



Extreme Cold Weather Shelter Program

Application | SFY 2027 | 2026–27 Winter Season

Administered by Get Warm Now VT, a partnership of Vermont Interfaith Action and Green Mountain Justice, sponsored and funded by the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, Office of Economic Opportunity.

About the Program

The Vermont Extreme Cold Weather Shelter Program (ECWSP) helps communities provide emergency shelter during periods of extreme cold for our neighbors experiencing homelessness who have no other safe housing option. The goal is to prevent cold-related illness or death by ensuring access to safe, temporary shelter during Vermont's severe winter weather. The program operates under Act 143 of 2026, which establishes extreme cold weather sheltering in Vermont law at 33 V.S.A. chapter 22.

Program Season: On or before December 1, 2026 through March 31, 2027, depending on Vermont temperatures. Shelters should be ready to mobilize by November 15, 2026.

When Shelters Open: Get Warm Now VT activates your shelter when the National Weather Service forecasts a wind chill at or below the threshold you choose, sustained for 4 or more hours in your locality. 10°F wind chill is the warmest threshold the program can reimburse. You pick your own threshold at or below that point.

Who Can Use Shelters: People who self-attest that they meet the [HUD definition of homelessness](#) as adopted by Vermont's Agency of Human Services and have no other safe shelter option. ECWSP shelters are low barrier. No identification is required.

Funding: Reimbursement is provided to approved shelter operators for eligible, documented costs during official weather activations. Funding may also be available for equipment, supplies, and site improvements, subject to pre-approval. There is no fixed per-community amount and no standard per-night rate.

You do not need to have everything in place to apply. Zoning approval, fire safety approval, insurance, and a complete operations plan are required before a subgrant agreement is signed — not before you apply. If you are not there yet, tell us where you are and what you need. Helping you get there is part of what we do. If you have never run a shelter, apply anyway. Several of last season's operators started from nothing.

Key Dates

- Application posted: Tuesday, September 8, 2026
- Virtual Info Session: Tuesday, September 15, 2026, 2:00 – 3:00 PM
- Office Hours (drop-in): Wednesdays, September 9, 16, 23, and 30, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
- **Applications due Thursday, October 1, 2026, by 4:00 PM.** Send to contact@getwarmnowvt.org.
- Decisions: rolling through the first half of October
- Award notifications: Thursday, October 15, 2026
- Pre-season orientation: before November 1, 2026

- Mobilization readiness: November 15, 2026

Application Support

Program materials, the reference manual, and the budget template are posted at GetWarmNowVT.org. Attach additional pages wherever you need more space. We offer help with site selection, operations planning, staffing, budgets, permitting, and insurance — several first-season operators told us budget development was where they most needed support. Ask early rather than late.

- Register for the Info Session – September 15: [\[Zoom registration link\]](#)
- Join Office Hours – September 9, 16, 23, 30: [\[Zoom link\]](#)
- Questions any time: contact@getwarmnowvt.org

Applicant Information

Legal Name of Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Unique Entity ID (UEI): _____

Federal EIN: _____

Organization Type (check one):

- ☐ 501(c)(3) nonprofit (attach IRS determination letter)
- ☐ Vermont municipality or municipally designated agency (attach official documentation)
- ☐ Faith-based organization (eligibility for funding requires that services and assistance at your facility, or as part of the funded project, are carried out in a manner which neither advances nor inhibits religion)
- ☐ Community action agency, regional service provider, or educational institution
- ☐ Other organization with a fiscal sponsor (attach a signed agreement between the two parties)

Primary Contact Person: _____

Title/Role: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Is this person authorized to make decisions for the organization?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No — name and contact information for the authorized individual:

Activation contact and after-hours phone (may be the same person): _____

Shelter Site and Activation Threshold

Full address of shelter location: _____

ZIP code of the shelter site: _____

We monitor National Weather Service forecasts by locality, because Vermont temperatures vary a great deal across the state. Your ZIP code is what we watch.

Intended shelter capacity (maximum number of individuals): _____

Proposed hours of operation (e.g., 6 PM – 8 AM): _____

Your Activation Threshold

10°F wind chill is the warmest threshold the ECWSP can reimburse. You may choose any colder value that fits your local conditions, your community's needs, your facility, and your budget. A warmer threshold means more nights open; a colder one means fewer. Choose what best serves your community rather than defaulting to the warmest or the coldest option — and talk to us if you would like help thinking it through. Your threshold can be changed during the season with our written approval.

