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U.S. Department of Commerce Invests \$1.8 Million to Expand Internet Capacity for Vermont Businesses in the Wake of Tropical Storm Irene

WASHINGTON — Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank today announced a \$1.8 million Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to the Vermont Council on Rural Development of Montpelier, Vermont. The investment will help the state rebound economically from Tropical Storm Irene by supporting the Vermont Digital Economy Project, an initiative focused on integrating online tools into rural business strategies, community development, and economic development efforts.

“The Obama administration is committed to helping communities impacted by natural disasters rebound and rebuild stronger than ever,” **said Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank.** “The EDA grant announced today will enhance the availability of reliable Internet services and enable small businesses in rural regions in Vermont to be more resilient to future disruptions.”

In the wake of Tropical Storm Irene, 225 of Vermont’s 251 communities incurred significant damage to public infrastructure and numerous communities were physically cut off from services for days. This disruption was magnified by the fact that many businesses in the state had not been able to establish an online presence prior to the storm due to the lack of broadband infrastructure in areas with low population density. This project will provide for the delivery of business support services, deployment of small-scale wireless Internet infrastructure, distribution of information technology licenses, and expansion of Vermont’s networking services.

The project is part of a \$200 million appropriation made by Congress to EDA to help communities that received a major disaster designation in fiscal year 2011 with long-term economic recovery and infrastructure support.

Within the context of the administration’s [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#) (NDRF), EDA serves as the Coordinating Agency on behalf of the Department of Commerce for the Economic Recovery Support Function (RSF) to coordinate the activities of a diverse group of partner agencies supporting recovery in disaster-impacted communities. The activities consist primarily of improved information sharing and the leveraging of existing resources to make a positive impact for communities affected by disasters.

About the U.S. Economic Development Administration (www.eda.gov):

The mission of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. An agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce, EDA makes investments in economically distressed communities in order to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.

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