



ADDISON COUNTY
Chamber of Commerce
Great starts here.

TO: Valerie Capels, Bristol Town Administrator and Bristol Selectboard

DATE: May 18, 2021

FROM: Rob Carter, Executive Director of ACCOC

RE: Tourism and Workforce Development Funds

Dear Valerie,

I'm sure that you are receiving many suggestions and proposals for the use of municipal funds coming through ARPA and that they are all for very worthy projects. The current ARPA guidelines for municipal money include "Responding to the negative economic impacts of COVID, to include assistance to households, small business, and non-profits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality."

I would like to bring a request to you for consideration which, along with investments from Middlebury and Vergennes, will go a long way to strengthen and support tourism throughout Addison County.

The Chamber hosts a Visitor's Center at our office on Court St, and it is the only staffed visitor's center in all of Addison County. We currently receive no funding from any organization or government to run the center and fund it through our regular membership dues.

Recently several opportunities have opened up for us to expand our tourism and workforce development work in the county and this will require additional funding beyond our current budget.

1. New Visitor's Center – we are weighing a proposal to move our visitor's center and offices to New Haven, right on Route 7, central to all of Addison County. We will have a brand new facility, expanded space, a great location, and more room to accommodate visitor's. This move will cost us more per month to rent, and we will need to add brochure racks, shelving, and kiosks to make the best use of this new facility, and will need to expand staffing as well.
2. Stay to Stay – the state has a program called Stay to Stay which is focused on encouraging tourists to consider moving to Vermont permanently. We just joined this program, which is currently virtual, and will be expanding the program as we move back to in-person work with potential new residents. This will require more hours for our staff, and/or expansion of our staff.

3. Welcome Wagon – there is a modern welcome wagon program expanding throughout Vermont and we hope to soon open a chapter here in Addison County. This program will focus on retention of people who move to the area, through providing of hosts to connect with new people to help them settle into the community. This will also require additional staff time to administer the program and develop a team of volunteer hosts.

4. Promotion of Outdoor Recreation – currently there is no coordinated effort to promote our many outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the county. At our visitor’s center we assist tourists to find these places, and we promote them through our tourism newsletter, but there exists no database of locations and no coordinated promotion of them. This fits within our wheelhouse and we can lead the way to coordinate with the various organizations and locations through the county. This will involve a one-time project, perhaps using paid interns from Middlebury College, along with programming.

We are requesting financial assistance (see attached) from Bristol, Vergennes and Middlebury to move these projects forward and build staffing for at least the next year. From there we will source ongoing funding to continue these projects into the future, as they are further developed. What we are seeking now is start-up funding for these projects, which will benefit the whole county. This is an investment in the future of tourism and workforce support in the community.

Please consider this proposal as a way Bristol can invest in tourism and employment infrastructure in our region. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rob Carter".

Rob Carter
Executive Director

Funding Needs:

1. Visitor's Center:

Additional Rent for 2021-2022 - \$4,100

Construction of shelving and Kiosks - \$3,500

Staffing - \$7,800 (10 hrs/wk @ \$15/hr)

2. Stay to Stay:

Staffing - \$5,200 (5 hrs/wk @ \$20/hr)

3. Welcome Wagon:

Staffing - \$5,200 (5 hrs/wk @ \$20/hr)

4. Outdoor Recreation:

Intern support and project costs - \$9,600

Total Need for 2021-2022 = \$27,600

Investment Request per Town based on population:

Bristol \$7,112.52

Middlebury \$15,756.84

Vergennes \$4,730.64