The VEC Community Fund Continues to Give Back—New Awards Announced!

The VEC Community Fund recently awarded grants in support of two new projects. Awards were made to the Aluminum Avian Antics Robotics Team in Grand Isle in support of the FIRST Tech Challenge and to the Vermont Energy Education Program (VEEP) to support the creation of their Grid Education materials. Since the fall of 2014, the VEC Community Fund has made numerous grants to local organizations. Past recipients included the Memphremagog Watershed Association, Boy Scouts of America, Johnson Historical Society, North Country Hospital, Capstone Community Action, Birds of Vermont Museum, and the North Woods Stewardship Center.

The 4-H Robotics Team will be participating in the FIRST Tech Challenge where they will design, build, and program their robots in a 10-week build period to compete in an alliance format against other teams. The team, which is made up of students in grades 7-12, reports that they are learning about engineering, wiring, programming, organizing, presenting, competition, and teamwork. The team will learn and experience several different areas of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). The grant will help the team to purchase a laptop that will be used to program the robot.

The grant awarded to VEEP will help to create Grid Education materials and a curriculum that will be made available to schools in the VEC region. For example, students may be given a series of engineering problems and challenges that they must solve using the grid and their growing knowledge of circuits. True-to-life challenges will be designed such as having students at the “utility” tasked with maintaining power quality on the lines, using meters that measure system voltage and current while students at the other end of a transmission line add load such as space heating, electric transportation, and distributed generation like solar arrays.

The past VEC Community Fund grant to the North Country Hospital helped in the creation of 250 “Baby Swag Bags.” These bags are take-home safety starter kits for new parents made up of safety items includ-
We reported in the Fall Co-op Life about the launch of VEC’s Co-op Community Solar project in Alburgh, VT. Since sponsorship opened on October 1, enrollment has been steady and strong. We currently have 77 members enrolled in the program with 1,899 panels sponsored, which is about 50 percent of the total project. If you have not done so yet, we invite you to consider sponsoring panels. It’s a great way to support development of cost-effective renewable energy.

What is Community Solar?
Community solar is a solar facility that produces more power than a single home or even a few homes can use. Participants in a community solar program can sign up to receive bill credit for the power that the solar array produces. VEC’s Co-op Community Solar follows this model. Members can participate by making an upfront payment to sponsor the array, which helps pay for the cost of putting more solar power onto the electric grid. Participants will then receive a monthly credit on their electric bills for either 10 or 20 years, depending on which sponsorship term they choose. Members can participate from just a small amount or can sponsor enough to cover their annual electric charges.

How much power will the project produce?
The Alburgh project will produce around 1.57 million kilowatt-hours a year, enough to power over 150 homes. This project can accommodate at least 100 participants, depending on what sponsorship level participants choose. We are planning additional VEC community solar projects in 2017.

How much does it cost?
Participants would make a one-time payment, either directly or with a loan. See the charts below for more details.

Will the solar credit change month to month?
No, the credit is fixed and guaranteed to participants. The credit amount is based on a guaranteed generation per panel and VEC’s value of solar. VEC guarantees that participants will receive this credit for as long as they are sponsoring panels.

What if I change my mind or move?
Will I get my money back?
Yes, participants can opt out of the program at any time. Those who opt out will receive a portion of their initial investment back, depending on how long they participated. Participants can also transfer their sponsorship to another VEC member’s account as long as that member has enough usage to take advantage of the monthly credit amount.

To learn more you can go to the VEC website or you can call at 1-800-832-2667 or email at communitysolar@vermontelectric.coop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsorship period</th>
<th>Cost per panel</th>
<th>Generation credit per panel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>$234.75</td>
<td>$2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>$412.54</td>
<td>$3.12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**SPONSORSHIP EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panels (option)</th>
<th>Payment</th>
<th>Monthly Credit</th>
<th>Annual Credit</th>
<th>Total Program Credit</th>
<th>Total Savings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 (10 year)</td>
<td>$6,573.00</td>
<td>$76.16</td>
<td>$913.92</td>
<td>$9,139.20</td>
<td>$2,566.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 (20 year)</td>
<td>$6,600.64</td>
<td>$49.92</td>
<td>$599.04</td>
<td>$11,980.80</td>
<td>$5,380.16</td>
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Vermont Electric Cooperative will host its 79th Annual Meeting of the Membership on May 6 at Jay Peak Resort. VEC’s annual meeting and election are great opportunities for members to exercise their voice. Since VEC is a cooperative, members elect local representatives to serve on the Board of Directors, which sets VEC policy.

