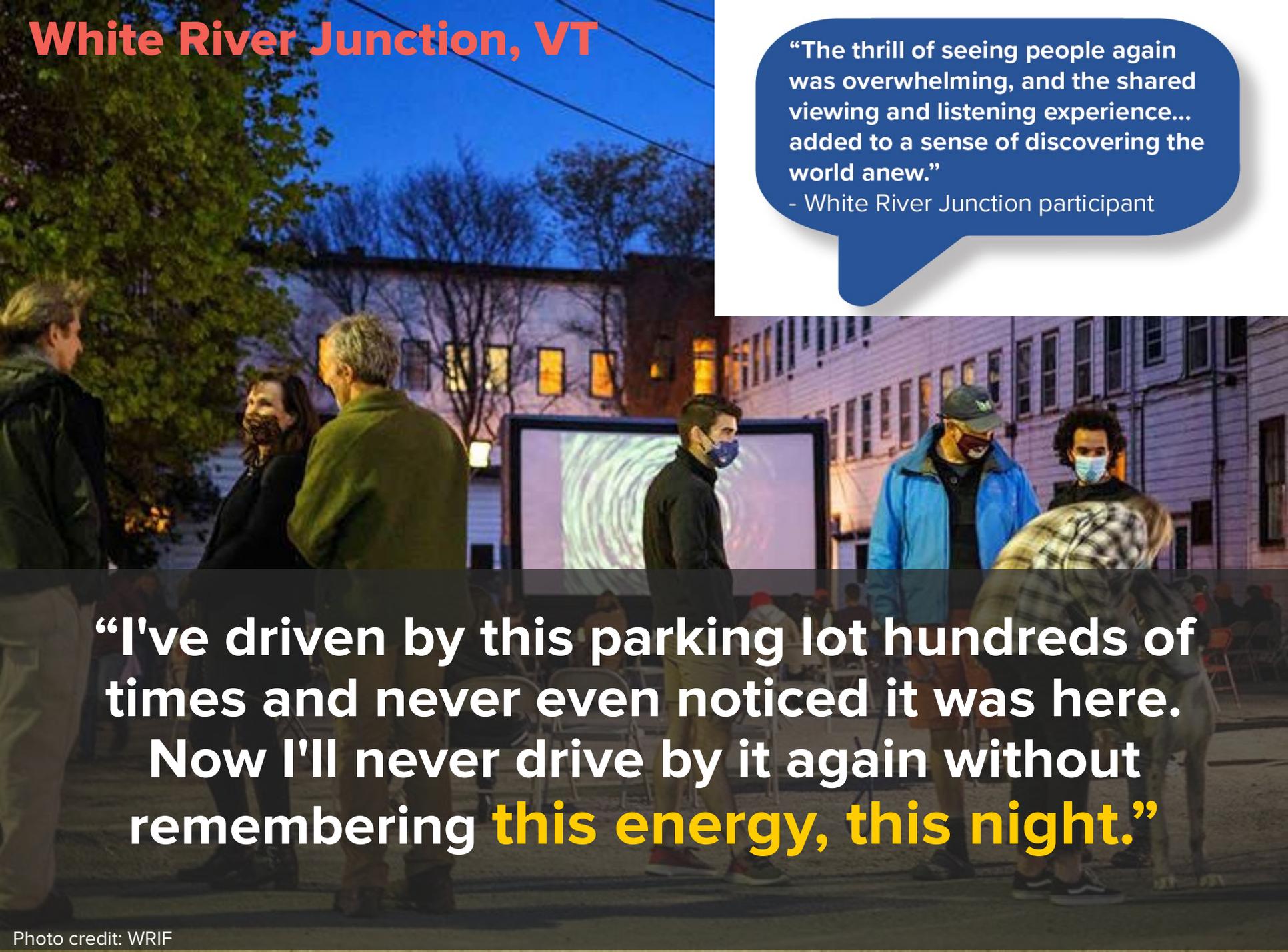
# Ludlow, VT

Youth Art Project



“Businesses want to be involved, and want to know that they are making a difference for their community.”  
- Ludlow participant

# White River Junction, VT



“The thrill of seeing people again was overwhelming, and the shared viewing and listening experience... added to a sense of discovering the world anew.”

