



Board Packet Executive Summary

June 12, 2023

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Introduction to and Framework of Confidential Legal Issues

In Executive Session, Toni Clithero, the VCBB General Counsel, with the support of other staff will provide the Board with an overview of several potential legal and/or contractual issues.

2024 Budget

A team of four has been working for a year on developing a budget reporting system for the VCBB. That team includes Tracy Collier, Patti Larose, Carol Flint of the Public Service Department and me. Using [Power Bi](#) visualization software, we were able to put together the funding streams and provide an output that works for the state budget process as well as the VCBB. The 2024 budget runs from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. The budget was sent to the Board for review on May 18. The budget proposal in the packet is the same that was sent to the Board.

BEAD/Digital Equity Presentation – Overview and Timeline

Vernonburg will present to the Board information about the initial proposal, timeline and plan to meet the schedule established by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration timeline for the BEAD and Digital Equity Funding

Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting
Monday, June 12, 2023, 12:00pm – 4:00pm
AGENDA

Meeting is being held virtually.

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Note: there may be executive sessions as needed

- 12:00 1) Meeting Call to Order, Roll Call, Approval of Agenda
- 12:05 2) Approval of May 8 Meeting Minutes
- 12:15 3) Introduction to and Framework of Confidential Legal Issues – *Toni Clithero* – Executive Session - *Confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services. 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(F)*
- 12:45 4) Budget Presentation – *Christine Hallquist*
- 2:15 5) BEAD/Digital Equity: Vernonburg Project Presentation, Overview, and Timeline – *Christine Hallquist*
- 3:15 6) Staff Updates
- General VCBB Updates – *Rob Fish*
 - Dashboard Review – *Alissa Matthews*
 - Communications & Media – *Herryn Herzog*
- 3:30 8) VCUDA Updates – *Rob Vietzke*
- 3:45 9) Public Comment
- 3:55 10) Parking Lot – *Christine Hallquist*
- 4:00 11) Confirm Next Regular Meeting 7/10 & Motion to Adjourn

Press inquiries: please contact Herryn Herzog, herryn.herzog@vermont.gov (802) 522-3396.

Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting
Monday, May 8th, 2023, 12:00pm – 4:00pm
Minutes

1. Meeting Call to Order, Roll Call, & Approval of Agenda

Patty Richards called the meeting to order at 12:04 and completed roll call.

- Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
- Laura Sibia (Absent)
- Brian Otley (Remote)
- Holly Groschner (Remote)
- Dan Nelson (Remote)
- Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)
- Robert Fish – Staff (Remote)
- Toni Clithero – Staff (Remote)
- Alissa Matthews – Staff (Absent)
- Lucy Rogers – Staff (Absent)
- Kristin Brynga – Staff (Remote)
- Heryn Herzog – Staff (Remote)

Patty Richards made a motion to approve the agenda as posted. Dan Nelson seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

2) Approval of March 13 and April 10 Meeting Minutes

Patty Richards made a motion to approve both the March and April minutes, Holly Groschner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Dan Nelson abstained because he was absent for one of the meetings.

3) Introduction to and Framework of Confidential Legal Issues – Toni Clithero – Executive Session - *Confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services. 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(F)*

Toni Clithero greeted the Board and explained what she will do in executive session: explain her role as attorney to the Board and what the confines are, and make sure they're all on the same page in terms of the use of executive session.

Holly Groschner commented that what Toni Clithero is going to tell them should be on the record, not in executive session, unless the advice refers to a specific instance.

Patty Richards seconded Holly Groschner's comment and added that she wants to be as transparent as possible. She would prefer to stay in public session if they can.

Toni Clithero said she feels as their attorney she needs to speak to them in executive session but is not trying to prevent transparency. She is trying to bolster the attorney/client communications.

Holly Groschner moved they adjourn to executive session. Patty Richards seconded and moved into executive session at 12:12. They came out of executive session at 12:34. Patty Richards reported no action was taken in executive session.

4) Discussion: Investigative Report from Auditor's Office – *Patty Richards*

Patty Richards introduced the Board Response to the Auditor's Report. She read the intro to the report (included in the Board Packet). Patty Richards said this is a good time to take a pause and a breath. She said they haven't had the time to develop policies and procedures. They have already covered a lot of it verbally, but this is an opportunity to develop the policies. Her goal is to tee them up in a process. Then staff can help come up with policies and bring them to the Board. Patty Richards would like to talk about at least three of the items per meeting and identify what policies need to be made. Staff, specifically Toni Clithero, will come up with policies, and then Board members can hash it out. And they will also collaborate with the CUDs.

Patty Richards read Laura Sibilias email she sent the Board: "Re Auditor's report on funding gaps: I am concerned that we are not actively and visibly working on financing measures. There are myriad ways we could do that. If there is not a working group with VCUDA exploring different financing approaches, I'd like to see us establish one ASAP with VCUDA."

Holly Groschner thanked Patty Richards for her memo. She made the point that they didn't hurry to hurry in any of the actions they've taken, but that it was necessary to get real objectives met in real time. They did not choose speed over prudence.

Christine Hallquist said they met with VCUDA before the meeting. Staff and VCUDA positions recognize we are in a different place than we were a year and a half ago. We look forward to stepping back and looking at our policies.

The goal of today is to identify policies and procedures, not write them all.

Risk 1: possible funding gap. Staff's response is listed including Middle Mile and other funding sources. It is followed in the memo by the Board response, which is staff should determine which CUDs face gaps and measure how much is needed and establish gap funds using grants noted by staff.

Holly Groschner said that makes sense but if we're qualifying the gap, what kind of gap is it, materials, personnel? Not all the grants are good for all of the different kinds of

gaps. Are the gaps sometimes intended to be funded by taking the cost out of one grant and putting it into another? We need to know what kind of gaps we have and validate they can be funded by specific kinds of grants. Holly Groschner says she's not convinced all the grants are sources we can use but leaves that to staff.

Brian Otley said they knew there were funding gaps. Part of the CUDs' job is to come up with strategies. Do we have an inventory of strategies from the CUDs?

Christine Hallquist said she'd like to hear from Rob Vietzke. She also said there are risks we face with BEAD funding. We can't pay back federal funds with BEAD funding. Also BEAD rules haven't been clarified yet.

There is a tension between universal service and building strong financial plans.

Rob Vietzke says that's right. Each CUD has a different scenario. We're trying to make sure construction continues at pace. We need to have a confidential discussion with each one. They can explain where they are with grant funds, where they have gaps, and make sure they stay on pace delivering to unserved homes.

Holly Groschner said conversations leading up to grant funding are confidential. Knowing what funding is out there is a service VCBB should be providing. There are policies that are interlocking. She would like to know that the business is viable before we invest further funds. There are other means of accountability, affordability for example. It shouldn't be financial only.

Patty Richards added to the Board's response that they will review business plans in terms of how it relates to the gap and affordability.

Holly Groschner says it's prudent for the VCBB to come back with requirements for accountability that will extend to future funding.

Dan Nelson suggested a policy on general construction metrics and project management metrics to stay informed and keep the public informed, such as cost per mile, take rates, policy around base metrics. Not sure if it goes here or with risk #8.

CUDs must demonstrate accountability with respect to use of past funds. Driver of that is the Auditor's report. Check that before they get more money.

Patty Richards wants to get words on paper today, then hear from VCUDA how they feel about it and make sure they're on the same page.

Patty Richards said she does not want an update from staff on what they are already doing. Patty Richards said this is future looking.

Risk #2: CUDs may struggle to access needed construction materials.

Patty Richards said she asked what can VCBB do, can we develop a joint purchase policy?

Rob Vietzke commented this is great. He'd like to start with a procurement strategy rather than policy because there are materials we need to be concerned about, but that will change over time. Fiber and materials availability will decrease as BEAD money is coming out.

Christine Hallquist added we should include logistics, how do we store and deliver materials.

Holly Groschner said the policy should address if it's drawing from unallocated funds or where it's coming from.

Risk #3: lack of workers

Board response: Leverage skills and staffing available in Vermont (assess what resources currently exist in this space, talk to leaders with these resources to determine if sharing of workers is possible, time construction with electric work to streamline and minimize expense)

- Policy Implications (identify policies needed as a result of this risk)
 - Develop Workforce Development Policy and coordinate with current plans pertaining to this topic.

Holly Groschner said ten risks are a lot, and Christine Hallquist has led the way on this issue. She thinks they should outsource this problem to the Dept. of Labor and VT Colleges system. Maybe we should continue to monitor the availability of workers.

Dan Nelson said they should focus on high-risk areas, the market will address this one.

Risk 4: Tensions between VCBB staff supporting CUDs and ensuring they are viable risks allowing any weaknesses in CUD business plans to persist and deepen.

Holly Groschner said this risk is real. Two things are useful: one is to develop a standard for business plan review or business plans generally. We've created an environment where the CUDs are all unique. But fiber is pretty standard and there should be a publicized version of what business requirements are. (standard business plan) She thinks they should be reviewing take rates and measuring them against grants spent.

We haven't talked about retail rates. That's inherent in the business plan and central to an affordability plan.

Rob Vietzke says this is overstated in the Auditor's report. The confidential conversations are collaborative. We are all aligned. There is great collaboration trying to meet the mission.

Holly Groschner said they are trying to set some objective standards they can point to to say they've addressed issues. It would be bad if CUDs couldn't come to VCBB and get advice for problems. We want to have some objective standard to make sure we're doing our job.

Rob Vietzke said the tension is about the hard work, not between the parties. Christine Hallquist said they've had a lot of meetings with CUDs about their finances, and the CUDs have been very open about all the numbers.

Patty Richards said Christine Hallquist reminded them that we have a business scoring matrix.

Risk 5: Reliance Upon CUDs with Varying Levels of Expertise and Capacity May Delay Broadband Service to Some Vermonters, Lead to Increased Spending, and Establish Inequitable Policies and Access

Reminder: Staff and Board responses are listed in the Memo that is included in the Board Packet.

Holly Groschner mentioned some of these items are addressed in other risks. There is very little other than applying for the ACP that is an objective requirement. There is a program of how to address the public and be inclusive in outreach to make opportunities available to low-income households. CUDs can be more proactive from the start.

