

*Vermont Land Use Education and Training Collaborative and
Vermont Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development (DEHCD)*
MUNICIPAL EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM

Program Description and Guidelines (FY10)

The Municipal Education Grant program (MEG) provides municipalities with funds for training volunteer boards and commissions to help them perform their duties as defined under 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117. The fund is designed to bring trainers directly to the community so that all members of the land use boards and commissions have the opportunity for basic and on-going education.

Overview and Eligibility

- Any municipality that wants training the roles and responsibilities of its land use boards and commissions may apply for a grant of up to \$800, once a year.
- A consortium of municipalities may apply for up to \$800 per town for training that requires more funding such as for all-day or multi-session training. (See FAQs for more information.)
- The MEG is a reimbursement program. Municipalities that are awarded a MEG pay for the trainer and/or other approved training expenses before the state will reimburse funds.
- The MEG is intended for training board and commission members as a group, and a majority should expect to attend.
- Funding for individual members to attend a training event, conference or university course, is not eligible.
- Trainers should be contacted, arrangements made and costs established before the grant application is submitted. A list of possible trainers is available on the DEHCD website (www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/MEG.htm).
- A “Menu of Training Topics” that describes the types of topics that will and will not be funded, is included in this packet
- Training on the roles local and appointed officials play in responding to Act 178 (the "ancient roads law") is eligible in FY10, but only for towns that did not receive an Ancient Roads grant in previous years.

Funding and Grant Details

- Approximately \$40,000 will be available for the MEG program in FY 2010 (ending June 2010).
- Up to \$800 grants are provided for a training session with a qualified trainer or other specified training expenses. If municipalities spend less than the proposed amount on training, any unspent funds will be rolled back into the MEG fund to help support training in other municipalities.
- In lieu of a local dollar match requirement, municipalities receiving a MEG are responsible for making every effort to ensure targeted board and commission members attend the training and to submit required evaluation forms within 150 days of receiving the grant agreement.
- To the best of its ability, DEHCD will award grants within two

MEG Information and Applications

For more information and to download electronic application materials go to *What's New* at www.vpic.info.

To obtain a hard copy of the application materials and ask questions, call or email Brenda Greika at DEHCD, Community Planning & Revitalization Division: (802)828-3243
brenda.greika@state.vt.us

weeks of receiving applications and will seek to provide for fair distribution of funds throughout the state.

Application and Approval Process


Municipalities seeking a MEG will go through the following steps:

1. Contact potential trainer and agree to content of training and cost.
2. Review MEG application materials.
3. Determine who will be the grant administrator- someone who can keep records and manage the grant requirements. Town treasurers cannot be grant administrators.
4. Fill out the application form and obtain Selectboard signatures.
5. Review and sign grant agreement.
6. Submit application and signed grant agreement to DEHCD at any time before (or postmarked by) May 15, 2010.
7. Applications will be reviewed by DEHCD in the order they are received.
8. Applications that DEHCD determines to be eligible for the MEG will be awarded a grant, as long as funding is available.
9. DEHCD will send a letter notifying the grantee of the award together with a copy of the executed grant agreement.
10. Conduct the training event within 120 days of receiving the grant agreement.
11. Send the request for reimbursement and grant completion forms with accompanying documentation to DEHCD for grant reimbursement within 30 days of completing the training.

Timetable

- November 3, 2009 – Opening date for submission of MEG applications.
- May 15, 2010 (postmarked by) – Last date applications can be accepted.

The MEG program is administered by the Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development (DEHCD) on behalf of the Vermont Land Use Education and Training Collaborative.



VERMONT LAND USE
Education & Training Collaborative

Coordinating training resources for local land use officials in Vermont.

University of Vermont, Center for Rural Studies (CRS)
Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA)
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DEHCD)
Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)
Vermont Planners Association (VPA)
Vermont Secretary of State's Office
Vermont Law School, Land Use Institute

And other non-profit, private and government providers of educational services for Vermont's municipal boards and commissions.

Vermont Planning Information Center – www.vpic.info

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who should be taking advantage of MEGs ? This program is designed for all municipal boards and commissions dealing with land use planning and regulation – primarily Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards and Development Review Boards and Selectboards. (Training workshops are intended for volunteer officials but should be noticed as public meetings and open to the public.)