VEC is seeking petitions from eligible candidates for four positions on the Board of Directors that will open in May of 2017. The positions for District 2, East Zone, and West Zone will each have a full four-year term. The position for District 6 will be for the remainder of the current director’s term, which expires in May of 2019.

Below is a list of the seats that are up for election and the towns they represent:

**District 6 – Term expires in 2019**
- Berkshire, Enosburg, Franklin, Georgia, Highgate, Montgomery, Richmond, Sheldon, St. Albans Town, Swanton

**District 2 – Four-year Term**
- Coventry, Derby, Newport City

**East Zone At-Large – Four-year Term**

**West Zone At-Large – Four-year Term**

In order to run for the Board, a candidate must be a VEC member, may not be employed by the Cooperative, and may not in any way be employed by or have financial interests in a business or organization that supplies services to the Cooperative. Candidates must have a principal residence within VEC service territory and in the district or zone in which they are running for election.

VEC is seeking candidates who have the ability and time to fulfill the responsibilities of the Board, which include participating in monthly board meetings and committee activities.

The Board generally meets in the afternoon on the last Tuesday of each month at VEC’s main office in Johnston. Directors receive a stipend and mileage reimbursement for attending meetings and have training opportunities to learn more about energy issues and the cooperative model.

Completed applications, including a petition signed by VEC members, are due by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 16. The election will take place from April 11 through May 5 by mail and online as well as in person at VEC’s annual meeting on Saturday, May 6. Please call 802-730-1172 to request application materials.

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**CEO Update from pg 1**

lar. VEC has kept rates stable for eight years, with average increases below one percent per year. One of the key reasons VEC is able to be a leader in innovation and responsive to our members is our highly committed employees. We have been working for many years to create high levels of engagement by moving towards distributed leadership with subject matter experts. This year we provided advanced leadership training to employees at all levels of the company, as we strive to be leaders in technology, we have the same passion for innovative leadership.

With this foundation, we are excited to meet new challenges and offer new services in the new year. 2017 is the first year that Vermont’s Renewable Energy Standard (RES) will be in place. Vermont utilities have new requirements under this law, part of which are what’s called energy transformation projects. Energy transformation projects are products and services that help members reduce the carbon impact of their homes and businesses (see page 4 for more details on this program).

As part of this program, VEC has been working with sugar-makers to eliminate the use of fossil fuel generators by supporting line extensions that will enable them to use the latest electrical technologies available. VEC is now providing incentives for members to switch to air-source heating through cold-climate heat pumps and save gas by purchasing or leasing electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. All members who participate in this program will be eligible to sign up for a rate that allows members to take advantage of lower cost electricity during off-peak hours.

VEC has also been working on residential, commercial, and utility-scale storage solutions to help the grid integrate renewables more effectively as well as help to reduce costs. In 2016 the VEC team identified a number of potential cost-effective solutions, and we are working with companies to propose contractual arrangements that can work for our members. Now we need to find software (a user interface) that is easy for our members to use. Our engineering and operations team has reviewed a number of software options and will be making recommendations during the first half of 2017.

VEC will also continue its right-of-way and vegetation management program that has been so important in reducing outages. Since about 80 percent of Vermont’s land is covered by forest, keeping the trees from falling on power lines requires a high level of diligence. Our forestry department is highly disciplined and works closely with VEC’s contractors to safely and effectively implement our Vegetation Management Plan.

This year the capital improvement program will focus on the older distribution infrastructure. Over the past eight years VEC has made great progress with improving substations. We can now prioritize some of our aging underground lines, as well as the feeders to our worst-performing circuits. I am eligible to sign up for a rate that allows members to take advantage of lower cost electricity during off-peak hours.

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In the spring of 2015, the Vermont legislature passed a law called Act 56, which created Vermont’s Renewable Energy Standard (RES). The RES has three parts or “tiers” that Vermont electric utilities must comply with, and 2017 is the first year that these requirements are in place. VEC has been working for the past two years to participate in the regulatory process that determines the rules for how the RES will be implemented and to develop a plan for how VEC can meet these requirements in the way that’s most beneficial to members.

