

TRORC

Two Rivers-Ottauquechee

REGIONAL COMMISSION



News & Notes

February 2023



Corinth, VT | Photo by: John Knox

PROJECT UPDATES AND REMINDERS

TRORC Announces 2023 Scholarship Program

The governing board of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission believes our region's future is enhanced by both wise and forward-looking stewardship of the land, natural resources, and public institutions, as well as through thoughtful investment in the next generation. To this end, the Regional Commission has authorized establishment of an annual TRORC Scholarship Program to encourage and recognize high school students pursuing career and life choices consistent with the vision and values of vibrant, diverse and sustainable communities, as articulated in our regularly updated Regional Plan.

The Regional Commission strongly believes that academic performance should be one of many factors in awarding scholarships and will also consider a student's record in the following areas:

- community service-oriented activities;
- engagement with civic institutions;
- activities that advance diversity, equity and inclusion;
- engagement with civic institutions;
- leadership skills;
- innovative thinking and problem solving;
- entrepreneurship and resourcefulness.

[ANNOUNCEMENT, ELIGIBILITY, APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS CAN BE FOUND HERE](#)

UPCOMING: Creating a Vibe: Strategies for Thriving Public Spaces

When: March 6, 2023, 6-7 p.m. EST

Where: On Zoom, [register here](#).

This training is focused on using existing resources available to Vermont towns and residents to create thriving downtowns and public spaces. Inclusive and vibrant public spaces are essential for community and economic development as Vermont continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. We will examine case studies illustrating successful efforts to revitalize ailing towns, and explore resources including digital toolkits and grant opportunities. This training will be recorded and available to the public.

For more information, please contact Meghan Asbury at masbury@trorc.org.

Upcoming Trainings

- **Money: Getting and Managing Grants for Local Projects:** Wednesday April 5th, 6-7 p.m.
- **Region-wide Listening Session: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our Communities:** Thursday April 6th, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- **Equity Forum for Municipal Officials:** Thursday April 27th, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- **Where to find useful data/Understanding visual data and information:** Monday July 10th, 6-7 p.m.

Details on locations will be forthcoming.

