

Vermont Today

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.vermonttoday.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Dec 24, 2010

e-Vermont

Calais, Hardwick chosen for E-Vt. digital project

MONTPELIER – The towns of Calais and Hardwick are joining 10 other rural communities set to receive computers and develop new digital projects through a pilot project sponsored by The Vermont Council on Rural Development.

The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project announced Wednesday it has chosen 12 more communities to take part in the one-year grant project aimed at helping Vermont's rural towns take advantage of high-speed Internet and its benefits.

"E-Vermont works with residents in rural communities to work with and use high-speed Internet," said Helen Labun Jordan, e-Vermont project director. "Every town received help from eight different organizations for their projects."

Bridgewater, Calais, Castleton, Dover, Fairfield, Hardwick, Middletown Springs, Jay/Westfield, Morristown, Richford and Vergennes are the other communities chosen for projects in spring 2011.

Jordan said e-Vermont follows the philosophy that high-speed Internet access is a tool for communities to accomplish their goals. The total grant award for the project is \$3.8 million, mostly from federal stimulus funds.

She said there is no specific amount that is allocated to each town because each town's project has a different cost.

"It's a service-based grant, so we can't measure how much money a town is getting," Jordan said.

She did say that through the pilot program, with the help of one of the project's partners, Digital Wish, every library involved in the program gets equipment to increase public Internet access.

"It depends on what people want," Jordan said. "They choose what they want accomplished and we help them accomplish those goals."

Calais and the other rural communities chosen will join 12 other pilot communities selected in spring 2010.

Jordan said the communities announced Wednesday are the second and final group of towns chosen for the e-Vermont project, as it is a two-year grant project overseen by the Vermont Council on Rural Development.

She said the first 12 communities are already seeing the benefits of the project, pointing out Bristol, Ludlow, Poultney, Newport and West Rutland are exploring the feasibility of offering free public access to wireless in their town centers.

"They have not completed their year, but we have seen businesses create websites and there are notebooks in all participating classrooms."

The town of Middlesex was in the first round and has targeted improving broadband access throughout the town and for businesses, and specifically at the school and town facilities. It also targeted use of the Internet to improve connections within the community.

Charles Jacien, Castleton town manager, said the town is very excited to have been chosen for the broadband project.

"We are hoping for the library to become an (Internet) hub for the community to use," Jacien said. "We look to develop a good Web presence by having Internet availability throughout the village."

"The plans are unlimited once it's here. The sky is the limit," he said.

Although the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project is only bringing in-depth services to 24 communities, it will be offering tools and resources to other communities through workshops, conferences, webinars, online tools and the continuing programs of its partner organizations.

lucia.suarez

@rutlandherald.com
