

## 1. What is Discretionary Funding?

Discretionary funding is a duly-appropriated sum of money in the Town's expense budget allocated to an eligible not-for-profit organization by the Selectboard and approved at Town Meeting.

## 2. What Types of Organizations May Receive Discretionary Funds?

Discretionary funds may only be allocated to not-for-profit; community-based social services providers. In order to receive discretionary funds directly, an organization must be incorporated as a not-for-profit and registered with the State of Vermont., unless exempt and have a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN).

## 3. What Types of Organizations May Not Receive Discretionary Funds?

For-profit entities may not receive discretionary funds, except when the primary non-profit contractor subcontracts with a for-profit entity as part of the delivery of services. Such subcontracts, however, must be only an ancillary part of the program to be funded, not the primary basis for the discretionary award, and must be approved by the contracting agency.

## 4. What are the Restrictions on the Use of Discretionary Funds?

All public funds, however awarded, must be used for a Town purpose. In general, a Town purpose is defined as an activity or service that is open to all members of the public, regardless of race, creed, gender, religious affiliation, etc., without restriction, and which does not promote a particular religion.

Programs and services provided by religious or religiously-affiliated organization must be able to demonstrate that the program is open to non-members, is not a religious program, and does not promote the religion.

Closed membership groups, which are those to which membership is restricted or subject to eligibility based upon prohibited factors, may generally not receive funding.

Groups that serve a particular population, for example, those age 65 and above in a particular community; are not considered a closed membership group, as long as the program is open and accessible to all seniors in the community. Similarly, tenant organizations in public housing may also receive funding, as long as they provide equal access to all residents of the public housing units they serve.

Funds may only be allocated for a public purpose and may not support political activities and private interests.

## 5. How to Apply for Discretionary Funding?

All organizations that wish to receive discretionary funding must submit a "Request for Special Appropriations" application to the Town Manager. The application elicits information about an organization's experience, qualifications, and integrity, and the project or service for which the organizations is requesting support.

Town of Richmond

Request for Special Appropriations

Request for Fiscal Year: 2023

Organization's Name: Front Porch Forum
Address: PO Box 64781
City, State, Zip: Burlington, VT 05406
Website address: https://FrontPorchForum.com

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Program Name: Richmond Front Porch Forum

2. Contact Person/Title: Michael Wood-Lewis, co-founder and president

Telephone Number: 802-540-0069 x3

E-mail address: michael@frontporchforum.com

3. Total number of individuals served in the last complete fiscal year by this program: 2,688 local members of the Richmond FPF

4. Total number of the above individuals who are Town residents: About 96%
Please attach any documentation that supports this number.

Percent of people served who are Town residents: About 96%

5. Amount of Request: \$100.00

6. Total Program Budget: Percent of total program budget you are requesting from the Town of Richmond: <1%

7. Please state or attach the mission of your agency: FPF's mission is to help neighbors connect and build community.

8. Will the funding be used to:
[X] Maintain an existing program
Expand an Existing Program
Start a new program

9. Has your organization received funds from the Town in the past for this or a similar program?
Yes

If yes, please answer the following:

a. Does the amount of your request represent an increase over your previous appropriation? If yes, explain the reason(s) for the increase. No change from past.

b. Were any conditions or restrictions placed on the funds by the Selectboard? No
If yes, describe how those conditions or restrictions have been met.

**B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

1. Statement of Need: Identify the issue or need that the program will address (use statistical data to justify the need for the program). To what extent does this need or problem exist in the Town of Richmond? Facilitate communication among neighbors, town government, local businesses and nonprofits.

2. Program Summary:

a. Identify the target/recipients of program services. Specify the number of Town residents your program will serve during the fiscal year and explain the basis upon which this number is calculated. Indicate any eligibility requirements your program has with respect to age, gender, income or residence. The Richmond FPF has served the vast majority of all Town residents since its inception in 2006.

---

---

---

---

b. Identify what is to be accomplished or what change will occur from participating in the program. How will people be better off as a result of participating in the program? Describe the steps you take to make the project known to the public, and make the program accessible and inclusive? Participating on the Richmond FPF often leads folks to feel more connected to their neighbors and to become more involved in their local community. It's available to anyone who can use a web browser or email.

---

---

---

---

3. Program Funding:

a. Identify how Town funds, specifically, will be used (i.e., funds will provide "X" amount of units of service.) General support.