Patty Richards suggested we need to be more prescriptive of what affordability means.

Holly Groschner and Laura Sibilgia are going to do a memo on affordability and accountability. There is not a one size fits all price for service. What is affordable needs to be addressed.

Patty Groschner said the Board should define affordability and have the CUDs respond to that and figure out how they work around affordability and carry out the definition.

Christine Hallquist asked if she wants staff to come up with a proposal or if the Board will? Holly Groschner said staff will have a lot to say about it, but they need some toehold bigger than what we have now.

Holly Groschner is concerned about the quote that \$50 million in grant intake equals a \$10/month saving for consumers. Patty Richards says she interprets that statement as a rule of thumb. Christine Hallquist said it's a general statement. She can defend the math.

Holly Groschner says it sounds like a statement of fact and we should say the more grant money we have, the lower the cost to consumers.

Dan Nelson said we should include in the policy that sometimes a public/private partnership will get people served faster. He doesn't see wireless as a long term solution, but maybe for the interim until broadband is built.

Rob Vietzke said the CUDs have done a lot of work to consider this. There have been investments in the past that have failed when they have gone completely private. How do we make sure we can deliver for the next 20 years and beyond?

Risk 6: CUDs have not been partnering for procurement of goods and services, risking higher costs.

Patty Richards said she doesn't agree with everything in the report on this. Some things can be shared but not everything.

Rob Vietzke said there is a ton of communication and collaboration between the CUDs and VCBB. He's impressed with all the work put into it. There is positive behavior and practice that could be turned into strategy. But sometimes it is better to do it on a one-off basis.

Christine Hallquist said there is also a shared services part of this with the NBRC grant: shared services in the financial space and junior program coordinator. There are lots of opportunities, and we can formalize a lot of the behaviors that are already happening.

Holly Groschner had a question for Rob Vietzke: What role can the operator organizations that are in the business play? Rob Vietzke said, yes, the CUDs in construction have several different models. Those organizations play a role in procurement and efficiencies. So it might not make sense to have one policy because they work in different ways.

Christine Hallquist said last year lead times were longer; now they are shorter. We need to consider what will happen when \$42 billion hits the economy. The policy should say when VCBB believes it's appropriate to get a waiver from the Buy American policy.

Risk 7: Confidentiality provision

Patty Richards asked Toni Clithero to give us a policy on this.

Risk 8: lack of affordability. Laura Sibilila and Holly Groschner will tackle this with staff. Christine Hallquist said we'll include CUDs as well. Patty Richards said all of this should be vetted by CUDs too.

Risk 9: conflict of interest issue. Patty Richards says we should establish a policy. Staff's response to this was appropriate.

Risk 10: letter of credit requirement is not designed for new entities. Staff has a good response. Holly Groschner said this is a fact of life problem. The federal standards are

skewed for large operators. She wonders if the federal delegation could do something about this. Christine Hallquist said we've been meeting with the federal delegation on this. An informed Board position would be good on this. Patty Richards will make a Board statement around this issue.

Rob Vietzke complimented Rob Fish and Christine Hallquist on what they've been doing. He called it very creative work across state government and said it would be worth executive session to talk about it.

Patty Richards said an additional policy that we should come up with is a customer service standard policy. Holly Groschner asked if that would be part of the accountability piece? Patty Richards said, yes, it could be.

Patty Richards would like to prioritize the list and put Toni Clithero in charge of collaborating and drafting it.

Took a break at 1:53. Back at 1:58.

5) BEAD/Digital Equity: Vernonburg Introduction, Overview, and Timeline – *Christine Hallquist*

Christine Hallquist reviewed the RFP, review, and selection process and introduced Paul Garnett with Vernonburg.

Paul Garnett said they are honored to be doing the work. They were in Montpelier last week to kick off the project with the VCBB staff.

Introduction: They are a consulting group that works on the digital divide. Paul Garnett discussed his background of 30 years of experience. They work half in the US and half in emerging markets. Their work falls into two categories: broadband policy and small network operators. They also work with new tech companies.

Introduced his team and mentioned a couple people from their team are from Vermont. Breese McIlvaine introduced herself as the project manager. Alex Jeffrey introduced himself as stakeholder engagement manager. Caroline Hauser introduced herself as another person who will focus on stakeholder engagement.

Paul Garnett explained there are a few subcontractors to help with PR, accessibility, and mapping/data.

Breese McIlvaine explained the timeline. BEAD 5-year action plan is due the end of August. Initial proposal for BEAD. Volume one – challenge process, rest of initial proposal – end of September. Then 20% of funding becomes available after those are approved. Digital equity plan will be submitted in December. We welcome input throughout this process.

Holly Groschner asked if they will educate the Board on what their definitions of equity and diversity are? Will they explain what stakeholder engagement means? What will be your process to get documents and plans in front of the Board for review prior to deployment?

Paul Garnett said this is an iterative process that involved leadership from the VCBB. There are eight covered populations that we're required to account for and get feedback from in digital equity planning. We can add in our own local groups if we think we should. We love to be data driven. A lot of times these adoption challenges are down to the individual, so we'll go as local as we can.

Alex Jeffrey talked about how stakeholder engagement is going to look. It will drive the production of a lot of the plans. We discussed how to most effectively engage during our kickoff meeting. We'll balance between respecting people's time with getting the information that will drive the plan to be successful. Our approach includes different engagement. Heavy touch events- VCBB events, which are in-person events across the state. We'll try to focus those on areas with underserved people. That will include a short presentation and then listening to people's comments. Light-touch events – events already taking place in the community, we'll collect comments at those. We will coordinate with outreach that is ongoing, for example NEKCA's ACP outreach. We'll set up an email address to collect responses. We'll also have active social media to reach people and monitor them to collect responses.

Paul Garnett added there will be a public comment period. We will also have some virtual events for people who are immunocompromised.

Plans will be brought to the Board as drafts before they go out for public comment.

Holly Groschner commented that she is grateful they are focused on really engaging with Vermonters.

Patty Richards said transparency and collaboration are really important with VCUDA and that CUDs should review them too. Paul Garnett said they had already met with Ellie de Villiers.

Alex Jeffrey encouraged members of the Board to attend public meetings if possible.

6) Budget – *Christine Hallquist*

Christine Hallquist said her goal is to introduce Board members to the budget process they will be using, not to get approval now. We have been working on this for a year and many people helped in the process. Christine Hallquist said they are confident with the numbers even though there is some uncertainty with how much federal money we will get.

Christine Hallquist suggested a special meeting to review the budget.

There will be a quarterly update. She asked for feedback on the format. Holly Groschner said it's a huge improvement. Patty Richards said it's fine as long as they can dig into any specifics.

Christine Hallquist said she did not include personnel costs in the Board Packet but will include them in the minutes:

VCBB Personnel Budget								
	Annual Cost	SFY 23	SFY 24	SFY 25	SFY 26	SFY 27	SFY 28	
Staff Position	SFY 23 Rates	Ends June 2023	Ends June 2024	Ends June 2025	Ends June 2026	Ends June 2027	Ends June 2028	Funding Stream
Executive Director – Salary	\$125,881.60	\$125,881.60	\$129,658.05	\$133,547.79	\$137,554.22	\$141,680.85	\$145,931.28	100% USF
Executive Director – Fringe	\$45,011.46	\$45,011.46	\$74,877.52	\$77,123.85	\$79,437.56	\$81,820.69	\$84,275.31	100% USF
Deputy Director – Salary	\$102,258.00	\$102,258.00	\$105,325.74	\$108,485.51	\$111,740.08	\$115,092.28	\$118,545.05	75% USF and 25% BEAD
Deputy Director – Fringe	\$37,020.10	\$37,020.10	\$60,825.61	\$62,650.38	\$64,529.89	\$66,465.79	\$68,459.77	75% USF and 25% BEAD
General Counsel – Salary	\$108,596.00	\$81,447.00	\$111,853.88	\$115,209.50	\$118,665.78	\$122,225.75	\$125,892.53	10% BEAD 90% USF
General Counsel – Fringe	\$62,714.19	\$47,035.64	\$64,595.62	\$66,533.48	\$68,529.49	\$70,585.37	\$72,702.93	10% BEAD 90% USF
Rural Broadband Technical Specialist - Salary	\$68,992.60	\$68,992.60	\$71,062.38	\$73,194.25	\$75,390.08	\$77,651.78	\$79,981.33	50% BEAD 50% USF
Rural Broadband Technical Specialist - Fringe	\$39,843.80	\$39,843.80	\$41,038.52	\$42,269.68	\$43,537.77	\$44,843.90	\$46,189.22	50% BEAD 50% USF
Special Projects Manager – Salary	\$73,320.00	\$73,320.00	\$75,519.60	\$77,785.19	\$80,118.74	\$82,522.31	\$84,997.98	50% USF 50% BEAD
Special Projects Manager – Fringe	\$42,342.30	\$42,342.30	\$43,612.57	\$44,920.95	\$46,268.57	\$47,656.63	\$49,086.33	50% USF 50% BEAD
Admin Services Manager III – Salary	\$73,320.00	\$24,440.00	\$73,320.00	\$75,519.60	\$77,785.19	\$80,118.74	\$82,522.31	100% ARPA AOA
Admin Services Manager III – Fringe	\$42,342.30	\$14,114.10	\$42,342.30	\$43,612.57	\$44,920.95	\$46,268.57	\$47,656.63	100% ARPA AOA
Regulatory Compliance – Salary	\$84,589.40	\$21,147.35	\$84,589.40	\$87,127.08	\$89,740.89	\$92,433.12	\$95,206.11	50% BEAD 50% USF
Regulatory Compliance – Fringe	\$48,850.38	\$12,212.59	\$48,850.38	\$50,315.89	\$51,825.37	\$53,380.13	\$54,981.53	50% BEAD 50% USF
Broadband Project Developer -Salary	\$78,213.20	\$39,106.60	\$80,559.60	\$82,976.38	\$85,465.68	\$88,029.65	\$90,670.54	100% NBRC GRF
Broadband Project Developer -Fringe	\$27,294.28	\$13,647.14	\$46,523.17	\$47,918.86	\$49,356.43	\$50,837.12	\$52,362.23	100% NBRC GRF
Public Outreach Manager - Salary	\$84,589.40	\$14,098.23	\$84,589.40	\$87,127.08	\$89,740.89	\$92,433.12	\$95,206.11	100% NBRC GBVT
Public Outreach Manager - Fringe	\$48,850.38	\$8,141.73	\$48,850.38	\$50,315.89	\$51,825.37	\$53,380.13	\$54,981.53	100% NBRC GBVT
Public Outreach Manager (Temp/PSD) -Salary	\$41,792.96	\$41,792.96	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	50% USF 50% BEAD
Public Outreach Manager (Temp/PSD) -Fringe	\$3,185.26	\$3,185.26	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	50% USF 50% BEAD
Grants and Contracts Admin - Salary	\$72,176.00	\$54,132.00	\$74,341.28	\$76,571.52	\$78,868.66	\$81,234.72	\$83,671.77	50% USF 50% BEAD
Grants and Contracts Admin - Fringe	\$24,744.46	\$18,558.35	\$42,932.09	\$44,220.05	\$45,546.65	\$46,913.05	\$48,320.44	50% USF 50% BEAD
Digital Equity Officer-Salary	\$75,160.00	\$8,351.21	\$75,160.80					100 % Digital Equity
Digital Equity Officer-Fringe	\$43,405.00	\$4,822.82	\$43,405.36					100 % Digital Equity
Total Personnel	\$1,454,493.06	\$940,902.84	\$1,523,833.64	\$1,447,425.50	\$1,490,848.27	\$1,535,573.71	\$1,581,640.93	
Total Salary	\$988,889.16	\$654,967.55	\$965,980.12					
Total Fringe	\$465,603.91	\$285,935.29	\$557,853.52					