TRORC Shared Services Survey Follow-Up Begins

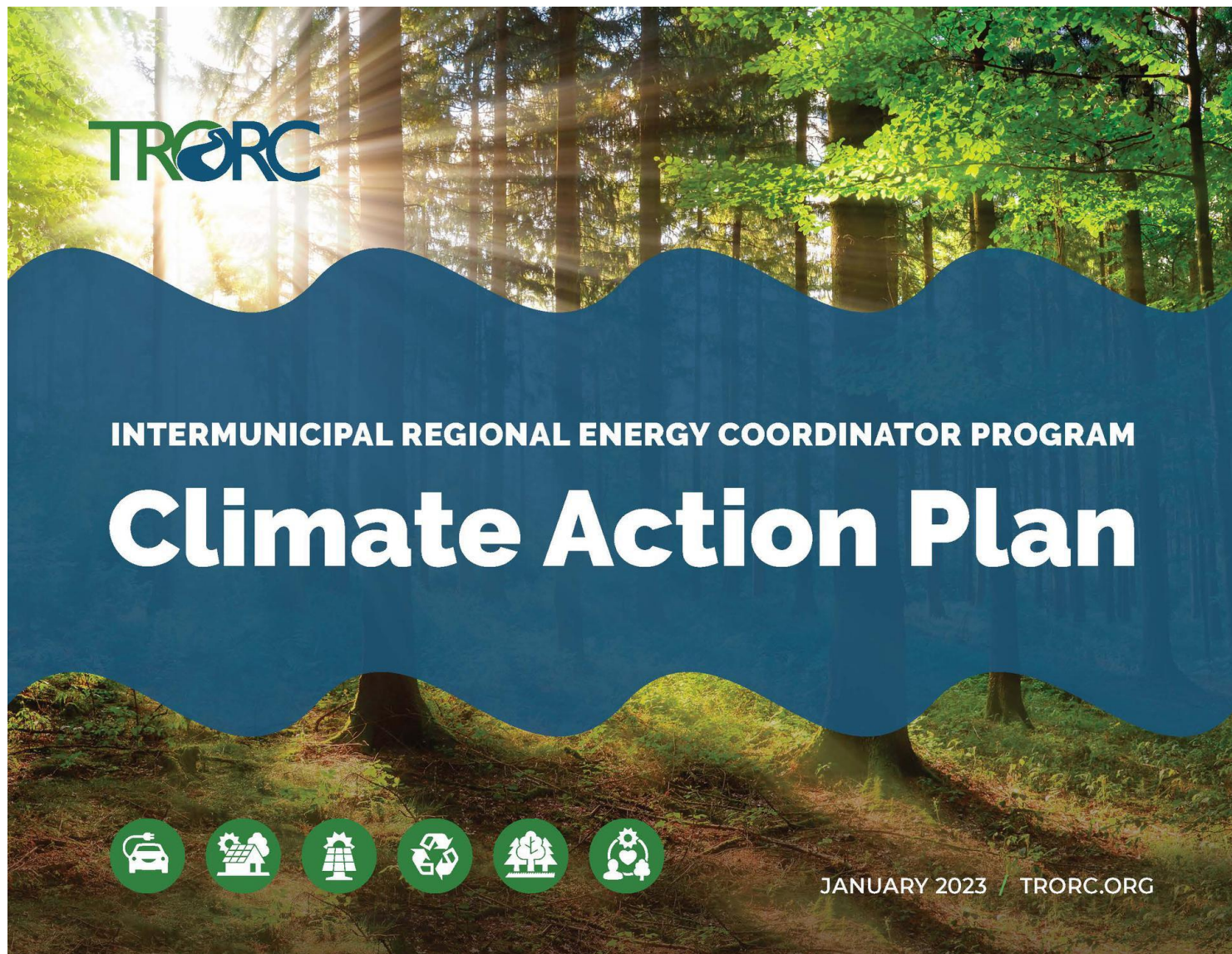
TRORC has begun follow-up with towns on the results of the Services Survey. The Survey sought to gauge town needs for additional staffing and interest in positions shared between towns. It was open for responses in September 2022. Group follow-up discussions are currently being scheduled and will be held via Zoom. Towns were grouped together by position interest and location, with the hope that neighboring towns would share positions. The goal of the follow-up is to confirm interest in a shared position between the towns and to brainstorm a timeline. As towns have not budgeted for the position and hiring can take a significant amount of time, we anticipate it may take some time to initiate these arrangements.

If you are a town official and would like to be contacted about potential shared positions, please email Sydney Steinle at ssteinle@trorc.org, and we will be in touch with more information.

Regional Forum on Health Equity

Please join us on Monday March 27th from 6:30 to 8 p.m. for a virtual discussion about health equity in our region. TRORC staff will introduce a new Health Equity Planning Toolkit and discuss other resources available to support health equity projects in our region. Attendees will be invited to share projects that they are currently working on or hope to get started.

[Click here to register](#)



Climate Action Plan Working Groups

The IREC Steering Committee has established two CAP working groups: the [Climate Action for You \(CAFY\)](#) working group and the Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES) working group. The CAFY working group has been compiling pre-existing resources on climate-friendly practices for individuals and businesses. The RBES working group is advocating for increased compliance with Energy Standards, including a training for zoning administrators on this topic.

IREC Climate Action Plan

This past year, the seven IREC towns, under supervision and direction from TRORC, developed a Climate Action Plan to set collective energy goals. Energy committees have already begun implementing these strategies, including:

- Participating in the ebike lending program;
- transitioning town buildings to all electric HVAC systems;
- eat Low & Local Campaigns, window dresser community builds, Green Drinks events, and other public outreach initiatives;
- working with schools to acquire electric school buses;
- developing weatherization initiatives for income-qualified households;
- raising funds to implement energy-efficiency improvements and upgraded systems for income-sensitive households;

- and increasing capacity and access to local foods for low income and food-insecure individuals through expansion of community gardens and GROW YOUR OWN GARDEN kits.

With the support of funding through the Small Grants for Smart Growth initiative offered by VNRC, the IREC towns were able to engage in a CAP redesign with the assistance of a consultant. [Click here to view the redesigned Climate Action Plan](#), and see which Pathways, Strategies, and Actions have been prioritized by the IREC towns.