---

---

---

---

b. List the other agencies to whom you are submitting a request for funds for this program and the amount requested. How would this program be modified should revenues be lost? FPF requests funding from VT towns that get significant value from this free service. If the Town of Richmond withholds its annual \$100 contribution, then we'll likely run a deficit of that amount for 2019.

---

---

---

---

**C. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

1. Describe your agency's capability to provide the program including its history, previous experience providing this service, management structure and staff expertise. FPF has been providing this free service in all of Chittenden County for 12 years and we've been growing and improving steadily.

2. How will you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you will assess program outcomes. Your description should include: what (what kind of data), how (method/tool for collecting the data), from whom (source of data) and when (timing of data collection). We track and study member usage data, member survey responses, and other indicators.

---

---

---

---

3. Summarize or attach program and or service assessments conducted in the past two years. See attached member survey results summary.

4. Does your organization have a strategic plan and a strategic planning process in place? Yes If yes, please attach your plan.

The strategic plan should include a mission statement, goals, action steps to achieve the goals, and measures that assess the accomplishments of the goals.

5. What is the authorized size of your board of directors?       
How many meetings were held by the board last year?     

I, the undersigned, confirm the information contained herein is accurate and can be verified as such. I understand and agree that if the requested funds are approved, the disbursement of funds are subject to all conditions established by the Richmond Selectboard.

Signature of Applicant *M. Wood-Lewis* Date 10/05/2021

Michael Wood-Lewis, co-founder and president  
Print Name of Applicant and Title

# Local Democracy and Front Porch Forum

## *Neighbors using FPF become better informed and more engaged.*

A neighbor's story from Heidi Ballentine in Newfane, Vermont:

"Recently, a neighbor posted an invitation on Front Porch Forum (FPF) for people in our town to gather in questioning how we can become more informed and better able to respond to current social issues. From that one post, 40 people showed up, including many local legislators. Without FPF's community-building infrastructure, this would not have occurred."

### **What fuels a healthy democracy?** Informed and engaged citizens.

Today, technology can impede communication with an overload of noise and misinformation, while spurring often disrespectful screen-to-screen debates. In contrast, Vermont neighbors and thousands of their local public officials post and read about local issues and political matters on Front Porch Forum. Open and civil discussion on FPF leads to people being better informed and getting more involved in their communities. This helps support a healthy local democracy.

According to FPF co-founder Michael Wood-Lewis, "FPF was created with the idea of supporting and encouraging vibrant communities. A big part of that vibrancy comes from a strong local democracy and open communication with our public officials, who we've welcomed to the forum since its beginning in 2006."

Every day on Front Porch Forum we see actions, small and large, taken by empowered and informed individuals who have a stake in the future and well-being of their neighborhoods. The result is a stronger community and stronger local democracy. **Stay informed about local issues on FPF. Speak up. Act.**

"Technology as a tool can be used to divide us or to bring us together, and it just depends on who's using the tool and how it's wielded," says Middlesex Town Moderator Susan Clark. "I really admire the way Front Porch Forum uses the Internet, but does not try to keep you on the screen for hours. It urges you to read it and then get going, and go out and be with your neighbors. That is really important and constructive in terms of building community and building democracy"

---

*Front Porch Forum is a statewide network of online local forums, where neighbors post about a wide variety of topics. In many Vermont communities, more than 75% of local households participate. Learn more at [frontporchforum.com](http://frontporchforum.com).*

---



**front porch forum**<sup>®</sup>

HELPING NEIGHBORS CONNECT

## Did you know that due to FPF\*..

- **91%** of FPF members are more informed about **local community issues**
- **77%** are more informed about their **neighbors' points of view** on local issues
- **67%** are more informed about **local government services**
- **73%** are more likely to cooperate on a **shared community need**
- **71%** are more likely to **discuss local issues with a neighbor**
- **71%** are more likely to **attend a local public meeting**
- **60%** are more likely to **contact a local public official**
- **40%** of FPF members can cite examples of **neighbors getting engaged in the local political process** due to public officials participating on FPF
- **31%** of FPF members can cite examples of **more trust between citizens and elected officials** due to public officials participating on FPF



\*The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded an independent third-party, Network Impact, to design, implement and analyze an online survey of 132,188 Front Porch Forum members in March 2017. 13,086 Vermonters completed this 20-minute survey. With a 99% confidence level, the survey results represent the full FPF membership.