

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Lindsay H. Kurrle, Secretary

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To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee

From: Lindsay H. Kurrle, Secretary, Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Re: CRF Request for Call Center Contract

Date: July 24, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$250,000. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) is seeking funding to contract with Maximus for a call center to provide technical assistance to Vermont employers applying for Economic Relief Grants.

Response to the Pandemic: Since March 2020, ACCD has led a variety of Vermont's economic mitigation and relief efforts curing the pandemic. ACCD staff, partners, and volunteers have been required to assess the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and develop a proposal to put federal relief dollars into the hands of businesses who were adversely impacted. ACCD was appropriated \$76 million for economic recovery grants to be disbursed to employers in our state. Administering this grant program requires robust technical support and assistance to those applying, far exceeding the capacity of existing ACCD staff. We have utilized 21 call agents for one month in support of this effort and anticipate the need for additional call agents and continued support to help with applications and to assist our existing staff through the earlier of September 6, 2020 or when the grant funds run out.

Urgency of Request: Prior to the economic relief legislation that was passed, ACCD did not have the resources or the infrastructure in place to deliver this grant program. In addition to building a grants management system, ACCD estimated demand for technical assistance would far surpass existing resources. As soon as the grants were announced in early July, 1000's of impacted businesses began applying for grants. Without the assistance of outside call agents, we would not have been able to appropriately and timely provide applicants with assistance. Continued assistance is required to enable ACCD to continue to effectively administer the grant program.



State of Vermont
and Secretary
Agency of Digital Services
Secretary
Secretary's Office
109 State Street, 2nd Floor
Montpelier, VT 05609

John Quinn III, State CIO

Shawn Nailor, Deputy

[phone] 802-828-4141

To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee
From: John Quinn, Secretary, Agency of Digital Services
Re: CRF Request for Grant Implementation Project Costs
Date: July 24, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$1,789,249.25. The Agency of Digital Services (ADS) is seeking reimbursement for Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) grant implementation project costs. ADS employed a technical tool, Salesforce, to provide the technology needed for the State to manage several CRF grant programs. Unbudgeted implantation costs include implementation vendor costs, ADS implantation staff and software licensing costs. The CRF related programs and expenses associated with each are as follows:

ACCD/AAFM Salesforce COVID Grant Admin	537,403.00
AHS Hazard Pay for Essential Workers	326,368.00
AHS/DVHA Healthcare Stabilization	313,918.00
ANR Forestry Stabilization Grant Program	394,266.25
Public Service Department Grants Program - Arrears Payments to Utility Companies	217,294.00
Total Projects - expended or obligated to date	1,789,249.25

Response to Pandemic:

As there was not an existing technical solution in use which could meet the tight timelines of the grant programs, and the use of a paper-based application and management system is not appropriate given the current social distancing guidance, ADS was required to build out solutions to enable the implementation of grant programs and provide needed financial relief to Vermont and Vermonters. If these Salesforce instances were not built out by ADS, the State would not have been able to issue and manage the CRF grants programs before the end of this calendar year.

Urgency of Request:

ADS asserts that there is a critical need for reimbursement that cannot wait until the appropriations process. These implantation costs have been incurred by ADS, drawing against funds budgeted for other planned State IT needs. As such, ADS is seeking CRF funding to prevent putting other necessary budgeted items at risk. Most importantly, ADS anticipates at least five other grant programs will require Salesforce for proper implementation and without replenishing expended funds, ADS may be unable to further stand up and employ Salesforce technology as additional grant programs require.



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Julia S. Moore, P.E.
Agency Secretary

State of Vermont
Agency of Natural Resources

To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee
From: Julie Moore, Secretary of Natural Resources
Date: July 24, 2020
Re: CRF Request for Digitization of Use Value Records and Regulatory Modernization

1. Digitization of Current Use Records

Total Amount Requested: \$450,000. The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) is seeking funding to purchase three large format scanners to digitize use value appraisal records. Vermont's Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program enables eligible private landowners who practice long-term forestry to have their land appraised based on the property's value for production of wood rather than its residential or commercial development value under normal ad valorem taxation. There are currently more than 16,000 parcels enrolled in UVA statewide, and records for approximately 10% of the enrolled parcels need to be reviewed and updated each year.

Response to the Pandemic: The UVA Program is largely paper-based and requires landowners and FPR staff to come to a state office to review and update parcel records. Digitizing UVA forestland parcel records will allow the public to access records without having to come to a state office. Electronic records will also allow foresters and landowners to move away from "tail gate conversations" and enable social distancing during field visits. All of this promotes Vermont's efforts to actively and safely respond to the needs of the unfolding pandemic by allowing government business operations to be maintained while limiting in-person contact.

