



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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e-Vermont Offers Rural Towns Free Computers and Digital Tools

Deadline November 17

MONTPELIER, VT – Vermont towns can get free help in learning how to take full advantage of the Internet to create jobs, drive school innovation, provide social services, and increase civic involvement. Twelve communities are already seeing free benefits from the *e-Vermont Community Broadband Project* including consulting for businesses that want to grow their e-commerce, a digital forum to connect neighbors, computers for selected school classes, expanded access to the Internet at town libraries, and trainings in computer skills.

Twelve more communities statewide will be selected to participate, but local groups must apply no later than November 17 to be considered. The complete guidelines are now posted online at www.e4vt.org.

“*e-Vermont* brings a large and varied toolbox to help Vermont e-communities. We look forward to seeing how towns envision using high speed Internet to achieve their goals,” said *e-Vermont* Project Director Helen Labun Jordan.

Municipal leaders and other local organizations that are interested in having their towns apply should visit www.e4vt.org, or contact Helen Labun Jordan, *e-Vermont* Project Director, at 802-225-6091 or by email at helen@vtrural.org.

e-Vermont is working to eliminate the digital divide by ensuring that all Vermonters have the skills, knowledge and assistance they need to make best use of high speed Internet. This project does not develop infrastructure. Its focus is on the grassroots needs of each selected community and bringing the right digital tools to address local issues. In addition to the services mentioned above, specific projects being explored by the first twelve e-communities include:

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- Upgrading municipal websites (or, in some cases, launching them for the first time) to offer more e-government services such as podcasting council meetings, creating efficiency through online access to permits, and streamlining services through better integration with state government and online local business resources;
- Providing hands-on training to local residents who are unfamiliar with social media, online communications, privacy online, and other key internet topics;
- Sharing important historical documents and photos on the web;
- Enhancing the capabilities of local public access TV to better serve its communities;
- Utilizing broadband resources to market the area as an ideal business location;
- Strengthening the informal ways that residents communicate online;
- Developing a business-supported artists and entrepreneurs portal to promote business, the arts and the community;
- Connecting citizens who cannot access broadband from home by bolstering public libraries' resources and creating downtown wi-fi districts.

The key to this major project is the “*e-Vermont Partnership*” led by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD). VCRD is a non-profit organization dedicated to the support of the locally-defined progress of Vermont's rural communities.

In addition to VCRD, the *e-Vermont Partnership* is made up of the Vermont State Colleges, the Vermont Department of Libraries, the Vermont Department of Public Service, Vermont Small Business Development Center, the Snelling Center for Government, Front Porch Forum, Digital Wish, Evslin Family Foundation and Vermont Community Foundation. Details on the roles of each of these partners are available at www.e4vt.org

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