

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE BROADBAND ADOPTION

General Information

1. Federal Agency and Organizational Element to Which Report is Submitted Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration	2. Award Identification Number 50-43-B10511	3. DUNS Number 137761792
4. Recipient Organization Vermont Council on Rural Development 43 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602		
5. Current Reporting Period End Date (MM/DD/YYYY) 12-31-2010	6. Is this the last Annual Report of the Award Period? <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No </p>	
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 Paul Costello Executive Director	7c. Telephone (area code, number and extension) (802) 223-5763	
	7d. Email Address pcostello@vtrural.org	
7b. Signature of Certifying Official Submitted Electronically	7e. Date Report Submitted (MM/DD/YYYY): 02-25-2011	

PROJECT INDICATORS																																																
<p>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</p>																																																
<p>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).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Manufacturer</th> <th>Item</th> <th>Unit Cost per Item</th> <th>Number of Units</th> <th>Narrative description of how the equipment and supplies were deployed</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>na</td> <td>na</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>na</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Totals</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> Add Equipment Remove Equipment </div>					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																														
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<p>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).</p> <p>Recipients of supplies in 2010 were students in 4th - 6th grade classrooms at schools in our participating communities. Students received primarily netbooks as part of the Digital Wish 1:1 Computing Initiative.</p>																																																
<p>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 <u>cumulatively</u> 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 <u>completed</u> the course.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Types of Access or Training</th> <th>Number of People Targeted</th> <th>Number of People Participating</th> <th>Total Training Hours Offered</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Open Lab Access</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Multimedia</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Skills</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ESL</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GED</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>College Preparatory Training</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Basic Internet and Computer Use</td> <td>200</td> <td>179</td> <td>513</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Certified Training Programs</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (please specify): Educator Trainings</td> <td>764</td> <td>764</td> <td>964</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>964</td> <td>943</td> <td>1,477</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					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	0	0	0	ESL	0	0	0	GED	0	0	0	College Preparatory Training	0	0	0	Basic Internet and Computer Use	200	179	513	Certified Training Programs	0	0	0	Other (please specify): Educator Trainings	764	764	964	Total	964	943	1,477
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<p>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).</p> <p>The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project engaged 12 communities (and accepted another 12) in comprehensive services designed to address the digital divide that remains even after broadband becomes available in rural areas. Our program is the only one in Vermont that provides in-depth services on a range of topics from civic engagement to early education. The sub-recipients within the project are all developing new models to continue in the state. Key accomplishments include:</p> <p>Small Business Development Center - has designed a menu of 6 business workshops, consulted individually with 32 businesses, and offered 11 trainings around the state.</p> <p>Vermont State Colleges - have engaged instructors throughout their system in designing hands-on workshops in basic computer skills, which will be offered throughout 2011 with a total of 75 expected by the end of the e-Vermont project.</p>																																																

Digital Wish - has placed trainers and equipment in elementary school classrooms in all 12 participating e-Vermont towns to institute 1:1 computer based learning for students there.

Snelling Center for Government - has designed best practices guidance for town websites and will begin individual consulting with towns in 2011, has also offered one regional workshop on intermediate computer skills with two more workshops and a statewide conference planned for 2011.

Front Porch Forum - has built platforms for community members to have an online conversation in 12 communities, with participation expected to reach the majority of households in each town by the end of the e-Vermont project.

Regional library consultants - have built plans with public libraries in participating communities to expand their ability to offer public broadband access, and equipment will be purchased in early 2011.

Community Directors - are not only coordinating all activities in each town, but also developing and implementing additional projects, which include creating downtown wi-fi zones, building centralized community calendars, helping communities through Vermont's transition to offering social services enrollment online, and setting up easily managed websites for providing key community information that is not part of municipal sites.

The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project directly increases the value of high speed Internet for rural residents, and through increasing its value creates compelling reasons for households to subscribe and remain subscribed. In the first 8 months of the e-Vermont project, partners have launched projects and programs in 12 different locations, brought on an additional 12, and planned for drawing statewide lessons from our work. We continue to identify the true needs of rural residents for whom the Internet may have played a minor role in their lives to date, but who can derive significant utility from broadband once they receive training in how to reach personal, educational, and community goals through online tools and resources. We anticipate that the lessons learned and models built will have a lasting impact on Vermont's strategies for bringing all citizens into the digital age.