Urgency of the Request: There is a critical need for funding to support digitization that cannot wait until the appropriations process. The digitization of UVA records is a significant undertaking, however, it will also result in interim work products that immediately make records available to Vermonters. The UVA Program requires both new applications and applications to add acreage to already enrolled parcels to be submitted by October 1 each year. If able to start work immediately, FPR should be able to complete digitization of all records for enrolled parcels that are either critical for program administration or require timely access by the public prior to December, with some materials scanned and made available before October 1, thereby limiting the amount of in-person contacts required to complete that process. Electronic records will allow also be compiled in a statewide digital

GIS map layer of UVA-enrolled parcels for remote evaluation of eligibility by landowners and foresters, further reducing the need to access the office.

2. Regulatory Modernization

Total Amount Requested: \$1,400,000. The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is requesting funding to support retooling ANR's approach to regulatory review and environmental permitting to allow for and support increased telework, doing so in a manner that enhances technical assistance available to applicants, improves the timeliness of regulatory review and ensures public participation processes are maintained or enhanced. Specifically, the project will: (1) deploy a virtual "one-stop shop" to help Vermonters identify what permits are required for specific projects; (2) expand online application materials, payment, and report submissions to facilitate remote permitting by programs that are currently partially or fully paper-based; (3) develop and deploy a suite of tools to improve online technical assistance and permitting guidance; and, (4) convert select ANR paper records to electronic records necessary to facilitate remote transactions.

Response to the Pandemic: Historically, permitting programs have required significant, direct interaction between the public and those within government responsible for regulatory review. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the challenges presented by many current systems in completing regulatory work remotely. In particular, improving Vermont's regulatory review systems will help expedite review of a number of CRF-funded priority initiatives and allow government to continue to operate while limiting in-person contact in order to safely and effectively maintain operations during the pandemic response.

Urgency of the Request: There is a critical need for funding to support modernization efforts that cannot wait until the appropriations process. To maximize the benefit of each of these initiatives it is essential to start work as soon as possible. Improved tools will be rolled out as they are completed. As such, starting now will make more tools available to organizations and entities seeking regulatory review and environmental permits during the pandemic response and ongoing need for social distancing, including projects related to including CRF-funded priority initiatives.

State of Vermont
Department of Financial Regulation
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To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee
From: Michael Pieciak, Commissioner, Department of Financial Regulation
Re: CRF Request for Modeling and Consulting Contract
Date: July 24, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$410,000. The Department of Financial Regulation (DFR) is seeking funding to contract with the consulting firm Oliver Wyman for modeling and consulting work related to Vermont’s COVID-19 response. The requested amount (\$410,000) will fund the modeling contract through December 2020.

Response to the Pandemic: Since March 2020, DFR has lead Vermont’s COVID-19 data and modeling efforts. In furtherance of Vermont’s efforts to actively and safely respond to the needs of the unfolding pandemic through modeling, DFR would like to formalize a relationship with Oliver Wyman to prepare for the Fall/Winter.

Oliver Wyman would develop Vermont-specific models to help forecast COVID-19 case growth for the remainder of 2020 which would inform decisions around: (1) re-opening K through 12 schools; (2) the return of out-of-state higher education students; (3) increased out-of-state tourism from Fall foliage and Winter ski season; (4) the return of cooler weather and more indoor activity; and, (5) hospital demand scenarios to help ensure that our hospitals are not overrun.

Oliver Wyman would also hold weekly briefings with Vermont officials to provide updates on: (1) best practices for continued economic reopening; (2) most recent advances on therapeutics, treatments, and vaccines across the globe; (3) most recent scientific understanding of non-therapeutic interventions such as masks; and (4) most recent scientific understanding of the disease generally, how it spreads, whether and how it is mutating and how it impacts individuals in the short and long term.

Urgency of Request: There is a critical need for funding to support modeling that cannot wait until the appropriations process. Much of the modeling and consulting work will impact decisions that will need to be made in August and September – especially regarding the re-opening of the K12 school system, the return of higher education students and travel policies around Fall tourism season. We would need to meet with Oliver Wyman over the next three to four weeks to establish reliable models that can help inform decisions in these areas.



State of Vermont

Department of Mental Health
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Agency of Human Services

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To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee
From: Sarah Squirrell, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health
Sarah Clark, CFO Agency of Human Services
Re: **CRF Request for Suicide Prevention**
Date: July 27, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$500,000. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is seeking funding for suicide prevention efforts that will support Vermonters whose mental health has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific uses of the requested funds are detailed as follows:

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|---|-----------|
| 1. Expand ZERO SUICIDE statewide in Vermont | \$300,000 |
| 2. Expand Vermont's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline | \$ 70,000 |
| 3. Develop targeted suicide prevention resources that are culturally informed | \$ 30,000 |
| 4. Expand Mental Health First Aid Training | \$ 50,000 |
| 5. Expand programs and supports for older Vermonters | \$ 50,000 |

Total CRF Request: \$500,000

DMH applied for an Emergency SAMHSA Suicide Prevention grant, but learned on Tuesday, July 21st, that Vermont was not awarded the SAMHSA grant. Because there is a critical need for immediately invest in suicide prevention efforts and in accordance with Act 136, Section 9, DMH is now requesting CRF funds from the Joint Fiscal Committee to support Vermonters.

