

# The Vermont Community Index: User Guide

## What is the Vermont Community Index?

The Vermont Community Index (VCI) is a data-based tool designed to identify Vermont county subdivisions (i.e., municipalities) and [labor market areas \(LMAs\)](#) that may benefit from additional support to access funding from State, federal, and other sources. Using publicly available data, the VCI estimates each community's need for investment ("need") and administrative capacity to implement projects and pursue external support ("capacity").

## How Does the VCI Apply to the Rural Infrastructure Assistance Program?

Municipalities must score in the top 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the VCI or demonstrate exceptional circumstances to pre-qualify for the Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP). If funds remain after meeting the funding requirements for qualifying county subdivisions, the Agency of Administration (AoA) may award funds to other municipalities. If this occurs, the AoA will prioritize awarding funds to municipalities with higher VCI scores.

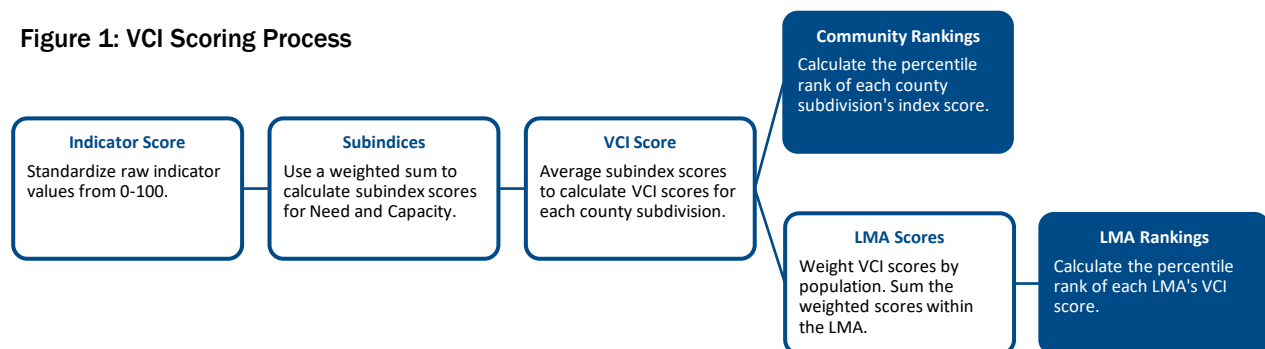
## Where Do I Find the VCI Scores?

VCI scores are in the *VCI Results Workbook* with separate tabs for county subdivisions and LMAs. The workbook includes the scores for all LMAs and 246 county subdivisions.<sup>1</sup> The county subdivisions and LMAs in the top 25<sup>th</sup> percentile are highlighted in green for reference.

## How Does the VCI Work?

The VCI compares county subdivisions and LMAs using eight socioeconomic and demographic (i.e., need) indicators and five capacity indicators. These metrics were chosen based on their inclusion in other indices with similar objectives, such as the [Rural Capacity Index](#) and the [Social Vulnerability Index](#), and their alignment with State goals, including those in [Vermont's Strategic Plan](#). Figure 1 summarizes how the VCI calculates county subdivision and LMA rankings. For more information on the methodology behind the VCI, see *The Vermont Community Index: Technical Documentation*.

Figure 1: VCI Scoring Process



<sup>1</sup> The VCI is missing data for nine county subdivisions with populations below 50. The README tab of the *VCI Results Workbook* lists these municipalities.

## Why Was the VCI Developed?

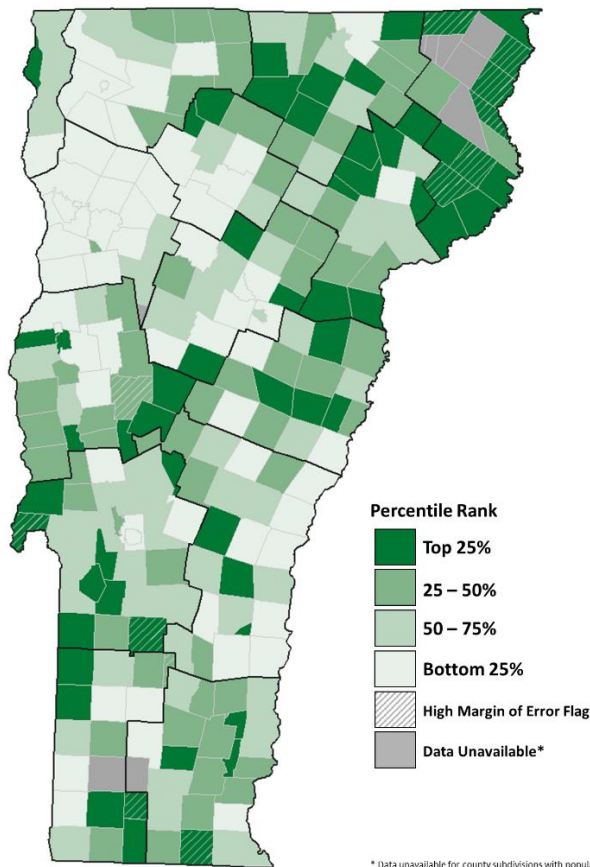
The AoA sought to develop this tool after an internal assessment of its distribution of State Fiscal Recovery Funds uncovered inconsistencies between how much funding counties received and their level of need. This assessment suggested that a significant proportion of funding was going to areas that demonstrate relatively less economic need based on the Governor’s priority economic indicators. This observation prompted the creation of the VCI as a tool to distribute funds with greater alignment to these metrics.

## Limitations

The VCI is a high-level tool in its initial iteration, and the State recognizes that further opportunities exist to refine the variables and methodology. Even with further refinement, the availability and reliability of data may prevent the inclusion of relevant metrics. Regardless of the metrics included, indices can obscure experiences and trends unique to each town and region. For more information, refer to *The Vermont Community Index: Technical Documentation*.

## Maps of VCI Results

County Subdivision Scores, Ranked by Percentile



Labor Market Area (LMA) Scores, Ranked by Percentile

