



Board Packet Executive Summary - November 14, 2022

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PSD Broadband Availability Data Release

The Connectivity Division at the Public Service Department is in the process of releasing updated broadband availability data. The new maps have yet to be published, but aggregate and address level data is now available on the PSD website. Clay Purvis and Corey Chase will present the new data to the Board. Staff will present additional analysis provided by our GIS Consultants if available at the time of the meeting. This will be followed by questions and answers (Board and CUDs) and then Board discussion.

Providers were asked to provide the level of service available at addresses as of 12/31/21. Providers were also asked to provide data on projects that would be completed by 12/31/22. This second set of data is source of concern for the CUDs. Despite the best of intentions, projects are often delayed. Projects are included in the data where the fiber is not lit and service is not currently available to the customer. CUDs have questioned whether these projects should be considered served and subject to the overbuild policy or subsequent build. Identifying these addresses is a challenge in most cases.

Currently, all data used by the CUDs in developing business plans and submitting grant applications is based on the latest version of the PSD maps with any address without a wireline connection of at least 25/3 Mbps being considered underserved. Addresses in the data with service of 25/3 or greater included in the data are subject to the overbuild policy. This policy requires passing by the addresses to be required to serve underserved addresses and limits the number of drops funded along these routes. The Board is also required to “consider” known or prospective projects when evaluating applications. The draft subsequent build policies requires that CUDs consider these addresses and the expected lower take rate in their business plan, but does not subject them to the overbuild policy since delays happen and there is a chance the addresses may never be built.

Since the maps have yet to be released and questions as to whether the PSD data is separated between “Built and Active” and “expected to be completed by 12/31/22,” the Staff is not bringing a formal policy recommendation at this time. During the Q&A and subsequent discussion, the Board may want to discuss potential ways to ensure “proposed projects” that would trigger the “consideration” clause are built in set period of time and how CUDs can challenge addresses shown as served in the new data, but not offering service to the public.

The PSD data is posted at <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/broadband-availability>. The

mapping dataset is posted at <https://geodata.vermont.gov/maps/vtspd::vt-data-broadband-status-2022/about>. *There are no items in the packet since the data was not released in time.*

Addendum – FCC Broadband Map Release and Challenge Process

The FCC also announced today that the first draft of the new FCC Broadband Map will be released on November 18th. The Challenge Process (availability data) will go through the middle of January. After those challenges are addresses, the NTIA will release state-by-state allocations of the BEAD Funding in June. Two videos explaining the challenge process were posted this afternoon: Public notice 11-10-22 [DA-22-1180A1 \(2\).pdf](#); [Bulk Fixed Availability Challenges: An Overview for Filers - YouTube](#) and [How to File Bulk Fixed Availability Challenges in the BDC System - YouTube](#). Individuals can also post challenges. The Board may wish to ask the PSD about the challenge process they've issued to the "fabric" of serviceable addresses and plans to file bulk challenges to the data.

Vermont Budget Process

Will Anderson, the budget analysis for the Public Service Department and VCBB in Finance in Management will discuss how the VCBB's budget fits within the state budgeting process and answer questions. Finance and Management requested this presentation. *No advanced information was provided. There are no items in the packet.*

Staff Updates

As directed at the Organizational Meeting, staff will provide general updates, discuss outgoing grant proposals, review the progress dashboard, provide an overview of press coverage and the status of grant applications approved, formally obligated, and expected. *The packet includes all press releases issued since the last Board Meeting and the VCBB Presentation to the Joint Information Technology Oversight Committee.*

VCUDA Update

The agenda includes extended time for VCUDA to share a more complete update on their progress and concerns.

Policy and Goals Discussion

This item is the placeholder requested by the Board

Next Meeting

Our normal schedule has a Board Meeting scheduled the Monday after Thanksgiving. The Board should consider whether there are issues that can be addresses with limited preparation. Most of the VCBB staff is out Wednesday through Friday the previous week.

Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting (UPDATED)

Monday, November 14th, 2022 12:00pm – 4:00pm

AGENDA

Meeting is being held virtually.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Join by Phone; [+1 802-828-7667,,494812198#](#)

Note: there may be executive sessions as needed

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|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12:00 | 1) Meeting Call to Order, Roll Call, & Approval of Agenda |
| 12:05 | 2) Approval of October 31st and November 3 rd Meeting Minutes |
| 12:10 | 3) 2022 PSD Broadband Availability Data – Presentation, Q&A from Board and Public, Discussion --- <i>Clay Purvis and Corey Chase, VT PSD</i> |
| 1:40 | 4) Vermont Budget Process – <i>Will Anderson, Finance and Management</i> |
| 2:10 | 5) Staff Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Updates – <i>Christine Hallquist/Rob Fish</i>• Outgoing Grant Requests – <i>Rob Fish</i>• Dashboard Review – <i>Alissa Matthews</i>• Press Coverage – <i>Herryn Herzog</i>• Upcoming Construction Grant Applications - <i>Lucy Rogers</i>• Grant Agreement Status and Monitoring Activities – <i>Kristin Brynga</i> |
| 2:40 | 6) Extended VCUDA Update (including updates from any CUDs) - <i>Rob Vietzke, VCUDA</i> |
| 3:10 | 7) Policy and Goals Discussion (<i>Placeholder</i>) |
| 3:40 | 8) Public Comment |
| 3:50 | 9) Parking Lot |
| 4:00 | 10) Date of Next Regular Meeting & Motion to Adjourn |

Press inquiries; please contact Christine Hallquist, christine.hallquist@vermont.gov, 802-636-7853

Vermont Community Broadband Board Draft Meeting Minutes
Meetings are being held virtually.
October 31st, 2022

I. Call To Order – 12:01pm

Roll call completed by Patty Richards

Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
Laura Sibilia (Remote)
Dan Nelson (Remote)
Brian Otley (Remote)
Holly Groschner (Remote)
Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)
Robert Fish – Staff (Remote)
Alissa Matthews – Staff (Remote)
Stan Macel – Staff (Remote)
Adam Bornstein – Staff (Remote)
Herryn Herzog – Staff (Remote)
Lucy Rogers – Staff (Remote, joined at 1:12pm)
Kristin Brynga – PSD Staff (Remote)

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

II. Approval of the October 17th Draft Minutes

The Board discussed the October 17th, 2022 draft Board Meeting minutes. Patty Richards made a motion to approve the minutes. Dan Nelson seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

III. CUD Finance Program and Consideration of NEK Broadband Request

Rob Fish highlighted the program one-pager included in the packet and introduced Christa Shute, Executive Director of NEK Broadband.

Christa Shute provided an overview of their application for the CUD Finance Program, explaining that NEK Broadband is submitting a \$24 million application to USDA, which requires a 25% non-federal match for which they currently have Community National Bank Letter of Credit for the purchase of fiber and are applying for a \$5M loan from VEDA and will use the \$400,000 from this VCBB program as a debt service reserve account for collateral, enabling a lower interest rate.

Patty Richards asked what alternative plans would look like if not funded. Christa responded that Plan B would be to see if they could structure something differently with Community National Bank or to start beating the bushes with other banks. It would cause a lot of complications related to the timing of the USDA ReConnect application.

Patty Richards asked for clarification on the source of these funds. Christine shared that this \$1.5M was allocated to help leverage other funds for the construction of networks. Rob Fish added that they were pre-ARPA State General Funds transferred over when the VCBB was created, specific for leveraging financing that was connected with the broadband expansion loan program.

Patty Richards asked what the plan is for all of the other CUDs since there is not enough for everyone to get this size of a grant. Rob explained that this is a first-come, first-served, but that there is not currently a plan for other CUDs that are not ready to participate yet.

Laura Similia asked what VCUDA has said about the proposal. Rob responded that this is a program that had been discussed prior to the VCBB being created and the availability of all of the federal recovery funds and that the assumption from the beginning was that it would be put to use as needed. He explained that everyone has been waiting for an opportunity to use them as intended to leverage financing that federal funds can't be used for. Laura reiterated her question of whether VCUDA was supportive of the process and stressed the importance of having full support from all of the CUDs to ensure the VCBB is appropriately behind them. Patty asked if Rob Vietzke was present and if he could speak to the topic. Rob Vietzke responded that it hadn't come up specifically since the program was proposed by the VCBB at the last meeting. Christa added that Rob Fish had presented the terms of the new program proposal to VCUDA as it was in development and that there was no pushback at the time about it being first-come, first-served. Rob Vietzke added that he felt the group would want Christa to be successful with her application to USDA.

Holly Groshner stated that it might make sense to establish a notice policy for when the VCBB uses a first-come, first-serve to give public notice of grant applications when submitted to solve the problem of fairness. She continued with praise to Christa Shute for figuring out an arrangement for financing that applies old grant funds in a new context. She then asked Christa what hurdles or contingencies they have in order to use the funding. Christa explained that NEK Broadband needs the commitment of this money in order to file the USDA grant application for \$17M in grants to match the \$6M, and the loan from VEDA is dependent on the approval of this \$400,000 for debt-service. Holly replied that she feels that fairness comes into play if other CUDs are lining up for these funds and they are tied up with a grantee in an uncommitted way and asked VCBB Staff to ensure there is a timeline in which these funds needs to be confirmed or must be returned. Rob Fish confirmed that there is a timeline in the RFP stating that. Christa added that she would like to see it included in the grant agreement that if the USDA grant isn't approved she would still like to be able to apply the funds towards a VEDA loan with adjusted terms. She also stated that NEK Broadband is the first applicant through the VEDA program and that she would, through VCUDA, help get other CUDs interested in the VEDA loan program.

Patty Richards made a motion to approve the NEK's CUD Financing Program application, given that based on their size their allocation would have been larger than the \$400,000 requested. Laura Sibilia seconded.

Brian Otley asked if there was a way to get a response from VCUDA before a vote. Laura suggested that the CUDs could consult during the meeting and respond. Rob Vietzke offered to start an email thread to provide an opinion from VCUDA by the end of the meeting and Patty Richards agreed to table the vote.