The biggest drivers are contractual and personnel. Contractual – where the contract is, the budgeted amount, the funding stream so you can see where the money is coming from.

Holly Groschner asked if the total budgeted amount is the total amount or just the amount for this year? Kristin Brynga said the budgeted amount is the total for the contract. Vernonburg contract is split between two sources.

Christine Hallquist said the FCC challenge process is a critical part. The FCC map is missing many addresses in VT. If they're not on the FCC map, we can't fund them.

Holly Groschner asked why are we paying NEKCA more to do outreach when they just got a \$500,000 grant to do that? Christine Hallquist said she will get an answer to that question.

Christine Hallquist said Stone Environmental has done a good job, they maintain our maps, CTC Engineering do the review of the CUD engineering plans.

There is the NBRC funding stream and funding stream from USF, and with proposed legislation going through it will be higher.

Personnel section is projected over five years, but we will have the Board vote on the annual budget. Christine Hallquist reviewed all personnel positions, who is currently in them, and which we're hiring for.

Christine Hallquist will bring the Board quarterly budget reports. Patty Richards said that's a good place to start.

7) Staff Updates

- General VCBB Updates – *Rob Fish* – We are currently hiring for three positions, hopefully we'll have candidates for the next Board meeting. We're working through the FCC challenge process. Most providers are open to compromise, some not. We have won 5316 challenges so far. Each is worth \$3500-\$5000 depending on how much the rest of the country gets. Working with the CUDs as more are in the process of getting ready for construction grants. Engaging with legislature, contractors, and CUDs. Making progress and making it happen.
- Communications & Media – *Herryn Herzog*-All recent media articles are linked on our website in the VCBB In the News section. Julie Raboin from the PSD is working with us on social media and has set up a VCBB Facebook page.

8) VCUDA Updates – Rob Vietzke

Rob Vietzke shared slides to talk about accountability, which are posted with Board materials for the May 8, 2023, meeting. Rob Vietzke thanked Patty Richards for the opportunity to collaborate. CUD leaders have discussed the complexity of accountability. They are mostly aligned that what we all care about is protecting the interests of Vermonters. Rob Vietzke wants to be discreet about problem statements and solve them one by one. He proposed having a series of workshops to work on this.

Holly Groschner thanked him for the slides and said there is work to be done on understanding what the public interest is.

Rob Vietzke gave an update on the make ready issue and said they are having trouble with one of the companies. CUDs are being asked to pay to replace some very old poles. They are talking with the utility to hopefully work with them on that.

9) Public Comment – Rob Vietzke commented that Christa Shute is going to send an email weighing in on accountability to the Board and the public.

There were no other public comments.

10) Parking Lot – Christine Hallquist

A number of issues will be included in the next Board meeting after the minutes and recording are reviewed.

Patty Richards changed her item from report to the next step – policies to form.

11) Confirm Next Regular Meeting 6/12 & Motion to Adjourn

Patty Richards moved to adjourn, seconded by Dan Nelson, unanimous approval.
Adjourned at 3:18.

Press inquiries: please contact Heryn Herzog, heryn.herzog@vermont.gov (802) 522-3396.

VCBB 2024 Proposed Budget

June 2023

[View in Power BI](#) ↗

Downloaded at:
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VCBB Budget Planning

State Fiscal Year 2024



The state fiscal year (SFY) is
July 1 – June 30.



The budget is
planned in two parts: Operating
Capital

Budgets by State Fiscal Year

Operating

Category	FY23	FY24	Total
Board Costs	28,000.00	28,000.00	56,000.00
Contractual	380,698.60	1,896,258.84	2,276,957.44
Equipment & Software	10,000.00	10,000.00	20,000.00
Internal Service Fees	92,063.63	162,035.36	254,098.99
Misc Costs	5,000.00	5,000.00	10,000.00
Non-Capital Grants	171,976.32	2,531,039.40	2,703,015.72
Other Personnel Costs	5,286.60	5,286.60	10,573.20
Personnel	996,246.66	1,463,466.63	2,459,713.29
Supplies	2,000.00	2,000.00	4,000.00
Travel & Training	20,262.03	42,500.85	62,762.88
Total	1,711,533.84	6,145,587.68	7,857,121.52

Contractual and Non-Capital grants are itemized in the next slide. They had to be separated on the overview slide as that is how they came out of the state reporting system. The total matches the total on the next slide.

Capital (Grants)

Category	FY23	FY24	Total
Capital Grants	112,900,000.00	129,100,000.00	242,000,000.00
ARPA Capital		90,500,000.00	90,500,000.00
ARPA SFR (Act 74)	112,500,000.00	37,500,000.00	150,000,000.00
One-time General Fund	400,000.00	1,100,000.00	1,500,000.00
Total	112,900,000.00	129,100,000.00	242,000,000.00

Contractual and Non-Capital Grants

Contract Type	Funding Stream	Total Budgeted	SFY 23 (end June 2023)	SFY 24 (end of June 2024)
BEAD - Vernonburg 1	BEAD	\$ 703,088.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 603,088.00
Asset Mapping - Data Collection 2	BEAD	\$ 125,000.00	\$ -	\$ 125,000.00
Asset Mapping - Mapping Support 2	BEAD	\$ 192,697.44	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 152,697.44
Technical Workshops 3	BEAD	\$ 90,000.00		\$ 90,000.00
Capacity Grants 4	BEAD	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,000,000.00
Digital Equity - Vernonburg 1	Digital Equity	\$ 192,632.00	\$ 57,789.60	\$ 134,842.40
DE Grant - Community Outreach 5	Digital Equity	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 135,000.00
Stone (GIS) (ADS) 6	NBRC-GBVT	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 150,000.00
CTC -Engineering 7	NBRC-GBVT	\$ 120,000.00	\$ -	\$ 120,000.00
VCUDA - Capacity 8	NBRC-GBVT	\$ 853,834.22	\$ 121,976.32	\$ 731,857.90
As Built Inspections 9	NBRC-GBVT	\$ 60,000.00	\$ -	\$ 60,000.00
Make Ready Support 10	NBRC-GBVT	\$ 24,000.00		\$ 24,000.00
VCBB (TBD) 11	NBRC-GBVT	\$ 205,181.50	\$ -	\$ 205,181.50
Ice Miller - Financial 12	NBRC-GRF	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 17,909.00	\$ 82,091.00
Grant Writer (TBD) 13	NBRC-GRF	\$ 75,000.00	\$ -	\$ 75,000.00
CUD Broadband Finance Program 14	NBRC-GRF	\$ 300,000.00	\$ -	\$ 300,000.00
Stone (GIS) (ADS) 6	USF	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
CTC -Engineering 7	USF	\$ 407,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 257,000.00
Rural Innovations Strategies, Inc. 15	USF	\$ 66,540.00	\$ -	\$ 66,540.00
Rural Innovations Strategies, Inc. 16	USF	\$ 15,000.00	\$ -	\$ 15,000.00
Grant Management System 17	USF	\$ 75,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Total:		\$ 5,104,973.16	\$ 552,674.92	\$ 4,427,298.24

We are going to add another \$100k for Workforce Development with money from the USF that is not shown in this report – need to add this to the state budgeting system (Power Bi). Will load this after Board approval. This will be contractual and used for recruiting and marketing

Contractual and Non-Capital Costs - Explanation

- 1) Producing the BEAD 5 year plan, initial proposal, and the Digital Equity Plan. Funded from the BEAD and Digital Equity Planning Grants.
- 2) Asset mapping and support for the FCC Challenge process.
- 3) Technical workshops will be provided to those entities interested in applying for BEAD competitive grants.
- 4) Capacity grants will be provided to CUDs to enable a comprehensive update to the business plans and planning for future funding opportunities.
- 5) As part of the Digital Equity planning grant, this budget item will provide Community Action organizations funding for “boots on the ground” input to the BEAD and Equity planning grant.
- 6) Stone (GIS) has been and will continue providing the GIS Dashboard and GIS connections to the grantees. This is being funded through NBRC and USF, which is why it is two separate line items.
- 7) CTC Engineering continues to provide 3rd party review of the technical design and business plan. This is being funded through NBRC and USF, which is why it is two separate line items.
- 8) VCUDA capacity grants are being used for shared services such as logistics, purchasing, finance and engineering
- 9) As built inspections are field verification that the construction complies with engineering and testing requirements.
- 10) Make-ready support is to address the issues related to electric utilities overbilling for make-ready work and related construction delays. The CUDs are experiencing make-ready costs that are two to three times the estimates and utilities are charging for poles that are long past their useful life.
- 11) VCBB (TBD) is contingency
- 12) Funding to provide expert advice and convening relating to BEAD requirement (Letter of Credit and Match) and financing at a lower cost the portions of the network not funded via VCBB federal grant funding. Ice Miller is assisting with developing the financial stack.
- 13) Funding set aside to contract for grant writing support for the CUDs and the VCBB.
- 14) Additional funding from NBRC to supplement the Broadband Financing Program funded with general fund dollars. This is set aside to provide matching funds for alternative CUD grants, such as the NEK successful USDA grant that the VCBB helped with a match.
- 15) PreConstruction contract to identify a solution or solutions for Chittenden County towns that, at the time, were not currently members of a Communication Union District
- 16) Policy review support. This contract funded an analysis of the requirements, obligations, guidance documents of the Broadband Equity Access Deployment Program (BEAD), the Digital Equity Act, and the enacting legislation, the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
- 17) Grant Management System to be deployed this summer to assist the VCBB in streamlining the application process and reporting requirements.