Should all boards/commissions be trained together or separately? We strongly encourage cross training between all the boards in a municipality but individual boards/commissions may apply for their own training on issues or procedures specific to their duties (for example Development Review Board training on making quasi-judicial decisions). It is a good practice for municipalities to conduct “all-boards” training on the essentials of land use planning and regulation every few years or whenever there is a high degree of member turn-over.

How do we find a qualified trainer? A list of potential trainers with their contact information and areas of expertise is available on the [DEHCD website](#) but any trainer may be selected. We provide no screening for trainers, but will be requesting evaluations of their work.

What types of training expenses are eligible for reimbursement? In most cases, training with a professional trainer, including their preparation and travel costs, will require the full \$800 grant amount but in situations where a qualified trainer can provide training for less or for free, other related expenses may be reimbursed. These may include training materials, modest food expenses or other reasonable expenses. All such items must be listed in the grant application with cost estimates. Only those items listed and approved as part of the application will be reimbursed though actual costs may vary from the estimates. MEG funds cannot be used to pay time and expenses for board/commission members to attend the training.

What if we want to do a more extensive training? In general, it is expected that the grant will pay for one 2-5 hour training session. If longer or more extensive trainings are desired, it is recommended that the town either budget its own funds for the additional training or work with neighboring municipalities to arrange a multi-session or other more extensive training through a consortium application.

How does a consortium application work? To obtain funds for training that costs more than \$800 in partnership with other municipalities, a lead town should be designated to file an application on behalf of the consortium. Each town involved in the consortium will be eligible for up to \$800 but only one application from the lead town is required. Signed signature sheets from the other consortium towns must be attached to the single application form. The lead town will be responsible for paying for the training expenses and meeting the requirements of the grant agreement.

Can we invite members from other towns to participate in our training? Yes. Training with other towns can be especially beneficial when specialized training for one type of board/commission is offered and participants can learn by comparing practices. No additional application requirements need to be met, unless there is reason to apply as a consortium.

Menu of Training Topics

Recommended Training Topics

The Land Use Education and Training Collaborative recommends the following topics for all municipal officials who deal with planning and permitting. Training materials for some of these topics are available through www.vpic.info and others are in the process of being developed.

- ❖ **Essentials of Local Land Use Planning and Regulation** - For all local boards, especially Planning Commissions, Zoning/Development Review Boards, Selectboards and staff. A handbook and audio training are available online or from your regional planning commission. All members should have a copy of the [Essentials handbook](#).
- ❖ **Development Review Training** – Specifically for Appropriate Municipal Panels (Zoning Boards, Development Review Boards and Planning Commissions that review zoning and subdivision applications). Training together with similar panels from other towns can enhance the learning experience. The following topics are touched on in the *Essentials* but more in-depth learning is recommended for Appropriate Municipal Panels:
 - ◆ *Development Review Skills and Procedures* (managing meetings, conflicts of interest, reading and reviewing development plans, site design issues and tools, etc.)
 - ◆ *Development Review Requirements* (Statutory requirements for hearings, rules of evidence, making and writing effective decisions, etc.)
 - ◆ *Zoning and/or Subdivision Review* (the structure and intent of zoning and subdivision bylaws in general and the town's bylaws in particular)
- ❖ **Planning Commission Training** – Specifically for Planning Commissions in their role of preparing the municipal plan and implementation through bylaws and non-regulatory actions. Training with other towns' planning commissions can enhance the learning experience. The following topics are touched on in the *Essentials* but more in-depth learning is recommended for Planning Commissions:
 - ◆ *Municipal Planning Skills and Resources* (community involvement, visioning, data resources, plan adoption and approval, GIS and other planning tools, etc.)
 - ◆ *Implementing the Plan – Regulatory Options* (writing, adopting and amending bylaws and the range of regulatory tools available)
 - ◆ *Implementing the Plan – Non-Regulatory Options* (the range of non-regulatory tools available)The [Planning Manual for Vermont Municipalities](#) and the [Vermont Land Use Planning Implementation Manual](#) can be used for this training.

Other Training Topics

Local boards and commissions may also benefit from training on particular related subjects such as stormwater or wastewater treatment options, economic development, transportation and other issues of interest to the community. Because experts on those subjects from government agencies and some non-profit organizations are often able to provide training at little or no cost to the municipality, MEG grants will no longer fund training on such training topics unless a compelling need is described in the application. One exception is training on Ancient Roads, which will be funded for any municipalities that did not receive an Ancient Roads grant.

