

2023 - 2025



University
of Vermont

Leahy Institute
for Rural Partnerships

TWO - YEAR REPORT

Reflecting on two years of research, partnerships, and progress in strengthening Vermont's rural communities

Our Mission

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships operates alongside the Office of Engagement with the mission to build collaborations between the University of Vermont and state partners for the benefit of our rural places.

How We Work



Grants

Grants to fund partnership-driven solutions to address the needs of our rural communities



Engagement Initiatives

Partnerships that provide ongoing service to Vermont communities

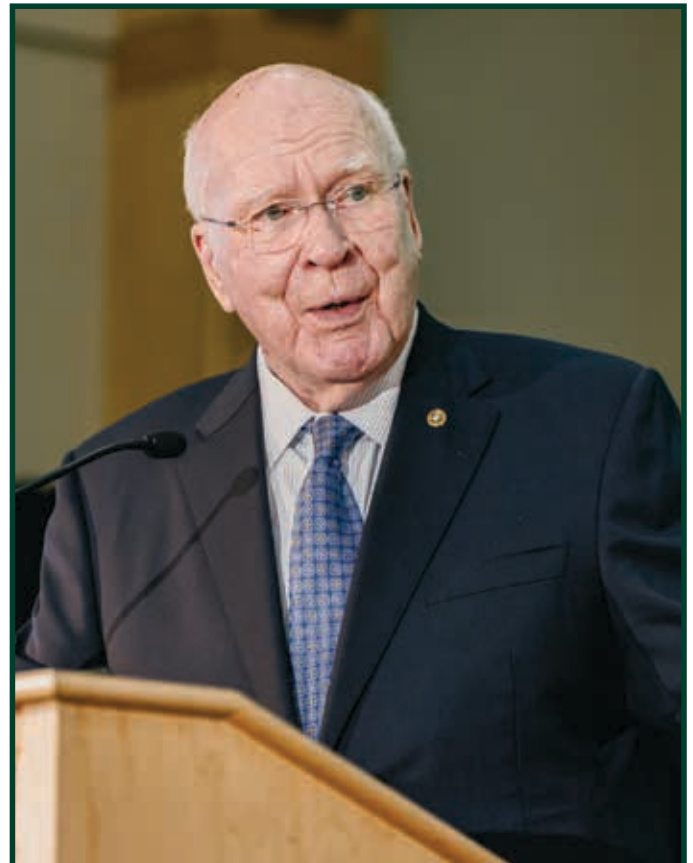


Convenings

Gathering people together to build connections and share knowledge

Every Vermont community deserves an opportunity to thrive. The Leahy Institute is pulling together the kind of partnerships with UVM in Vermont that support creative, long-lasting local solutions.

Patrick Leahy,
— *Retired Senator, Vermont*



Our Impact

South Hero

Research to support the increased grid demands of an electrified economy.

Stowe

This grant supports UVM and Stowe Electric in restoring knotweed-damaged riverbanks and creating a model to guide similar projects statewide.

Rutland

An Innovation Hub Consortium to support economic development, workforce growth, and entrepreneurial success.

Bennington

This partnership explores whether refugee resettlement accomplishments in Southern Vermont can serve as models for other rural communities across the country.

Barton

Developing a gel to heal dairy cow hoof wounds, which can be both dangerous for cows and costly for farmers.

St. Johnsbury

This pilot equips first-responders to administer medically assisted treatment in the field.

Bethel

A summer internship program designed to support community schools in rural areas.

Brattleboro

Establishing a community-based organization to support the new American community that is resettling in the region.

Our impact stretches across the state's 14 counties, including 38 individual areas and 15 statewide projects. Our key focus areas include:



Regenerative Agriculture



Resilient Energy Systems



Community Schools



Healthy Ecosystems



Transit and Housing Solutions



Access to Health Care in Rural Areas



Remote and Co-Working Practices



Policy and Governance

Partnership Highlights



Vibrant Community Schools

RESEARCH NEEDED TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

When the Vermont Agency of Education adopted a new model for k-12 education, the Community School model, it needed research support to determine how it could best serve Vermont schools, students and their communities.

RURAL EDUCATION CAPACITY-BUILDING MODEL

A new research partnership was formed between the Agency of Education, local community schools, and UVM's College of Education and Social Services that provides on-site research and evaluation support to help rural schools better serve students and their families.



A Maple Syrup Quality Testing Lab

SUGARMAKERS LACK RELIABLE SYRUP GRADING RESOURCES

Vermont maple is prized for its high quality. However, Vermont sugarmakers have nowhere to test their syrup for proper grading. Inconsistency within syrup grades can undermine Vermont maple in the market.

HELPING PRODUCERS GRADE WITH CONFIDENCE

UVM's Extension Maple Program at the Proctor Maple Research Lab, in partnership with the Vermont Maple Sugarmakers Association, has opened a new lab to test syrup and to offer workshops for producers. These results will provide sugarmakers with the knowledge and assurance needed to confidently grade and market their syrup.

Giving farmers the ability to make better decisions will help make them stronger farmers. Their success will contribute to the rich cultural fabric of Vermont.

— Heather Darby, UVM Extension

Farmer-Led Research Collaboration

FARMERS NEED INFORMATIVE DATA

The growing use of technology and data to run more efficient and sustainable farms can quickly raise the complexity of farming. Many of these solutions are not always tailored to the needs of Vermont farmers.

CONNECTING FARMS THROUGH SHARED RESEARCH

UVM Extension is working with the Vermont Farmer's Watershed Alliance to develop their own goals related to research and data needs that will support best practices on their farms. This farmer-led network is also working with UVM's Food Systems Research Institute to create a data clearinghouse for farmers.



