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

Approved Minutes

1) Meeting call to Order, Roll Call, and Approval of Agenda

Patty Richards called the meeting to order at 12:17 and completed roll call.

- Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
- Laura Sibilia (Absent) – joined at about 1:12
- Brian Otley (Remote)
- Holly Groschner (Remote)
- Dan Nelson (Remote)
- Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)
- Robert Fish – Staff (Remote)
- Toni Clithero – Staff (Remote)
- Alissa Matthews – Staff (Remote)
- Lucy Rogers – Staff (Remote)
- Kristin Brynga – Staff (Remote)
- Herryn 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 May 8 Meeting Minutes

Patty Richards moved to approve, Brian Otley seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

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)*

The Board needs to be informed of a legal issue. Toni Clithero explained this is an opportunity to inform the Board of a brewing legal issue. Patty Richards made a motion to go into executive session, seconded by Dan Nelson. It was unanimously approved. Toni Clithero, Christine Hallquist, Lucy Rogers, and Rob Fish joined the executive session, as well as the Board members. They returned from executive session at 1:08. No action was taken.

4) Budget Presentation – *Christine Hallquist*

Christine Hallquist presented the budget. Reporting will be done on a quarterly basis once the budget is approved. (See Appendix 1 for more information and charts).
Brian Otley asked about contractual grant. He asked to clarify that that means incoming funding from an external source used to pay either for operational expenses or awards, correct?
Christine Hallquist said this is what we're paying out, yes, this budget is the proposed cost side.

She explained the difference between contractual and non-contractual grants. Both are to cover contracts they have with third parties. Holly Groschner said contracts are expenditures that are not capital in nature. Christine Hallquist said that is right. Big drivers here are personnel and contracts. Brian Otley said the name should be changed from "non-capital grants" to "non-capital grant costs." Christine Hallquist said she will change that.

Laura Sibilia joined the meeting at this point.

Christine Hallquist started with contract costs first. The Vernonburg contract is being paid for by infrastructure grant and equity grant.

Holly Groschner asked how the Vernonburg contract could be a construction grant? Christine Hallquist said she's using the terms from the federal programs. Holly Groschner said the BEAD money is also for planning. Christine Hallquist said yes, it is. Brian Otley suggested adding a line that says the deliverables. Christine Hallquist will investigate if that's possible.

Holly Groschner asked if it could call it BEAD infrastructure or planning so it doesn't show up as a capital cost. Brian Otley said planning can be lumped into capital costs. Christine Hallquist said it's categorized by the money that's paying for it, a planning grant.

Holly Groschner asked whether the money has to be subgranted? Christine Hallquist said it is not being subgranted. There is a separate capital grant program. Capital is not addressed in this. Brian Otley said it is confusing the way it's labeled. Christine Hallquist said it is how Power BI (the state system) works, but she will try to work on that.

Dan Nelson says the names are automatically generated.

Christine Hallquist talked about asset mapping and technical workshops. She explained capacity grants. It's money to provide CUDs money to update their business plans. Digital equity community outreach is a big part of the work we're doing. That covers BEAD and digital equity.

Next is NBRC grant that the Board approved. VCUDA capacity grant is part of that. It is for shared services for CUDs. As built inspections will be done by NB&C. $24,000 is set aside for make ready support, but might not need to use it. Patty Richards asked about that line item. Christine Hallquist said we probably won't need to use it.

Christine Hallquist said there is a VCBB TBD item. It's for flexibility since things are changing. Patty Richards asked how that number was calculated. Rob Fish said that was the remaining funds.

Christine Hallquist said we are using Ice Miller to help with match and letter of credit. There is money for grant writers. Rob Fish explained that CUD Broadband Finance Program is additional grants along the lines of what we did for NEK Broadband. Christine Hallquist said Stone and CTC engineering come out of USF. Rural Innovation Strategies is analysis we've already done.