After the VCUDA update, Patty Richards called the motion to a vote, Holly Groschner seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

IV. Compliance Review Recommendations

Kristin Brynga shared the proposal for the VCBB's Compliance Review Process, which is new to the Public Service Department as well, but would ensure adequate transparency, accountability, and oversight.

- All high-risk grantees will be reviewed; low/moderate risk grantees will be at the discretion of the PSD/VCBB.
- Proposed annual attestation denoting changes once initial review is complete.
 - Based on responses additional targeted follow-up procedures can be performed.
- Review framework will be conducted for regulatory compliance and governance purposes only.
- Financial audit is outside of the scope of PSD/VCBB review.
 - ALL CUDs once operational must have a third party financial audit annually.
 - All grantees with over \$750K in expenditures must have a Single Audit performed annually. A Single Audit is more comprehensive than a financial audit and includes evaluation of internal control processes related to compliance with Federal grant requirements.
- Some of the areas of focus for the proposed Regulatory Compliance and Governance Reviews conducted by PSD may include but are not limited to:
 - Compliance with Title 30, Chapter 082: Communication Union Districts
 - Examples of procedures to perform could include:
 - Review of governing board composition and competency
 - Review of governing board meeting minutes
 - Review of bylaws
 - Interviews with a selected delegates
 - Compliance with 2 CFR 200: Uniform Administrative Requirements
 - Examples of procedures to perform could include:
 - Review of Conflict of Interest Policies
 - Review of Procurement Policies
 - Review of Cost Allocation Methodology
 - Internal control process review
 - Included within this review will be an assessment of the processes and procedures in place over screening and monitoring of service providers.

Patty Richards asked who establishes the high-risk categories. Kristin explained that every grantee, after grants are approved by the Board, must go through a Risk Assessment before the award agreement can be finalized, and includes a checklist and a memo that is signed-off on by Christine and stays in the grant file. She explained that since all of the CUDs are new entities and the dollar threshold inherently puts them in the high-risk category, not because anything specific has happened or has been found wrong when reviewing everything. Kristin added that the Risk Assessment is a statewide process required by Vermont Finance & Management. Patty then asked if this has been run by the State Auditor's Office. Kristine responded that it has not and wouldn't necessarily be in their purview since it comes down to grant monitoring procedures and is done a little different by every Department and this would just be a procedure for us to do to ensure accountability.

Laura Sibilgia asked for clarification that the VCBB audit will occur after the single audit is completed. Kristin responded that they are not dependent on one another and can happen separately. Laura then asked about the plans for the technical assistance that has been discussed for the CUDs. Christine Hallquist explained that formal training on grant compliance is planned, but that this is really about getting the CUDs running in a way that they become low risk over time and confirmed that there will be continued training for the CUDs over time.

Holly Groschner stated that she thinks it is great that the VCBB is starting this work but feels more is needed. Holly explained that in her town funds were given to the local telecom to provide service to 35 households and the Public Service Department doesn't know whether they were ever served. Holly asked if the VCBB's regulatory review could include whether or not the CUD's have complied with their existing grant documents and benchmarks within the grants to ensure the funds are getting used for the right purposes consistent with the applications. Kristin explained that the current process is addressing that through monthly reports and will also happen during grant closeout from a financial perspective and there will also be accountability on the construction side. Christine added that the approved budget includes approval of constructed projects by a Fiber Optics Engineer. Holly added that she also thinks Patty's suggestion to interface with the State Auditor would be beneficial. Christine responded that she feels that the information requests from the State Auditor have been helpful and that Staff will come back with more information. Holly requested that the grant award document be provided to the Board to show what kind of ramifications and conditions are included and that standards for recourse would be related.

Patty asked Christine whether staff are making changes based on the information requests from the State Auditor. Christine responded that responses are still being given but that yes, there could likely be changes in how the VCBB Staff and Board operates. Patty asked for an update on those questions and possible changes. Laura Sibilgia asked that as part of the VCBB's role in facilitating support and technical assistance to the CUDs that it would be appropriate for the Executive Director to interface as much as possible to make sure that the CUD's have the assistance they need to be in compliance. Christine agreed and responded that as part of the updates Patty requested in the Parking Lot, Staff will prepare recommended actions as a result of the questions.

V. Simplified Business Model Review (moved from item VIII)

Christine Hallquist shared a quick overview of the Simplified Business Model that she pulled together through discussions with Adam Bornstein, which highlights the importance of increasing the portion of projects funded by grants, the impact of changes in interest rates, and the take-rate that is able to be achieved in order to provide affordable broadband service.

Holly Groschner asked if the preconstruction costs and the make-ready costs are on target for all of the CUDs and if we could compare the CUD numbers against a standard. Christine responded that they have not reviewed that yet and it would likely have to be done confidentially but that the team could work on it. Holly added that in the world of affordability that if these networks were 100% funded and \$30 could be applied from ACP the VCBB would meet its goal of affordability but it would not eliminate the challenges that low income households have in qualifying for ACP.

Patty Richards pointed out that with 100% grant funds, this model is illustrating that the minimum threshold, absent any subsidies would be \$46 on average in the state.

VI. Utility Make Ready (Q&A with VEC & WEC)

Christine introduced Lewis Porter, the General Manager of Washington Electric Coop (WEC) and Peter Rossi, the Vice President of Operations for Vermont Electric Coop (VEC). Christine also reported that she has had several discussions on this topic with Mike Burke from Green Mountain Power (GMP) as well and will provide their updates as appropriate in the discussion.

Patty Richards pointed out that Burlington and VEPSA members are not present and will not be a part of the conversation.

Christine shared that GMP has set in place the capacity and hired three additional contractors to double the amount of make-ready work they can do for a year, from an average of about 4500 poles to 9000 pole changes per year in order to meet the broadband requirements. She noted that the challenge comes to pricing because the contractors add to the overall cost which get passed directly along to the CUDs. They fully comply with PUC Rule 3.700, and if any of the Districts have an issue it can be elevated through the VCBB.

Peter Rossi then provided a presentation for VEC, highlighting that over the last two years they had 5,248 total attachments requested, half of them being from NEK Broadband which had 206 qualifying locations for offsetting the capital expenditures. He explained there has been almost 300 miles of make-ready completed over the same timeline. Peter noted that Velco fiber is going across VEC's 34-5 line with a 12-4-70 under-build causing VEC to eat a lot of those costs which other utilities are noticing the impact on CapEx as well with increased NESC violations.

Peter reminded the board that on March 19th of 2021, a three-year program began to contribute \$2000 to the capital cost for each qualifying location with an annual cap of \$1M for a total program cap of about \$3M.

Peter shared that they are storing fiber for the Lamoille CUD in Johnson. He also explained that they haven't reached 500 miles per year but noted that is still the maximum VEC can handle without a delay and that VEC has not yet seen any project plans for Lamoille FiberNet or NWFX.

Peter noted that while VEC has plenty of poles in stock, the normal 1-2 week supply timeline has expanded to an average of 8 weeks so if construction starts to accelerate next year there main be increased supply chain impacts.

Louis Porter and Dave Prisock, the Chief of Operations for Washington Electric Coop provided a brief overview of make-ready work from WEC's perspective, for CVFiber, NEK Broadband, and ECFiber. Louis explained that their relatively small crew has been shifted from other work to make-ready. Currently they have completed make-ready for over 7,000 poles, taking an average of 48 days to complete. They do have contracts standing by to bring in outside crews and have been working closely with the CUDs to prioritize work based on their project timelines.

Dave explained that WEC is currently preparing for winter to ensure they have enough materials on hand to take care of any outages or any storm damage but they have increased order sizes to try and continue sourcing all needed materials.

Christine asked what that might mean in terms of make-ready for the CUDs. Louis explained that it changes the priorities to focus on occupied dwellings and that they are trying to hold-off on make-ready that is farther out in the construction season. Laura asked if the team at WEC has suggestions in terms of what CUD's could do to help with scheduling make-ready work. Louis responded that continued close communication should help everyone stay on track. Laura then asked Christine if she knew if the CUDs were consistently communicating with the utilities in

their Districts. Christine responded that it was something GMP has also asked for and VCBB Staff will encourage the CUDs to make sure frequent meetings are happening.

Laura asked Christine to follow up with any challenges the Municipal Utilities may be having.

Holly asked for a summary of the Velco project and whether it would make a difference to anything to try and negotiate with them in the coming construction year to prioritize CUD projects. Peter provided an overview and explained that he doesn't think there would be an impact because their project is almost done.

Patty asked if this was a fairly calm storm year for the utilities and Peter confirmed it was overall, but that we are heading into winter and Louis echoed that. Patty then asked if the contractors lined up for make-ready are the same that get pulled in for storms. Louis and Peter both responded that they are all the same contractors, but if the load of make-ready applications increases and there are more large storms to deal with everyone could run into issues.

Patty asked if there are sharing agreements in place and Peter explained there might not be something official but there is good communication and cooperation.

Dan Nelson asked if any of the make-ready work caused by Velco's project help clear the way to pole attachments or clean up work for the CUDs coming later. Peter answered yes, if they take that route. Christine added that this brings up a to-do to coordinate with private telecom providers more effectively.

Rob Vietzke shared that the CUDs are very pleased overall with the collaboration and recognition of the importance of bringing broadband to Vermont and to all work together towards that effort. He shared that from his review of where CUDs are at it seems like the next step is to figure out how to continue improving coordination around prioritization and looking at getting contiguous service areas done and having conversations when there might be 200 pole applications and 198 of them are simple make-ready and 2 of them force the project into complex make-ready. He suggested that maybe some combined efforts to look at dashboard numbers across the state might help improve the process a bit.

