



**University  
of Vermont**

**Leahy Institute  
for Rural Partnerships**

## **Request for Proposals**

**Fall 2024 Funding Cycle**

<b>Background .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What We Fund .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Evaluation Criteria .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Eligibility.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Award Amounts .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Application Timeline .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>How to Apply.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FAQ .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Letter of Intent .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships Evaluation Rubric.....</b>	<b>8</b>

## Background

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships' mission is to amplify existing partnerships and develop new partnerships between the University of Vermont and Vermont organizations and communities working to implement solutions to rural challenges.

We envision a Vermont where all communities can thrive.

With funding from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Leahy Institute will support partnerships between University of Vermont faculty and facilities and rural and community-driven initiatives, non-profits pursuing rural development, and early-stage startups that are likely to have a significant impact on rural communities through a series of Partnership Grants and Capacity Grants.

The Leahy Institute is a program of UVM's Office of Engagement. In addition to this funding initiative, the Office of Engagement offers resources to community organizations including internship support from the Career Center, data services, and service-learning opportunities from the Center for Engaged Learning Office.

## What We Fund

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships funds project costs associated with engaged partnerships between Community Partners and the University of Vermont.

Through this funding initiative, UVM will join as partners with Vermont leaders who are working toward impactful solutions to rural challenges in our priority focus areas:

- **Regenerative Agriculture**
- **Community Schools**
- **Transit & Housing Solutions**
- **Remote & Co-Working Practices**
- **Resilient Energy Systems**
- **Healthy Ecosystems**
- **Access to Health Care in Rural Areas**
- **Policy & Governance**

## Evaluation Criteria

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships is looking to fund proposals which meet the following criteria:

1. **Engage in a partnership** with the University of Vermont and its students, faculty, and resources.
2. Alignment with Leahy Institute for Rural Partnership **priority focus areas**.
3. Show a **deep understanding** of what is challenging Vermont's rural communities and economies and propose impactful solutions.
4. Consider principles of **diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice** in project outcomes and evaluation.
5. Demonstrate **feasibility and scalability** in project design.

The Leahy Institute Advisory Board, made up of both UVM and community leaders, will vet partnership opportunities, review applications, and provide input to program staff toward awarding and approving funded projects.

## Eligibility

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships accepts applications for **partnership projects** that involve a Community Partner and a University of Vermont partner.

- **Community Partners** include all organizations that work within the State of Vermont and who are working to impact Vermont’s rural communities. This includes nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and government entities.
- **University of Vermont Partners** include any entity at the University of Vermont (professor, department, institute, etc.) that provides support or direction to a partnership project alongside a Community Partner.
- Applications can be submitted by either partner (Community or UVM), and either partner may take the “lead” role in project outcomes and deliverables.
- Capacity Grant applications (see below) **do not need a solidified partnership** and are intended to catalyze partnership engagement.

To ensure eligibility to receive grant funds from the Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships, Community Partners will need to have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

**Please make sure your organization has an active SAM.gov Entity Registration *before* the proposal deadline of November 15, 2024.**

Please contact the Office of Engagement at [engage@uvm.edu](mailto:engage@uvm.edu) with questions on SAM.gov.

## Award Amounts

The Leahy Institute will award funding for partnership projects at the following levels:

Capacity Grants (Up to \$10,000) will catalyze partnership and project development. This is the entry track for Community/UVM Partners who have a vision for increased rural impact but **need support to develop the partnership**. Capacity Grant awardees will foster collaborative relationships with the UVM Office of Engagement that will lead to a strong working relationship with an engaged partner. Capacity Grant awardees will be eligible to apply for a Partnership Grant after the close of their award.

Partnership Grants (Up to \$250,000) **will fund research projects, stakeholder engagement initiatives, student internships and service-learning experiences, and business plan development for partnerships working to address rural challenges**. Those interested in applying for a Partnership Grant from the Leahy Institute should have clearly articulated goals, measures of success, **and either an existing partnership between Community and UVM partners, or a strong potential to create a partnership.**

## Application Timeline

Milestone	Date
RFP Posted; Application Portal Open	June 24, 2024
<b>Letter of Intent Submission Deadline</b>	<b>September 13, 2024, by 11:59 PM</b>
Invitations for Full Proposals Sent	October 16, 2024
<b>Full Proposal Deadline</b>	<b>November 15, 2024, by 11:59 PM</b>
Award Notification	December 16, 2024 (estimated)
Period of Performance	January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025

## How to Apply

The University of Vermont uses the InfoReady platform for grant submissions. Applicants will create a user ID and password and will be able to access the Letter of Intent from the applicant homepage.