VCBB Personnel Budget

	SFY 23	SFY 24
Staff Position	Ends June 2023	Ends June 2024
Executive Director – Salary	\$125,881.60	\$129,658.05
Executive Director – Fringe	\$45,011.46	\$44,968.00
Deputy Director – Salary	\$102,258.00	\$95,680.00
Deputy Director – Fringe	\$37,020.10	\$34,231.00
General Counsel – Salary	\$81,447.00	\$111,853.88
General Counsel – Fringe	\$47,035.64	\$64,595.62
Rural Broadband Technical Specialist - Salary	\$68,992.60	\$71,062.38
Rural Broadband Technical Specialist - Fringe	\$39,843.80	\$37,352.00
Special Projects Manager – Salary	\$73,320.00	\$75,519.60
Special Projects Manager – Fringe	\$42,342.30	\$39,409.00
Admin Services Manager III – Salary	\$24,440.00	\$68,994.00
Admin Services Manager III – Fringe	\$14,114.10	\$44,475.00
Regulatory Compliance – Salary	\$21,147.35	\$84,589.40
Regulatory Compliance – Fringe	\$12,212.59	\$39,409.00
Broadband Project Developer -Salary	\$34,497.00	\$68,994.00
Broadband Project Developer -Fringe	\$22,237.50	\$44,475.00
Public Outreach Manager - Salary	\$14,098.23	\$84,589.40
Public Outreach Manager - Fringe	\$8,141.73	\$48,850.38
Public Outreach Manager (Temp/PSD) -Salary	\$41,792.96	\$25,298.91
Public Outreach Manager (Temp/PSD) -Fringe	\$3,185.26	\$13,622.49
PSD-Grants and Contracts Admin - Salary	\$54,132.00	\$74,341.28
PSD-Grants and Contracts Admin - Fringe	\$18,558.35	\$42,932.09
Digital Equity Officer-Salary	\$8,351.21	\$75,160.80
Digital Equity Officer-Fringe	\$4,822.82	\$43,405.36
Total Personnel	\$944,883.60	\$1,463,466.63
Total Salary	\$650,357.95	\$965,741.69
Total Fringe	\$294,525.65	\$497,724.93

Lucy

Alissa

Kristin

Admin. Services is a replacement for the position vacated when Tracy Collier left

In the hiring process. Position was previously approved by the Board.

This is to move Herry'n's current position from a temporary position to a full-time position.

This is funding a position at the PSD based on an agreement. The PSD is doing much more work than the cost of this position. We agreed it would be easiest to fund this position rather than require reporting every interaction and request. We will use a portion of this position as well for federal compliance.

In the hiring process. Position was previously approved by the Board.

Vermont Internet for All Plans: Project Work Plan and Timeline

May 15, 2023

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the project plan for the development of Vermont's Internet for All Plans: the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Plan and Digital Equity Plan. This document was prepared by the Vernonburg Group for the Vermont Community Broadband Board.

Project Background

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), passed into law in 2021, includes a significant investment of \$65 billion to help close the digital divide and ensure that all Americans have equitable access to reliable, high speed, and affordable broadband. This investment builds upon the funding for broadband deployment provided in the American Rescue Plan Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Federal Communications Commission's Universal Service programs, and US Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service broadband programs. This will lay critical groundwork for widespread access and affordability of broadband, creating new jobs and economic opportunities, providing increased access to healthcare services, enriching educational experiences of students, and improving overall quality of life for all Americans.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) administers grant programs that further the deployment and use of broadband and other technologies in America, laying the groundwork for sustainable economic growth; improved education, public safety, and health care; and the advancement of other national priorities. Two such programs are the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program and the Digital Equity Act programs.

Vermont has received BEAD Initial Planning Funds for creating a Five-Year Action Plan and submitting to NTIA an Initial and Final Proposal to the NTIA for funding under the BEAD program. Additionally, Vermont has received the State Digital Equity Planning Grant for creating the State Digital Equity Plan, which will also be submitted to the NTIA for further funding.

The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) is the state authority charged with expanding broadband service to unserved and underserved parts of the state. The VCBB is a public instrumentality, with a separate board, designated by statute or appointed by the Governor. VCBB is tasked with implementing the BEAD and Digital Equity grant programs. Although these are two separate planning grants, VCBB is following guidance from the NTIA in viewing them as one cohesive and integrated planning process.

Vermont has already performed substantial planning including via the 10-Year Telecommunications Plan, the creation of the Broadband Construction Grant Program developed and administered by the VCBB, the digital equity outreach efforts already underway by the VCBB, including the convening of a Digital Equity Core Team, and the completed planning processes undertaken by the state's ten Communications Union Districts.

The purpose of this project is to develop the BEAD and Digital Equity Plans and grant administration proposals in alignment with broader work of the State of Vermont on telecommunications and with the principles of Vermont's Act 71 of 2021, which outlined Vermont's path forward toward universal service. Vernonburg Group has been selected to assist the VCBB in the development and implementation of Vermont's Internet for All Plans. Working at the direction of the VCBB, Vernonburg Group will provide strategic program development services, research and data analysis, community outreach and engagement, and writing services to facilitate the development of Vermont's 5-Year BEAD and State Digital Equity Plans and Vermont's Initial Proposal for funding under the BEAD Program that meet the requirements set-forth by the NTIA.

Previous Planning Work by Vermont

This project will build on work the State of Vermont has already started, laying a foundation for broadband and digital equity planning:

- Developed a 10 Year Telecommunications plan for the state in 2021.
- Passed Act 71 in the State Legislature in 2021, which established the VCBB, broadband speed targets of 100/100 Mbps, and the significance of Communications Union Districts (CUDs).
- Worked with Stone Environmental to develop a dashboard of broadband funding as well as a dashboard of broadband availability and gaps.
- Assisted CUDs to develop broadband business plans and construction proposals and issued funding under State American Rescue Plan Act funds.
- Organized and submitted challenges to FCC broadband data on unserved and underserved locations.
- Analyzed NTIA requirements and guidelines and submitted questions for clarification.
- Initiated stakeholder mapping and established a Digital Equity Core Planning Team consisting of stakeholders from statewide agencies focused on Covered Populations.
- Identified conflicts between Act 71 and Infrastructure Act requirements.

Summary of Project Timeline and Approach

This project plan describes the steps Vernonburg Group and VCBB teams will take to complete the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, BEAD Initial Proposal, and the Digital Equity Act Plan for Vermont within the statutory deadlines set by NTIA.

The target dates for completed deliverables submitted to NTIA include:

- August 28, 2023: BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1

- September 29, 2023: BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2
- December 15, 2023 (pending approval of request for extension): Digital Equity Act Plan

In developing these plans, we will apply the following principles to our approach:

- Regular input and feedback sought from the Digital Equity Core Planning Team, existing internet service providers, and municipal communications districts across the State.
- In-depth stakeholder engagement process to engage the public, especially Underrepresented Communities¹ Covered Populations¹ and people in areas with limited broadband availability and adoption.
- Work with—and design a program that enhances—existing vision, planning, infrastructure, and other assets of the State of Vermont to ensure community-driven solutions for broadband access and digital equity.
- Leverage templates provided by NTIA to help facilitate NTIA approval of the plans.
- Conduct a thorough and inclusive review process of draft plans consisting of VCBB review, VCBB Board review, and a two-phased public comment period for each deliverable (requests for input on the BEAD and Digital Equity Plans for 30 days followed by a public comment period on the draft plans for 14 days). Final versions will be copy-edited and proofread and submitted to VCBB.
 - BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal
 - Request for input: May 25 – June 15, 2023
 - Draft available for public comment:
 - July 10 – 28, 2023: Draft Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume1
 - August 21 – September 4, 2023: Draft BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2
 - Digital Equity Plan
 - Request for input: July 19 – August 18, 2023
 - Draft available for public comment: October 17 – 31, 2023
 -
- Adopt an integrative process during the development of these plans as stakeholder input and/or new data is received and analyzed.
- Vernonburg Group will provide final versions of the plans to VCBB three business days before the deadline for Vermont to submit the plans to NTIA.

¹ According to the BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity, “The term “underrepresented communities” refers to groups that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, including: low-income households, aging individuals, incarcerated individuals, veterans, persons of color, Indigenous and Native American persons, members of ethnic and religious minorities, women, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities, persons with limited English proficiency, persons who live in rural areas, and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.” Page 16.