Patty asked Rob V. if he is aware of any spots that are particularly having issues. Rob responded that DVFiber and Maple Broadband are the two CUDs that are coming out of the studies and starting to want to pay for applications and they are doing comparisons on the estimates against actual bills and trying to understand them.

Christa shared that VEC has been fantastic to work with and she made a few points including that statewide we might want to leverage purchasing power and might want to continue coordinating around pre-purchases, and that as plans continue to move forward there might be more strategic ways to move materials and make-ready and construction around where it's most needed.

Ellie de Villiers echoed that providing a high level dashboard of how things are going statewide to the VCBB on an ongoing basis, identifying some of the delays and their causes and what possible mitigation strategies might be most effective would be very helpful as CUDs all pick up the pace. She added that to Patty's point, until actual challenges are clearly identified and where there are areas of risk, it is hard to do any sort of risk management.

David Jones commented that the CUDs are working hard to navigate through the marketplace

issues that have been mentioned and that is something everyone will need to continue to work on adjusting to.

Roger Nishi mentioned that with the issue of cross subsidization and not being able to have the ratepayers of the electric utilities paying for some of the costs that may be incurred to get the poles ready, and asked if there are funds available to help them continue the make-ready. Louis and Peter responded that it's not an issue yet, but they are keeping their eye on it and it might be something that changes as demand increases.

VII. New Staff Intro (originally item III. tabled until Lucy Rogers joined)

Christine Hallquist introduced Lucy Rogers, who has been a Representative from Lamoille County and was instrumental in the CUD broadband efforts with a lot of experience and is highly respected in the state. Christine has pulled Lucy into the Digital Equity planning team along with Alissa to immediately start working on the 5-year plan with the newly awarded \$518k planning grant. Christine explained that Lucy will also become the main liaison to the CUDs.

Lucy Rogers shared her excitement to get to work with the VCBB, and that in addition to being a legislator and working on energy and tech, she has been working with Lamoille FiberNet over the last few years and is looking forward to taking that work and looking at it with more of a statewide lens.

VIII. Workforce Development Plan

Christine Hallquist provided a summary of the Workforce Development Plan, developed by a team made up of the VCBB, CUDs, and Vermont state Colleges and Vermont Technical College.

She shared the challenges:

- estimated need of more than 200 technicians to meet the five year build out
- turnover rates in the industry are high, averaging 55%
- piece pay is prevalent in the construction industry among contractors making it harder to justify adding apprenticeship programs or prioritizing safety and worksite cleanliness
- hard to find trainers and pressure on the workforce is only going to increase with the amount of federal funding available

She shared the program goals:

- facilitate the establishment of the scaling of education training programs
- focus on Vermonters (state and local focus)
- provide Vermonters with opportunities for better paying jobs
- provide job and career opportunities for the marginally employed
- create career paths
- improve employee retention

Christine shared that the team is now focused on employer outreach and collecting information for industry partners, finalizing training and core curriculum, starting to develop a pay-it-forward program, create two separate advisory boards, an industry advisory board and a training advisory board, engaging Vermont's career Tech Ed program, developing success measures, sourcing, funding, and deploying training resources, and finalizing career path programs with other Agency partners at DED and DOL.

Patty Richards asked if the team is working with any of the contractors and if there are financial incentives that would help. Christine confirmed that they are, but that they are all across the board at different places and some are leading these efforts in their own companies and others will need coached along the process, but the goal is to raise the bar for everybody and funding doesn't seem like it will solve all of the issues and it seems like reducing turnover rates is the biggest attractor right now.

Laura Sibilia expressed concern about workforce training programs, particularly for temporary staff and encouraged the team to sit down with the local contractors and directly ask what it would take to get 20 or 30 new staff hired. Christine confirmed she will continue to have those discussions.

IX. VCUDA Update

Rob Vietzke provided an update for VCUDA, starting with the fact that he heard back from 8 of the 9 CUDs in support of the NEK CUD Financing Program application. He also highlighted that the legislative and policy group met with Christine and Rob F. and Ray Pelletier has started to draft some language around the legislative initiatives that everyone was most interested in this year including language around acquisitions and mergers as those terms relate to public entities maintaining town interests and public control if there was efficiency to work across CUD borders. He also shared the other very simple technical correction they would like to see around including the CUD municipal staff in the municipal staff to qualify for the Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement System.

X. Public Comment

There were two public comments provided:

- Christa Shute stated how complicated it is that CUDs don't have a way to have a certificate of good standing, and that there are a lot of other states that apparently do certificates for municipalities and other types of organizations, and she would like the VCBB to consider approaching the Secretary of State to do the same thing.

Patty Richards asked for this to be added to the parking lot. Holly asked if VCUDA added it to the VCUDA legislative committee and Christa agreed she would.

- Irv Thomae commented that in the run up to the PUC's revision with make-ready rules where the rules dealt with schedules and required time frames unless agreed otherwise and he feels that helped with the collaboration and forward planning between CUDs and utilities or pole owners. He also commented in response to Christine's simplified CUD business model that ECFiber as a pioneer in this effort had to take on a lot of debt and he hopes discussions can bring the CUD closer to the same kind of balance that is being sought for the new CUDs.

XI. Staff Updates

Christine Hallquist shared that the VCBB Staff will be presenting to JITOC later in the week.

Rob Fish shared that VCBB Staff issued a press release about the most recent grants last week and another press release just went out regarding the match program with quotes from the Governor and VLCT. He reported that within the next month NEK Broadband, CVFiber, Maple Broadband, Deerfield Valley, and ECFiber will all be continuing or starting construction and that SoVT may be completing construction ahead of schedule by mid-2023.

Christine then reviewed the items on the parking lot, which include:

- VCBB's approach to mapping and strategy for challenging the FCC - tentative plan to present strategy at future meeting tentatively January. A Federal Program Officer at the NTIA will be needed to work on this with and that has finally been announced as Clay Purvis from the Public Service Department.
- Define audit criteria and post award grant reporting and review process for grantees/CUDs – the team shared the memo today and will provide the framework being used for other kinds of compliance review and share a grant agreement with the Board.
- Invite to the Federal Delegation to future Board Meeting - tentative plan to attend a future meeting after the elections.
- Workshop for the CUDs on Uniform Guidance is scheduled for December 7th.
- Establish policy to address issue of enforceability with any of the partners and the CUDs - team will finalize plan and share with Board that addresses how the VCBB will know when problems are starting to occur, develop a corrective action plan, and then what happens if people default on that corrective action plan and come back to the board with that plan. Stan commented that grant terms are all the VCBB can enforce. Holly stated that is why she is interested in seeing the grant agreements.
- Finalize subsequent overbuild policy and will present plan at a future meeting.

XII. November 3rd Board Organizational Meeting

Patty Richards explained the intention is for an opportunity to check-in and focus on what is working and not working, frequency of Board Meetings, structural improvements, and the addition of the VCBB's interpretation for 'universal service' and ensuring alignment of VCBB goals with what was intended in Act 71 legislation and the Board reviewed the draft 2-hour agenda.

XIII. Confirm Next Meeting & Motion to Adjourn

Patty Richards confirmed the next meeting will be November 14th and made a motion to adjourn. Laura Sibilia seconded, the motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:17pm.

**Vermont Community Broadband Board Draft Organizational
Meeting Minutes
Meetings are being held virtually.
November 3rd, 2022**

I. Call To Order – 12:12pm

Roll call completed by Patty Richards

Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
Laura Sibilila (Remote)
Dan Nelson (Remote)
Brian Otley (Remote)
Holly Groschner (Remote)
Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)
Robert Fish – Staff (Remote)
Alissa Matthews – Staff (Remote)
Stan Macel – Staff (Remote)
Adam Bornstein – Staff (Remote)
Herryn Herzog – Staff (Remote)
Kristin Brynga – PSD Staff (Remote)

II. Approval of Agenda

Patty Richards made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of 10 minutes for public comment as the last item. Dan Nelson seconded, and the agenda was unanimously approved.

III. Goals of the Organization

Patty asked Board members to think of goals to help improve the efficiency and efficacy of the Board process. No policy or procedural development was done during the meeting; however, the following items were noted to be addressed prospectively.

- Establish a Board communication policy and procedures including staff communication expectations.
 - All communication should come from Christine, rather than from other staff members. All things sent to the board should be authorized by Christine so it should come from her directly to ensure this is the case.
- What is in the purview of the board and what is in the purview of staff?
- How and when do we include VCUDA in discussions and actions?
- What is the prospective focus of the board as we enter a new stage of programming?
- Baseline communications. How, when and what is the goal for each?
- Now that there is more staff capacity, the Board would like Christine to be able to spend

more time interfacing with them.

IV. Reaffirming Role and Expectation of the Board

Discussion items regarding Board roles and expectations included:

- It is recognized that all Board members have very busy schedules; however, being present and engaged when meetings are scheduled is an expectation that needs to be upheld to facilitate robust discussions and adequate oversight.
- The Board needs to solidify the objectives of Act71 more formally.
- Development of performance measurements for the Board is needed.

V. Board Packet Content and Structure

Prospectively Patty and Christine will work together to put together the agendas at least a week in advance of each meeting.

Requested changes or reaffirmations for Board Packet content included:

- Agenda Structure
 - Include a placeholder for policy and goal discussions on each agenda.
 - Budget to actual analysis to be included at least quarterly.
- Dashboard summary to highlight grant status and compliance and progress reporting.
- Parking lot (No change)
- Copies of press releases that have been sent out since the last meeting.
- One pager to provide a high-level summary of any new opportunities that staff is pursuing to include: objectives, partners, dollar amounts, what is being leveraged, etc.
- Status of grant requests that have been received but that are not yet ready for Board review to ensure the Board is aware of what is in process currently.
- Benchmarks for grants by which to compare new requests.

VI. Board Meetings

Both the Board and staff expressed a desire to change meeting frequency from twice a month to once a month. Christine also inquired about moving the Board meetings to a day of the week other than Monday; however, due to Laura's legislative schedule this proved to not be possible. No changes were made to the day of the week.

