



Steering Team Meeting Notes
August 25, 2025 1-2 PM

Present

Katelynn Averyt, Michele Bailey, Josh Bell, Jane Cadwalader, Meg Campbell, Taiga Christie, Eileen Corcoran, Amy Cunningham, Jamie Duggan, Tom McMurdo, Rachel Onuf, Joseph Watson
Special Guest: Desmond Peeples, VAC Communications Team

Business

Josh Bell recently joined the VACDaRN Steering Team. He is the new Director of State Historic Sites and has been in the position for seven weeks. He previously worked for the National Park Service-Historical Parks, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Cemetery Administration. Josh and the other Steering Team members made introductions.

Desmond Peeples presented his suggestions for revision to the VACDaRN website. Desmond thoroughly reviewed the website, met with the co-leads to discuss its functionality, and prepared a report to share with the Steering Team. The report features suggested changes to reduce clicks and streamline content. Amy Cunningham liked the separate contact page that Desmond suggested. She suggested the co-leads need to think through and clarify contacts for VACDaRN.

ACTION ITEM: Determine contact numbers and organizational contacts for VACDaRN website.

Rachel Onuf asked about an in-person meeting in fall 2025. Present members were interested. The discussion turned to ideas for a cultural site, although one wasn't decided. Rachel asked if October would be a good time and there was agreement on the month but not on a specific date.

ACTION ITEM: Send an e-mail poll for dates and reach out to contacts for locations.

Steering Team Updates

Rachel started the steering team updates with the State Board Programming Grant application feedback from the NHPRC. It was positive! Program Officer Jacob Lusk is optimistic that the federal funding will continue. The grant application review panel asked a few follow-up questions and Rachel responded earlier this month. She shared some of the grant sections that relate to VACDaRN. The first is two cycles of resilient cultural organization cohorts. The first cohort is currently midway through creating disaster plans with dPlan, generously funded by the Waterwheel Foundation. The next two cohorts will be groups of collecting organizations (archives and historical societies). The proposal also requests \$50,000 for regrants that can be used for supplies and consultants. This has not been determined yet but the regrants could be based on a theme which Rachel and Jane will work on with VHRAB. Vermont Historical Society

would administer the regrants, easing the difficulty of getting grant money through the state. And lastly, \$4,000 for cultural asset mapping of Vermont. Joseph Watson commented that a Middlebury College geography student intern might be able to do the mapping project. Rachel also hoped that other Steering Team members can help shape this mapping project. Rachel attended the VCRD Leadership Summit in early August and thanked Amy for suggesting she join a panel. She also presented for the Continuing Education Forum for State Librarians in Providence, RI to support trainers of librarians on disaster planning and resilience. The high-level talk discussed the training process and tools. The Performing Arts Readiness project will wrap at the end of 2025 and is exploring ways the networks can continue to connect, and Rachel will keep us up to date with any news.

Amy Cunningham gave an update on the Resilient Cultural Organizations Cohort, which will reconvene on September 11 to discuss risk assessment. The structure will be small groups getting together and discussing flagged items from the risk assessment with others and determining action steps. Anna Glover, who attended the launch and gave a presentation, may participate in the upcoming event. VACDaRN colleagues will meet after this meeting to plan for the September RCO event.

Joseph Watson stated that the CHERN annual meeting is happening at Lake Champlain Maritime Museum on November 11th [now rescheduled to the 17th].

Michelle Bailey said the Vermont Arts Council had a record number of applicants for the Cultural Facilities Grant. There were 40 applicants requesting approximately \$800,000. The purpose of the CFG is to improve the utility and accessibility of arts and culture buildings.

Jane Cadwalader shared recent social media posts for VACDaRN. She attended the History Alive! event at Ethan Allen Homestead Museum, August 16 to 17.

Megan Campbell had no updates but hoped to have more information on the Sacred Places Retreats.

Taiga Christie worked with Zach Borst on an outdoor safety presentation. It received a good response for the 90 minutes of presentation and 30 minutes of Q&A with a good showing from all over Vermont. They are now looking into creating an arts and culture safety event and asking for suggestions on topics. They said it would be a good opportunity for networking between emergency management directors, arts and culture directors, and others who are interested. Taiga asked for help from VACDaRN in brainstorming topics for this event. Amy said that VACDaRN is happy to help, and we could possibly ask the RCO cohort to attend. She also suggested that the Steering Team members spread information for this event on their various communication channels. Taiga is also involved in the Vermont Emergency Management conference at Killington Resort on September 4th and 5th and asked for volunteers to help with a performance. Rachel is going to the conference and said that she would be happy to help.

ACTION ITEM: Brainstorm topics of interest for upcoming VEM arts and culture safety event.

Tom McMurdo updated the group that Vermont Department of Libraries had their federal funding passed by one of the Committees of the Senate.

Katelynn Averyt said there is an upcoming HEART training in December and asked Rachel if she would be willing to speak. She also said that the Smithsonian is launching regional collaborations in areas around the country.

Josh Bell reminded everyone that the state historic sites are open, and we should visit!