Holly Groschner asked where to find anything on affordability in the budget. Christine Hallquist said we need direction from the Board on that, on how to address affordability. Patty Richards said they're going to come back around to it. Holly Groschner and Laura Sibilia are coming back with more for them. Patty Richards said we need to come back with a definition of affordability and a policy in order to hold the CUDs responsible for it. Holly Groschner said CUDs will need

support on this. She suggested taking 10% off the top of capital and non-capital costs and setting it aside for affordability evaluation and administration. Not supplementing rates. Christine Hallquist said we have a broadband project developer starting soon. This will be that person's job. Christine Hallquist said we need to make a plan first. Holly Groschner says the Board opens themselves up to criticism if they don't have a line item for affordability.

Laura Sibilia said affordability goes to the accountability issue and retaining that ability for the public good. When we get into situations where we don't have strong contracts that ensure the public good in perpetuity, we're not doing our job in assuring affordability going forward. Private for-profit companies can drop prices for some time and then raise them. That's happening in an attempt to undermine public accountability.

Dan Nelson says this is a good budget. Until we have a policy, this is a great start. Affordability needs to be sustainable, not based on grants.

Dan Nelson left at 1:36, plans to return.

Brian Otley said affordability was an element of the plan of each CUD. Our role is to monitor and make sure it's part of all business plans, not to develop it.

Holly Groschner said she's read the grant language and all they do is ask CUDs if they are doing affordability. We need to set aside funding to pay for the evaluation, administration, opportunity to investigate affordability and make it a priority. We need a policy and anticipate it will be harder to take money away from categories once they're committed.

Brian Otley said that makes sense. We should have a policy. Then CUDs will more likely hit the mark.

Holly Groschner says she doesn't agree that it doesn't belong in the budget now. It should reflect the mission and objective of the VCBB.

Patty Richards said it is the CUDs' responsibility to address affordability. We need our definition of what that means. Line item of $205,000 can be used if we need to.

Holly Groschner suggested changing the line-item name to "affordability administration" from "VCBB TBD." Christine Hallquist said that's fine. Line item 11 will be renamed "affordability administration." We will need approval from NBRC since the money comes from there. It's a place holder for something we may need.

Patty Richards – asking for approval for 4.4 million? Christine Hallquist said yes.

Christine Hallquist said the personnel budget is self-explanatory.

Holly Groschner asked if there's a scope of work for the PSD contract? Christine Hallquist said it's not a contract, it's a position. That's Kristin Brynga's former position.

Laura Sibilia– is this sustainable through the USF? Christine Hallquist said yes, and we will look at personnel costs as time goes on. Laura Sibilia said USF is likely to be declining unless something changes. We need to make sure we're keeping an eye on our staffing and funding.

Laura Sibilia moved to approve the budget with changes suggested by the Board. Patty Richards seconded, and there was unanimous approval. Dan Nelson was not present for the vote.

Don't need approval for individual grants because the Board approves each.

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

Introduced Vernonburg for an update to keep the Board informed. Lucy Rogers will start presenting to the Board since she has their presentation and send a note to Vernonburg to find out if they're having difficulty getting on the meeting.

(See Appendix 2 for presentation slides).

Christine Hallquist asked if we can do staff updates first and then Vernonburg can present when they're here since we finished prior agenda items earlier than they were scheduled. We did staff updates next and came back to Vernonburg.

6) Staff Updates
- General VCBB Updates – *Rob Fish*

Rob Fish gave an update on the hiring process and an update on the FCC challenge results.
- Dashboard Review – *Alissa Matthews* – did not go to Alissa Matthews for an update.
- Communications & Media – *Herryn Herzog*

Herryn Herzog gave an update on recent media stories and reminded everyone that links to all stories are on the "VCBB In the News" page on our website.

Patty Richards asked about the letter of credit issue. Christine Hallquist said we are asking for a waiver from the federal government and reaching out to different organizations to help us out on that.