- White River Junction participant

“I've driven by this parking lot hundreds of times and never even noticed it was here. Now I'll never drive by it again without remembering **this energy, this night.**”

# Better Places (new) Program Milestones



Better Places legislation and **\$1.5M** funding allocation, **June 2021**



Program partnerships formed with Vermont Community Foundation, Vermont Health Department, and Patronicity, **Fall 2021**



**Program goes live, 230 webinar participants, February 2022**



First project goes live with crowdfunding campaign, **March 2022**

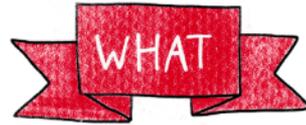


**60+ projects** in preflight consultation, **April 2022**

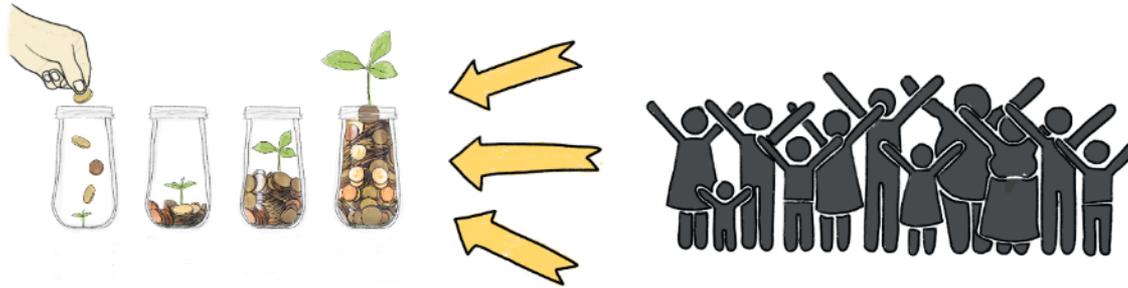
Crowdgranting is the power  
of the crowd **plus** the power  
of the grant.



# CROWDFUNDING



RAISE **FUNDS** FROM MANY **PEOPLE**



**GOAL**

IDEA



CAMPAIGN



SHARING



DONATIONS



# What is Crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding is the process of gathering a community to provide financial support for a project within a set period of time.

# What is Crowdgranting?

This powerful model combines the power of a grant with the power of crowdfunding!



The **COMMUNITY**  
crowdfunds

**\$15,000**



The **SPONSOR or GRANTOR**  
awards a matching grant of

**\$30,000**



The **TOTAL INVESTMENT**  
in the community is

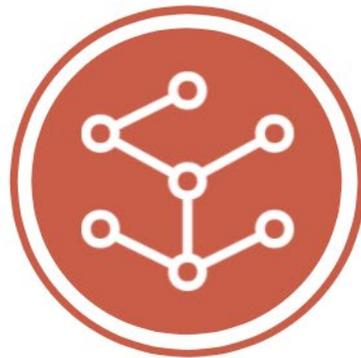
**\$45,000**

# Empowering Communities

Crowdfunding democratizes access to capital, empowers communities to champion their own sustainable development, and allows residents to support projects that mattered most to them.



IT IS  
ACCESSIBLE



IT IS  
DECENTRALIZED



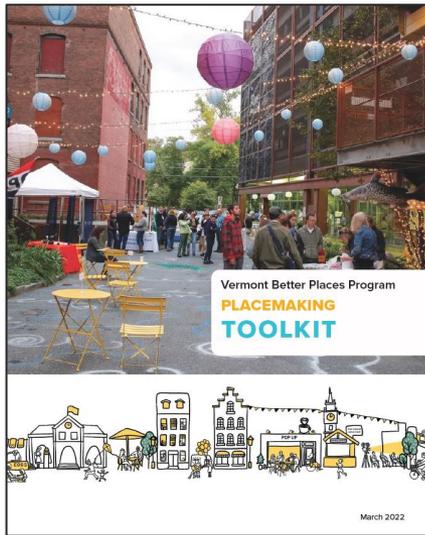
IT'S A GREAT  
STORYTELLING  
TOOL



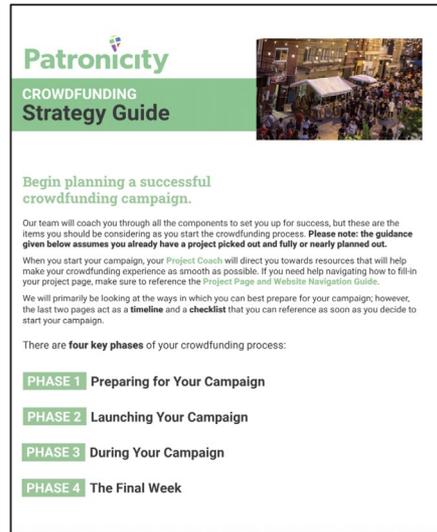
IT FACILITATES  
COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT

