



The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project has a core goal of increasing rural communities' ability to use broadband resources in achieving a variety of local objectives. The project combines services of core partners with projects designed by each community to either enhance partner services or introduce something completely new. The intent is for all projects to be completed by spring of 2012.

The following overview provides a list of the principal projects planned for Castleton in 2011-2012. The project list was developed through Castleton's application to e-Vermont, input of a local steering committee, input from the public during a forum held in Castleton in March 2011, and conversations between e-Vermont partners and local representatives. These projects will:

- Foster civic engagement and town government capacity
- Promote community level communications and participation in Castleton events
- Offer digital literacy for all residents
- Aid business development
- Advance education at the elementary school level
- Expand public access to high speed Internet
- Add capacity to the public library

This document establishes major objectives for the e-Vermont service year and assigns project leaders for implementation of each component. This overview, communications & marketing materials, and other materials relevant to the work of implementing e-Vermont projects will be available at <http://e4vt.org>. At this site, readers can also find stories about e-Vermont communities, partners, and recommended online resources. All e-Vermont communities are also encouraged to follow developments on Facebook (e-Vermont) and Twitter (@evermont).

e-Vermont and the local committee welcome your interest and involvement. Contact:

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Core e-Vermont Projects

- I. Build Community Connections through Front Porch Forum
- II. Provide Business Training and Consultation Services
- III. Design, Launch and Maintain Town Website
- IV. Take Advantage of 21st Century Educational Opportunities
- V. Bolster Library's Efforts to Increase Public Access
- VI. Promote Digital Literacy for All Castleton Residents

Additional Castleton Priorities

- VII. Build and Promote a Comprehensive Community Calendar
- VIII. Improve Downtown Marketing to Lake Tourists and Lake Marketing to Town Residents and Visitors
- IX. Bring Wi-Fi Zone or Hot Spots to Town and Lake
- X. Promote Outdoor and Environmental Opportunities

I. BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS THROUGH FRONT PORCH FORUM

Front Porch Forum (FPF) has established an online platform for people who live or work in Castleton to connect and share items of local interest. At the request of the Castleton e-Vermont Steering Committee, forum participation was extended to Hubbardton residents. The FPF neighborhood forums not only improve online communication, they spill over into more community engagement offline as well. As of May 3, 2011, the Castleton Hubbardton FPF already had 162 participants – a strong start. The e-Vermont Steering Committee and interested community members will have access to materials to continue to help promote FPF in their town.

The success of the program is measured as much in the value of the messages exchanged and conversations started as in the number of subscribers. By the end of the e-Vermont year, Castleton will have a robust, ongoing town conversation through Front Porch Forum and can be an anchor town as FPF services expand to cover communities throughout Rutland County.

Castleton is very interested in using FPF to help bridge the local community's multiple divides: the divide between the downtown and the lake, the divide between home business owners and other sectors, and the divide between the college and residents. Bridging these divides will involve outreach to each of these constituencies to inform them of FPF and demonstrate how it can be of value to their respective interests and needs.

To get in on the action, simply visit the "Join" section of <http://frontporchforum.com>

II. PROVIDE BUSINESS TRAINING AND CONSULTATION SERVICES

Through e-Vermont, the VT Small Business Development Center offers businesses one-on-one counseling and advising to help identify individual broadband-related business needs and develop plans to meet those needs. The focused e-Vermont advising builds from the strong business assistance programs already in place at VtSBDC. The e-Vermont Business Advisor can assist businesses with website development and redesign, establishment of e-commerce online storefronts, social media marketing strategies, professional networking and other needs based on each individual business's situation. This one-on-one assistance is in addition to two training, workshops, and/or collective projects developed through e-Vermont. Castleton business owners have expressed interest in promoting the nearby Lake Bomoseen tourist area, as well as taking part in the 'Getting Your Business Online' workshop. A need for business website development is also apparent.

To learn more, visit <http://vtrural.org/programs/e-vermont/partners/VtSBDC>

III. UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN MUNICIPAL WEBSITE

Castleton is eager to update its town website to offer increased transparency and e-government services.

For more information, visit: <http://evermont.wordpress.com>

IV. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF 21ST CENTURY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Castleton Elementary strives to prepare their students with the skills necessary to be successful in the Internet-connected economy. As a participant in the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project, Castleton Elementary is working with Digital Wish to provide all 41 students in the 4th grade with the kind of technology-rich education that will help them excel in the global economy.

e-Vermont is bringing Digital Wish's one-computer-per-child program to Castleton Elementary. Their services include the donation of 41 netbooks to ensure that every child in the participating classes have access to their own computer, technical support for these computers, intensive teacher training, curriculum development, and innovative community connections using the most up-to-date technology. This classroom modernization project is expected to have long lasting impacts for all classes in the school, and will extend into the community with peer mentorship programs and community projects.

