# ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE BROADBAND ADOPTION

**General Information**

| 1. Federal Agency and Organizational Element to Which Report is Submitted | 2. Award Identification Number | 3. DUNS Number |
|---|---|---|
| Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration | 50-43-B10511 | 137761792 |

**4. Recipient Organization**

Vermont Council on Rural Development 43 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602

| 5. Current Reporting Period End Date (MM/DD/YYYY) | 6. Is this the last Annual Report of the Award Period? |
|---|---|
| 12-31-2011 | ◯ Yes ◉ No |

**7. Certification: I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that this report is correct and complete for performance of activities for the purposes set forth in the award documents.**

| 7a. Typed or Printed Name and Title of Certifying Official | 7c. Telephone (area code, number and extension) |
|---|---|
| Paul Costello | 802-223-5763 |
| Executive Director | 7d. Email Address: pcostello@vtrural.org |
| 7b. Signature of Certifying Official | 7e. Date Report Submitted (MM/DD/YYYY): |
| Submitted Electronically | 01-30-2012 |

## PROJECT INDICATORS

**1. Does your Sustainable Broadband Adoption (SBA) project foster a particular broadband technology or technologies? If so, please describe this technology (or technologies) (600 words or less).**

No.

**2a. Please list all of the broadband equipment and/or supplies you have purchased during the most recent calendar year using BTOP grant funds or other (matching) funds, including any customer premises equipment or end-user devices. If additional space is needed, please attach a list of equipment and/or supplies. Please also describe how the equipment and supplies have been deployed (100 words or less).**

| Manufacturer | Item | Unit Cost per Item | Number of Units | Narrative description of how the equipment and supplies were deployed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| na | na | 0 | 0 | na |
| **Totals** | | 0 | 0 | |

Add Equipment | Remove Equipment

**2b. To the extent you distribute equipment/supplies to beneficiaries of your project, please describe the equipment/supplies you distribute, the quantities distributed, and the specific populations to whom the equipment/supplies are distributed (600 words or less).**

Recipients of supplies in 2011 were libraries in our participating communities and students in 4th - 6th grade classrooms at schools in our participating communities. In 2011, 798 netbooks with software and printers were distributed to students as part of the Digital Wish 1:1 Computing Initiative. Libraries identified their needs and received supplies to increase their ability to offer public Internet access including 51 computers, 2 printers, 3 scanners, 1 camera, 4 routers, 7 ipads, a mobile charging station, and software.

**3. For SBA access and training provided with BTOP grant funds, please provide the information below. Unless otherwise indicated in the instructions, figures should be reported cumulatively from award inception to the end of the most recent calendar year. For each type of training (other than open access), please count only the participants who completed the course.**

| Types of Access or Training | Number of People Targeted | Number of People Participating | Total Training Hours Offered |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Open Lab Access** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Multimedia** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Office Skills** | 544 | 460 | 1,180 |
| **ESL** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **GED** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **College Preparatory Training** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Basic Internet and Computer Use** | 561 | 528 | 2,244 |
| **Certified Training Programs** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Other (please specify):** School Trainings | 1,275 | 1,275 | 22,363 |
| **Total** | 2,380 | 2,263 | 25,787 |

**4. Please describe key economic and social successes of your project during the past year, and why you believe the project is successful thus far (600 words or less).**

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) manages implementation of independently designed projects selected by each e-Vermont town. As part of this assistance for implementing local initiatives, towns have launched public access Internet zones, improved capacity of local public access television stations to create content for the web, supplied community facilities where computer & Internet trainings can be offered, digitized and posted local historic documents, and built support structures to help local residents access state benefits online. At the end of 2011, a set of 23 community stories was posted online at e4vt.org.

The Vermont Small Business Development Center works directly with small, rural business owners to improve their use of online tools - often starting from no online presence at all. VtSBDC reported 91 direct service clients at the close of 2011. Not only are the businesses gaining valuable advice, but we are also identifying core competencies needed for businesses state wide. These lessons learned appear in a Business Toolkit at www.e4vt.org.

Front Porch Forum is emerging as a key online platform for neighborhood communications and, through these communications, stronger community. e-Vermont towns have had both steady increases in subscription to their forums (28% of households on average) and also seen "tipping point" moments when an area of particular local concern brings many citizens to the conversation. For example, school issues brought Calais subscriptions to 74% and Bristol 57%, a drive to re-energize town meeting helped bring Middlesex to 88%, and neighbors' interest in helping each other after major flooding brought Moretown to 50%. In every case, the existence of a FPF moderator to manage timing of the information flow and maintain civility has encouraged participation. A new online calendar tool launched at the end of 2011 adds a new dimension to the community connections.

Digital Wish focuses on today's elementary school students as the work force of tomorrow. They ensure a 21st century education through in-classroom promotion of not only technology access (with 1,290 computers distributed - a computer for every student) but also intensive teacher training (1,490 educator trainings offered to date with 2,242 Digital Wish staff hours *in* the school classroom). In the last year, Digital Wish has built off of lessons learned in the first academic year funded by e-Vermont to add more school-community connections, particularly through their business mentors program.