# Crowdfunding Process and Support

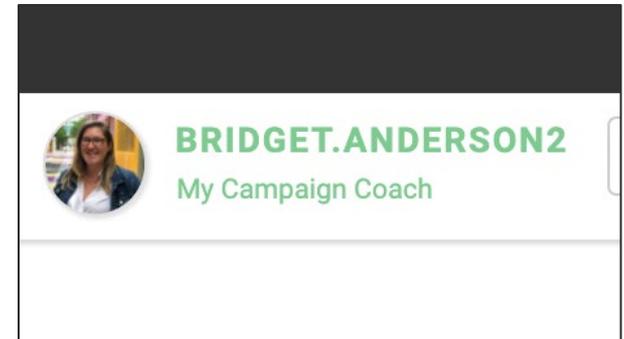
Running a local crowdfunding campaign may seem daunting, but we will be there to support you every step of the way! We provide:



Technical  
Support



Crowdfunding  
Strategy



One-on-One  
Project Coaching

# Resources



## Vermont Better Places Program PLACEMAKING TOOLKIT



### BUDGET WORKSHEET

This is an example of a budget template for a placemaking project. This can be printed and used as-is or click on the icon at the bottom of the page for an **editable excel file** of this worksheet.

**Project:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Town/City:** \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT BUDGET WORKSHEET		Supplier	Hours	Cost
Use the 'insert or delete row' function if you wish to add/subtract project costs.		(if known)	(if known)	
Cost description (amend as needed)	Technical design services or artist fees:			

## BETTER PLACES TOOLKIT

This toolkit is a companion document to Vermont's Better Places program. It is a resource for anyone interested in working together to create vibrant public places in the heart of Vermont communities. Each page includes resource links to Vermont funding partners, project examples, technical guidance, and inspiration for getting community-led projects started, keeping them moving, and making them happen.

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

- ▶ **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**  
If you are interested in participating in Vermont's Better Places program, this section provides an overview of the program process, partners, and quick steps to get started.
  - ▶ **SECTION 2: PLACEMAKING IN VERMONT**  
Need inspiration? This section highlights Vermonters who are creating wonderful public places and programs in their community and why they are doing it.
  - ▶ **SECTION 3: PILLARS OF PLACEMAKING**  
This section introduces the three pillars of placemaking: People, Place, and Process, providing big picture questions to ask in each of these areas when embarking on a placemaking project.
  - ▶ **SECTION 4: PROJECT SUCCESS CHECKLISTS**  
Committed to making this happen? This section provides a series of checklists for the five stages of creating a collaborative placemaking project from start to finish.
  - ▶ **SECTION 5: PRINTABLE TEMPLATES**  
Take a look at the Better Places preflight questions and find printable worksheets and hyperlinks to editable files including: budget, timeline, action plan, and press release templates.
- For a comprehensive list of placemaking resources and funding sources go to the [Better Places website](#).

### Better Places Goals

- ▶ Activate and revitalize public spaces to build vibrant communities
- ▶ Empower residents to play an active role in shaping their community
- ▶ Increase integrity of and equitable access to green spaces
- ▶ Advance "quick build" projects which boost community confidence and local pride
- ▶ Build inclusive and welcoming spaces for social connection, health, and recreation
- ▶ Stimulate the creative economy and provide equitable access to the arts
- ▶ Spur entrepreneurship, partnerships, and public and private investment



# How it Works?

Better Places uses a method of grantmaking called “crowdgranting”. Crowdgranting combines crowdfunding – the practice of funding a project with small donations from a large number of people – paired with a matching grant from DHCD.