Patty made a motion to move to a once-a-month meeting frequency beginning in December. Brian Otley, seconded. Laura expressed concern and would like to begin

this practice later than December so the change is not rushed but is willing to make an attempt at the change and see how it goes. The motion was unanimously approval.

November meetings will continue as scheduled on Monday November 14th and Monday November 28th. Christine and PSD staff will present the budget on the 14th with a discussion regarding ongoing budget reporting needs. Monday December 12th will be the first in the monthly meeting schedule. However, the board packet being provided a full week in advance will not begin until January.

Requested changes for meeting process and procedures included:

- Designated staff should make initial presentations and be available to answer questions from the Board as the point person for that particular topic of discussion. Any other discussion from staff should be limited as it is the Board's role to deliberate and make the final decisions.
 - Christine agreed that staff can be more organized and limit additional discussions; however, she reiterated that she does not want to stop staff from taking responsibility for items within their areas of expertise. The Board agreed with this sentiment.
- It would be useful to have staff provide the board with status updates for each of the CUDs.
- The Board needs to be apprised of monitoring activities of grantees.
- It would be useful to bring in others to speak to the board as it is appropriate.
 - Governor's Office
 - State Legislative Leaders
 - Federal Legislative Leaders
 - PSD Commissioner
 - Auditors Office
 - Others
- It would be useful to have information from legislative committees that impacts the VCBB presented to the board in summary format. Particularly if anything is contentious.

Further comments were requested from Rob Vietzke on behalf of VCUDA. He indicated that it would be helpful to the CUDs to get away from the last minute agendas that create a frantic push between when the agenda is released and the meeting itself. Additionally, the CUDs feel that it would be more helpful for the board and staff to work out problems in advance of the meetings, rather than in the meetings, so that everyone is on the same page going into the meetings.

VII. Executive Director Review Process

Before the end of the year the Board Chair would like to sit down with Christine and do an Executive Director evaluation. This will include the recognition of accomplishments and discussion of current and prospective challenges. Feedback will be provided in advance of this meeting by the whole Board with comments summarized during the one-on-one meeting between Christine and Patty.

Laura suggested that a gap analysis be performed whereby Christine can rate herself as well and comparisons can be made between this self-evaluation and the Board evaluation.

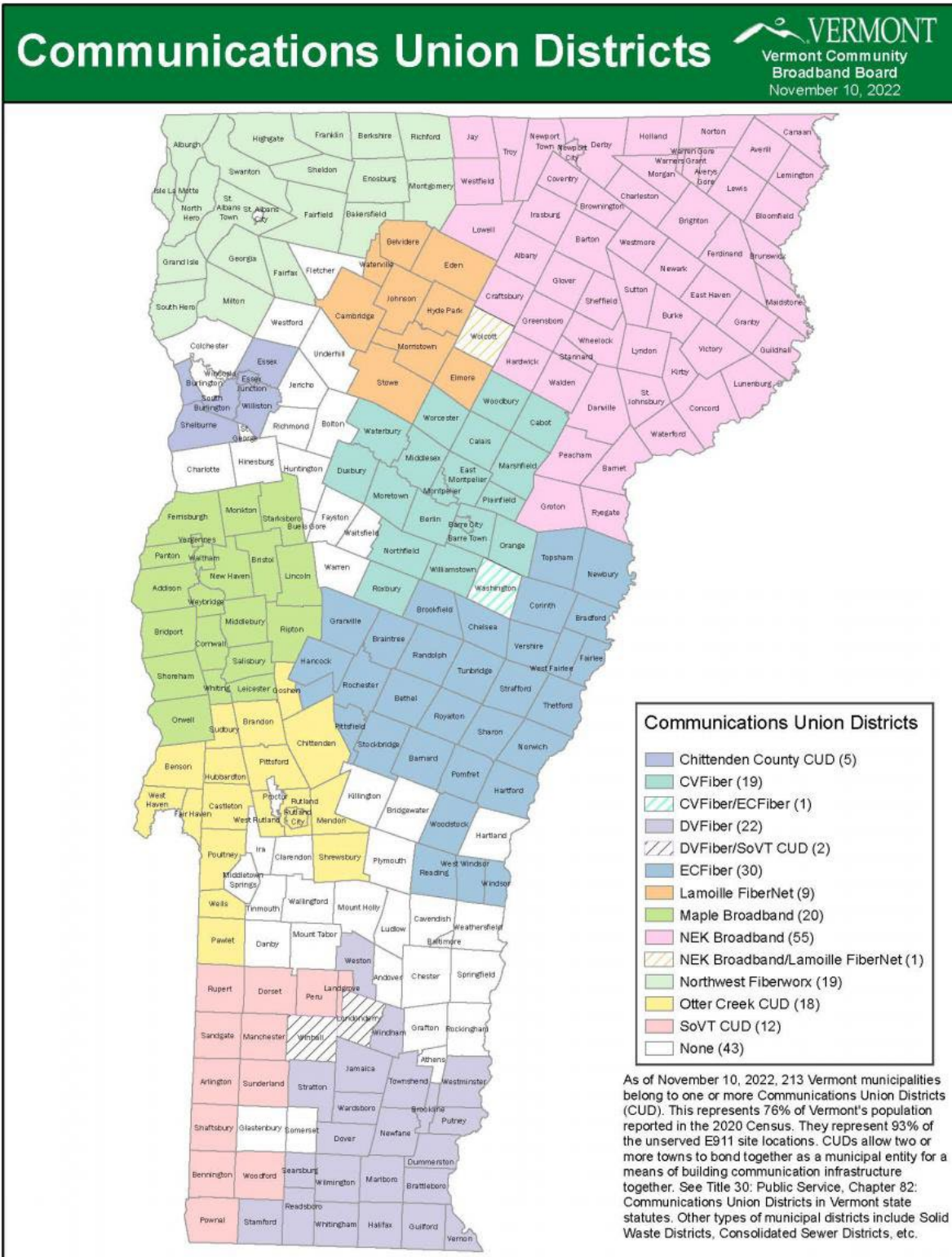
VIII. Board Performance and Review

Staff will also be expected to give feedback to the Board as to what is working well and what is not working well. Input from all staff will be encouraged; however, Christine will be responsible for providing a summary of the feedback solicited. The Board requests that commentary on Board performance and review be confined to this review process rather than in any other formal or informal public forums.

Laura suggested that a gap analysis be performed whereby the Board members can rate themselves as well and comparisons can be made between this self-evaluation and the staff evaluation.

After opening the meeting for public comment and hearing none, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45pm.

Map of Current Communications Union Districts





VERMONT COMMUNITY BROADBAND BOARD

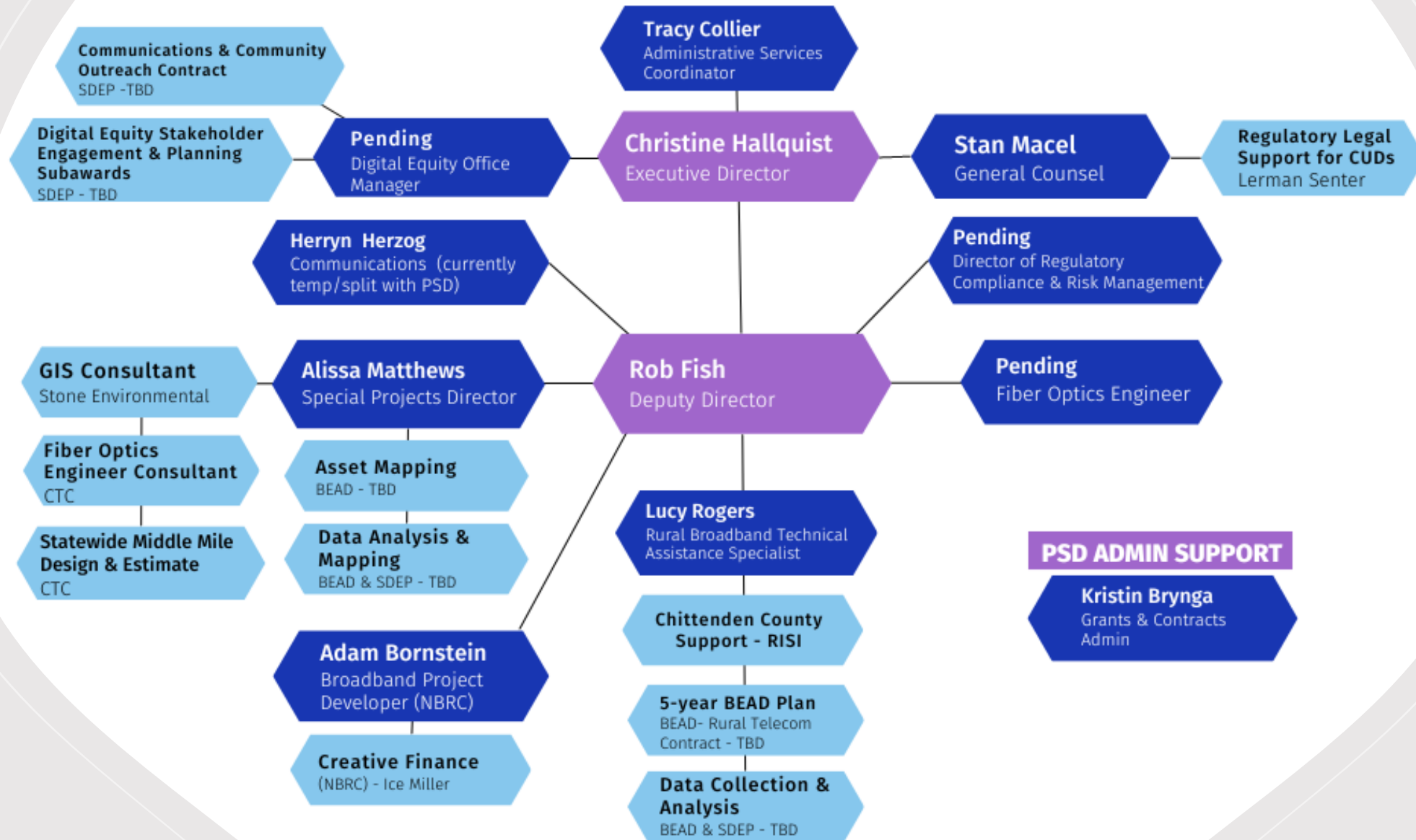
Presentation to Joint Information Technology Oversight Committee

