



## Vermont Council on Rural Development

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## **e-Vermont Selects 2011 Communities**

MONTPELIER, VT – The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project will bring digital tools and in-depth internet training to 12 additional rural communities in 2011. The twelve, announced today, will benefit from the expertise and resources of e-Vermont’s statewide partners as the local groups develop ways to take full advantage of the Internet for creating jobs and innovative schools, providing social services, and increasing community connection. These towns join the first 12 pilot e-communities, selected in spring 2010.

The 2011 e-Vermont communities will be Bridgewater, Calais, Castleton, Dover, Fairfield, Hardwick, Jay/Westfield, Middletown Springs, Moretown, Morristown, Richford, and Vergennes.

“As we work with rural communities to support the best use of high speed Internet tools in business, government, community and education, we are bringing Vermont one step closer to truly eliminating the digital divide,” says Project Director Helen Labun Jordan, “Rural regions can’t be left behind in digital skills– we may be receiving high speed Internet later than more urban areas, but we’re going to make up for lost time through programs like e-Vermont.”

e-Vermont is one of the few national broadband adoption initiatives focused on rural needs and it is being viewed as a national model. These towns are among the first to explore how the Internet can be harnessed as a tool for community development.

Although the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project can only bring in-depth services to 24 communities, it will be offering tools and resources to all of Vermont through workshops, conferences, webinars, online tools, and the continuing programs of its partner organizations. e-Vermont updates are posted at [www.e4vt.org](http://www.e4vt.org). Contact e-Vermont with any questions at 802-225-6091 or [helen@vtrural.org](mailto:helen@vtrural.org). (MORE)

e-Vermont is not stringing cable or fiber, but is working to make better use of broadband where it is available. The 2010 communities are already seeing benefits.

- In Middlesex, almost 60% of the households are using a new community e-newsletter called Front Porch Forum to buy and trade household items, learn about local special events and volunteer needs, share wildlife sightings, and support area businesses.
- Five towns (Bristol, Ludlow, Poultney, Newport and West Rutland) are exploring the feasibility of creating public access Wi-Fi zones in their town centers in order to promote their communities and provide visitors with information about local events, services, entertainment and hospitality.
- Small business owners in West Rutland are getting one-on-one analysis and advice on how to update and grow their e-commerce from the Vermont Small Business Development Center.
- Sunderland - Arlington - Sandgate are adding technology as part of their celebration of their 250th Town Charter Anniversaries in 2011. High school community service students will create a website based on the historical holdings of Martha Canfield Library's Russell Vermontiana Collection.
- In Canaan churches, sports teams, and community groups are implementing an online calendar which will allow for greater event coordination, promotion, and cross-pollination.
- Bristol's 5<sup>th</sup> graders are learning to create podcasts and other interactive projects as the teachers integrate technology into their classroom. Digital Wish brought new computers for these students along with the training to unlock their potential.
- Libraries in all the e-Vermont towns are trying new ways to offer the public better access and training, as computers become essential to obtain social services, find jobs, and keep up with research.

e-Vermont's partners include Digital Wish, Front Porch Forum, Vermont State Colleges, Vermont Department of Libraries, Vermont Small Business Development Center and the Snelling Center for Government. The Vermont Council on Rural Development is overseeing e-Vermont, and will bring its expertise in community organizing to help each town connect its schools, government, businesses, and nonprofit providers in new and exciting ways. (MORE)

The 2010 e-communities announced last spring are Brighton, Bristol, Canaan, Cambridge, Grand Isle County, Ludlow, Middlesex, Newport, Poultney, Pownal, Sunderland-Arlington-Sandgate, and West Rutland.