

## Vermont Department of Libraries

### US Department of Housing and Urban Development Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants for Small, Rural Public Libraries

#### Overview\*

*The Vermont Department of Libraries launched the application process for \$9.6 million in competitive grant funding through the Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants for Small, Rural Public Libraries in Vermont on December 3, 2025. This funding, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through their FY2023 Economic Initiative Community Project Funding program, is intended to complete capital projects necessary to maintain, repair, or improve existing library buildings. This funding was made possible with the support of Senator Leahy, who included the Department's proposal in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.*

*The Department plans to award grants to public libraries for the repair or replacement of existing features of their library buildings and/or for accessibility upgrades. The Department anticipates awarding at least 20 grants of \$50,000-400,000 through a highly competitive process. Vermont public libraries eligible for the funding must be housed in buildings owned by an incorporated public library or a municipality and must be open at least 14 hours per week. The application evaluation rubric will favor small public libraries located in rural communities.*

#### Goal\*

*This federal funding will help public libraries address existing maintenance and repair needs, thereby ensuring they can continue to serve Vermonters well into the future. This funding is intended to address critical repairs needed for existing public library buildings including: building system repairs or replacement; building envelope repairs; and structural repairs. This funding is also intended to improve the accessibility of existing public library buildings, including: internal ramps; external ramps; lifts; and accessible restrooms. The Department aims to support public libraries across the state by awarding capital grant funds from one of its two programs to at least one public library in each of Vermont's 14 counties.*

**\*Overview & Goals descriptions above are from the Vermont Department of Libraries website at <https://libraries.vermont.gov/capitalprojectgrants/public-facilities-preservation>**

#### Grant Schedule & Details

**Application Deadline:** Applications are open now, deadline is March 31, 2026

**Notification:** Summer 2026

**Start Date:** Bid process can start as soon as grant agreement is signed and environmental and historic preservation reviews\* are completed. It is our intention to complete this project in the summer of 2027. (Grant applicants are awarded additional points if project can be completed in 2027).

**End Date:** Funds must be expended by December 31, 2028

This is a **reimbursement** grant so no match is required; however, the Town would be paying invoices which are then submitted for reimbursement.

**\*Environmental and Historic Preservation Review** -- We have contacted VHB in South Burlington to get an estimate for employing them as our consultant to obtain the HUD required environmental and historic preservation reviews. More information on their website at <https://www.vhb.com/about-vhb/> VHB was recommended by Alex Tolstoi (Hunger Valley Construction) and is listed in the Preservation Trust of Vermont database for environmental reviews. Their consultation fee can be included as part of the requested funding.

## **Project Discussion & Description:**

The slate roof of the library building is the original slate roof from 1879. The typical life expectancy of a slate roof is about 150 years (which we will reach in 2029). We have received various assessments, starting as far back as 2015, that indicate that the roof should be replaced by that 150 year mark. Some consultants felt we could repair the roof over time, replacing damaged slate as needed over time.

While we are not experiencing total roof failure on the slate roof of the library, there are several concerns. Slate roofs of this era were put on with iron nails which rust and result in loose slate which can be pulled off during windstorms. Drone footage and inspections indicate there are cracked slate and broken corners on the existing roof. In addition, we have had a few pieces of slate come off of the roof. If this became worse, it could become a safety hazard.

In 2015, we had a roof assessment from Headwaters (who also did some repair on the tower) that we replace the South roof within 5 years and the North roof within 10 years.

An assessment by Jan Lewandowski in 2015 included an alternative suggestion that we could repair damaged and loose slate on a scheduled plan (perhaps every 3-5 years).

We have a new assessment and estimate for both options from Alex Tolstoi of Hunger Valley Construction and Jeff Spencer of Stewardship Slate. In considering partial repairs over time, there concerns about whether we would be able to match the color—Jeff has stated that “Matching slate is always tricky and time consuming to find the right quarry/quantity. We will obviously try our hardest to match the color with the highest quality slate that is available. “

## **Estimated Costs:**

**Full replacement -- \$265,000**

**Partial replacement (based on recent inspections) -- \$100,000**

\*NOTE: HUD and the Town of Richmond would require that we pursue a sealed bid process in order to issue a contract for this work.

## **Planned Funding Request:**

**The Richmond Free Library Trustees approved applying for funding for a full replacement of the slate roof at their February 9, 2026 meeting.**

### **Rationale:**

- The grant is available now and would cover the entire cost of a full replacement
- We are experiencing some worrisome signs of roof wear and have received several building assessments that included a need to address potential roof issues now.
- Partial replacement is also very expensive
- Partial replacement would necessitate a new project and funding source every few years and would cost significantly more over time. We will not know the timing until a first repair was completed and the remainder of the roof condition assessed.
- There is no guarantee that we can match the existing slate color, so partial replacement could result in a patchwork of colors.
- We want to be proactive and address the slate issue before experience failure and leaks.
- We have asked Alex and Jeff to look into options for selling or giving away the slate removed from the roof so it does not all end up in a landfill.

**Grant Funds Requested**

Replacement of existing roof:	\$265,000
+15% contingency	\$ 39,750
Cost of Environmental Review consultant	\$ 5,000*

\*We are obtaining a real estimate from VHB and will include it in the grant request, so the total amount could change.

**TOTAL REQUEST: \$309,750**

**Documentation Needed from the Selectboard & Town**

- **A Selectboard vote to approve applying for the grant**
- **A letter of support for the project from the municipality**
- **Town of Richmond W-9**
- **Town of Richmond Certificate of Insurance**

**Respectfully submitted,**  
Richmond Free Library  
Board of Trustees  
February 17, 2026