Sole Proprietor Stabilization Grants

As a part of TRORC's economic development strategy and in order to assist struggling sole proprietor businesses in our region and beyond, TRORC has partnered with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to connect qualifying sole proprietor businesses with technical assistance providers in three key areas:

- Website Development / Enhancement
- Financial Management (Bookkeeping) and Record-Keeping
- Branding and Marketing (digital, print, audio)

Applications for assistance are collected on a rolling basis and are first-come, first-served. More information, including eligibility criteria and how to apply, [can be found here](#).



Strafford, VT | Photo by: John Knox

Strafford Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Approval!

Earlier this month, Strafford's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) was approved by the State of Vermont and FEMA. TRORC is proud to have assisted Strafford in the LHMP update process. Currently, TRORC is under contract with many of our region's towns to update and rewrite their LHMPs to keep their residents safe and informed in the event of a natural disaster. Please give us a call if you would like assistance.

More information on LHMPs, why they're needed, and what they do, [can be found here](#).

TRORC UPDATES

Staffing Changes and Updates

In January and early February, TRORC welcomed Harry Falconer as a Planner and Jeff Grout as the new Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator.

Harry Falconer's main project area is administering the Municipal Energy Resilience Program, helping to convert town-owned buildings to more efficient and eco-friendly heating and cooling systems. He holds a degree in English and creative writing from Emerson College and is currently researching the thesis project required to complete his Master of City Planning degree from Boston University. In various past lives, he has been a bread baker, an EMT, and a reference librarian specializing in business and economic research. Originally from New Hampshire, Harry has a deep love for Northern New England and on weekends can be found having way too much fun with a chainsaw at his family's camp in Windsor County.

Jeff has been implementing and managing Energy Efficiency and Distributed Energy Management programs for large utilities and their customers since 2009. He has assisted municipal, commercial and industrial customers with projects that enabled them to efficiently track and manage their energy usage, curb peak demand, and lower their energy bills. Jeff's projects have included residential and commercial Energy Efficiency, Demand Response, and Electric Vehicle charging optimization.

Jeff holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Master of Science degree in Engineering Management, both from the University of Massachusetts. He is certified as an Energy Manager (CEM), Demand Side Manager (CDSM) and Project Management Professional (PMP). Jeff was raised in Vermont and is very excited to be working on energy projects with local energy committees to help them reach their energy goals.

When not working or volunteering in his community, Jeff spends his time outdoors being as active as he can hiking, running, skiing and bicycling so that he can reward himself with delicious Vermont local food and brew.



Harry Falconer | Photo by: Sydney Steinle, staff



Jeff Grout | Photo by: Sydney Steinle, staff

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

AARP VT Accepting 2023 Community Challenge Grant Applications

The annual program aims to make communities in Vermont more livable for people of all ages

We invite local eligible organizations and governments across the state to apply for the [2023 AARP Community Challenge](#) grant program, **now through March 15 at 5:00 p.m.** Grants fund quick-action projects that help communities become more livable in the long-term by improving public spaces, transportation, housing, civic engagement, diversity and inclusion.

The AARP Community Challenge is accepting applications across three different grant opportunities, two of which are new this year. All projects must be consistent with AARP's mission to serve the needs of people 50 and older. Priority will be given to proposals that are inclusive, address disparities, and directly engage volunteers age 50 and older.

- New this year, **capacity-building microgrants** paired with resources, such as one-on-one coaching, webinars, cohort learning opportunities to improve walkability and starting or expanding a community garden.
- Also new this year are **demonstration grants**, focused on transportation improvements and the other portion of will focus on promoting awareness of the benefits of accessory dwelling units as a housing solution.
- AARP's **flagship** opportunity supports projects that improve public places; transportation; housing; diversity, equity and inclusion; digital connections; community health and economic empowerment; new this year community resilience; and civic engagement.

Deadline for applying is March 15, 2023; all project activities must be completed by November 30, 2023. To submit an application and view past grantees, visit www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

VTrans Announces Community Driver Campaign Initiative

Transportation is essential. Vermonters need you. There is a transportation crisis in Vermont. Mobility is essential to almost everyone, and there is more demand than ever to help Vermonters get to doctor's appointments and fulfill other critical needs. The answer? You and your vehicle.

Become a Community Driver through your local transit provider and be a force for change in the lives of your neighbors. Plus, for providing transport to help other Vermonters, you will be eligible to be paid or receive other compensation related to your travel. [Visit VTrans for more information.](#)