Proposed activation threshold (°F wind chill, at or below 10°F): _____

Briefly, why is this the right threshold for your community?

Facility Use and Readiness

Is the proposed use allowed under local zoning regulations?

- ☐ Yes (please attach your permit or other relevant documentation)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not yet applied

If **No** or **Not yet applied**, describe your plan to obtain approval and any barriers (e.g., funding, timing, regulations):

Has the facility received approval from the VT Dept. of Public Safety, Division of Fire Safety?

- ☐ Yes (please attach your permit or other relevant documentation)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not yet applied

If **No** or **Not yet applied**, describe your plan to secure approval, including steps, barriers, and timeline:

Zoning and fire safety approval must be in place before a final agreement can be executed, but not to apply. Start early — it is the single most common source of delay. If you have been told your building needs sprinklers or other upgrades, tell us. That is not necessarily the end of the conversation, and we work these cases with state partners.

Facility Description

Briefly describe the shelter space. Include responses to the following:

- Is the space suitable for congregate shelter use, with room to circulate and clear sight lines for monitoring?
- Is there open floor space for beds or cots?
- How many bathrooms are available? Are any accessible?
- Is a shower available?
- Is there a kitchen or food prep area?
- Is there secure storage for supplies and for guest belongings?
- Is there private space for staff or guest conversations?
- Can people reach the site on foot or by transit during operating hours?
- Has the building been used as a shelter before?
- Any other helpful facility details, including neighborhood considerations:

Shelter Program and Staffing Plans

Mission Alignment

How does operating an extreme cold weather shelter align with your organization's mission or purpose?

Does your organization currently, or has it previously, supported people experiencing homelessness? Please explain. Prior shelter experience is not required.

Operations Manual

An operations manual covers shelter rules and expectations, intake procedures, staff roles, emergency contacts, de-escalation and conflict resolution, and a protocol for entry by law enforcement or outside medical personnel.

Do you have one?

- ☐ Yes (attach the document)
- ☐ In part (attach what you have)
- ☐ No

If your manual is incomplete, describe your plan and timeline. Let us know if you would like a sample template:

A complete operations manual will be required before a funding agreement can be executed. We can help you build one.

Shelter Operations Overview

Describe your current plan for how the shelter will operate on a nightly basis, even if preliminary. This helps us understand your approach while your full plan is still in development. Your response should address:

- Daily flow from shelter opening to closing
- Guest intake and discharge process
- Meals or refreshments, if any
- How guests will move through the space (quiet hours, activities, etc.)
- How belongings will be managed
- How you will handle guests arriving with pets or companion animals
- Available services or supports on site
- Any anticipated challenges and your approach to addressing them

Staffing and Coordination

Describe your staffing model and plan, including:

- Number of staff and/or volunteers per shift
- Whether staff are paid, stipended, volunteer, or a mix
- Typical shift hours and responsibilities
- Who is responsible for coordination, supervision, and administrative oversight
- Your plan for daily setup and cleanup (mobilization and demobilization)
- Storage and supply logistics
- Where you will find staff and volunteers, and how you will train and screen them

All staff and volunteers must be screened for suitability, checked against the AHS Child and Adult Abuse Registries, sign a confidentiality agreement, and receive basic shelter training. Background check costs are an eligible expense. Get Warm Now VT provides training, including trauma-responsive practices, and holds a pre-season orientation before November 1.

Transportation

How will guests reach the shelter (e.g., walk, bus, transported)?

Will you be transporting individuals from other regions?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If **Yes**, describe your anticipated transportation needs (from and to which towns and areas, local transportation providers, and so on):

Guest Information and Reporting

Intake and Guest Information

ECWSP shelters are low barrier. No identification is required, no coordinated entry assessment or case management is required, and a guest may not be denied shelter for declining to provide information. The minimum data collected at intake is guest name and date of birth, applied flexibly. Life safety comes first and

data collection second. Participation in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is not required; Get Warm Now VT provides templates for unduplicated guest counts instead.

Briefly describe how you will handle intake and how you will keep an unduplicated guest count without requiring identification:

Intake should be brief and welcoming. People arriving on the coldest nights of the year have usually just had a hard time of it. Safety and comfort come before paperwork.