To learn about Digital Wish and their work, visit <http://vtrural.org/programs/e-vermont/partners/digital-wish>

V. BOLSTER LIBRARY'S EFFORTS TO INCREASE PUBLIC ACCESS

Public libraries are charged with meeting the informational needs of their communities and serving as a front line in addressing the "digital divide," or the disparity in technological access that various segments of the population experience. The Castleton Free Library certainly fills this bill – all of its public computers are frequently in use. Through e-Vermont, the library aims to obtain additional equipment, such as a fleet of laptops, for use in and out of the Library. These can be utilized for a variety of purposes ranging from students completing homework assignments to seniors learning to navigate the web and use this technology. In addition, the

library hopes to upgrade its website to add more interactivity, improve library services, and connect patrons to the wealth of online library resources. Finally, the Library will take advantage of Vermont State Colleges' training for volunteers who are willing to provide technical assistance to residents who need it.

To learn more, visit <http://vtrural.org/programs/e-vermont/partners/vtdol>

VI. PROMOTE DIGITAL LITERACY FOR ALL CASTLETON RESIDENTS

The Vermont State Colleges (VSC) provide basic skills training for using the Internet. Castleton can host three workshops led by VSC staff; the menu of workshops is available from the Partners page at e4vt.org. Castleton steering committee members will help with logistics and outreach to be sure that residents who aren't currently online know about this opportunity. In addition, VSC staff are available to train community members who work with computer beginners to ensure that there is ongoing assistance for learning these new skills after workshops have ended. As part of the overall e-Vermont project, VSC is presenting webinars and teaching materials that cover critical topic areas in Internet use. The steering committee will help get word out about these opportunities.

Learn more at <http://vtrural.org/programs/e-vermont/partners/vsc>

VII. BUILD AND PROMOTE A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Geography and the economy have both contributed to an unraveling of some traditional threads that bound the Castleton community together. More families have both parents working, there is less volunteerism and engagement in school or other community activities, and the advent of Australian ballots has diminished attendance at Town Meeting and other municipal events.

On the upside, the senior center, library, and schools all offer vibrant programming. But the success of this programming is limited as the community is often splintered into separate groups with poor communication between the sectors. Broadband can play an important role in

improving communication across sectors, and thus help restore and rework the threads of Castleton's community fabric.

While Front Porch Forum is one step toward improved communication, another is a comprehensive community calendar which would feature all events in one central place. Essential components of this calendar are: 1) that it is simple to populate through the event planner's choice of either a web form or a Front Porch Forum post, and 2) that it would be available as a widget for other local websites wishing to display the calendar on their sites.

To learn more, contact e-Vermont Community Director Seán Sheehan at sean@vtrural.org or 802-225-6156

VIII. IMPROVE DOWNTOWN MARKETING TO LAKE TOURISTS AND LAKE MARKETING TO TOWN RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Communication and marketing is a big challenge for Castleton's businesses, non-profits, and service providers. The challenge stems from having a geographically divided town, catering to full-time residents as well as tourists and part-timers, and consisting largely of entities that have yet to develop a web presence. Of the 70 businesses listed on the current town website, only about 20 have links to their own website. The Castleton steering committee seeks to upgrade this directory, making it easier for businesses and non-profits to have an improved web presence, whether it be through stand-alone websites, a Wi-Fi portal (see below as well as <http://poultneywifi.com> as an example), a presence on sites such as Facebook or Etsy, or possibly a more descriptive section of the directory itself. Tools such as Google Places will also be considered, and any effort should take advantage of Search Engine Optimization techniques to help tourists seamlessly flow from lake resources to town resources and vice versa.

To learn more, contact e-Vermont Community Director Seán Sheehan at sean@vtrural.org or 802-225-6156

IX. BRING WI-FI ZONE OR HOT SPOTS TO TOWN AND LAKE

In addition to using the Castleton Public Library's public computers and Wi-Fi signal to help close the digital divide, Castleton hopes to extend a free wireless broadband service to a larger zone. Using Wireless Woodstock and first round e-Vermont towns as models, the town hopes

to empower residents and visitors alike to obtain wireless access. Another benefit of this project would be the creation of a “portal page,” which all users would initially see, which could serve to brand Castleton and promote its businesses, social services, civic groups, and municipal resources.

A key challenge stems from the spread-out nature of Castleton. The team working on this project will have to determine the best location of an initial pilot zone – being sure to identify and encompass key locations such as the Farmers’ Market – or could potentially decide to pursue mini-zones in both the downtown and lake districts. A coordinated and branded series of hot spots will be considered as an alternative.

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X. PROMOTE OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

Castleton sees an opportunity to position itself as a green town, to promote its environmental and outdoor attractions in a coordinated way, and to reach out to visitors with likeminded interests. Castleton’s Amtrak station, Bomoseen State Park, the D+H Rail Trail, and the Stone Valley Byway should be among the featured offerings.

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