Table 1. Summary of Project Milestones

Phase	Activity	Start Date	End Date
Initial Planning	Hold kick-off meeting with VCBB	1-May-23	2-May-23
	Hold kick-off meeting with Vermont Digital Equity Core Planning team	3-May-23	3-May-23
	Submit final detailed project plan to VCBB	15-May-23	15-May-23
	Submit Stakeholder Engagement Plan to VCBB	20-May-23	20-May-23
	Submit Program and Policy Review Plan to VCBB	19-May-23	19-May-23
	Submit Program and Policy Review Report to VCBB	5 June 2023	5 June 2023
	Submit Stakeholder Engagement Report to VCBB	23-Jun-23	23-Jun-23
	Submit Broadband Funding Inventory to VCBB	5 June 2023	5 June 2023
BEAD	BEAD RFI open for public comment	25-May-23	16-Jun-23
	Workshop with VCBB to finalize approach to BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal	1-Jun-23	1-Jun-23
	Present BEAD update to VCBB Board	12-Jun-23	12-Jun-23
	Present draft BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to VCBB Board	10-Jul-23	10-Jul-23
	Submit draft BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to VCBB	13-Jul-23	13-Jul-23
	Public comment period / Conduct external stakeholder engagement for feedback on draft	14-Jul-23	28-Jul-23
	Submit BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to VCBB	22-Aug-23	24-Aug-23
	Submit BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to NTIA	25-Aug-23	28-Aug-23
	Confirm NTIA approval of BEAD Five-Year Action Plan	27-Sep-23	27-Sep-23
	Submit draft initial Proposal Volume 2 to VCBB	25-Jul-23	25-Jul-23

	Present Initial Proposal Volume 2 to VCBB Board for feedback	7-Aug-23	7-Aug-23
	Public comment period / Conduct external stakeholder engagement for feedback on draft Initial Proposal Volume 2	21-Aug-23	4-Sep-23
	Submit Initial Proposal Volume 2 to VCBB	26-Sep-23	29-Sep-23
	Submit Initial Proposal Volume 2 to NTIA	29-Sep-23	29-Sep-23
	Confirm approval from NTIA for Initial Proposal	29-Oct-23	29-Oct-23
Digital Equity Plan	Digital Equity Plan RFI open for public comment	19-Jul-23	18-Aug-23
	Submit draft Digital Equity Plan to VCBB	26-Sep-23	27-Sep-23
	Present draft to VCBB Board for feedback	9-Oct-23	9-Oct-23
	Public comment period / Conduct external stakeholder engagement for feedback on draft Digital Equity Plan	17-Oct-23	31-Oct-23
	Submit Digital Equity Plan to VCBB	8-Dec-23	8-Dec-23
	Submit Digital Equity Plan to NTIA	15-Dec-23	31-Jan-24
	Confirm NTIA approval of Digital Equity Plan	1-Feb-24	30-Mar-24

Ongoing Support

Once Vermont has submitted its BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, Initial Proposal, and Digital Equity Plan, Vernonburg Group will continue to provide support to the VCBB in engaging with NTIA on feedback to the plans, engaging stakeholders to keep them informed, and planning for the BEAD Final Proposal and implementation of the grant programs.

Vermont Internet for All Plans: Project Work Plan and Timeline

May 15, 2023

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Executive Summary

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA or Infrastructure Act), passed into law in 2021, includes a significant investment of \$65 billion to help close the digital divide and ensure that all Americans have access to reliable, high speed, and affordable broadband. This historic investment will lay critical groundwork for widespread availability and adoption of broadband, creating new jobs and economic opportunities, providing increased access to healthcare services, enriching educational experiences of students, and improving overall quality of life for all Americans.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is administering two grant programs for states: the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program and the Digital Equity Act program. The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) has been tasked with developing Vermont’s strategy for broadband and digital equity, and the State’s plan for administering the funding it receives from NTIA. VCBB has contracted Vernonburg Group to assist in this endeavor.

This project plan describes the steps Vernonburg Group and VCBB teams will take to complete the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, BEAD Initial Proposal, and the Digital Equity Act Plan for Vermont within the deadlines set by NTIA. The target dates for completed deliverables submitted to NTIA include:

- *August 28, 2023*: BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1
- *September 29, 2023*: BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2
- *December 15, 2023* (pending approval of request for extension): Digital Equity Plan

In developing these plans, we will apply the following principles to our approach:

- Regular input and feedback sought from the Digital Equity Core Planning Team, existing internet service providers, and municipal communications districts across the State.
- In-depth stakeholder engagement process to engage the public, especially Underrepresented Communities¹ Covered Populations¹ and people in areas with limited broadband availability and adoption.
- Work with—and design a program that enhances—existing vision, planning, infrastructure, and other assets of the State of Vermont to ensure community-driven solutions for broadband access and digital equity.
- Leverage templates provided by NTIA to help facilitate NTIA approval of the plans.
- Conduct a thorough and inclusive review process of draft plans consisting of VCBB review, VCBB Board review, and a two-phased public comment period for each deliverable (requests for input on the BEAD and Digital Equity Plans for 30 days followed by a public comment

¹ According to the BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity, “The term “underrepresented communities” refers to groups that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, including: low-income households, aging individuals, incarcerated individuals, veterans, persons of color, Indigenous and Native American persons, members of ethnic and religious minorities, women, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities, persons with limited English proficiency, persons who live in rural areas, and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.” Page 16.

period on the draft plans for 14 days). Final versions will be copy-edited and proofread and submitted to VCBB.

- Adopt an integrative process during the development of these plans as stakeholder input and/or new data is received and analyzed
- Vernonburg Group will provide final versions of the plans to VCBB three business days before the deadline for Vermont to submit the plans to NTIA.

Upon conclusion of this project, Vermont will have produced a vision and measurable objectives for broadband access and digital equity for all residents, and specific implementation plans to maximize the use of available funding to realize that vision.

Project Background

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), passed into law in 2021, includes a significant investment of \$65 billion to help close the digital divide and ensure that all Americans have equitable access to reliable, high speed, and affordable broadband. This investment builds upon the funding for broadband deployment provided in the American Rescue Plan Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Federal Communications Commission's Universal Service programs, and US Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service broadband programs. This will lay critical groundwork for widespread access and affordability of broadband, creating new jobs and economic opportunities, providing increased access to healthcare services, enriching educational experiences of students, and improving overall quality of life for all Americans.

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Vermont has received BEAD Initial Planning Funds for creating a Five-Year Action Plan and submitting to NTIA an Initial and Final Proposal to the NTIA for funding under the BEAD program. Additionally, Vermont has received the State Digital Equity Planning Grant for creating the State Digital Equity Plan, which will also be submitted to the NTIA for further funding.

The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) is the state authority charged with expanding broadband service to unserved and underserved parts of the state. The VCBB is a public instrumentality, with a separate board, designated by statute or appointed by the Governor. VCBB is tasked with implementing the BEAD and Digital Equity grant programs. Although these are two separate planning grants, VCBB is following guidance from the NTIA in viewing them as one cohesive and integrated planning process.

Vermont has already performed substantial planning including via the 10-Year Telecommunications Plan, the creation of the Broadband Construction Grant Program developed and administered by the VCBB, the digital equity outreach efforts already underway by the VCBB, including the convening of a Digital Equity Core Team, and the completed planning processes undertaken by the state's ten Communications Union Districts.

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This project will build on work the State of Vermont has already started, laying a foundation for broadband and digital equity planning:

- Developed a 10 Year Telecommunications plan for the state in 2021.
- Passed Act 71 in the State Legislature in 2021, which established the VCBB, broadband speed targets of 100/100 Mbps, and the significance of Communications Union Districts (CUDs).
- Worked with Stone Environmental to develop a dashboard of broadband funding as well as a dashboard of broadband availability and gaps.
- Assisted CUDs to develop broadband business plans and construction proposals and issued funding under State American Rescue Plan Act funds.
- Organized and submitted challenges to FCC broadband data on unserved and underserved locations.
- Analyzed NTIA requirements and guidelines and submitted questions for clarification.
- Initiated stakeholder mapping and established a Digital Equity Core Planning Team consisting of stakeholders from statewide agencies focused on Covered Populations.
- Identified conflicts between Act 71 and Infrastructure Act requirements.

Summary of Project Timeline and Approach

This project plan describes the steps Vernonburg Group and VCBB teams will take to complete the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, BEAD Initial Proposal, and the Digital Equity Act Plan for Vermont within the statutory deadlines set by NTIA.

The target dates for completed deliverables submitted to NTIA include:

- August 28, 2023: BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1

- September 29, 2023: BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2
- December 15, 2023 (pending approval of request for extension): Digital Equity Act Plan

In developing these plans, we will apply the following principles to our approach:

- Regular input and feedback sought from the Digital Equity Core Planning Team, existing internet service providers, and municipal communications districts across the State.
- In-depth stakeholder engagement process to engage the public, especially Underrepresented Communities² Covered Populations¹ and people in areas with limited broadband availability and adoption.
- Work with—and design a program that enhances—existing vision, planning, infrastructure, and other assets of the State of Vermont to ensure community-driven solutions for broadband access and digital equity.
- Leverage templates provided by NTIA to help facilitate NTIA approval of the plans.
- Conduct a thorough and inclusive review process of draft plans consisting of VCBB review, VCBB Board review, and a two-phased public comment period for each deliverable (requests for input on the BEAD and Digital Equity Plans for 30 days followed by a public comment period on the draft plans for 14 days). Final versions will be copy-edited and proofread and submitted to VCBB.
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 - August 21 – September 4, 2023: Draft BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2
 - Digital Equity Plan
 - Request for input: July 19 – August 18, 2023
 - Draft available for public comment: October 17 – 31, 2023
 -
- Adopt an integrative process during the development of these plans as stakeholder input and/or new data is received and analyzed.
- Vernonburg Group will provide final versions of the plans to VCBB three business days before the deadline for Vermont to submit the plans to NTIA.

