



Environmental Benefits Spending Report

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HealthVermont.gov
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 **VERMONT**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Introduction

This report is the Vermont Department of Health’s sample environmental benefits spending methodology. Due to sudden changes at the federal level that began in 2025 – from grant funding to policy changes – Health continues to face new challenges. This report attempts to demonstrate Health’s commitment to environmental justice work while also addressing capacity, funding, and logistical constraints that limit conducting a full baseline spending report analysis.

Key Points

- The Health Department spends funds on direct and indirect environmental benefits that are not easily quantifiable.
- This report offers the methodology used with sample data in place of a full baseline spending report.
- The Health Department intends to explore how to make systems-level changes to track environmental benefits in the future.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact Amy Redman, Environmental Justice & Health Equity Advisor at amy.redman@vermont.gov.

The Baseline Spending Report Deliverable

Vermont’s Environmental Justice Law ([Act 154](#), 2022) requires covered state agencies to review the past three years and generate baseline spending reports no later than February 15, 2026. The report must include:

- “(A) where investments were made, if any, and which geographic areas, at the municipal level and census block group, where practicable, received environmental benefits from those investments; and
- (B) a description and quantification of the environmental benefits as an outcome of the investment. The covered agencies shall publicly post the baseline spending reports on their respective websites.” 3 V.S.A § 6004 (g).

In other words, the baseline spending report asks each covered agency to take a “snapshot” of its investments in environmental benefits over the previously identified three-year reporting period. The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and the Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance (EBSG) Task Group designed the [Environmental Benefits Spending Report Guidance](#) to provide covered agencies with guidance for preparing their first Baseline Spending Report, but it is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive about which investments to include.

Environmental Benefits

In the Environmental Justice Law, environmental benefits are defined as: “The assets and services that enhance the capability of communities and individuals to function and flourish in society. Examples of environmental benefits [are] access to a healthy environment and clean natural resources, including:

- Air, water, land, green spaces, constructed playgrounds, and other outdoor recreational facilities and venues;
- Affordable, clean, renewable energy sources;
- Public transportation;
- Fulfilling and dignified green jobs;
- Healthy homes and buildings;
- Health care;
- Nutritious food;
- Indigenous food and cultural resources;
- Environmental enforcement; and
- Training and funding disbursed or administered by governmental agencies.”

Environmental Benefit Spending Sample Methodology

Step 1: Environmental Benefits Program Scan

The Health Department maintains a program inventory, which is a list of approximately 122 programs and their purposes. The first step in creating a sample methodology for this report was to scan the program inventory for programs and projects with potential direct environmental benefits spending.

Given that the topic of environmental benefits most closely aligns with the Division of Environmental Health, the inventory began by piloting the information-gathering process with programs in Environmental Health (for example, Private Drinking Water, Climate & Health, and Healthy Homes & Lead Poisoning Prevention).

Next, to gather more department-wide information, division directors, along with the policy team and leadership, met to discuss this report. Directors from the Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and the Division of Emergency Preparedness, Response and Injury Prevention identified programs likely working on projects with direct environmental benefits to fill out the environmental benefits spending inventory (see Step

2). Additionally, the Office of Health Equity Integration completed the inventory and gathered sample data for this report.

Step 2: Environmental Benefits Program Inventory

The Health Department adopted its environmental benefits spending inventory from the Department of Public Service and the Agency of Agriculture. The inventory was created using the filters outlined in the [Environmental Benefits Spending Report Guidance](#). In total, 20 programs and/or projects were entered into the inventory.

The inventory captured information on the program, associated environmental benefits, funding, and whether investment location data was available. For example, the information in the initial inventory captured the following:

- **Initiative name:** What is the name of the program, benefit or service that the reported investment is associated with?
- **Environmental benefit type:** What type of environmental benefit under the statutory definition does this initiative provide? (See Environmental Benefit examples above).
 - Investment quantity (\$): Does the program and/or Business Office have access to the investment for this initiative? (Note: in the initial inventory, this was a “yes” or “no” question to determine if data should be pulled during the next phase of this process.)
 - Funding source: Where does the covered agency receive this funding from? (for example, state, federal or a combination of the two).
 - Funding cycle: How often does the covered agency receive this funding?
- **Investment location:** Does the department have investment location information at the municipal or census block group level?
- **Benefit location or impact radius.** Does the department know which geographic areas received environmental benefits as a result of this investment at the municipal or census block group level?