November 3, 2022

- Christine Hallquist, Executive Director
- Rob Fish, Deputy Director
- Alissa Matthews, Special Projects Director
- Stan Macel, General Counsel

<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/vcbb>

VCBB STAFF & CONTRACT SUPPORT



Public Accountability



**First Meeting – August
2021**



**39 Public Meetings
4 hrs each**



**Average attendance 30
participants**



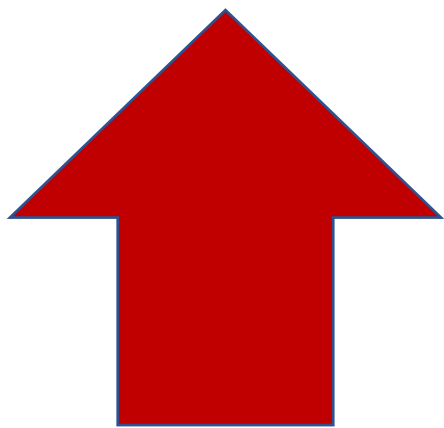
**Minutes and Recordings
Posted on Website**

Goals and Mission

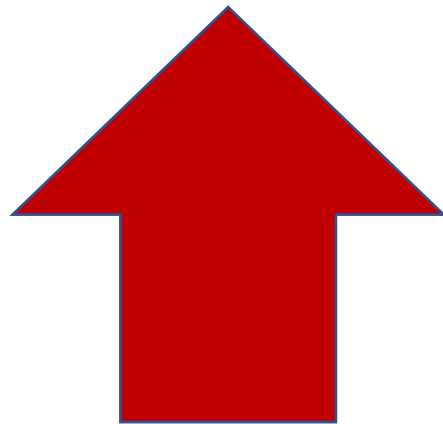
§ 8081. “to support policies and programs designed to accelerate community efforts that advance the State’s goal of achieving universal access to reliable, high-quality, affordable, fixed broadband and to establish the Vermont Community Broadband Board to coordinate, facilitate, support, and accelerate the development and implementation of universal community broadband solutions. “

Funding Model

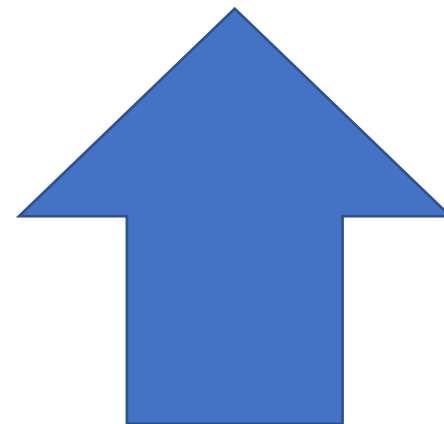
- Grant funding and donations provide initial funding (~ 60%)
- CUDs build and own infrastructure. Operator provides the service
- CUDs access the Revenue Bond Market or other financing to complete the build-out
- On Avg, Statewide, every addl \$50M provided in grants reduces consumer rate by \$10/mo.



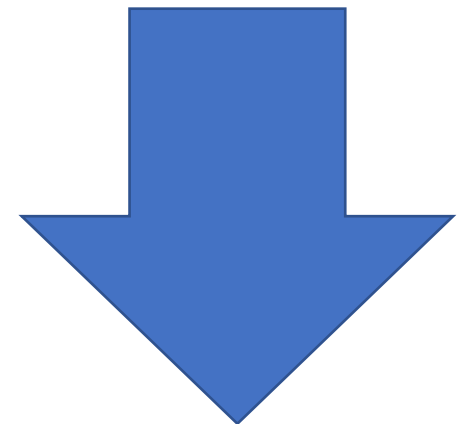
**Traditional Borrowing
Consumer (loans, bonds)**



**= Higher
Prices**



**Grants &
Creative Finance**



**= Lowers Prices for
Consumers**

Act 71 Grant Programs

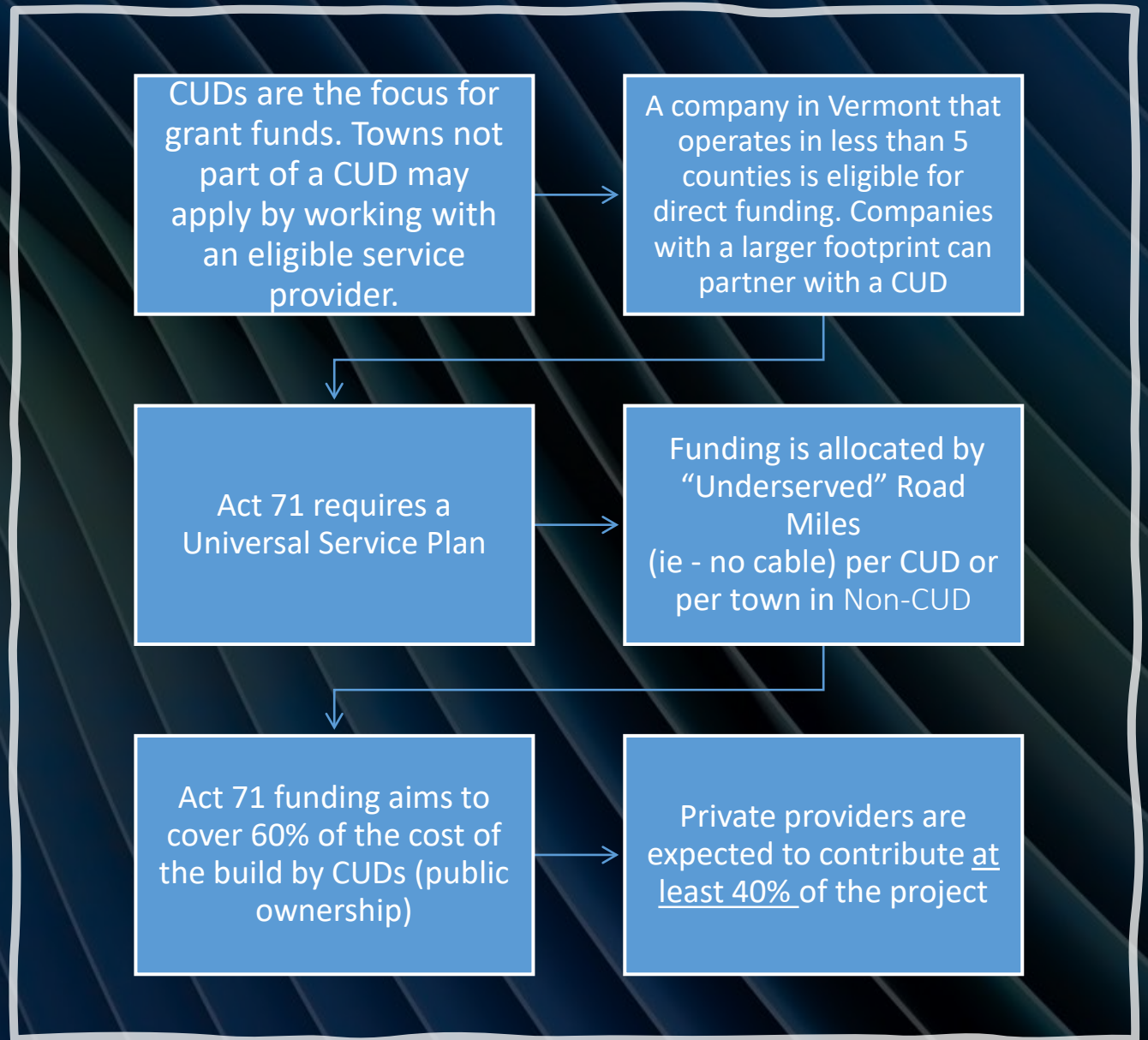
Act 71 PreConstruction

to provide grants to CUDs (“Districts”) for preconstruction costs related to broadband projects that are a part of a universal service plan and meet other criteria as specified in Act 71. As provided by Sec. 2 § 8085 of Act 71, eligible costs include expenses for feasibility studies, business planning, pole data surveys, engineering and design, and make-ready work associated with the construction of broadband networks, including consultant, legal, and administrative expenses, and any other cost deemed appropriate by the Board.