Attachment A: MEG FY10 Application Form

Municipality _____

Grant Administrator _____

Title _____ **Daytime Phone** _____

Address _____

E-Mail Address (if available) _____

Backup Contact Person _____

Title _____ **Daytime Phone** _____

Address _____

E-mail Address (if available) _____

Training Topic _____

Why is this Training Needed? _____

Board(s)/Commission(s) to be trained (Planning Commission, Development Review Board, etc.)

Name of Trainer or Training Organization _____

Other Municipalities that will participate in the training (only if applicable) _____

Is this a consortium application? **Yes** **No**

Projected cost of trainer and any other training expenses (only those expenses listed here will be reimbursed)

Total Estimated Cost of Training (up to \$800 or \$800/town for consortium) \$ _____

Date(s) of training or date by which training is expected to occur _____

Signature Form for FY10 Municipal Education Grant Program

Municipality _____

To the best of my knowledge and belief, information in this application is true and correct. The application has been duly authorized by the Legislative Body of the applicant. We understand that the receipt of funds is conditional upon agreement to comply with all applicable state requirements and agree to the terms of the grant agreement provided below.

(Signature of Grant Administrator)

(Printed/typed name and title)

(Date signed)

(Signature of Selectboard Chair or Designee- please use blue ink)

(Printed/typed name and title)

(Date signed)

The reimbursement check will be mailed to:

_____, Town Treasurer
(Printed/typed name of Town Treasurer)

(Printed/typed address of Town Treasurer)

Mail this application form anytime before (or postmarked by) May 15, 2010 to:

Division of Community Planning & Revitalization
Department of Housing and Community Affairs
One National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501

Questions? Contact Brenda Greika at the DEHCD Division of Community Planning & Revitalization at 802-828-3243 or brenda.greika@state.vt.us.

NOTE: All applications must include this signature form signed by the grant administrator and the chair or designee of the Selectboard, as well as the following Grant Agreement signed by the grant administrator. For consortia, each town must sign a separate form identifying the same grant administrator.

Signing the grant agreement does not guarantee that the grant will be awarded; it is only intended to expedite processing of the grant. .

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Grant Number _____ Municipality (s) _____

ATTENTION GRANT ADMINISTRATOR: Please sign gray box below.

GRANT AGREEMENT

This *Agreement* is entered into by **the State of Vermont, Department of Housing and Community Affairs (“Department”)** and **the Grantee**.

The Department and the Grantee(s) hereby agree as follows:

1. The Grantee shall use the funds awarded under this *Agreement* only to provide the municipal training described in the Application, attached hereto and incorporated herein as Attachment A.
2. The Grantee shall be reimbursed only for eligible expenses listed in Attachment A.
3. Reimbursement shall be made by the Department to the Grantee upon the Department’s receipt, within 30 days of completion of the training, of all supporting documentation including the following:
 - A. *Request for Reimbursement Form* filled-out and accompanied by:
 1. Invoices for approved expenses; and
 2. Evidence of payment (copies of cancelled checks **or** bank statements with payments highlighted **OR** a computer report from the Town Treasurer documenting each payment for the grant showing: payee, date of payment, and the check or transfer number with certification by the Treasurer that the information in the report is correct).
 - B. *Training Completion Form* filled-out and accompanied by:
 1. A copy of the sign-in sheet from the training listing all training participants and their roles in municipal government; and
 2. Copies of the *Training Evaluation Forms* completed by training participants.
4. The Grantee shall provide the training described in Attachment A within 90 days of the date of Department’s signature below.

For Department entry only:

5. This *Agreement* begins on _____ and expires _____ (150 days from award). All requests for reimbursement must be addressed to Brenda Greika, Community Planning & Revitalization, and postmarked within 30 days of completing the training).
6. The total amount reimbursable under this *Agreement* shall not exceed \$_____.

For the Department

By: _____
Tayt R. Brooks, Commissioner
Department of Economic, Housing and
Community Development

Dated: _____

For the GRANTEE (*sign and return with Grant Application*)

By: _____
Grant Administrator

Printed Name _____

Town of _____

Dated _____