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Table 1. Summary of Project Milestones

Phase	Activity	Start Date	End Date
Initial Planning	Hold kick-off meeting with VCBB	1-May-23	2-May-23
	Hold kick-off meeting with Vermont Digital Equity Core Planning team	3-May-23	3-May-23
	Submit final detailed project plan to VCBB	15-May-23	15-May-23
	Submit Stakeholder Engagement Plan to VCBB	20-May-23	20-May-23
	Submit Program and Policy Review Plan to VCBB	19-May-23	19-May-23
	Submit Program and Policy Review Report to VCBB	5 June 2023	5 June 2023
	Submit Stakeholder Engagement Report to VCBB	23-Jun-23	23-Jun-23
	Submit Broadband Funding Inventory to VCBB	5 June 2023	5 June 2023
BEAD	BEAD RFI open for public comment	25-May-23	16-Jun-23
	Workshop with VCBB to finalize approach to BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal	1-Jun-23	1-Jun-23
	Present BEAD update to VCBB Board	12-Jun-23	12-Jun-23
	Present draft BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to VCBB Board	10-Jul-23	10-Jul-23
	Submit draft BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to VCBB	13-Jul-23	13-Jul-23
	Public comment period / Conduct external stakeholder engagement for feedback on draft	14-Jul-23	28-Jul-23
	Submit BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to VCBB	22-Aug-23	24-Aug-23
	Submit BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to NTIA	25-Aug-23	28-Aug-23
	Confirm NTIA approval of BEAD Five-Year Action Plan	27-Sep-23	27-Sep-23

	Submit draft initial Proposal Volume 2 to VCBB	25-Jul-23	25-Jul-23
	Present Initial Proposal Volume 2 to VCBB Board for feedback	7-Aug-23	7-Aug-23
	Public comment period / Conduct external stakeholder engagement for feedback on draft Initial Proposal Volume 2	21-Aug-23	4-Sep-23
	Submit Initial Proposal Volume 2 to VCBB	26-Sep-23	29-Sep-23
	Submit Initial Proposal Volume 2 to NTIA	29-Sep-23	29-Sep-23
	Confirm approval from NTIA for Initial Proposal	29-Oct-23	29-Oct-23
Digital Equity Plan			
Digital Equity Plan	Digital Equity Plan RFI open for public comment	19-Jul-23	18-Aug-23
	Submit draft Digital Equity Plan to VCBB	26-Sep-23	27-Sep-23
	Present draft to VCBB Board for feedback	9-Oct-23	9-Oct-23
	Public comment period / Conduct external stakeholder engagement for feedback on draft Digital Equity Plan	17-Oct-23	31-Oct-23
	Submit Digital Equity Plan to VCBB	8-Dec-23	8-Dec-23
	Submit Digital Equity Plan to NTIA	15-Dec-23	31-Jan-24
	Confirm NTIA approval of Digital Equity Plan	1-Feb-24	30-Mar-24

The following sections describe the primary phases of the project, roles and responsibilities, and timing of activities (Gantt charts). Across these tasks, Vernonburg Group is primarily responsible and accountable to VCBB for completing the work, while the VCBB is responsible for approving it and ultimately accountable to the State of Vermont for the outcomes of the project. Names in **bold** note the person primarily responsible for completing the work. Dates for “NTIA approval” of the Internet for All Plans are estimates and will be updated once further information is available from NTIA.

Phase 1: Initial Planning

The Initial Planning phase consists of getting to know each other, aligning on expectations and timeline, and gathering background information. Important activities include a kick-off meeting between VCBB and Vernonburg Group. Additionally, the VCBB will facilitate introductions for Vernonburg Group to the VCBB Board and the Digital Equity Core Planning Team.

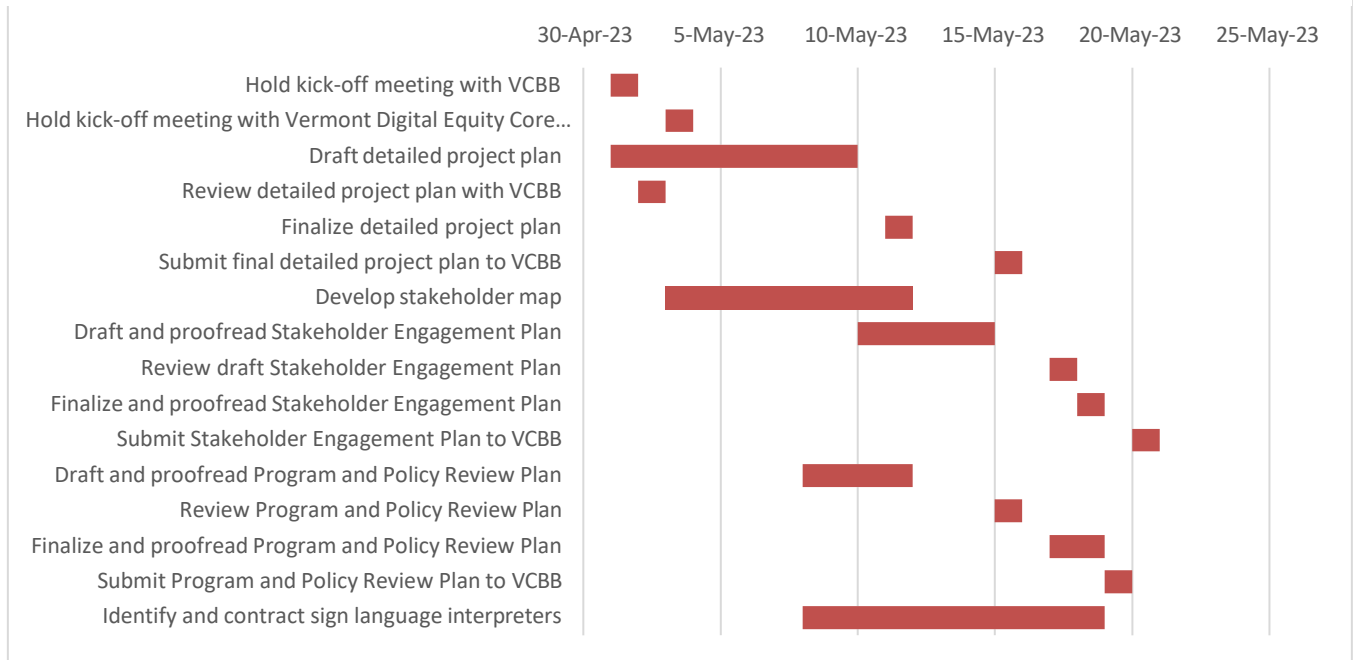
Table 2 below summarizes primary roles and responsibilities for this phase.

Table 2. Roles and Responsibilities for Initial Planning

	Responsible	Accountable	Consult	Inform
Vermont	Lucy Rogers	Christine Hallquist	Lucy Rogers, Rob Fish, Heryn Herzog, Toni Clithero, Kristin Brynga	Hunter Thompson, David Johnson, Namema Amendi, Umair Qayyum
Vernonburg Group	Breese Mcllvaine	Paul Garnett	Alexander Jeffery, Caroline Hauser, Jess Monago	

Figure 1 below shows activities and timing associated with completing the Initial Planning Phase.

Figure 1. Initial Planning Timeline



Phase 2: Program and Policy Review

The Program and Policy Review will gather and analyze information about existing policies and programs relevant to telecommunications, broadband availability, and digital equity in the State of Vermont. This will inform what programs and resources are already in existence in Vermont that the BEAD and Digital Equity plans and programs can leverage and complement. It will also highlight any policies and requirements that must be taken into account when defining BEAD and Digital Equity Plan implementation and grantmaking guidelines (e.g., broadband speed requirements), and any areas in conflict with Infrastructure Act requirements (e.g., finding eligibility requirements).

The outputs of this review will include content for:

- BEAD Five-year Action Plan requirement #6 (Asset inventory of broadband adoption, affordability, equity, access, and deployment activities in the State and relevant partners) and #5 (Identify known obstacles or barriers to the implementation of BEAD and State's corresponding plans to address them)
- Initial Proposal requirements #4 (Certify coordination with Tribal Governments, local community organizations, unions and worker organizations, and other groups consistent with requirements in NOFO) and #6 (Describe how State applied the statutory definition of "community anchor institution" and identified CAIs in jurisdiction and assessed needs of CAIs, including what types of CAIs it intends to serve, which it considered but declined to classify as CAIs, if it included CAIs that were not in federal definition categories and why.). Note for Initial Proposal requirement #6 that the VCBB's existing GIS and mapping resources will be available

to Contractor for mapping CAIs throughout the state.

- Digital Equity Plan statutory requirements #4 (plan to collaborate with stakeholders to achieve objectives) and #5 (list of organizations collaborated with to develop plan), and additional requirements #4 (coordination and outreach strategy with Covered Populations) and #8 (description of how municipal, regional, and/or Tribal digital equity plans were incorporated into the State Digital Equity Plan).

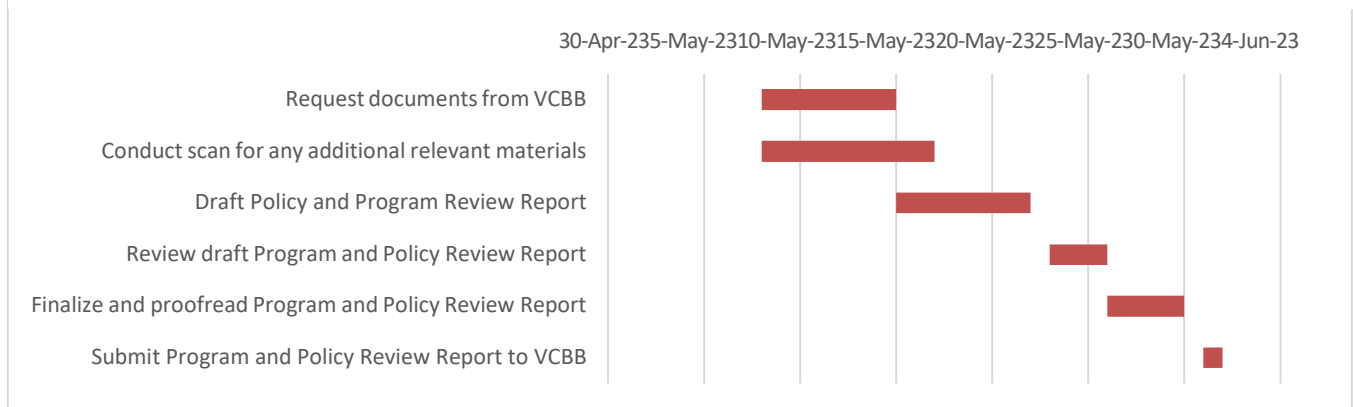
Table 3 below summarizes primary roles and responsibilities for this phase.