Response to the Pandemic: The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the well-being of Vermonters. It increased social isolation, increased unemployment, imposed significant economic stress on the population and placed additional stress on families and relationships. Vermont is a rural state with limited access to internet and technology in some regions, thereby limiting the ability to connect and use natural supports during this difficult time. Suicide prevention efforts will support Vermonters by increasing access to mental health services and resources, broadening the use of evidence-based practices for identifying and treating suicidality, and fostering partnerships with those supporting at risk populations.

Urgency of Request: There is a need for funding to support suicide prevention that cannot wait until the appropriations process. It is critical to invest in these important suicide prevention efforts as soon as possible to ensure the health and wellness of Vermonters as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.





NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD

10 Baldwin Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-3201

To: The Joint Fiscal Committee
From: Diane Snelling, Chair, Natural Resources Board/Act 250
Re: CRF Request
Date: July 24, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$80,113. The Natural Resources Board (NRB) is tasked with administering Act 250, Vermont’s land use and planning law. The NRB is seeking funding to expedite Covid-19 permitting by digitizing a subset of our permit files, those that are most directly related to Vermont’s emergency response to Covid-19. The NRB would require additional staff to complete the digitization process. The NRB requests funding to hire a qualified Temporary Service Position to perform the functions required to digitize the required records. Costs for the digitization project are estimated as follows:

• Temporary Service Position for 4 months	\$26,925
• Scanning of 99 boxes	\$50,688
• Cost for equipment, supplies and travel expenses	<u>\$ 2,500</u>
•	
Total Project Cost	\$80,113

Approximate calculations show that it could be possible to scan up to 250,000 new images into our database prior to December 31, 2020.

Response to the Pandemic: The unexpected onset of the COVID-19 has forced businesses and governmental agencies to adapt to a new normal. Digitizing records will significantly assist development by providing easy online access to the permit history that is necessary to prepare a new permit application without requiring in-person contact. The NRB will work closely with ACCD and ANR and the development community to identify the best files to scan and target areas where future development is planned.

Urgency of Request: This project will provide a significant benefit to Vermonters by expediting the research involved with drafting Act 250 permit applications by providing substantial additional permit history online. Access to permit history is essential to application process and online access both expedites the process and eliminates the need for in person contact. The earlier the scanning project begins, the sooner permit histories can move online, decreasing the need for in person contact in furtherance of social distancing requirements brought on by the pandemic.



**State of Vermont
Department of Labor**

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MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Fiscal Committee
From: Michael Harrington, Commissioner, Department of Labor
Date: July 24, 2020
Subject: Vermont Department of Labor CRF Request

Total Amount Requested: \$18,750,000. The Department of Labor (VDOL) is requesting funding and/or reimbursement for the following programs:

- 1. UI Modernization (\$750,000):** VDOL is requesting funding to contract with a vendor to begin modernizing the Unemployment Insurance (UI) through the implantation of a mainframe software system (Mulesoft) and the digitization of records. MuleSoft will pull and push data to and from the system. OnBase software will enable VDOL to digitize large quantities of data and files for document retention. These efforts will result in efficiency, reliability, and movement toward a modernized UI system.
- 2. UI Operations (\$18,000,000):** VDOL is requesting funding for reimbursement of expenses incurred from contracting with Maximus to operate the UI call center and for additional funds to extend Maximus' contract through December 2020. Included in the costs already incurred are Green Mountain Power costs for operating the supplemental UI call center; the move of the UI mainframe to BlueHill, and other smaller contracted services.

Response to the Pandemic: Since the Governor's initial *Stay Home, Stay Safe* Executive Order in March 2020, there has been a sharp increase in both initial and continued unemployment insurance claims, putting additional pressure on an already outdated UI system. We continue to see over 39,000 Vermonters filing for benefits each week, an increase of over 35,000 weekly claims compared to this time one year ago. To date, the Department has processed roughly 116,000 initial



claims. The call center support is essential for VDOL to continue to manage the substantially increased volume of claims.

Urgency of Request: Specific to the UI Modernization effort, the timeline is tight and the funding request reflects a realistic proposal of modernization aspects that could be achieved by the end of the calendar year if efforts commenced immediately. It is also important to begin modernizing the system now to increase efficiency. The current Mainframe is extremely unstable, and while full modernization is not an option at this time, these efforts will assist in automating processes and bringing stability to the very old, taxed system. Call center support also continues to be critical as VDOL will continue to process a record number of weekly claims for the foreseeable future in multiple programs (UI, PUA, PEUC, etc.).