Below are some questions and answers about Vermont’s RES and how it affects VEC.

What are the requirements of the RES?

Tier I of Act 56 requires utilities to have a certain amount of renewable power in their portfolios, 55 percent in 2017, which increases every year until the requirement reaches 75 percent in 2032, the last year of the law.

Tier II requires a portion of that renewable power to be in-state, small-scale renewable power. This requirement starts at 1 percent in 2017 and increases to 10 percent in 2032. VEC is generally pursuing utility-scale solar projects to meet this requirement, and net metering projects installed by VEC members could contribute as well.

Tier III requires utilities to undergo energy transformation projects to leverage the increasing renewability of Vermont’s electric power supply to reduce carbon emission in other areas, for example heating and transportation. Utilities are required to demonstrate that they enabled energy transformation projects at 2 percent of their total sales for 2017, increasing every year until the requirement reaches 12 percent in 2032.

How does VEC plan to meet its Tier III requirements?

VEC and all Vermont utilities have the option of achieving Tier III savings through energy transformation projects or by using excess Tier II credits to meet Tier III requirements. VEC intends to try to meet its Tier III goals in 2017 with energy transformation projects only. Technologies and strategies that VEC is currently pursuing for energy transformation projects include cold-climate heat pumps, electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, and generator conversion.

VEC’s full 2017 Tier III plan that we filed with the Public Service Board on November 15, 2016 is available on the energy transformation page of VEC’s website.

How can I take advantage of VEC’s Tier III program?

VEC is currently offering a bill credit to members who install a cold-climate heat pump or purchase an electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid electric vehicle. VEC is also offering discounted line extensions and service upgrades to projects that qualify for the Clean Air Program.

Cold-climate heat pumps. For the cold climate heat pump program, members can work through Efficiency Vermont’s program to receive a discount on the initial purchase of either $600 or $800 by working through one of EVT’s approved contractors. Once the cold-climate heat pump is installed, you can fill out a short form to receive a $150 bill credit from VEC per heat pump. (See page 5 for more details on cold-climate heat pumps.) Electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. For the electric vehicle and plug-in hybrid electric vehicle program, you simply fill out a short form and include proof of lease or purchase to receive your bill credit. If you purchase a used or new vehicle, you will be eligible for a bill credit of $250. If you lease a vehicle, you will be eligible for a bill credit of $50 for each year of the lease. For example, if you sign a three-year lease, your bill credit will be $150. These bill credits are available once per VIN number.

Clean Air Program. VEC’s Clean Air Program (CAP) is another opportunity for members to take advantage of VEC’s Tier III program. If you are currently running a generator on a regular basis for all or part of your power needs, VEC may be able to offer you a discounted line extension or service upgrade so that you can retire the generator and replace it with electric service. CAP is an extremely effective way for VEC to meet its Tier III requirements and provide improved service that benefits all members.

Please call 1-800-832-2667 for more information on any of these programs.
What is a heat pump and how does it work?

Heat pumps draw heat from the environment and move it indoors to heat your home, or move it outdoors to cool your home. Air-source heat pumps gather heat from the ambient air, while ground-source or geothermal heat pumps extract it from the ground. Heat pump technology has evolved in recent years, and new ductless air-source models are designed to excel in cold climates like Vermont’s. The efficiency and cost savings of switching to heat pumps can be significant, depending on the fuel you currently use.

While most heating systems burn fuel, a heat pump moves existing heat from one place to another. In the case of an air-source heat pump, heat is collected from the exterior air, concentrated via an outdoor compressor, and distributed inside through an indoor room unit. Heat pumps require electricity to run, but can deliver more energy than they use. In summer, a heat pump’s operation is reversed to air condition your home by moving heat from indoors to out.

Cold-Climate Heat Pumps

Also called mini-splits, air-source and ductless, cold-climate heat pumps consume far less energy than electric resistance, propane, or oil heating systems. Typically, one heat pump per room or a multi-zone set-up is necessary for whole-home heating. While effective in cold weather, cold-climate heat pump often requires supplemental heat on subzero days.

Benefits can include:
- Zone friendly: heat only the rooms you need to
- Lower energy bills by switching from electric resistance, propane, and oil to heat pumps
- No combustion means no carbon monoxide
- No fuel storage or risk of running out of fuel

Is a cold climate heat pump right for you?