Please note that the inventory is not an exhaustive list of programs and projects that may have direct environmental benefits. There are likely more. However, given the resources needed to investigate environmental benefits at the program and project levels rather than at the financial systems level, it was not possible to spend more time gathering information in this way while simultaneously writing this report. Please see the [Rationale, Limitations and Challenges section](#) for more explanation on why this report is a methodology sample, rather than a comprehensive baseline spending report.

Step 3: Environmental Benefits Sample Data

The sample data in this section includes two granular examples of what a Health Department analysis might look like in the absence of a more systematic approach. The examples were selected based on data and staff availability. Based on the Environmental Benefits Spending Inventory and the availability of program-level data, the following two examples include an analysis of full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing and an analysis of a portion of a grant program.

Example 1: Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Analysis

The table below shows the last three years of spending on childhood lead poisoning prevention and case management. Here we see a steady increase in total spending on in-home childhood lead poisoning prevention due to cost-of-living adjustments. Please note that these costs do not include costs for transportation to and from home, ongoing case management, ongoing communication with property owners for rental units, or follow-up visits/clearance, and costs for dust, water, soil, and secondary-source sampling.

Table 1: FTE analysis of Healthy Homes & Lead Poisoning Prevention Program spending as an environmental benefit

Year	Prevention cost per home visit	Total Spending
2023	\$197.78	\$16,810.88
2024	\$205.13	\$17,435.63
2025	\$217.80	\$22,215.60

The Healthy Homes & Lead Poisoning Prevention Program data indicate that the highest spending per county is driven by two factors: the number of children (ages 0 – 16) and the [percentage of housing built before 1950](#). For example, preliminary analysis indicates that Rutland and Chittenden Counties have higher rates of spending on in-home lead prevention because they have more children and a higher share of housing built before the 1950s; however, an adjusted statistical model to visualize these data was not feasible for this report.

Because many of the environmental benefits at the department are in indirect services, most likely captured in staff time, it would be helpful to extend the FTE analysis to other programs and initiatives. However, this type of analysis is exceedingly complex and likely not comparable to other program data.

Example 2: Grant Program Analysis

The next example is an analysis of Health Disparities Grant spending on Indigenous food and cultural resources as a direct environmental benefit from 2023 to 2025. Indigenous Foods are locally sourced and deeply connected to the land and culture of indigenous communities, specifically Abenaki groups in Vermont. Note that this is a small portion of the analyzable Health Disparities Grant funding awarded to Vermont communities.

The Health Disparities Grant was a one-time national initiative to address COVID-19 health disparities among populations at high risk and underserved, including racial and ethnic minorities and rural communities, and was terminated in 2025 (note: several of the grants had already ended in 2024). The grant was used to fund, including but not limited to, trusted community partners serving health equity focus populations, hiring health equity staff, supporting workforce development, and providing translation and interpretation support.

Table 2 shows the annual spending for grantees involved in Indigenous food and cultural resources initiatives, with higher spending in the first two years because the grant was originally a 2-year grant that received two separate no-cost extensions (with no additional funding).

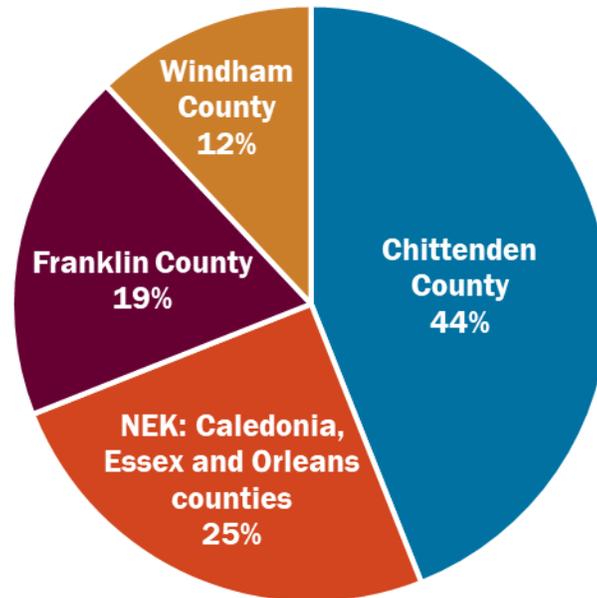
Table 2: Health Disparities Grant analysis of Indigenous food and cultural resources as an environmental benefit

Year	Total Spending
2023	\$396,558.91
2024	\$417,022.36
2025	\$123,233.63
Total	\$936,814.90

Geographical distribution of Health Disparities grant resources was impacted by a couple of factors, including 1) grantees who received funds were required to submit a clear application and go through a vetting process to be selected, and 2) distribution of funds to support indigenous foods and cultural resources was largely influenced by the location of organizations that received the grant and their prescribed service areas.