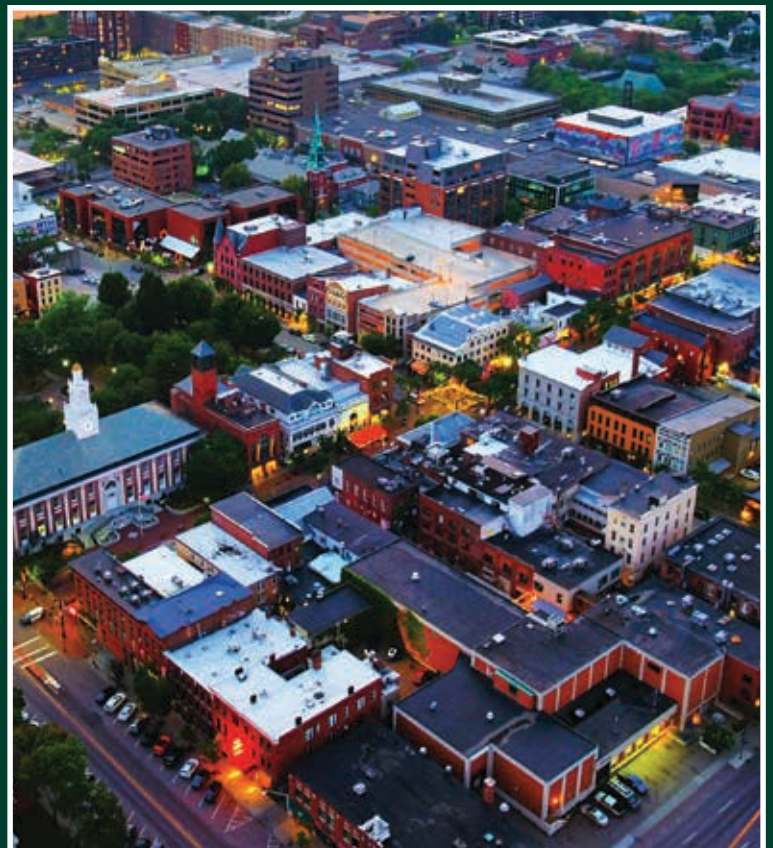
Rural Water Systems Mapping Initiative

INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS STALL VERMONT'S HOUSING GOALS

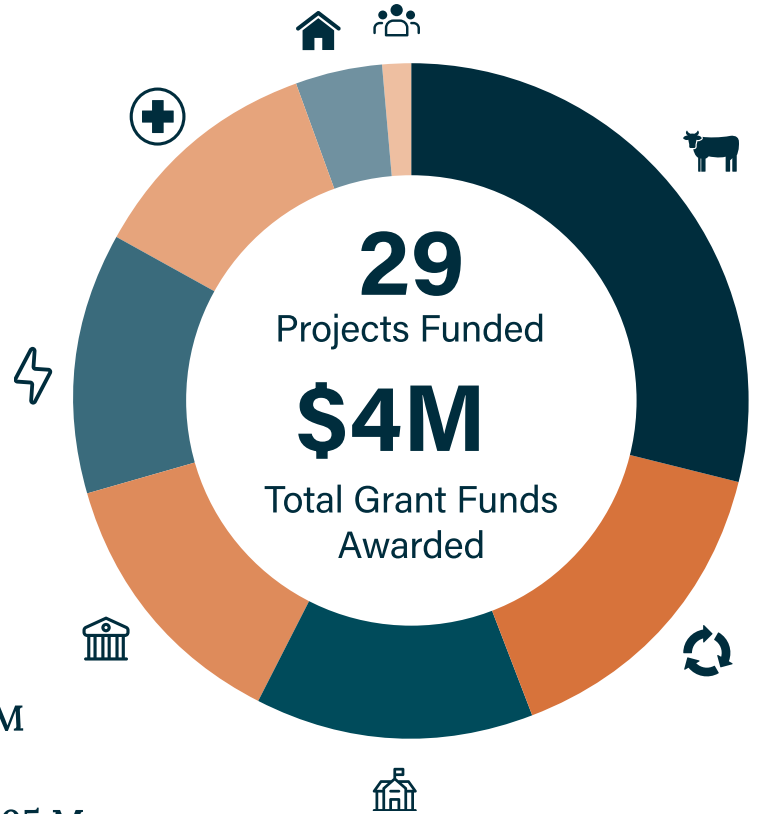
If Vermont wants to maintain its historic settlement pattern around compact village centers, water infrastructure capacity will have to increase. Without a clear picture of the extent of this need, housing and conservation goals will be difficult to achieve.

DATA-DRIVEN PLANNING TOOL FOR HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

UVM's Open Source program (VERSO) is partnering with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation to systematically map wastewater infrastructure data in Vermont. The new map is helping Vermonters better understand its impact on economic activity and housing development.



By the Numbers



2,328
Total Partners
Engaged

36
Summer Interns
Supported



Convenings



RISE 2025: Research as a Public Good

In this one-day summit, representatives from UVM, other universities, community organizations, municipalities and regions, businesses and government came together to consider how collaborative research can provide critical tools to solve problems in their rural places.

823

Attendants
at RISE 2025

VT Data Collaborative

The Vermont Data Collaborative is creating a front door for data access for Vermonters. A partnership between the Leahy Institute, UVM's Center for Rural Studies, and Vermont Open-Source Program Office, the Vermont Data Collaborative will create platforms and tools that will help Vermonters use data in their planning and decision-making.





Leahy Institute
for Rural Partnerships

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Institute for Rural Partnerships Consortium



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WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



University
of Vermont

The Team



Photos by: Adam Zylka, Andy Duback, Bear Cieri, David Seaver, Jacob Thomas, Joshua Defibaugh, Joshua Brown, and the UVM Spatial Analysis Lab