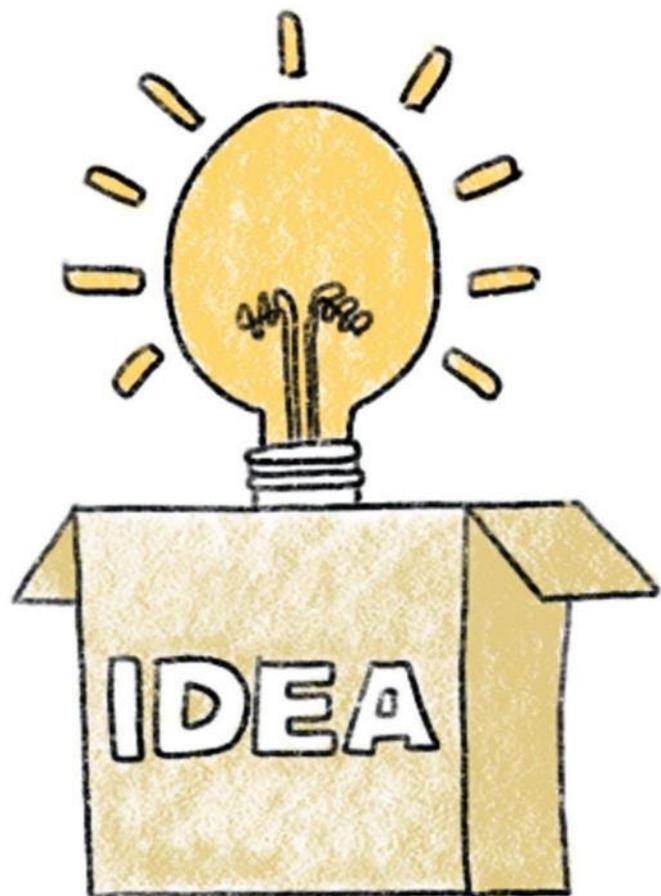
## Better Places participants will:

- 1** Complete Pre-flight check, Apply and Receive Project Approval from DHCD [on a rolling basis]
- 2** Work with a Patronicity project coach to launch crowdfunding campaign and raise 33% local match
- 3** Receive Better Places 2:1 matching grant and work with Vermont Community Foundation on grant agreement
- 4** Implement Project and Celebrate Success