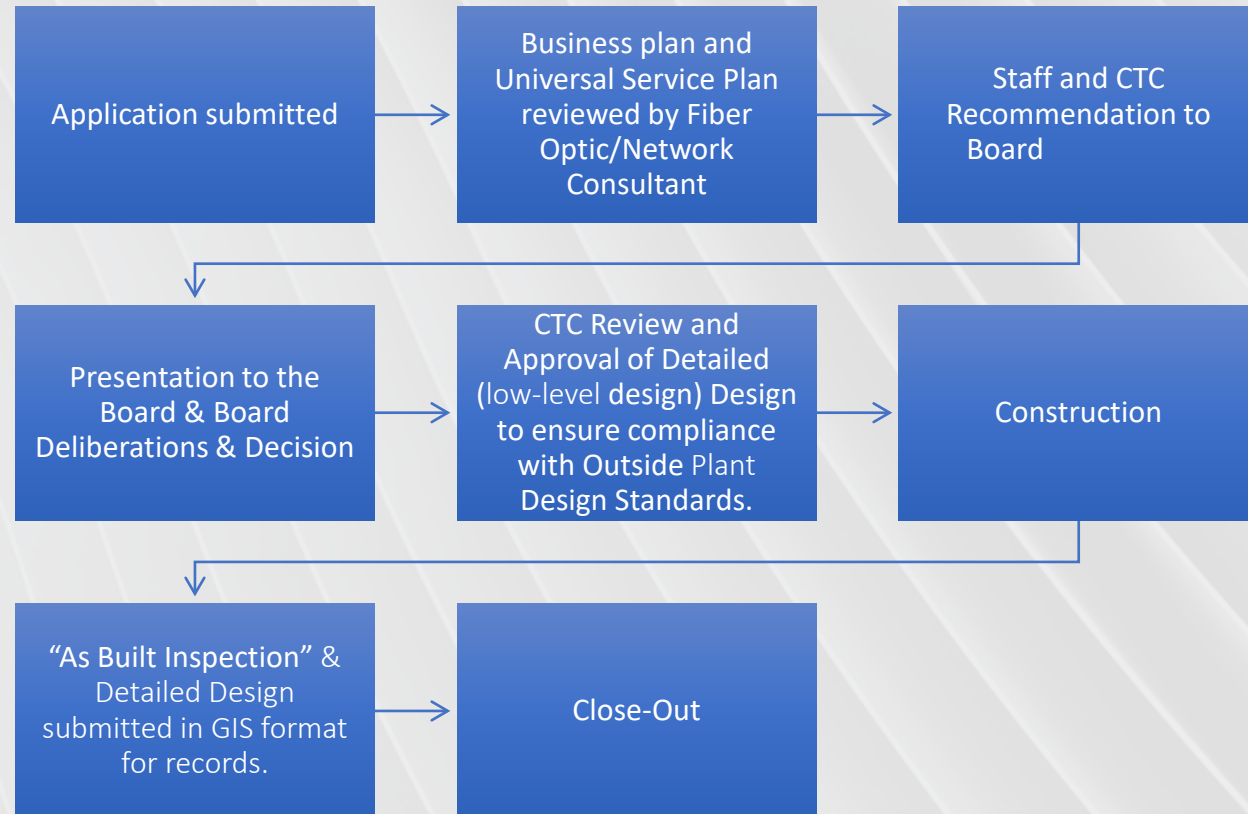
Act 71 Construction Program

to provide grants to Eligible Providers (“Providers”) for construction costs related to broadband projects providing service of at least 100/100 Mbps that are a part of a Universal Service Plan and meet other criteria as specified in Act 71 as well as those criteria established by the Vermont Community Broadband Board.

Act 71- Construction Grant Considerations

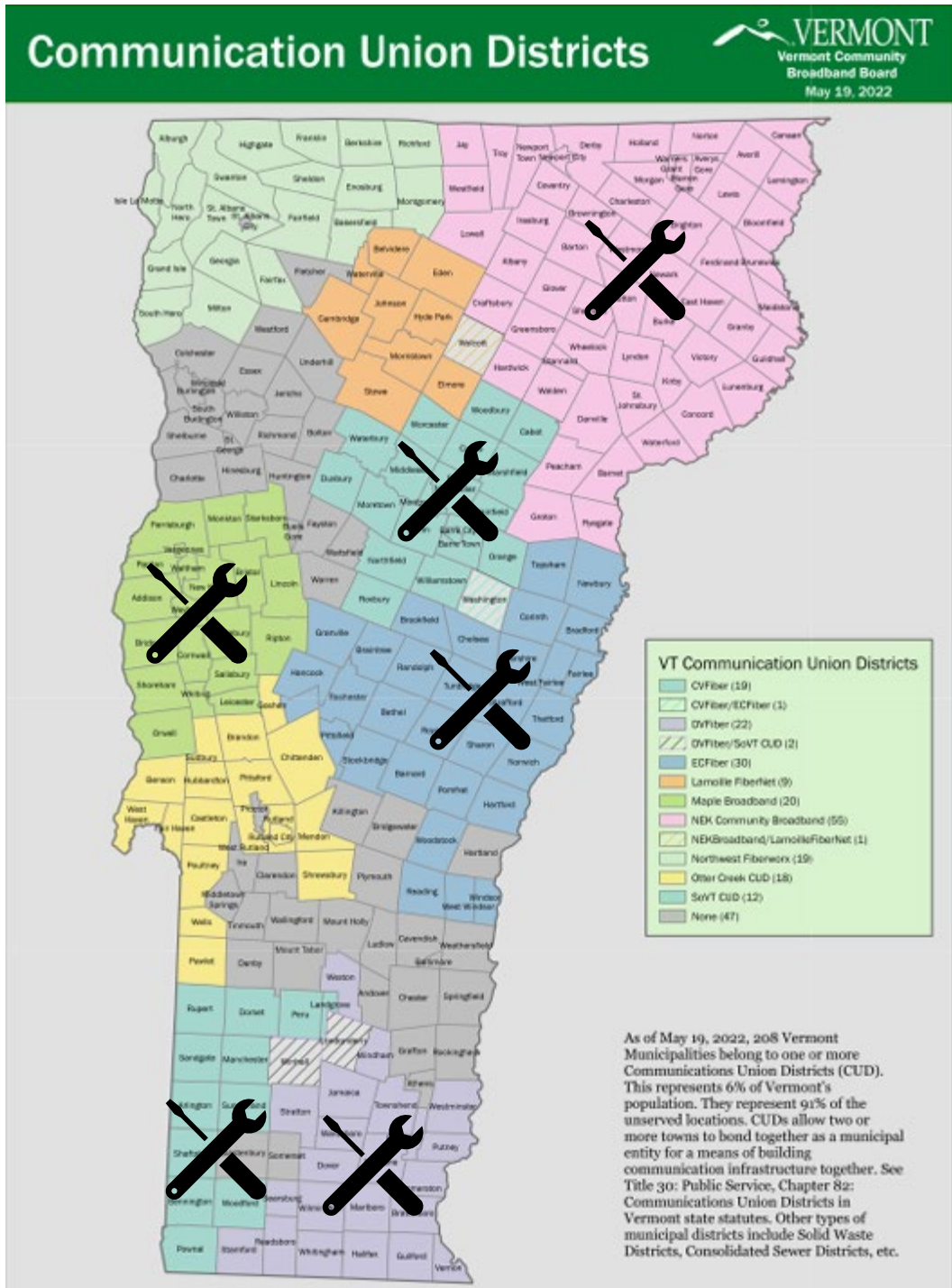


Construction Grant Process



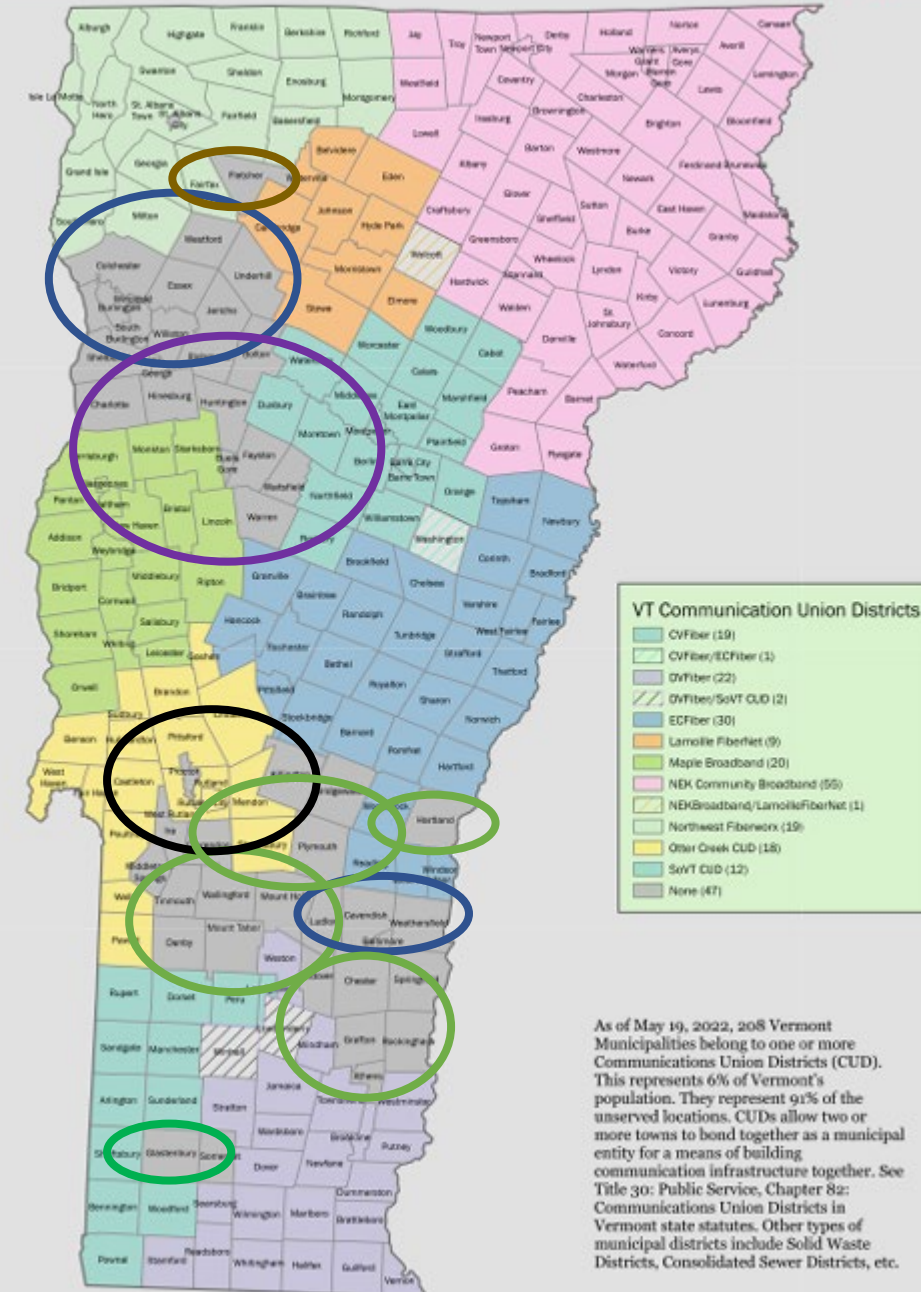
Communications Union Districts

- 9 Districts
- 208 Member Towns
- 416 Volunteer Board Representatives & Alternates
- More than half the state's population
- 92% of premises statewide without access to 25/3
- New District Forming in Chittenden County
- Construction in 2022