The Snelling Center for Government promotes government transparency through helping municipalities post public information, notices, emergency communications, and other updates online. Over the last year, the Snelling Center has launched a website template for use by municipalities and is developing a system to make this framework accessible to more local governments.

Increasingly, public libraries are the face of digital literacy in rural communities. e-Vermont started with a focus on funding equipment to increase libraries' ability to offer public Internet access. In 2011 the focus shifted to include libraries' role as places for learning digital literacy. In partnership with the Vermont State Colleges, public libraries in e-Vermont started the Internet Interns program through which trained college students offer regular Internet help hours at libraries. Libraries have also partnered with the Vermont State Colleges and VCRD to develop the Teaching Internet Basics program to train community members and professionals in how to provide Internet instruction.

The partnership between e-Vermont, Vermont State Colleges and the Vermont Department of library has been a key component of a new initiative within Vermont state government to integrate digital literacy and broadband adoption into strategic planning across agencies. At the close of 2011, an interagency committee on digital literacy was scheduled to begin in January 2012.

Expanded information, reports, toolkits, and stories from e-Vermont are all available online at www.e4vt.org.

**5. Please estimate the level of broadband adoption in the community(ies) and/or area(s) your project serves, explain your methodology for estimating the level of broadband adoption, and explain changes in the broadband adoption level, if any, since the project began.**

| 5a. Adoption Level (%): | Narrative description of level, methodology, and change from the level at project inception (600 words or less). |
|---|---|
| 42 | Because e-Vermont is a community based approach, we track subscription changes across the community, not by individuals participating in the project. The Vermont Department of Public Service collects subscriber information for e-Vermont towns and reports the percentage of household with broadband access who subscribe at the end of the quarter. Average take rates across all e-Vermont towns in the last year rose from 35.8% to 42.4% |

**6. Please describe the two most common barriers to broadband adoption that you have experienced this year in connection with your project. What steps did you take to address them (600 words or less)?**

Basic digital literacy has been a one barrier targeted in 2011. Based on experience in the first year of e-Vermont, we determined that Vermont needed a program that could assist Vermonters with digital literacy needs, 1. at the time they had a pressing reason to go online, 2. in a 1:1 instructional setting, and 3. with a goal of getting participants quickly to a point where they can self-teach using existing online tutorials and information sites.

Furthermore, we observed that an increasing number of adult learners with low digital literacy will be seeking assistance as more essential services go online - for example, job applications, Vermont's unemployment benefits, GED test (in 2014), and applications for social services such as food assistance.

In a partnership between the Vermont Council on Rural Development, Vermont State Colleges, Vermont Department of Libraries and Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, e-Vermont has developed a training program on Teaching Internet Basics that prepares state employees, librarians, volunteers in community programs, and others to deliver basic digital literacy concepts during a relatively brief interaction. Supporting materials for ongoing learning include printed FAQs booklets for using the Internet and a vetted list of top online sites for basic digital literacy tutorials.

The second major barrier to adoption continues to be lack of broadband infrastructure - both because people without this infrastructure cannot subscribe and because it hinders the statewide conversation as Vermonters want to talk about adoption *after* infrastructure has been resolved. However, we saw significant progress in reshaping this conversation over the last year. e-Vermont now meets weekly with Connect VT, the office overseeing infrastructure development in the state, to integrate an adoption message into their outreach. e-Vermont has had success placing adoption stories in news outlets and the project director delivers regular commentaries

on Vermont Public Radio. Local projects now better integrate an access component with education and training. This integration is made possible through the new equipment we bring to libraries as well as more involved projects, such as wireless Internet zones in rural downtowns. As Vermont remains on track to have universal broadband access in 2013, we anticipate this barrier will be greatly diminished.

An additional impact of the slower progress for broadband reaching rural areas has been that the culture of using online tools has not developed in the way it has in other regions. Even if the problem of digital literacy is solved, that is not the same as knowing the potential of digital tools to benefit businesses, non-profits, libraries, schools or local government. If rural residents are not deriving full value from high speed Internet, they may not value this service enough to subscribe. For this reason, the majority of e-Vermont services are built around helping rural residents realize the power of online resources, apply them to local goals, and build a culture of usage that leads to sustainable broadband adoption and improves the business case for Internet providers to deliver services in rural locations.

**7. To the extent that you have made any subcontracts or sub grants, please provide the number of subcontracts or sub grants that have been made to socially and economically disadvantaged small business (SDB) concerns as defined by section 8(a) of the Small Business Act, 15 U.S.C. 647, as modified by NTIA's adoption of an alternative small business size standard for use in BTOP. Please also provide the names of these SDB entities. (150 words or less)**

N/A

**8. Please describe any best practices / lessons learned that can be shared with other similar BTOP projects (900 words or less).**

e-Vermont is currently building an online center for best practices, tools, and lessons learned - which we also share on digitalliteracy.gov. Information currently available includes:

Internet Basics - for beginners, instructors, and beginner-friendly web design

How to create public Internet access in rural towns

Best online practices for town governments

Sample projects and curriculum for integrating technology into the 4th - 6th grad classroom

Basic online tools for business

Webinars and short videos that translate our basic Internet skills & tools classes into publicly available resources

All resources can be found at www.e4vt.org