Looking closely at Indigenous food and cultural resources as a direct environmental benefit, Figure 2 shows that just under half of the funding was spent in Chittenden County, followed by the three counties in the Northeast Kingdom.

Percent of health disparities spending by county on Indigenous food and cultural resources from 2023 to 2024.



As with the FTE analysis, the grant program analysis could be used to examine other grants, programs, and initiatives by working closely with programs and analyzing data. This methodology has strengths for internal auditing, but it is again exceedingly complex and unlikely to be comparable to other program data. Please see the [Rationale, Limitations and Challenges section](#) for more explanation.

Notable Environmental Benefits Spending Trends

As Health Department program staff, directors, and leadership worked on filling out the initial Environmental Benefits Spending Report, notable environmental justice and health equity spending trends emerged, including:

- The Health Disparities Grant augmented departmental spending on translations and interpretations by spending approximately \$107,000 on these services from 2023 to 2025.
- Much of our work is funded by federal grants, which have been either terminated or severely restricted due to Executive Orders. For example, in 2025, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) environmental justice grant program, awarded under the Biden Administration, was terminated under the Trump Administration. Under this grant program, Health was awarded a \$1 million EPA Environmental Justice Government-to-Government grant to fund a community-ambassador-led, healthy, energy-efficient housing program for new immigrants, refugees, asylees, and asylee-

seekers, but the funds were revoked in March 2025. Similarly, the CDC's Health Disparities grant was terminated during this period.

- Funding at the Health Department is allocated to community partners and grantees each year. For example, roughly \$83.5 million has been awarded to grantees from 2024 to 2027, according to the Health Department's grantee inventory. Portions of these funds have been identified for health equity priority populations, like Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ+, older Vermonters, people with disabilities, and those who are unhoused. It is important to note that, given the end of the CDC's Health Disparities funds and the termination or severe restrictions on federal grants due to Executive Orders, the Health Department expects a significant reduction in federal funds for Vermont's priority populations.
- The environmental benefits spending inventory revealed environmental benefits and services that cross multiple agencies. Examples include PCB testing in schools (the Department of Environmental Conservation and Agency of Education) and Weatherization + Health (the Public Service Department and Department for Children and Families).

Rationale, Limitations & Challenges

This section has been adapted from the [Agency of Natural Resources cover letter](#) for the rationale on why the Health Department has prepared a sample methodology.

Quantification

- Many programs are not structured in ways that allow environmental-justice-relevant spending to be isolated, tracked, or attributed.
- Quantification often requires assumptions, methodologies, or modeling that do not yet exist, which is why we have used this spending report to learn more about how to gather environmental justice data.
- Quantification of benefits, particularly cumulative or community-level benefits, requires modeling and analytical frameworks that are not currently available.

Existing Financial Systems

- Statewide financial systems were not designed to track specific investments or outcomes in a way that would translate to these reports without extraneous complexities.
- Environmental-justice-relevant spending is often embedded within broader programs and cannot be disaggregated without significant manual effort or system redesign.

Lack of Resources and Staff Capacity

- Agencies lack dedicated staff time, funding, and technical support to comprehensively review all programs and funding streams. For example, the Health Department's Environmental Justice & Health Advisor, who also serves as the Environmental Justice Interagency Representative, is working part-time.
- Data gathering across programs is labor-intensive and, in some cases, incomplete due to capacity constraints.

Preparing for Future Environmental Benefits Spending Reports

Continuing the Environmental Benefits Inventory

As noted, statewide financial systems were not set up to track specific investments or outcomes for these reports. However, exploring how to work at the program level to continue gathering environmental benefits information and data is one way to move forward.

Explore Adding Environmental Benefits to the Grantee Inventory Form

The department's Performance Improvement Unit maintains a grantee inventory with spending, investment location, and priority populations. Exploring the feasibility of adding environmental benefits information to this preexisting inventory is a possible next step.

Environmental Benefits: Explore Inclusion in Program Inventory

As noted, scanning the department's program inventory was one of the first steps in the sample methodology. The program inventory will be updated yearly and could include a section on environmental benefits.

Environmental Benefits Spending Report Summary

In summary, although there are many gaps and challenges in collecting and reporting Environmental Benefit Spending data, preparing for this report has begun the vital process of exploring system-level improvements for future reporting. This process is helping the Department as a whole identify areas for investment and improvement to better serve those most disproportionately impacted by environmental injustice in Vermont.