Table 3. Roles and Responsibilities for Program and Policy Review

	Responsible	Accountable	Consult	Inform
Vermont	Alissa Matthews	Christine Hallquist	Lucy Rogers, Rob Fish, Herry Herzog, Toni Clithero, Kristin Brynga	VCBB, VCBB Board, Digital Equity Core Planning Team
Vernonburg Group	Breese McIlvaine	Paul Garnett	Namema Amendi, Alexander Jeffery, Caroline Hauser, Jess Monago, Paul Garnett	

Figure 2 below describes activities and timing associated with completing the Program and Policy Review.

Figure 2. Program and Policy Review Timeline



Phase 3: Stakeholder Engagement

Venonburg Group will work with the VCBB to develop and implement a thorough stakeholder engagement plan. Stakeholder engagement will include both in-person and virtual as well as statewide and localized events. The stakeholder engagement approach will focus on intentionally seeking input from the Covered Populations, and geographic diversity particularly in areas with low rates of broadband availability and/or adoption. The output of this phase will be documented needs, gaps, barriers to as well as assets for digital equity to guide the effective allocation of BEAD and Digital Equity Act funding to remedy inequities. This effort will be conducted in very close collaboration with the VCBB to ensure the VCBB is the face of the effort to the general public. Activities will be planned in consultation with the Public Service Department as well as with the Northeast Kingdom Community Action.

The subsequent report will inform the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Digital Equity Plan, and serve as content for:

- BEAD Five-Year Action Plan requirement #7 [Description of external engagement process demonstrating collaboration with local, regional, tribal entities (governmental and non-governmental)]
- Initial Proposal requirements #4 (Certify coordination with Tribal Governments, local community organizations, unions and worker organizations, and other groups consistent with requirements in NOFO) and #5 (Describe how State applied the statutory definition of "community anchor institution" and identified CAIs in jurisdiction and assessed needs of CAIs, including what types of CAIs it intends to serve, which it considered but declined to classify as CAIs, if it included CAIs that were not in federal definition categories and why.)
- Digital Equity Plan requirement #4 (Plan to collaborate with stakeholders to achieve (2) measurable objectives) #5 (list of organizations State collaborated with to develop the plan)

Table 4 below summarizes primary roles and responsibilities for this phase.

Table 4. Roles and Responsibilities for Stakeholder Engagement

	Responsible	Accountable	Consult	Inform
Vermont	Herryn Herzog	Christine Hallquist	Lucy Rogers, Alissa Matthews, Casey Winterson	VCBB, VCBB Board, Digital Equity Core Planning Team
Vernonburg Group	Alexander Jeffery	Paul Garnett	Caroline Hauser, Breese McIlvaine, Tana Bosshard, Melissa Levy, Laura Ruby	

Figure 3 below shows activities and timing associated with completing the Stakeholder Engagement Phase. These details may be adjusted and updated once the Stakeholder Engagement Plan is finalized and has the VCBB’s approval.

Figure 3. Stakeholder Engagement Timeline



Phase 4: Broadband Funding Inventory

The purpose of this phase is to work with the VCBB to gather information from NTIA as well as other state agencies to inventory funding sources currently available to or used by Vermont for broadband deployment and digital equity, summarize how these funding sources interact, and suggest ways Vermont could maximize funding sources (now and in the future) for impact in Vermont. This phase will also collect information for mapping areas of funded broadband deployments and current build status of those projects.

This will inform the BEAD deliverable requirements:

- Five-Year Action Plan Requirements #2 (Identify existing funding for broadband deployment and other related activities (local planning, data collection, etc.)) and #3 (Identify existing efforts funded by federal government (Universal Service Fund) for broadband and digital divide)
- Initial Proposal #2 (Identify and outline steps to support local, tribal, and regional broadband planning processes or ongoing efforts to deploy broadband and close the digital divide, describe coordination with local and tribal governments and broadband planning processes)

Funding sources to be analyzed include:

- American Rescue Plan Act funds to the state (including the Capital Projects Fund)
- BEAD estimated funds and match
- Digital Equity Act
- US Department of Agriculture
- Federal Communications Commission Universal Service Funds
- State funds (any additional budget allocations)

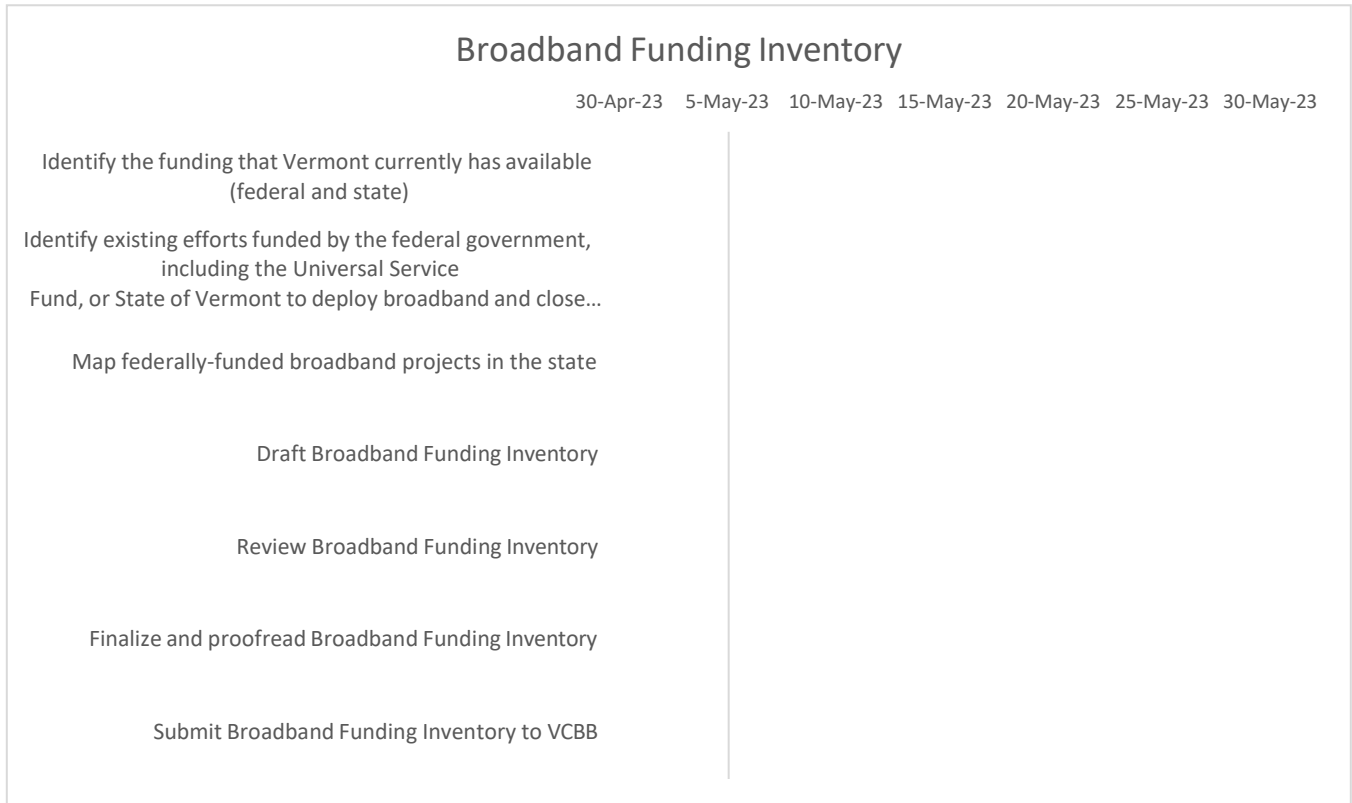
Table 5 below summarizes primary roles and responsibilities for this phase.

Table 5. Roles and Responsibilities: Broadband Funding Inventory

	Responsible	Accountable	Consult	Inform
Vermont	Alissa Matthews	Christine Hallquist	Lucy Rogers, Rob Fish, Hunter Thompson	VCBB, VCBB Board
Vernonburg Group	Jess Monago	Paul Garnett	Breese McIlvaine, David Johnson, Alex Jeffery, Caroline Hauser	

Figure 4 below shows activities and timing associated with completing the Broadband Funding Inventory.

Figure 4. Broadband Funding Inventory Timeline



Phase 5: Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1

The VCBB decided to submit the BEAD Initial Proposal in two parts: Volume 1 and Volume 2.² Initial Proposal Volume 1 consists of requirements #3 and #5-7: existing broadband funding, unserved and underserved locations, community anchor institutions, and the challenge process. Volume 2 consists of the remaining requirements of the Initial Proposal. During this phase, Vernonburg Group will assist the VCBB to develop the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 concurrently, submitting both to NTIA at the end of August 2023.