Patty Richards asked about a weekly update on the programs we're going after. Christine Hallquist said there is no update, and we should know something at the end of July. Patty Richards asked Laura Sibilia if she's familiar with it. Laura Sibilia said she was not aware the application had been submitted. Laura Sibilia said they should talk about whether the Board should be made aware when applications are submitted. Christine Hallquist said they were updated in the weekly update. Patty Richards said staff should work with Laura Sibilia and other state lawmakers to push this through. Laura Sibilia said this was submitted June 1 and was in the report June 6.

Toni Clithero said if we are going to discuss particular applications we need to go into executive session because these are confidential matters. Laura Sibilia said this is about dates, not the specific application. Patty Richards said this is about the process and leveraging our resources. Toni Clithero said this is a slippery slope and she's worried we could divulge confidential information that would jeopardize our application. Patty Richards wants to keep it in open session and will move if we need to.

Laura Sibilia wants to discuss protocol on submitting applications to make sure everyone is aware, particularly when we're looking at political entities. Laura Sibilia said this is our second constitutional officer issue that we've had. We've had discussions about testimony. She thinks the Board has to have the staff's back and it's impossible if they don't have the information on

what's happening with the staff. Holly Groschner said this should be added to the parking lot and staff can come up with policy. Patty Richards said this is a growth issue, not throwing anyone under the bus. Staff will pull something together on this for the next meeting.

Rob Fish added that we decided to apply for a USDA Broadband Technical Assistance grant.

The Board is the VCBB. When there are decisions regarding funding and critical issues, we need to keep Board members engaged in that process. Christine Hallquist said staff will come back with a policy for the Board to review.

Christine Hallquist asked what the Board's will on the USDA application is. Do they want a special meeting or staff not to apply? Patty Richards said she just wants to know about it but doesn't want to hold it up. Holly Groschner said that is next week. It would be great if there is a thumb nail included this week to let them know.

Vernonburg Update

Breese McIlvaine presented Vernonburg slides. (See Appendix 2)

Holly Groschner asked if there's a place on the web for the public to go to to get more information about our listening sessions. Alex Jeffery from Vernonburg Group said we have a calendar, but we can add more information to the calendar.

Alex Jeffery presented more information about the next steps, RFI (request for input) has gotten responses, and they've added weekly office hours.

Starting this week, we are starting in-person and virtual listening sessions for the next three weeks or so, designed to be discussions that are community-led to hear lived experience of Vermonters.

Paul Garnett from Vernonburg Group presented early input we're getting from stakeholders.

Patty Richards asked about the slides. They say they're confidential, but are they really? Can we put them on our website? It shouldn't say they're confidential so there aren't any concerns about confidentiality.

Laura Sibilia asked to what extent are they monitoring ACP? Paul Garnett said it was separate and will run out unless it's extended and asked how that takes away funding. Laura Sibilia said it's a subsidy for private providers and undermines the buildout of community projects like ours. Paul Garnett said it's not just for for-profit providers.

Holly Groschner thanked Paul Garnett for the comment. ACP is allowing low-income households to participate in community broadband in ECFiber. They are benefiting. We should be careful about how we address this. Laura Sibilia said it should be applied to public programs only.

7) VCUDA Updates – *Rob Vietzke*

Ellie de Villiers did the VCUDA update. CUD construction season is in full swing. DVFiber has a contract for its build out. CVFiber, NEK Broadband, and Maple are all very busy with

construction. Southern VT is ahead of schedule. ECFiber is about to complete its original 23-town network.

NBRC agreement is signed. The timing is good. We need a little cross-CUD support.

BEAD planning 5-year action plan – comment period is critical for the CUDs. Encouraged by the work so far.

Want to understand how public comment will be reviewed and discussed by the Board before the Board approves the plans.

Multiple CUDs were having issues with a pole owner. They made progress on a number of issues.

8) Public Comment

Christa Shute said at the last meeting Rob said she would provide written comment on accountability and affordability. She does intend to do that. She's behind schedule due to a family emergency. She said they're very excited about the ReConnect award. It will impact many towns and the CUD as a whole. ReConnect event is coming June 24.

