

# Community, Arts and Business Spaces

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Includes goals from these Creative Communities Reports:

- Build an Arts Center (St. Albans)
- Create an Arts Incubator (Windsor)
- Create a Business Incubator and Arts Space (Hardwick)
- Develop the Future of the Hardwick Town House
- Establish a Business Incubator (Middlebury)
- Expand Options for Indoor Community Space (Grand Isle)

## *Art/Community Centers*

- The first objective should be selling the community on why arts are something to invest in – and at the same time get feedback from the community about what types of arts & cultural activities are needed. This effort needs a broad interest base. A comprehensive feasibility study should be the first step before fundraising for an arts center. This would include identifying what the community sees as important for the project, what resources are currently available in the region, and investigation of possible redundancies.
- The **Center for Rural Studies** is one group that performs surveys and evaluations for non-profit organizations; they could be a place to start for exploring what options exist to generate a useful profile of community interests ([crs.uvm.edu](http://crs.uvm.edu)). Interns may be available to develop and distribute surveys. Contact Will Sawyer at 656-0892.
- **Preservation Trust of Vermont** has extensive experience with both restoring historical buildings and using physical structures as a foundation for strengthening community life. [ptvermont.org](http://ptvermont.org).
- The **Vermont Humanities Council** (<http://www.vermonthumanities.org/>) can help non-profits find new ways to engage people in town – there is a small grants program to support community initiatives of certain kinds (call Peter Gilbert at (802) 262-2626).
- **The Champlain Housing Trust** (Brenda Torpy) might have some technical advice for the organization - board constitution, fund raising, capital campaign, and project development. Phone: (802) 862-6244. <http://www.champlainhousingtrust.org/>
- Talk to towns that have done similar projects around arts-oriented facilities as a centerpiece for the community. A good starting point could be **Gerianne Smart** and others in Vergennes about what they did to restore their Opera House (802) 877-2262). Call **Alex Aldrich** (802) 828-3293), Executive Director of the **Vermont Arts Council**, or staff at the **Preservation Trust of Vermont** (802) 658-6647), for ideas of people to speak with.

## *Arts and business incubators*

- The **Vermont Community Development Association** toured of Randolph to see the town's incubation space. Contact VCDA at (802) 229-9111.

- There are many arts and business incubator developments in Vermont.
  - **Studio Place Arts** in Barre combines studio, gallery and classroom space. Janet Van Fleet, can describe the successes of SPA and on-going challenges of managing an arts incubator.
  - The **Rockingham Arts and Museum Project** in Bellows Falls (Robert McBride, 463-3252) offers an example of incorporating artists' living space with retail space in a downtown building as part of a larger community revitalization project.
  - The **Burlington Community Land Trust** established an artists' cooperative including living space in Burlington through their affordable housing programs – the **Rose Street Artists' Cooperative**, [bclt.net/c\\_rosest.shtml](http://bclt.net/c_rosest.shtml).
  - The **Tip Top Bakery Building** provides reasonably priced studio space in a building that generates a “creative collaborative environment” in White River Junction (Matt Bucy, [tiptopmedia.com](http://tiptopmedia.com)).
- Tour several similar facilities and learn about what works, where they've found financing, how they've attracted artists and businesses, and how their business model works. The **Preservation Trust** could potentially provide a tour of centers (802 434-5014).
- Inventory major options for available space in the region and talk to the **Regional Planning Commission** and **Regional Economic Development Corporation** to seek assistance. Depending on the strategic plan for the incubator, needed space may range anywhere from single rooms for classes a few hours a week to a full building dedicated to the arts.
- If the incubator focuses on helping small, arts-related businesses, USDA Rural Development **Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG)** might be able to fund a comprehensive development planning activity. These grants can exceed \$40,000. Rhonda Shippee at 828-6033 or [rurdev.usda.gov/VT/vtnhcf.htm](http://rurdev.usda.gov/VT/vtnhcf.htm).
- USDA also provides **Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG)** to non-profits and municipalities to help facilitate business development. If there is a planning, feasibility study, marketing or other technical component needed to launch this effort, they may be able to help. Contact **Sherry Paige** at USDA: (802) 828-6034.
- Some incubators target new businesses that would not have located in their town otherwise. Other incubators primarily support the development plans of existing small businesses. Often incubators will serve community development goals, like bringing focus, activity and excitement to downtown through an attractive building. For some ideas of what is happening around the country, look at the **National Business Incubation Association** ([nbia.org](http://nbia.org)).
- Many incubators become useful only after businesses reach a certain size. **Invent Vermont** provides a virtual incubation service, helping inventors who are not yet at the size to enter an existing incubator. Invent Vermont provides workshops, technical assistance, networking and socializing opportunities and serves as a virtual incubator ([inventvermont.com](http://inventvermont.com)).