Here are some factors to consider before you purchase:

- Factor size and layout. Small homes and businesses with open floor plans can typically heat with one or two heat pump units. For larger spaces and those with enclosed rooms, multiple units are needed—one for each room or zone.
- Know that it is not a one-for-one replacement. For most buildings, a heat pump doesn’t entirely replace the current heating system (e.g., furnace, boiler, woodstove). Its heating capabilities decrease as temperatures approach –15 degrees F, so you’ll still need a supplemental heat source for the coldest days of the year.
- Think about cooling. Heat pumps cool as well as heat your space—in summer, you simply reverse the operation by flipping a switch. So if you currently use window units for air conditioning, switching to heat pumps can significantly reduce your summer cooling costs.
- Insulate and air-seal first. As with any other heating system, heat pumps work best in an energy-efficient building. Before you install them, consider tightening up air sealing and adding insulation. These are affordable improvements that quickly pay for themselves.
- Estimate your savings. How much (and whether) you save with a heat pump depends on the fuel you’re switching from. A qualified heat pump installer can help you calculate these savings. You can also contact Efficiency Vermont’s customer support team for help.
- Account for all costs. Heat pumps cost as much as $4,000 per unit, installed. Factor this in when determining if they’re a cost-effective choice for you. If you’re still not sure, a professional installer can visit your home and assess your needs.
ing a TV anti-tip strap to keep kids safe from furniture tipping accidents. The Boy Scouts of America received funds to help a startup program in Eden, VT that will provide Scouts with a week-long experience learning about STEM opportunities (merit badges included).

The VEC Community Fund, adopted by the VEC Board of Directors in 2014, is intended to strengthen the community by supporting organizations that promote community development and economic security. VEC members can support the fund by rounding up their monthly electric bill to the next highest dollar. Currently, about 300 VEC members contribute to the fund by rounding up their monthly bills.

“One of the seven Cooperative Principal’s focuses on member needs and concern for community, so VEC strives to help build a better community for our members and the state overall,” said Christine Hallquist, CEO. “We’re very happy that our members have welcomed the opportunity to give out these grants. Without their cooperation and donations we would not be able to have a program like this,” said Hallquist.

The VEC Community Fund provided a grant to help North Country Hospital provide “Baby Swag Bags” to families with infants to help keep them safe at home.

VEC members that would like to round up their bills to support the Community Fund can find more information at www.vermontelectric.coop or by calling VEC at 1-800-832-2667. Or simply check the box on your next electric bill!

VEC works hard to keep rates as low as possible. We have not had a rate increase since 2014, and our annual rate increase has been less than one percent a year over the past 8 years. As we look ahead to 2017, the costs reflected on your electric bill face strong upward pressure due to many factors. For example, transmission costs that get passed onto the utility are increasing and Energy Efficiency Charges continue to increase. All these costs are reflected on members’ electric bills. While we will continue to look for opportunities for internal efficiencies, many of these external costs drivers are out of our direct control.

To understand what those other costs are, we can use a small commercial account as an example. The small commercial member pays $18.26 each month for their Customer Charge. This member then pays 15.8 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for their Energy Charge. About 5 percent of these two charges is the result of property, gross receipts, and gross revenue taxes that VEC pays. The bill is then marked up another 6 percent for sales tax on the electric charges. In addition to that, members also pay the Energy Efficiency Charge that funds Efficiency Vermont, which amounts to about another 6 percent. Even though VEC has not had a rate increase since 2014, the Energy Efficiency Charge has increased, which is reflected on members’ bills (Efficiency Vermont raised their rates about 9 percent in 2016 and by 9 percent again in 2017).

It’s important for members to understand the various cost components of their electric bill so that they can make their interests and priorities known to policy and law makers. An educated and informed citizenry is essential to making good public policy decisions.
As more renewable energy comes onto the grid, electric utilities across the nation are experiencing the impact on their systems. VEC is no different. Vermont Electric Co-op life

As battery technology improves, the amount of renewable power on the grid can continue to grow and help us meet the challenge of a lower-carbon future. At VEC, the storage pilot team is continuing to research various battery technologies and currently has a small-scale installation in the lobby of the Johnson headquarters.