F.X. Flinn said everyone is invited to ECFiber's golden patch cord event. Senator Welch will be there. They're hoping Governor Scott will be there. They're hoping for a crowd. This symbolizes the completion of their original 23-town network. June 16 will be ECFiber's ninth anniversary.

9) Parking Lot – *Christine Hallquist*

Two things – follow up from the report from the Auditor's Office. Patty Richards is working on that. Christine Hallquist said she added an item to develop a policy on how staff keeps the Board informed.

10) Confirm Next Regular Meeting 7/10 & Motion to Adjourn

Patty Richards asked Christine Hallquist if we can move the application deadline back. Christine Hallquist said she has to consult with staff. Patty Richards asked how many grant applications are coming in July. Christine Hallquist said four or five, and we might need to have another meeting in July. Patty Richards said we should hold the meeting on July 10th and see how far we get. Then we can hold another meeting if needed. Other Board members agreed. Holly Groschner asked that an accountability and affordability discussion be put on the agenda.

Christa Shute clarified that she was asking to extend comment period to Vernonburg Group to June 25 or 26, not the application deadline that Patty Richards referred to.

Patty Richards moved to adjourn, Laura Sibilia seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

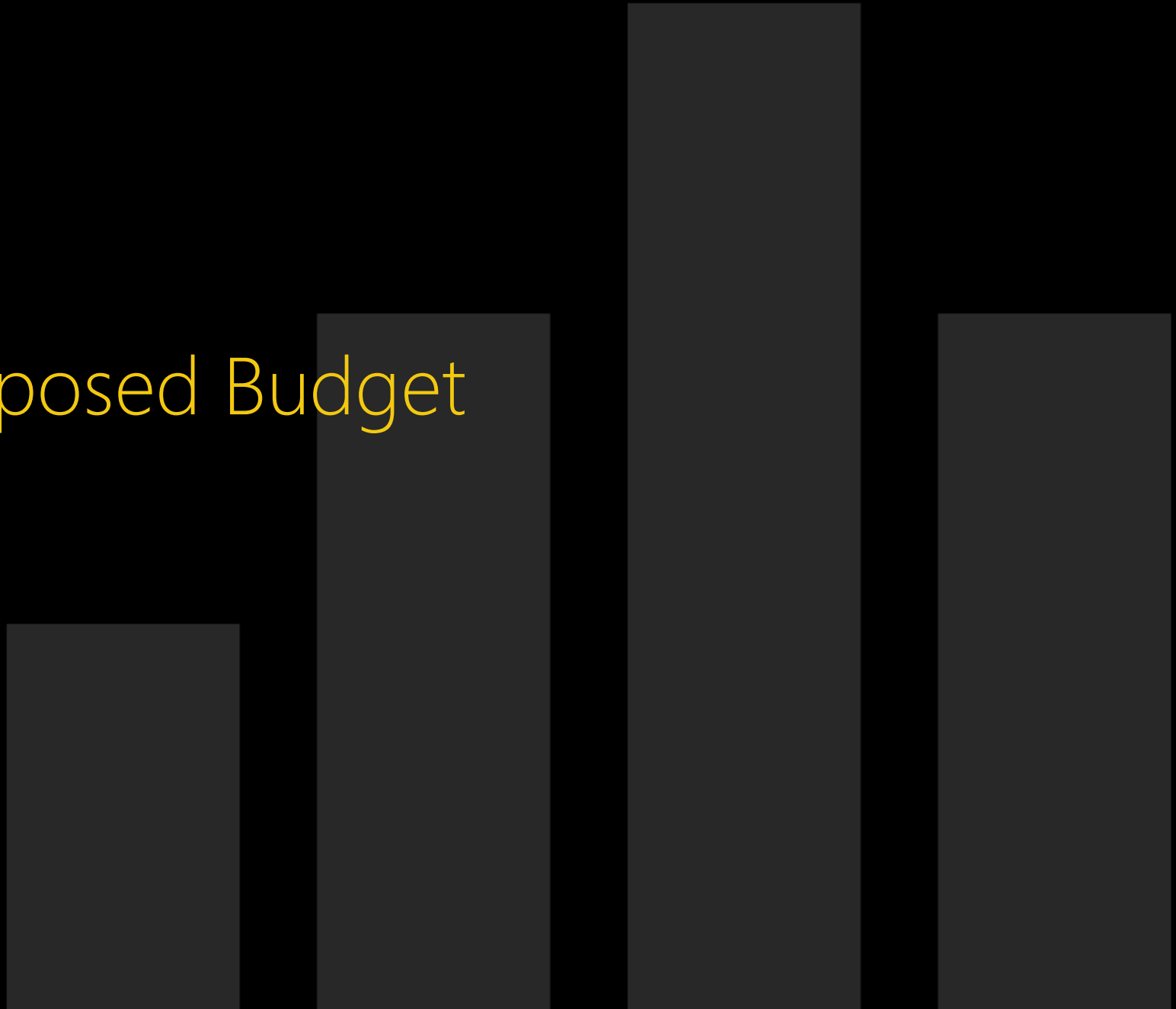Press inquiries: please contact Herryn Herzog, herryn.herzog@vermont.gov (802) 522-3396.