1. **Follow this link to access the Leahy Institute Letter of Intent (LOI):**  
<https://uvm.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1922039>
2. Click “Apply” to be redirected to the Log In screen.
3. Community Partners:
  - a. Scroll to the “Login for Other Users” box.
  - b. Click Register
  - c. Fill out the registration form, including the email address where you would like to receive notifications.
  - d. Submit the form and confirm your account using the email address you entered.
  - e. You may now log in to InfoReady and begin your Leahy Institute Letter of Intent.
4. UVM Partners:
  - a. **Please work with your Department Chair/Business Manager to process your application through UVM Click in addition to your InfoReady submission.**
  - b. Log in to InfoReady with your UVM SSO.
  - c. Begin your letter of intent once logged in.
5. Hit “Submit Application” when completed.

For questions about the grant program or application process, please contact Daria Jarani, Program Manager, at [engageUVM@uvm.edu](mailto:engageUVM@uvm.edu), and include “InfoReady” in the subject line of your email.

## FAQ

### 1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

This grant is open to all organizations that work within the State of Vermont, and University of Vermont faculty and staff.

We will accept applications from nonprofit and for-profit organizations, start-ups, local governments, and UVM-affiliated applicants.

### 2. I am a faculty/staff member at the University of Vermont. Am I eligible to apply?

You are welcome to apply to this program as a UVM faculty or staff member. Please see Question 5 for important details on working with your department/unit to apply for a Leahy grant.

### 3. How do I know how much funding to request for the project?

The best practice for requesting funding is to request the amount that will promote the greatest impact while also considering the organization's current capacity. Project sustainability past the Partnership Grant lifespan is a major component of proposal evaluation, so it is important to consider what the immediate needs are but not promise too much that the project's sustainability would come into question.

### 4. What project costs are eligible, and which are ineligible?

All costs directly associated with the project are eligible. This includes personnel time, including graduate student and postdoctoral research support, devoted to the funded project. Indirect costs of up to 1% are allowed on modified total direct costs.

For questions on specific costs, please contact Daria Jarani, Program Manager, at [engage@uvm.edu](mailto:engage@uvm.edu).

### 5. I am a UVM Faculty/Staff Member. How can I communicate to my department my intent to apply for a Leahy Institute grant?

For our applicants who are UVM Faculty or Staff, please work with your Department Chair, SPA 2.0 representative, and/or Business Manager when considering applying for a Leahy Institute grant. Projects that will be administered by the UVM Partner will need approval through UVMClick, as with other federal grants.

For questions on this process, please contact Daria Jarani, Program Manager, at [engage@uvm.edu](mailto:engage@uvm.edu).

### 6. What is the Leahy Institute Advisory Board?

The Leahy Institute Advisory Board was created to advise the Institute on its work and to help promote, review, and approve partnership opportunities that will provide nationally scalable economic development solutions. [Click here for the full list of Board Members and their affiliations.](#)

### 7. How will UVM students be involved in approved partnerships?

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships prioritizes the cultivation of reciprocal relationships among UVM students and rural communities, in service to Vermont's economy. Community partners can engage with UVM students through (1) Participation in service-learning courses led by UVM faculty, (2) creating internship positions, (3) micro-internships, (4) semester and summer internships, (5) year-long co-ops, and (6) participation in summer intern cohort workshops.

For more information on Student Engagement at UVM, please contact Kristen Andrews, Internship Coordinator, at [kandrews@uvm.edu](mailto:kandrews@uvm.edu).

### 8. How can my organization prepare materials for student engagement to include in our application?

Student engagement, including but not limited to internships and service learning, are an important piece of a successful application. If your organization is preparing to host an intern, or would like to get the process

started, please include one of the following Student Engagement Attachments when preparing your final proposal:

- \*Internship job description with a named supervisor
- \*Service-Learning scope of work for students and an identified faculty instructor
- \*Micro-internship job description
- \*Research scope of work with faculty sponsor, and evidence of IRB initiation

**9. What is service-learning, and how is it offered at UVM?**

Each year, between 80 to 100 community-engaged service-learning courses are offered at UVM. Students apply their coursework in real-world settings, and in ways that address priorities identified by community partners. Faculty provide a structure for accountability to the project or service that benefits the community partners and helps students learn from their experience.

**10. What are the reporting requirements for this grant program?**

Funding recipients will be asked to complete two reports over the year-long period of performance: a 6-month report and a final closeout report. It is the Leahy Institute's intent to keep reporting streamlined and we will attempt to reduce the burden on the awardee wherever we are able.

**11. If I am denied funding for this cycle, what are my next steps?**

If your partnership does not receive funding in this first cycle, there will be more opportunities to request support. The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships will host subsequent grant cycles over the coming years with different areas of focus. We will be publicizing future grant cycles in our Office of Engagement newsletter. Please sign up [here](#) to receive updates from the Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships directly to your email inbox.

