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Contact: Clay Purvis, Director, Division of Telecommunications and Connectivity

(802)-371-9655

clay.purvis@vermont.gov

MEDIA RELEASE

Vermont Public Service Department Announces newest round of Connectivity Initiative Grants

Montpelier, Vermont – The Public Service Department today announces nearly \$220,00 in grant awards to internet service providers to boost broadband internet speeds at more than 220 eligible locations in twelve rural Vermont communities.

The Department awarded \$63,250 to ECFiber to bring fiber optic cable service to 49 homes and businesses in the towns of Tunbridge and Corinth. Consolidated Communications, Inc. received \$44,498 to expand broadband to 37 homes and businesses in Barnet. Pear Networks and Kingdom Fiber received a grant of \$85,000 to bring fiber optic cable service to 126 homes and businesses in Bloomfield, Brighton, Brunswick, Canaan, Ferdinand, Lemington, and Maidstone. MCFiber received \$21,200 to extend fiber optic cable service to six locations in Underhill. Southern Vermont Cable received \$5,636 to provide cable internet to 11 homes in Putney.

The projects receiving awards were selected from a competitive pool of twenty projects which requested grant funds totaling over \$960,000. The Department selected projects with the lowest cost per location and will use the funds to extend broadband to 229 homes and businesses that were previously unserved or underserved. For this round of grants, the average cost to the program is under \$1,000 per address, the lowest figure to date.

The goal of Vermont's Connectivity Initiative is to expand high-speed broadband service starting with unserved and underserved locations. "The Connectivity Initiative enables providers to bring high-speed internet to communities with some of the hardest to serve locations, both in terms of cost and terrain." said June Tierney, Commissioner of the Public Service Department. The locations included in the awards were previously identified by the Department as unserved or underserved. "Our hope is that these grants can have a meaningful impact on the lives of rural Vermonters. Although these are incremental improvements, the funding should help Vermont's rural broadband providers expand their service areas and create new opportunities for the rural communities they serve." added Clay Purvis, Director Telecommunications and Connectivity at the Department.

Since beginning in 2015, the Connectivity Initiative has provided over \$2 million to Internet Service Providers to fund the extension of broadband internet service to over 1,000 previously unserved or underserved locations. In making the awards, the Department worked with the Telecommunications and Connectivity Advisory Board, which provided valuable support to the Department in selecting projects. For more information on the Connectivity Initiative, please visit the [Department of Public Service](http://publicservice.vermont.gov/) at <http://publicservice.vermont.gov/>.

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Vermont Public Service Department
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620

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