Microsoft | Power BI

Appendix 1

VCBB 2024 Proposed Budget
June 2023

View in Power BI ↗

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 Instpections	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 Herryn'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.

Appendix 2
Vermont Internet for All Plans

Update for the VCBB Board

June 12, 2023

What We'll Cover

- Overview of Vermont's Internet for All Plans

- What happens when

- Where we are today

- Stakeholder engagement

- Early input from stakeholders

- Q&A

Internet for All: Planning Grants

- The **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program** provides $42.45 Billion nationwide to expand high-speed Internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs across the country.
    1. Expand access to all unserved locations, underserved locations, community anchor institutions
    2. (If funds remain) Support digital equity initiatives

- The **Digital Equity Act** provides $2.75 billion to establish three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion. They aim to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy.
    - Current phase: State Digital Equity Planning Grant
    - Next phase:
        - Digital Equity Capacity Building Grant Program (for states)
        - Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program

What Happens When: BEAD

	BEAD Five Year Action Plan	BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 1	BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2
What's included (summary)	• Vision, goals, objectives • Current state of broadband an digital inclusion • Obstacles and barriers to successful implementation of the plan • Implementation Plan	• Initial identification of unserved and underserved locations • Definition of community anchor institutions classification applied • Proposed pre-challenge process location modifications (e.g., the proposed deduplication process) • Proposed challenge process.	• Long-term objectives • Stakeholder engagement process • Detailed plan for use of BEAD funds, including competitive subgrantee process, workforce development, and climate risk assessment. • Intended use of the 20% of total funding allocation that is made available upon NTIA's approval of the Initial Proposal
Key dates	• **May 25 – June 20**: Request for input open • **June 30**: FCC mapping data locked to determine NTIA's funding allocation to states for BEAD • **July 10**: Present draft 5 Year Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to VCBB Board • **July 14 – 28**: Public comment period for draft 5 Year Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 • **August 22**: Vernonburg Group submits final version to VCBB board and staff • **August 28**: VCBB submits BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 to NTIA		• **August 7**: Present draft Initial Proposal Volume 2 to VCBB Board • **August 21 – Sept. 4**: Public comment period on Initial Proposal Volume 2 • **Sept. 26**: Vernonburg Group submits final version to VCBB board and staff • **Sept. 29**: VCBB submits Initial Proposal Volume 2 to NTIA

Focus at July Board Meeting

- Present the **draft** BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volume 1 prior to releasing it for public comment.