- Sometimes business development needs are better met by programming than by an incubator building. However, a building can be key for some businesses that have high utility demands and/or need equipment that is more affordable when shared. The **Food Venture Center** is one example, where businesses can share equipment and production facilities along with receiving technical assistance (contact Brian Norder at (802) 849-2000). <http://www.edcnv.org/>
- The **Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies** is an example of a new high-tech incubator. **Tom Rainey** led the start of VCET and has experience with business incubation in other states as well. [vermonttechnologies.com](http://vermonttechnologies.com)
- The **Vermont Community Loan Foundation** provides loans for projects that will contribute to the local economy and strong community in towns around Vermont. Visit [vclf.org](http://vclf.org).
- **Mark Blanchard** is the **Vermont Small Business Development Center** expert on incubators. (800 464-SBDC).
- Organize existing resources so that entrepreneurs can easily determine where to go to meet their needs. The state maintains [thinkvermont.com](http://thinkvermont.com) as a business resource. Communities have become more sophisticated in presenting community-wide resources. An example is St. Johnsbury's page: [discoverstjvt.com](http://discoverstjvt.com). Free tools also offer a surprisingly professional web presence. A popular one is **pbworks** (<http://pbworks.com/>).

## *Funding*

- The **Vermont Arts Council** awards annual Cultural Facilities Grants to assist Vermont nonprofit organizations and municipalities to enhance, create or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public. Visit [vermontartscouncil.org/](http://vermontartscouncil.org/).
- Send for the **Vermont Directory of Foundations** at [cpgfundraising.com](http://cpgfundraising.com) or call **Christine Graham** at 862-0327. It is a great resource for grant seekers with an interest in Vermont and lists federal and state funding sources for a wide range of community interests.
- Contact the **Vermont Community Foundation** (388-3355) for list of potential grant sources for community centers or facilities. <http://www.vermontcf.org/>
- Search the **Foundation Library Directory** ([foundationcenter.org](http://foundationcenter.org)). This is a very large database which can give you foundation information from around the country as well as Vermont: what they fund, grant application cycles and contact information.
- The **Warren & Cecile Thompson Charitable Trust** funds community facilities:
  - Warren & Cecile Thompson Charitable Trust
  - 16709 Port Royal Circle
  - Jupiter, Fl 33477
  - Warren L. Thompson (561) 747-6612
- Write them a letter of interest and describe the project.

- The **W. K. Kellogg Foundation** also funds community facilities: [wkkf.org](http://wkkf.org)
- **Rural Development's Community Facility Direct** (or guaranteed) **loan program** may be able to assist in delivering capital related to construction costs. Very early involvement with the agency is critical especially if the arts center will be a "start-up" non-profit. One recommendation is to bring an experienced non-profit real estate owner/operator/investor to the table to "own" the facility.
- Early discussions should be held with the **Agency of Commerce and Community Development** (Molly Dugan – (802) 828-3211) to determine if there is a role that Community Development Block Grant money can play.

Compiled by the **Vermont Council on Rural Development**, 802-223-6091, [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org)