In 2016, VEC began a pilot program to test utility, commercial, and industrial-scale storage, as well as utility-scale battery options, which theoretically have been engineered, but they all have limitations. Prices are high. Various methods of storing energy and prices are low and release it when demand and associated charges is to store energy when demand and
ting and at night. If a utility has a daytime peak, the penetration of solar helps to reduce the peak and the associated charges to the utility. If the peak is in the evening, the solar generation is not available and there is no peak or demand charge reduction.

It is commonly understood that one of the more effective ways to manage peak demand and its associated charges is to store energy when demand and prices are low and release it when demand and prices are high. Various methods of storing energy have been engineered, but they all have limitations. Utility-scale battery options, which theoretically could be located anywhere on the grid, are finally starting to become feasible.

In 2016, VEC began a pilot program to test utility, commercial, and industrial-scale storage, as well as the potential for individual member solutions. This pilot program is looking at the possible benefits of each battery option. Beyond managing demand, large-scale battery storage could help solve the problem of renewable intermittency (i.e., the power is available only when the wind is blowing or sun is shining). Storage options could also help provide backup power during outages or when critical work needs to be done to repair a line.

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The Revolutionary Potential of Battery Storage

By Kris Smith, Manager of SCADA and Operations Engineering

Vermont utilities maintain electric line rights-of-way with several methods, including the selective use of herbicides on trees and brush. They also encourage low-growing shrubs and trees which will crowd tall-growing species and, thus, minimize the use of herbicides. The application of herbicides may start as early as April 1. Requests to utilities for notice by mail, however, must be made by February 15.

The Public Service Board requires Vermont utilities to carry out vegetation management techniques which allow maintenance of electrical systems in a cost-efficient manner.

The types of herbicide treatment used to maintain vegetation on utility rights-of-way include the following applications: stump, injection, basal, soil, and foliar. These are the commonly used methods; your local utility may use other methods. Landowners have the right to request that a utility apply herbicide treatment on cut stumps only or that a utility refrain from applying herbicide. In the latter case, the landowner has to pay the utility an administrative fee. Only electric utility rights-of-way that have tall-growing tree species with the potential of threatening the electric utility system are treated.

Utilities advertise by radio and newspaper prior to herbicide applications on all lines. Utilities typically treat rights of way once every four-to-six years, depending on the utility’s specific vegetation management cycle. Please check with your utility regarding the vegetation management cycle of a particular line.

Some utilities identify their poles with metal letters and numbers, e.g., V.E.C. (Vermont Electric Co-operative), or V.E.L.G.O. (Vermont Electric Power Company). These markings are not found on every utility pole. However, by checking of several poles on a line, you should be able to find a marked pole and determine which utility owns it.

Persons owning or occupying land within 1,000 feet of a utility right-of-way may request in writing that the utility notify them individually by mail anytime but at least 30 days prior to treatment of the line with herbicides. The landowner or resident is responsible for contacting the utility, in writing, to request placement on the mailing list. The utility should be provided with sufficient information as to the exact location of the residence and land. It is the duty of each landowner or resident to make the utility aware of the location of any potentially affected water supply, and any environmentally sensitive areas where herbicide application ought to be avoided.

CONTACT YOUR ELECTRIC UTILITY WITH QUESTIONS OR SUBMIT THE COUPON PROVIDED

If you have further questions or concerns contact:

Agency of Agriculture
James Leland
116 State St., Montpelier, VT 05602
1-802-828-2431

Consumer Affairs & Public Information
Dept. of Public Service
112 State St., Montpelier, VT 05620
1-800-622-4496 or 1-802-828-2332

LANDOWNER REQUEST TO BE ADDED TO HERBICIDE TREATMENT NOTIFICATION MAILING LIST

Name
Street Address
Town
State
Zip Code
Phone Number (Home)
O.K. to use Work Number
Yes □ No □
Best Time to Call
Year Round Residence □ Summer Residence □
Water Supply □ Land □ Commercial Property □
Other □
Utility Initials
Numbers

Line and Pole Identification: (Work)

We need all of this information in order to determine if you qualify for personal notification. If information is unobtainable, please state why. Use an extra sheet of paper if you need more space.

RETURN TO YOUR LOCAL UTILITY

VELCO15
Inside Winter 2017 Co-op Life

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CO-OP LIFE is published quarterly by Vermont Electric Cooperative
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VEC’s Control Center is open 24 hours a day 365 days a year to monitor the system and take
calls about outages and any hazards the members report.