## Letter of Intent

### Applicant Information

1. Applicant First/Last Name
2. Email Address
3. Phone Number

### Organization Information

4. Organization Name
5. Annual Operating Budget

### Project Information

6. Project Title
7. Project Start/End Date
8. Estimated Total Project Budget
9. Amount Requested
10. Project Description (2,000 characters / 500 words)
  - Please describe your proposed project. For guidance on how to structure your answer, please consult the Leahy Institute Evaluation Rubric.
11. How does this project promote values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in Vermont's rural communities? (2-3 sentences)

### Priority Focus Areas (check box)

- Regenerative Agriculture
- Community Schools
- Transit & Housing Solutions
- Remote & Co-Working Practices
- Resilient Energy Systems
- Healthy Ecosystems
- Access to Health Care in Rural Areas
- Policy & Governance

**By checking this box, I consent to having my letter of intent materials potentially shared with UVM faculty and staff for partnership purposes.**

**Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships  
Evaluation Rubric  
Fall 2024 Funding Cycle**

*When scoring, reviewers will assign points from a scale of 1 (lowest score) to 5 (highest score).*

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Letter of Intent</b>	<b>Full Proposal</b>
<b>Engage in a partnership with the University of Vermont and its students, faculty, and resources.</b>	Does the proposed partnership integrate explicit partners within the UVM network? This can include faculty, research centers/institutes, and university offices.	5-The letter of intent clearly expresses how the applicants seek to partner with UVM.  1-The letter of intent does not express a relevant partnership potential.	5-The proposal clearly expresses how the applicants seek to partner with UVM.  1-The proposal displays no clear partnership potential.
	Does the proposed partnership plan for the inclusion of students, either through internships, participation in service-learning courses, or other opportunities for UVM students?	5-The letter of intent clearly expresses how student engagement is incorporated into the partnership.  1-The letter of intent does not articulate how student engagement applies to the proposed partnership.	5-The proposal clearly expresses how student engagement is incorporated into the partnership <b>by including at least one Student Engagement Attachment (see FAQ #8 for details).</b>  1-The proposal does not articulate how student engagement applies to the proposed partnership.
<b>Align with Leahy Institute for Rural Partnership themes.</b>	Does the proposed partnership align with one or more of the eight Leahy Institute priority focus areas?	5 - The letter of intent aligns with one or more of the Leahy Institute’s thematic areas and articulates an innovative approach to problem-solving in that area.  1-The letter of intent does not clearly articulate alignment with at least one Leahy Institute focus area.	5 - The proposal aligns with one or more of the Leahy Institute’s thematic areas and articulates an innovative approach to problem-solving in that area.  1-The proposal does not clearly articulate alignment with at least one Leahy Institute focus area.
<b>Show a deep understanding of what is challenging Vermont’s rural communities and economies and propose impactful solutions.</b>	What is the intended impact on the rural communities targeted through the proposal? What is the impact at the community level, county level, state level in Vermont?	5 – The letter of intent clearly identifies the problem and proposes a relevant, impactful solution.  1-The letter of intent does not clearly articulate a problem and solution and	5-The proposal clearly identifies the different impacts that the partnership will have for diverse stakeholders and considers the effects on the larger community.  1-The proposal does not clearly articulate intended



	Who are the recipients of anticipated outcomes?	is vague on who will be impacted.	outcomes and is vague in who is impacted.
<b>Consider principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in project outcomes and evaluation.</b>	Does the proposed partnership incorporate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice into the intended outcomes?	5- The letter of intent aligns strongly with principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.  1-The letter of intent does not address principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.	5- The proposal clearly articulates how the partners plan to incorporate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in their programming.  1-The proposal does not meaningfully incorporate these principles.
<b>Demonstrate feasibility and scalability in project design.</b>	Is this project feasible? Does the project have strong potential for creating lasting partnerships that positively impact rural communities in Vermont?	5- The letter of intent clearly identifies how the partnership will achieve its intended outcomes.  1-The letter of intent does not clearly state how outcomes will be accomplished.	5- The proposal clearly identifies how the partnership will achieve its intended outcomes and identifies potential challenges with accompanying solutions.  1-Evidence of the proposal's intended impacts and challenges is vague and unclear.
	Does the proposed partnership and its outcomes show significant potential for funding leverage, activity, or participation beyond the Leahy Institute funding? Does the proposal include plans for future funding opportunities to sustain the work?	5-The letter of intent identifies a future for the project, and how Leahy Institute funds may be leveraged.  1-The letter of intent does not include a clear growth plan.	5-The proposal includes a clear growth trajectory, including additional sources of funding, additional partnerships, and possible replicability of programming.  1-The proposal does not include a clear growth plan.