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	Vermont's Department of Public Service works with all broadband providers to gather subscription rates for households with broadband available to them in participating e-Vermont communities and reports aggregate data, with average adoption level, to e-Vermont quarterly

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)?

One barrier to adoption as a result of e-Vermont work is the uneven broadband coverage in participating communities. Although we make clear that we are *not* delivering infrastructure, residents without current broadband access are still eager to receive assistance in making better use of online resources. e-Vermont partners with the VT Department of Public Service and Vermont Telecommunications Authority - two groups that *do* bring infrastructure - and we can refer inquiries to these organizations. We also expand accessibility at locations within the town that do have broadband, for example through our collaboration with public libraries, assistance with public wi-fi zones, and making school wi-fi or computer labs available for families (particularly in connection with Digital Wish). e-Vermont partners who provide individual advising, such as the Small Business Development Center, can help participants plan around current lack of home access and plan for what they will do when broadband becomes available. In this way, we are building not only the current but also the future base of rural broadband subscribers.

A second barrier is cultural; Vermonters pride themselves on small, close knit communities that rely on person-to-person interactions. Some Vermonters worry that incorporating more virtual interactions will weaken this traditional culture - a perspective that becomes challenging in a project like e-Vermont that relies on a whole-community approach to establishing a strong digital culture. Cultural concerns can prevent Internet usage in general and household (as opposed to work) subscriptions in particular. The e-Vermont project emphasizes ways that online tools can *enhance* personal interactions within a community. Front Porch Forum, for example, hosts online conversations between neighbors with the goal of getting people talking in real life after they have established points of connection online - even if that connection is something as simple as returning a lost cat. The Snelling Center for Government works with towns to improve civic engagement through getting more information online, and again this connection spills over into greater offline participation, such as volunteering on town committees, attending public input sessions, or participating in the annual town and village meetings. Projects such as building a better system to let local residents know about events, guides to local businesses, or student-community connections through Digital Wish classroom assignments, are all clearly directed towards strengthening the traditional close community culture in Vermont. The more that citizens have a way to use online tools to connect with their neighbors and community, the more they have a reason to subscribe to broadband for their household.

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).

The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project uses a community-based approach to sustainable broadband adoption. We combine offering defined services from our partner organizations with holding public forums in which towns identify particular needs and e-Vermont staff organize resources to meet these needs. We find that this approach of both modeling best practices and responding to local direction has a lasting, positive impact on a community's digital culture. Some relevant observations from a community-based approach to increasing utilization of broadband:

Communities have pockets of households without broadband access who are in real danger of being left behind - these include home-based businesses, households with students in classes that use online educational tools, low income households accessing government benefits online, and seniors facing isolation. Members of these access-less households still need to keep abreast with broadband activities so that they know, and can use, broadband resources when they become available. e-Vermont is working on creative solutions that expand public access to high speed Internet and keep those households tied into digital tools so that they are ready to subscribe when they have the opportunity.

Community needs can be very basic. For example, one commonly desired tool is a shared, universal community calendar for listing events that can be embedded in a range of websites and is one place for the public to enter information. This is a simple tool that e-Vermont will develop, and it will be an important addition to the Internet's value for rural residents.

We have not closed the basic computer / online skills divide between younger generations who have grown up using the Internet and those who have not. These skills are the first step to seeing the utility of, and subscribing to, broadband. e-Vermont continues to work with our partner the Vermont State Colleges to find the best answer to this challenge.

Some of our projects are "tipping point" projects. Front Porch Forum (FPF) is a good example - this online neighborhood conversation begins slowly, with a handful of early adopters. After a long period of slow growth, FPF finds that the conversation online reaches a point of activity where residents rapidly see a reason to subscribe, jumping from participation below 10% to levels that can exceed 80% of a community's households.

It is important to tie online tools and interactions to "real world" interactions. Residents who have not been using available broadband want to know how it will enhance, not displace, their current offline activities.

It is important to develop outreach strategies that rely on traditional media, individual invitations, working through groups that provide direct services, word of mouth and basic flyers, posters, and handouts. While e-Vermont educates participants in using the Internet and social media for communications, we need to use *alternate* strategies to reach the participants. We continue to work on this interplay of traditional and new outreach strategies.

In year two of our project, the e-Vermont partners will begin to think more strategically about when community-level lessons learned imply for state- and regional-level strategies for improving broadband usage.