How Activation Works

So you know what you are signing up for:

- We monitor the forecast for your locality all season.
- When conditions are expected to meet your threshold, we send an activation notice roughly three days ahead. You confirm within 4 hours that you will open.
- Once issued, an activation notice is never rescinded. If the forecast warms up afterward, you still operate and you are still reimbursed. You can call in staff and buy supplies without worrying the decision will be reversed underneath you.
- You operate nightly under your plan, and join a short debrief call each morning of operations.
- Within an hour of closing each morning, you send a brief activation report: guest count, unduplicated guests, incidents, and anything you need.

Reporting Capacity

Reporting requirements are deliberately minimal. Get Warm Now VT provides all templates, and reporting moves to a web-based system this season. Please confirm your ability to:

- ☐ Submit a brief activation report within one hour of closing, after each night of operation
- ☐ Submit a Critical Incident Report within 24 hours of a serious incident
- ☐ Submit a monthly reimbursement request with supporting documentation
- ☐ Complete end-of-season reconciliation within 45 days of April 1, 2027

If you foresee any challenges in meeting these requirements, describe them below:

Budget and Reimbursement

Funding Structure

- You may open and operate your shelter on your own criteria at any time, but the ECWSP reimburses only for nights that meet your approved threshold.

- All funding is provided on a reimbursement basis for actual, documented expenses, up to your contracted maximum. There is no advance payment.
- No standard per-night rate is applied; each shelter's actual costs will vary.
- If you do not spend your full award, that is fine and common. Tell us early if you see a large variance so the funds can be used elsewhere in the program.

Eligible Expenses

Expenses may include, but are not limited to:

- Staff wages, stipends, and related personnel costs
- Shelter supplies: cots, bedding, food, cleaning, laundry, basic medical, and hygiene products
- Rent, utilities, trash, telephone, and internet tied to shelter operations
- Guest transportation to and from shelter sites
- Insurance (facility and transport)
- Background checks, permits, and inspections
- Security services where there is a demonstrated need
- Facility fit-up or minor improvements (reviewed case by case)

Budget Submission

Using the ECWSP Budget Template posted at GetWarmNowVT.org, submit:

- A per-night estimated cost to operate the shelter
- A projected seasonal budget based on the number of nights you expect to open at your chosen threshold
- Any anticipated fit-up or one-time costs, listed separately
- If requesting facility improvements, a description of the work, a cost estimate or proposal, and your plan for the long-term use of the facility

Two things worth building in. First, do not budget for a fixed 20 nights the way the first season did — with a 10°F threshold you should expect more, and we can help you land on a realistic number for your locality. Second, operators tell us a single reimbursed night carries close to three days of actual effort once setup and breakdown are counted. Let your staffing and stipend lines reflect that. Investments that last more than one season are viewed favorably.

Number of activation nights assumed in your budget: _____

Total Funding Request: _____

Reimbursement Process

Reimbursements are issued monthly upon submission of a report of shelter nights opened, a summary of actual expenses, and supporting documentation such as receipts, invoices, payroll records, and guest counts. Get Warm Now VT provides the template. Funds are not released until documentation has been reviewed and approved.

Additional Information

Please share anything else that may help us evaluate your application — local partnerships, in-kind support, particular constraints, or questions you would like to talk through with us. If a municipality in your area is also applying for a Municipal Support Grant, let us know here so we can review the plans together.

Before You Send

Attach what you have. Items marked with an asterisk are required before an agreement is signed, not before you apply.

- ☐ IRS determination letter or official municipal documentation
- ☐ Completed ECWSP Budget Template
- ☐ Signed fiscal sponsor agreement, if applicable
- ☐ Operations manual, complete or partial *
- ☐ Zoning and fire safety documentation *
- ☐ Certificate of insurance *
- ☐ Any additional pages for narrative responses

Can your organization meet the insurance coverage limits set out in the funding notice?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Not yet, or unsure — we would like help with this

Signature

By signing, I certify that the information in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge, that I am authorized to submit it, and that our organization will operate as a low-barrier shelter under 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 — requiring no identification, denying no one shelter for declining to provide information, and making services available on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Signature: _____

Printed Name and Title: _____

Organization: _____

Date: _____

Send your completed application and attachments by 4:00 PM on Thursday, October 1, 2026 to contact@getwarmnowvt.org. Questions are welcome at any point before then.

