

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA RELEASE

Vermont Department of Public Service Announces Awards for Round 3 of the COVID-19 Emergency Connectivity Initiative and Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative

Montpelier, VT – The Department of Public Service today announced \$4,055,920.50 in grant awards to Internet Service Providers to serve over 2,860 eligible locations with broadband connections in response to COVID-19.

The Department awards:

- \$381,611 to NewCo to deploy a wireless network to reach 1360 locations
- \$384,094 to Cloud Alliance to deploy a wireless network to reach 639 locations
- \$276,020 to VTel Wireless to deploy a wireless network to reach 270 locations
- \$100,378 to Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom to deploy fiber to reach 24 locations
- \$1,942,575 to Tilson to deploy fiber to reach 217 locations
- \$971,242.50 to Topsham Telephone to deploy fiber to reach 350 locations

Of those locations slated to receive service from the grant-funded projects, 636 lack a connection of 4/1 Mbps and 342 were identified as having a telehealth, distance learning, or telework need. “Broadband internet access continues to be an important resource for Vermonters in the COVID-19 Emergency, and these projects will further our goal of ensuring that everyone has quality access,” said June Tierney, Commissioner of Public Service.

The goal of the COVID-19 Emergency Connectivity Initiative is to use Federal Coronavirus Relief Funds to build high-speed broadband service to unserved and underserved locations by December 30, 2020. The Vermont Legislature, through H.966, also created the Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative (GVCNI). The GVCNI provides financial assistance to Internet Service Providers to offset customer costs of fiber-to-the-premises installations, such as trenching, conduit installation, and service drops. The two programs target homes lacking connections capable of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload (25/3 Mbps is the federal definition of broadband) and lend priority to locations with K-12 students and teachers, telehealth patients and providers, and teleworkers.

The Connectivity Initiative, which began in 2015, funds the expansion of broadband facilities in underserved towns. The awards were made through a competitive bidding process. In making the awards, the Department sought input from the state’s Communications Union Districts,

which had the opportunity to oppose projects in their territory they did not find to be in the public interest. For more information on the Connectivity Initiative, please visit the [Department of Public Service webpage](https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/connectivity-initiative-0) at <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/connectivity-initiative-0>.

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