Towns Not Members of a CUD

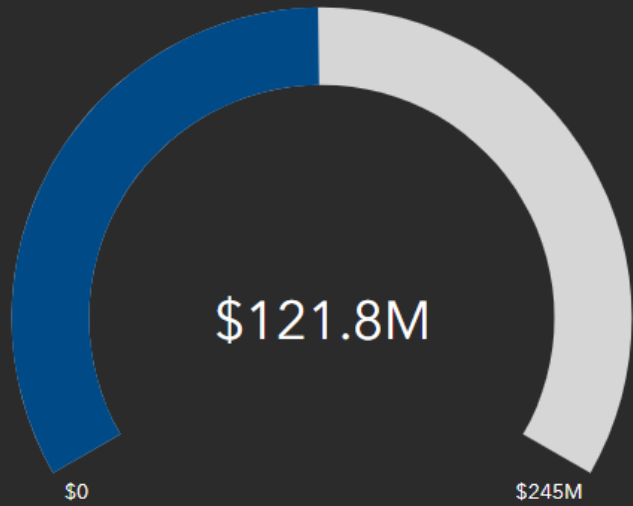
- **NBRC grant to MCFiber for Fletcher**
- **Chittenden County CUD forming**
- **Act 71 Construction Grant issued to build to remaining addresses in phased approach in WCVT towns not members of Maple CUD**
- **Towns served with fiber by Consolidated/Fidium or Vtel**
- **TDS planning on building fiber to 90%+ addresses. Other areas may be served by ECFiber in the future.**
- **VTel – All addresses served by fiber**
- **SoVT will serve with fiber via partnership with Consolidated/Fidium.**



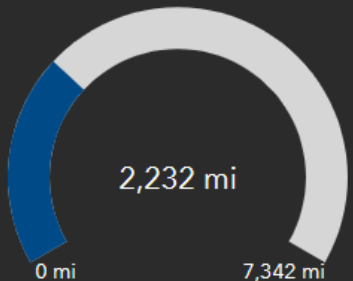
FUNDING DASHBOARD



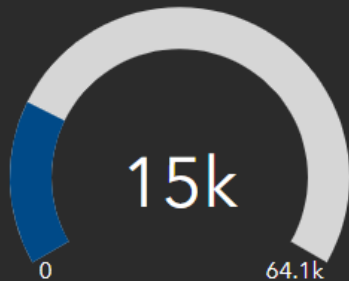
VCBB Act 71 Grant Funding As of October 2022



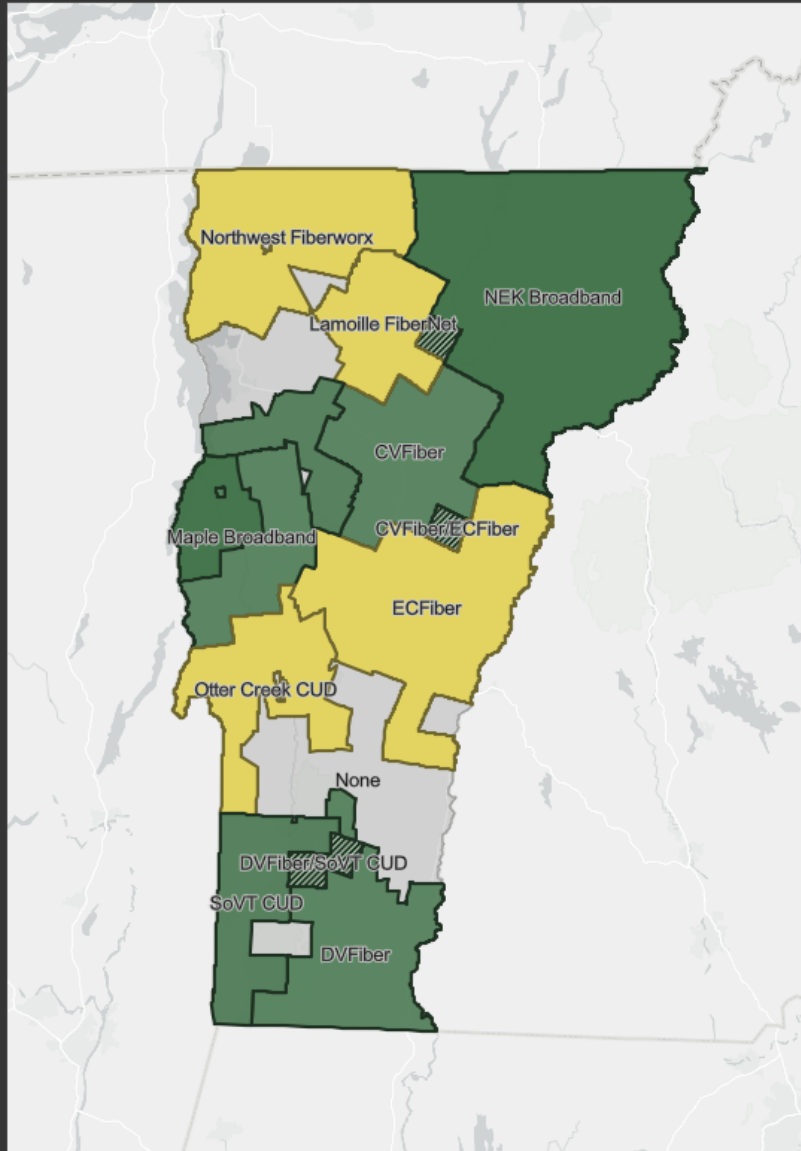
Total Investments



Project Miles Funded



Eligible Addresses Funded



VCGI, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS

Powered by Esri

- \$150 Million in ARPA
- \$95 Million in ARPA Capital
- ~\$100 Million – Infrastructure Bill/BEAD

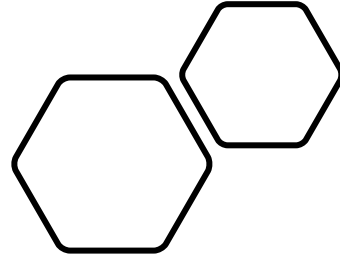
A LOT OF \$\$ BUT.

- Inflation
- Rising Interest Rates
- Material Shortages
- Workforce Challenges
- BEAD Delays

As of October 2022

<https://vcbb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/75eb5dd3e4454c18a31ef25d97b3d3da>

Key Constraints



- **Access to Capital**
- **Access to Materials**
- **Access to Labor**
- **Delays with BEAD**
- **Delays with Make-Ready**

With billions of dollars being invested nationwide in fiber optic broadband networks, materials and labor will be two of the most important and difficult constraints to address.

Access to Capital/Materials - Creative Finance

Creative Finance involves adapting, improvising, and blending traditional financial products and concepts to unlock public and private capital thus exponentially increasing the prospect of delivering high-quality outcomes.

- **Joint Fiber Purchase Backed by Letters of Credit** - Saved over \$2M and avoided supply chain disruptions.
- **Leveraging Existing Programs** - By granting NEK Broadband \$400,000 they can access a VEDA Loan at a lower rate. The loan will be the matching funds for a \$24M USDA grant.
- **Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) bonds**
- **Pay-it-Forward Workforce Development Programs**

Access to Capital - Matching Program

Cornwall Select Board Chair Benjamin Marks said, "I am proud that Cornwall was able to take a leadership role in early ARPA fund allocation to Maple Broadband. The VCBB grant match doubles the good we were able to do with our initial grant and will be an important consideration for our future allocation of ARPA funds. Cornwall is underserved by the legacy DSL copper-wire currently in place. I firmly believe that fiber optic service at the highest speeds is necessary for us to function in a 21st century environment. The more Maple Broadband's build-out is funded outside of the debt markets, the lower the cost will be to Cornwall residents who need this vital service."

- The VCBB will match additional contributions from town ARPA up to \$100,000
- The funds will be used during the IJA - BEAD program for match
- Discuss with your CUD the best use of the funds
 - Accelerating construction
 - Paying for high-cost drops
 - Cover additional areas of town
 - Affordability

To-Date: 40 Towns Have Committed \$2,485,622

CVFiber Total Match To-Date: \$833,000

Calais	\$200,000
Moretown	\$50,000
Roxbury	\$20,000
East Montpelier	\$100,000
Waterbury	\$50,000
Woodbury	\$50,000
Washington	\$20,000
Cabot	\$50,000
Duxbury	\$20,000
Northfield	\$90,000
Middlesex	\$100,000
Worcester	\$53,000
Orange	\$30,000

