Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Vermont Council on Rural Development

Project Title: e-Vermont: The Vermont Community Broadband Project

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

_____Executive Summary_____

e-Vermont: the Vermont Community Broadband Project, will stimulate the use of on-line services in rural Vermont communities through families, schools, libraries, businesses, civic networks and local government. Led by an unprecedented Vermont team of experts in rural community development, education, and business development, e-Vermont will build wholesale campaigns in 24 Vermont communities over two years to help them avail new services, build communications, social capital and community involvement, create jobs, improve business efficiencies and bottom line, build new Internet-related businesses, modernize the curriculum by embedding technology in schools, directly bring computers into homes, radically advance the development of digital culture, and dramatically increase local adoption rates for broadband services in underserved and previously un-served areas of Vermont.

e-Vermont will provide community organizing facilitation, technical assistance, education, hardware and funding to 24 selected rural communities that have low broadband service take rates or have just gained high-speed broadband access. e-Vermont will stimulate broadband usage in a variety of ways determined by local leadership rather than deliver program services through a simple top-down formula. Each community will form its own e-Vermont Community Task Force to build its own plan. Local actions of e-Vermont will include:

• Building enhanced state-of-the-art town websites and digitally advancing municipal services

• Providing direct business consultation services to expand web-based marketing and commerce

• Building social networking to promote connected neighborhoods

• Assisting local providers of services to vulnerable populations to implement to new digital tools and opportunities to improve services

• Providing new computer based services to connect seniors with their families

• Encouraging and supporting the incubation of new Internet-related businesses

• Involving youth in leadership to build community connections

• Providing teacher training, curriculum and equipment to spur Internet usage

• Training local residents, including elders and vulnerable populations, in popular applications from Facebook to email, Twitter to Google apps

• Providing new computer workstations and new digital services to town libraries

• Building local community and neighborhood on-line social networks

• Delivering new netbook computer packages free to 4th and 5th grade children and their families

• Providing consultation and training to improve digital communications, networking and appropriate on-line tools between working civic committees, clubs, churches, social service and planning groups and low income populations

• Expanding the use of web-based tools to facilitate community engagement and advance locally-designed initiatives

• Building community calendars, business directories, buy-local maps, arts and crafts tours, sports schedules, and a variety of new locally-driven digital applications

• Expanding on-line computer health information and opportunities

By reaching the foundations of Vermont communities—schools, businesses, municipal government, libraries, health and social services groups—the e-Vermont Project will drive the benefits of the digital age to parts of the state that have fallen terribly behind, economically and in digital culture.

Led and managed by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), e-Vermont will coordinate its efforts through an advisory committee made up of all the partners in the effort (listed below). Vermont's Department of Public Service (DPS) will inform the project with its adoption research, survey findings, and maps. VCRD will manage the project and provide on-the-ground leadership in communications, building the local community teams and in implementing the community and business services. Vermont Small Business Development Center (VT SBDC) business counseling will supplement and deepen technical training to businesses. Vermont State Colleges will provide instructional classes and workshops to meet community needs. Working with the State Department of Libraries the project will boost the number of computer workstations and on-line, web-based services in local public libraries. The Snelling Center will serve as lead partner in sharing a menu of applications and best practices across governmental, economic, non-profit, and other sectors. Front Porch Forum will lead the implementation of social networking systems that enhance social capital throughout the served towns. Digital Wish will lead in school-based digital literacy training, administration and teacher training, curricular development and implementation, and oversee the distribution of Dell netbook packages to 4th and 5th grade children and their families. Together, these resources will support local leadership, local business growth and prosperity, and help communities avail all the opportunities and benefits of networking and e-

commerce. It will also celebrate success and build a new atmosphere of hope and progress, a tremendous excitement around community exploration of what to these rural communities is a new medium, and build models of progress that will inspire other Vermont communities, and new Internet users, throughout the state.

e-Vermont will directly impact 24 communities at a total expense of $3,799.812 including a match of $1,274.137 (33.53 percent). e-Vermont seeks a total of $2,525,675 in ARRA funding through the Sustainable Broadband Adoption Program. Over 50,000 people will be directly served; over 2 years 9,600 new home and business broadband subscribers (60% of households) within these communities will purchase broadband services for the first time, and over 100 jobs will be created. The strategic statewide expansion of best practices and publicity about community success will multiply these impacts beyond the targeted towns.