What happens when: Digital Equity

Digital Equity Plan	
What's included (summary)	• Barriers to digital equity • Vision for digital equity • Objectives for documenting and promoting digital equity among "Covered Populations" and how this will impact State's broader goals for economic and social development • Stakeholder engagement • Needs assessment • Asset inventory • Implementation strategy and timeline to holistically address barriers to participation in the digital world, including affordability, devices, digital skills, technical support, and digital navigation.
Key dates	• **June 16:** Submit request for deadline extension • **July 19 – August 18**: Request for Input • **Oct. 9:** Present draft to VCBB Board • **Oct. 17 – 31:** Public comment period on draft Digital Equity Plan • **Dec. 8:** Vernonburg Group submits final Digital Equity Plan to VCBB • **Dec. 15:** VCBB submits Digital Equity Plan to NTIA

Where We Are Today

- Completed the initial planning phase

- Analyzing available funding and broadband access needs

- Drafting sections of the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal

- Conducting stakeholder meetings

- Scheduling stakeholder events

Stakeholder Engagement Touchpoints

- VCBB website for Internet for All Planning launched
- BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Request for Input Form
  - Intended to collect input and suggestions to inform grant funding, eligibility and accountability for the State's BEAD Program
  - Deadline: **June 20, 2023**
- Office Hours
  - Available every **Thursday, 1:00-2:00 pm** starting **June 15**. Targeted for potential BEAD subgrantees, stakeholders can book 15 minutes with VCBB and Vernonburg Group.
- Ongoing Feedback Streams
  - VCBB is accepting public comments by mail, email, and through the phone (via the Public Service Departments CAPI operators) on an ongoing basis
- Virtual Listening Sessions
  - VCBB is holding two virtual listening sessions to hear input on the current state of internet service; problems Vermonters have accessing, affording, or using it; and what can be done to fix it.
- In-person Public Listening Sessions
  - VCBB is holding listening sessions across the State to hear input on the current state of internet service; problems Vermonters have accessing, affording, or using it; and what can be done to fix it.
- Scheduled Events
  - VCBB presence at events being held where there will be significant numbers of Covered Populations to distribute surveys/increase awareness of Internet for All planning process

Upcoming Public Feedback Events

Date	Time	Title
6/13/23	11am-1pm	HUD ACP Enrollment Event in Barre
6/14/23	11:30am-1pm	Virtual Listening Session 1
6/14/23	2-9:30pm	VT Veterans Summit Event
6/14/23	6:30-7:30pm	In-person event in Brattleboro
6/15/23	6:30-8pm	Virtual Listening Session 2
6/17/23	12:30-1:30pm	In-person event in Rutland
6/19/23	6:30-7:30pm	In-person event in Newport
6/22/23	6:30-7:30pm	In-person event in Burke
6/24/23	12:00-4:00pm	VTRID Barbecue
6/27/23	6:30-7:30pm	In-person event in Swanton/St. Albans

Early Input from Stakeholders

- We need to make sure that the BEAD program is implemented in a manner that furthers the State's existing broadband funding structures and planning efforts, including completion of existing Universal Service Plans.
  - Steps can be taken to support existing structure without violating federal eligibility
- Estimates to reach all unserved and underserved locations with end-to-end fiber will likely exhaust available BEAD and ARPA funds and leave very little for other program priorities.
  - Other ideas raised by stakeholders include broadband adoption (*e.g.*, affordability, digital skills, digital navigators) programs targeting underrepresented communities (rural, low-income, aging individuals, etc.) and infrastructure programs addressing specific gaps (*e.g.*, wiring up multi-dwelling units, cost of fiber drops)
- NTIA's requirements for irrevocable letters of credit from subgrantees and 25% funding match are concerns for some of the CUDs.
- Affordability of broadband service is a concern for some providers.
  - Limited adoption of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) amongst eligible households.
  - Even with the ACP subsidy, monthly fees for service could be $40+, too high.
  - Vernonburg Group projects current funding for ACP will run out in 2H2024.

Q&A

Questions?

We welcome any questions or suggestions.

Thank you!