HOW IT WORKS

IDEA



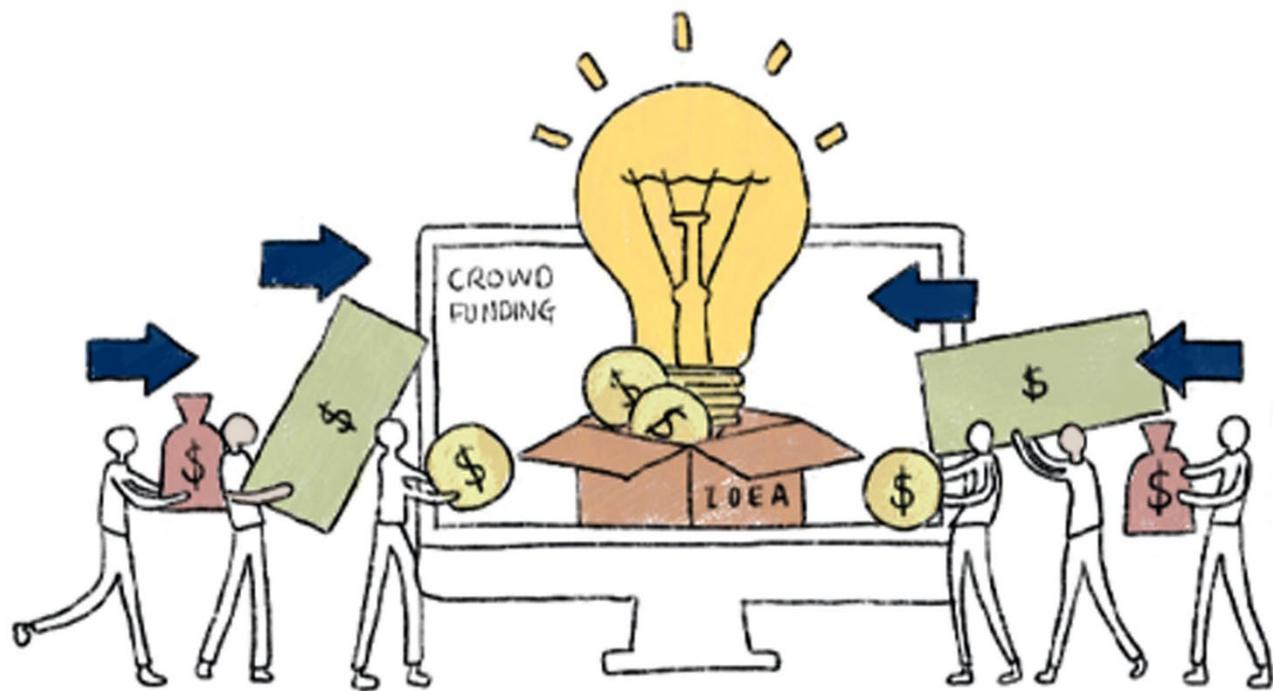
HOW IT WORKS

APPROVED  
PROJECT



HOW IT WORKS

# START CROWDFUNDING



HOW IT WORKS

# MEET THE GOAL

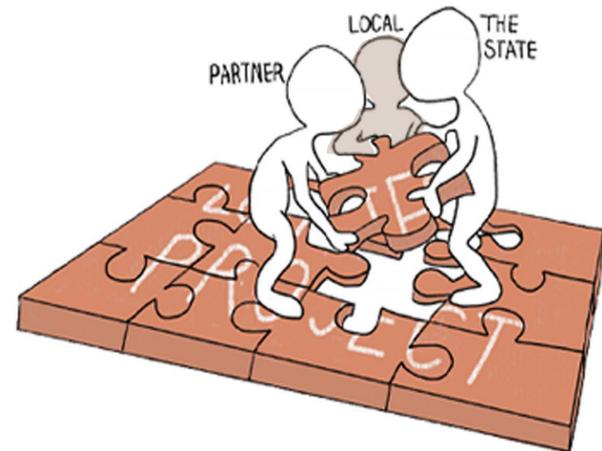


# Recap

## Better Places participants will:

- 1** Apply and **Receive Project Approval** [on a rolling basis]
- 2** Work with a Patronicity project coach to launch crowdfunding campaign and **raise 33% local match**
- 3** Receive Better Places 2:1 matching **grant (from \$5k to \$40k)** and execute grant agreement
- 4** Implement Project, **Celebrate Success**, Measure Impact

SUPPORT  
THE PROJECT



# Project Interest

April 2022



- 8 completed pilot projects
- 2 live project campaigns
- 6 projects in pipeline to launch
- 60 + projects in preflight



📍 BENNINGTON, VT

## Better Bennington Thursday Night Live!

We hope to build and restore our community with free diverse entertainment to bring residents and tourists to Beautiful Downtown Bennington!

**\$4,810**

of \$5,000

**31**

days left

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

VIEW

⚡ SUPPORT

# Live Campaigns

“We are 3/5 of the way there in just a week and a half [of campaign]. This is beyond exciting! This program...gives all donors ownership of feeling like they made something amazing happen regardless of what they are able to give. **And they did. Genius.**”

- Jenny Dewar, Executive Director  
Better Bennington Corp.

# Live Campaigns



WINDSOR, VT

## Windsor Public Library Lift Installation and Accessibility Project

Help us install a lift and redo the stairs and bathroom so our library is more accessible to our community!

\$4,627

of \$10,000

44

days left

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

[VIEW](#)

[⚡ SUPPORT](#)

“There are far too many Windsor residents who currently can’t use our bathroom, meeting room, or children’s room due to an inability to navigate stairs. Our library board and staff have been attempting to make the library more accessible for the last 20 years. We finally have an affordable plan that makes sense.”

- Barbara Ball  
Director of Windsor Public Library

## Health Equity and Community Design Technical Assistance Pilot **in partnership with Vermont's Better Places Program**

The Vermont Department of Health is partnering with the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Better Places program to develop a **Health Equity and Community Design Technical Assistance Pilot**.

The Technical Assistance Pilot will **provide extra capacity and resources** to communities to develop healthy community design and placemaking plans and ideas, that **center on equity and address COVID-19 health disparities** among populations that are at high-risk and underserved.



**Connects**

**Builds Social Capital**



**People to**

**Creates Community**



**Place**

**Adds Vitality**

# Thank you and Q&A

## Better Places

Empowering Vermonters to Create Vibrant Public Places



\$9,437



Funded

81



Patrons

2



Projects

\$0



Matched by Sponsor