² *Proposed BEAD Challenge Process Guidance*. National Telecommunications and Information Association. Accessed May 10, 2023. Available online at: https://www.internet4all.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/BEAD_Model_Challenge_Process_-_Public_Comment_Draft_04.24.2023.pdf

This phase will produce:

- BEAD Five-Year Action Plan
- Initial Proposal requirements #3 (existing broadband funding), #5 (unserved and underserved locations), #6 (community anchor institutions), and #7 (the challenge process)

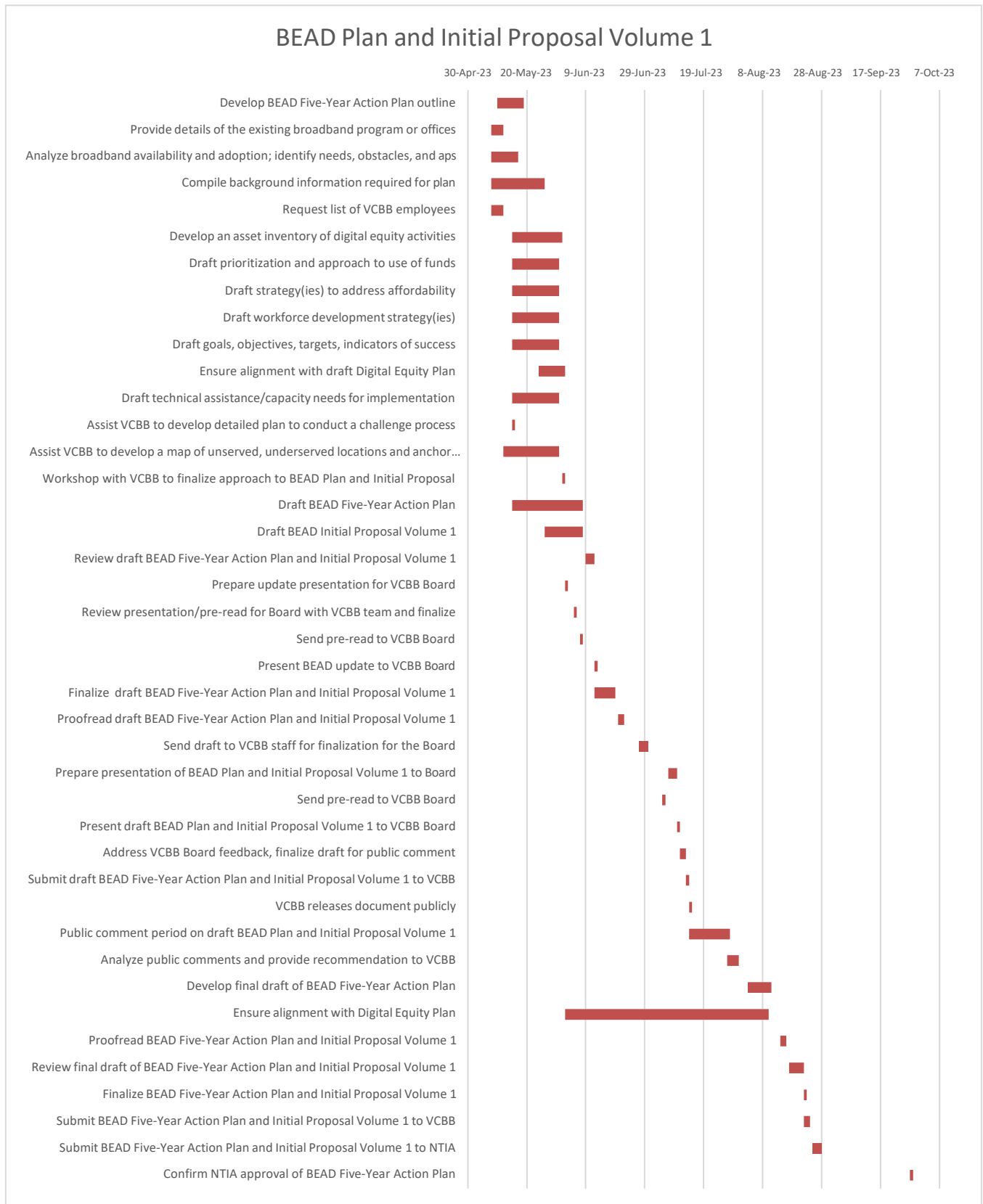
Table 6 below summarizes primary roles and responsibilities for this phase.

Table 6. Roles and Responsibilities for BEAD Five-Year Action Plan

	Responsible	Accountable	Consult	Inform
Vermont	Alissa Matthews	Christine Hallquist	VCBB, VCBB Board, Hunter Thompson	VCBB, VCBB Board, Digital Equity Core Planning Team
Vernonburg Group	Breese McIlvaine	Paul Garnett	Caroline Hauser, Alex Jeffery, Tana Bosshard, Melissa Levy, Laura Ruby, Namema Amendi	

Figure 5 below shows activities and timing associated with completing the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Volume 1 of the Initial Proposal.

Figure 5. BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1



Phase 6: BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2

The BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2 will consist of the remaining required components of the Initial Proposal not submitted in Volume 1, including but not limited to Vermont’s long-term objectives for deploying broadband, closing the digital divide, addressing access, affordability, equity, and adoption issues, and enhancing economic growth and job creation; steps to coordinate with and support local, Tribal, and regional broadband planning processes or ongoing efforts to deploy broadband or close the digital divide; plan for competitively awarding subgrants; planned use of funds for any non-deployment eligible activities; plans to encourage minority-owned organizations as subgrantees; plans to ensure strong labor practices and workforce development; and others.

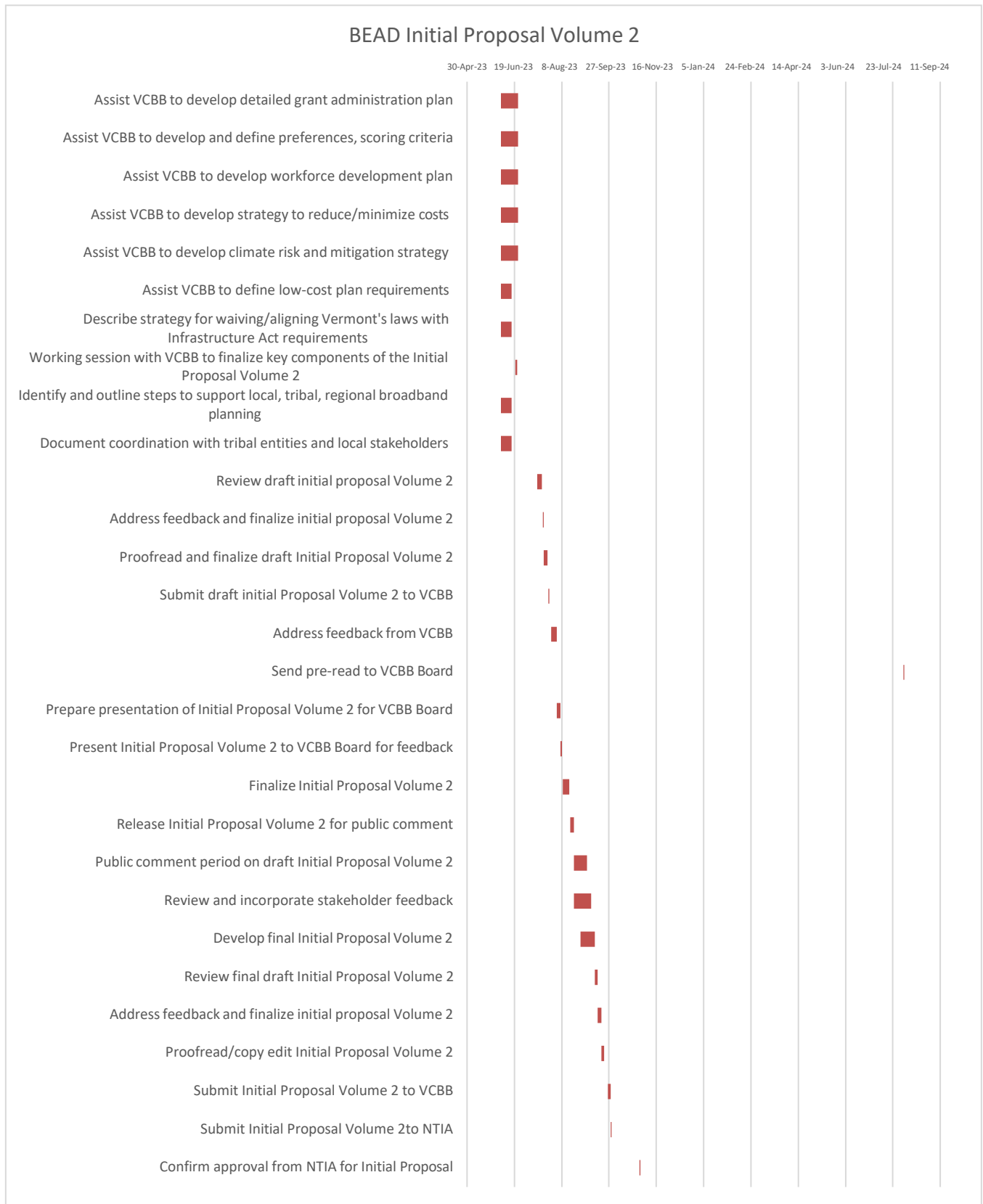
Table 7 below summarizes primary roles and responsibilities for this phase.

Table 7. Roles and Responsibilities for BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2

	Responsible	Accountable	Consult	Inform
Vermont	Alissa Matthews	Christine Hallquist	Lucy Rogers, Herryn Herzog, VCBB Board	Rob Fish, Toni Clithero, Kristin Brynga,
Vernonburg Group	Breese McIlvaine	Paul Garnett	Caroline Hauser, Alex Jeffery, Tana Bosshard, Melissa Levy, Laura Ruby, David Johnson, Namema Amendi	

Figure 6 below shows activities and timing associated with completing the BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2.

Figure 6. BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2



Phase 7: Digital Equity Plan

Vermont’s Digital Equity Plan will outline the State’s vision and implementation plan to advance full access and participation in the digital economy by all Vermont residents. Broader than broadband access, this will describe how Vermont intends to use the federal Digital Equity Program funds to address a broadband affordability, device access and affordability, digital literacy and skilling, and more. Components of the Digital Equity Plan will be developed concurrently with Vermont’s BEAD Plan (e.g., vision and objectives) to ensure alignment.

Table 8 below summarizes primary roles and responsibilities for this phase.

Table 8. Roles and Responsibilities for Digital Equity Plan

	Responsible	Accountable	Consult	Inform
Vermont	Alissa Matthews	Christine Hallquist	Lucy Rogers, Herryn Herzog, VCBB Board	Rob Fish, Toni Clithero, Kristin Brynga,
Vernonburg Group	Breese McIlvaine	Paul Garnett	Caroline Hauser, Alex Jeffery, Tana Bosshard, Melissa Levy, Laura Ruby, David Johnson, Namema Amendi	

Figure 7 below shows activities and timing associated with completing the Digital Equity Plan.

Figure 7. Digital Equity Act Plan



Ongoing Support

Once Vermont has submitted its BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, Initial Proposal, and Digital Equity Plan, Vernonburg Group will continue to provide support to the VCBB in engaging with NTIA on feedback to the plans, engaging stakeholders to keep them informed, and planning for the BEAD Final Proposal and implementation of the grant programs.