DVFiber Total Match To-Date: \$86,742

Marlboro	\$24,642
Jamaica	\$22,100
Halifax	\$40,000

WCVT Total Match To-Date: \$243,830

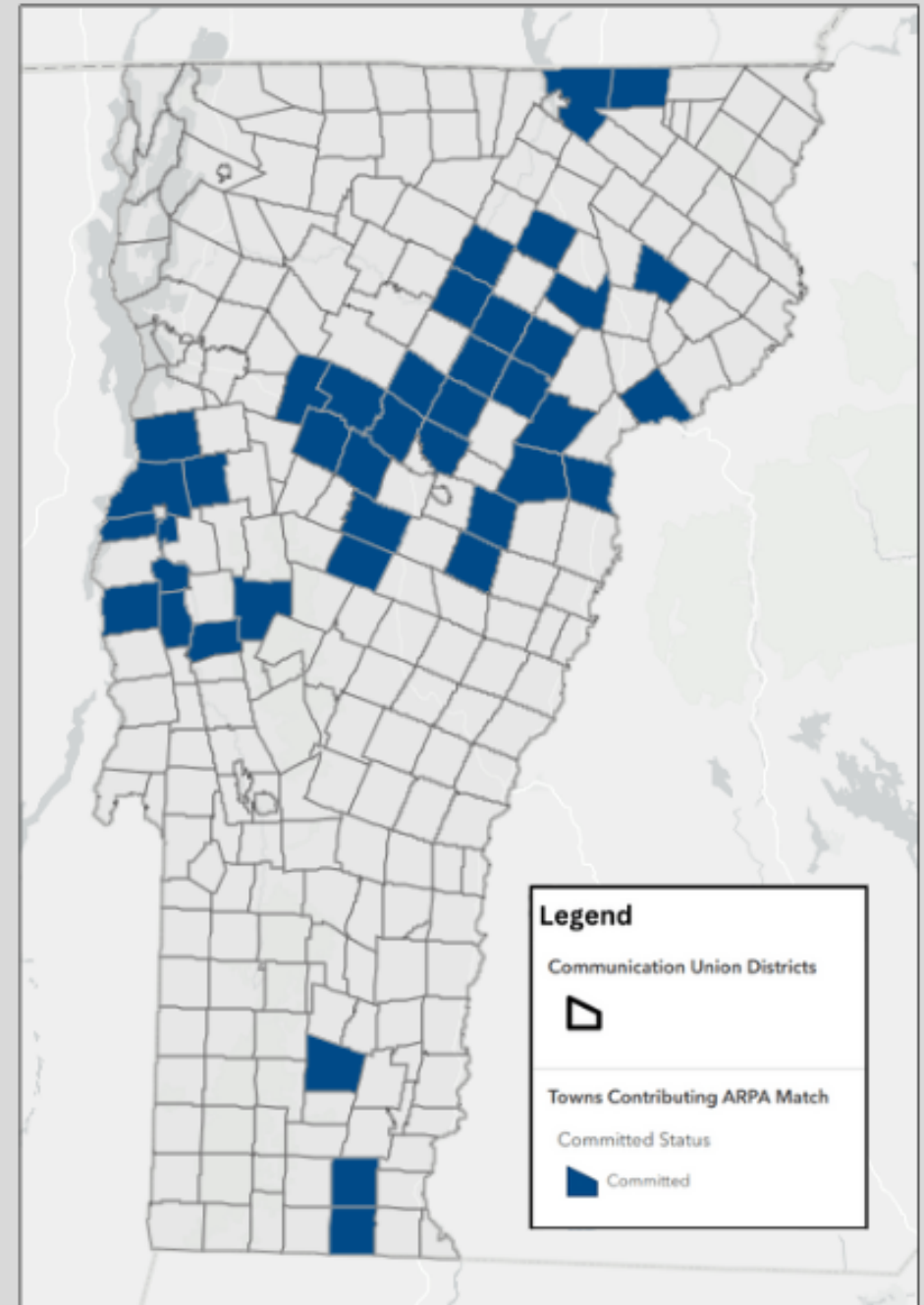
Bolton	\$200,000
Charlotte	\$43,830

NEK Broadband Total Match To-Date: \$942,050

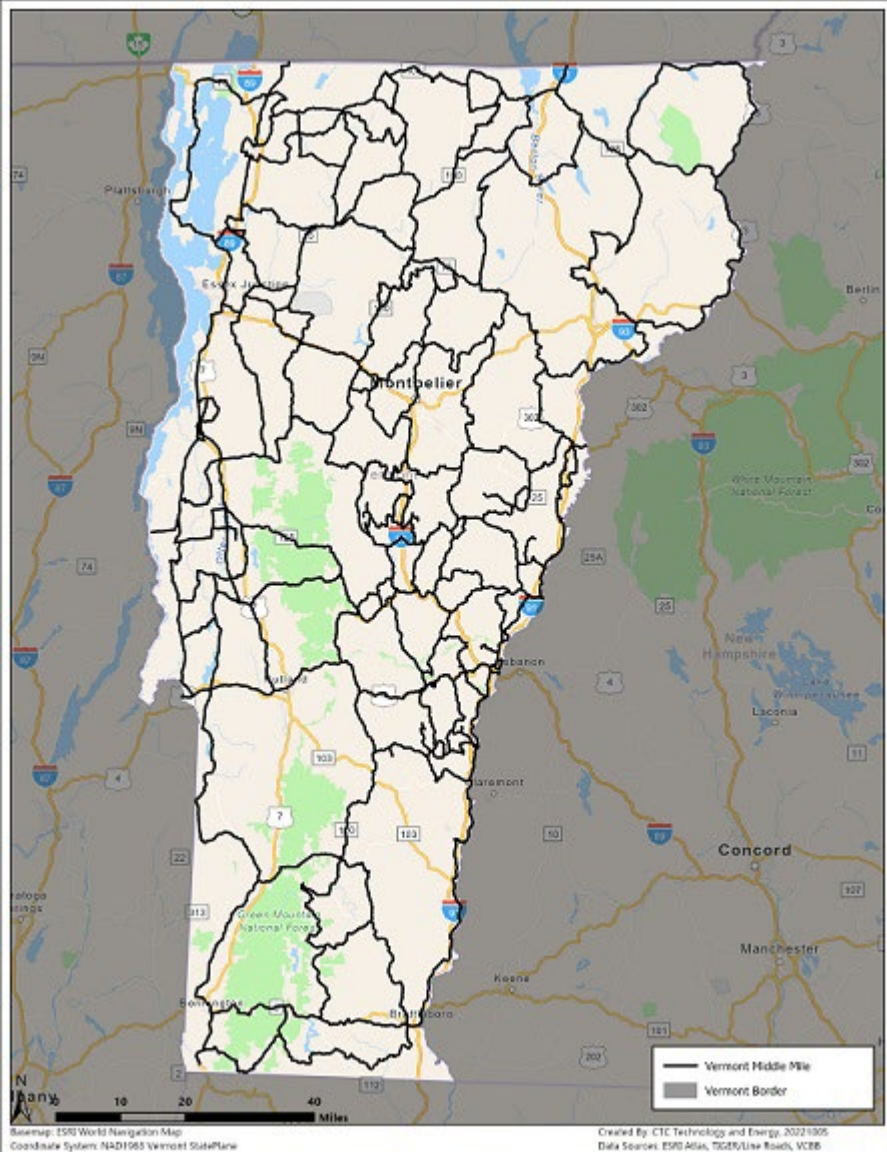
Peacham	\$30,000
Groton	\$40,800
Rygate	\$76,000
Walden	\$40,000
Hardwick	\$139,800
Derby	\$72,417
Waterford	\$110,883
Wheelock	\$40,900
Holland	\$123,833
Craftsbury	\$116,733
Wolcott	\$52,917
Glover	\$41,267
Burke	\$56,500

Maple Broadband Total Match To-Date: \$380,000

Bridport	\$40,000
Cornwall	\$50,000
Ferrisburgh	\$50,000
Monkton	\$50,000
Panton	\$50,000
Ripton	\$25,000
Salisbury	\$30,000
Waltham	\$45,000
Weybridge	\$40,000



Middle Mile Application



- Proposes \$114 Million Fiber-Optic Middle Mile Network.
- 1,663 miles total (1,107 new miles, leverages previous state fiber, and IRUs).
- Public control via a Special Purpose Vehicle
- Increases resiliency and redundancy of all networks.
- Addresses public safety concerns around remote host isolation.
- Accelerates deployment of last mile and reduces end cost to consumer.
- Developed via discussions with CUDS and Private Telecoms.
- Match: \$30M General Funds & \$16M in-kind using existing public and private assets.

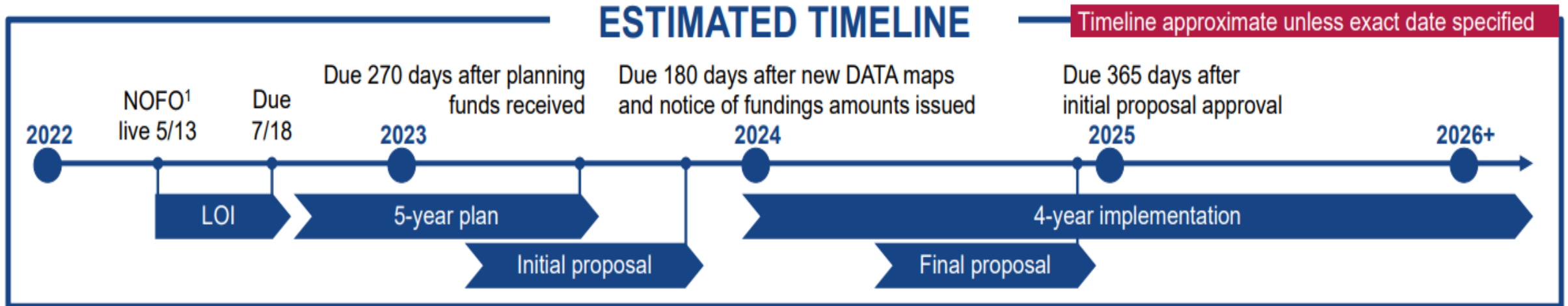
For illustrative purposes only

Workforce Development

Build-out requires the construction of 8,000 miles of fiber over a 5-year period, 200 fiber optic technicians, as well as interrelated jobs, such as tree-trimmers and electric utility lineworkers.

- The Workforce Development Plan includes apprenticeship programs, tuition assistance, job placement, an earn-to-learn program, a centralized resource for sourcing workers
- Targeting, recruiting, and training people to work on all aspects of universal build-out of broadband
- Collaboration including VCBB, Vermont Department of Labor, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, CUDs, the Vermont Technical College, Vermont State Colleges, and industry leaders

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program Delays



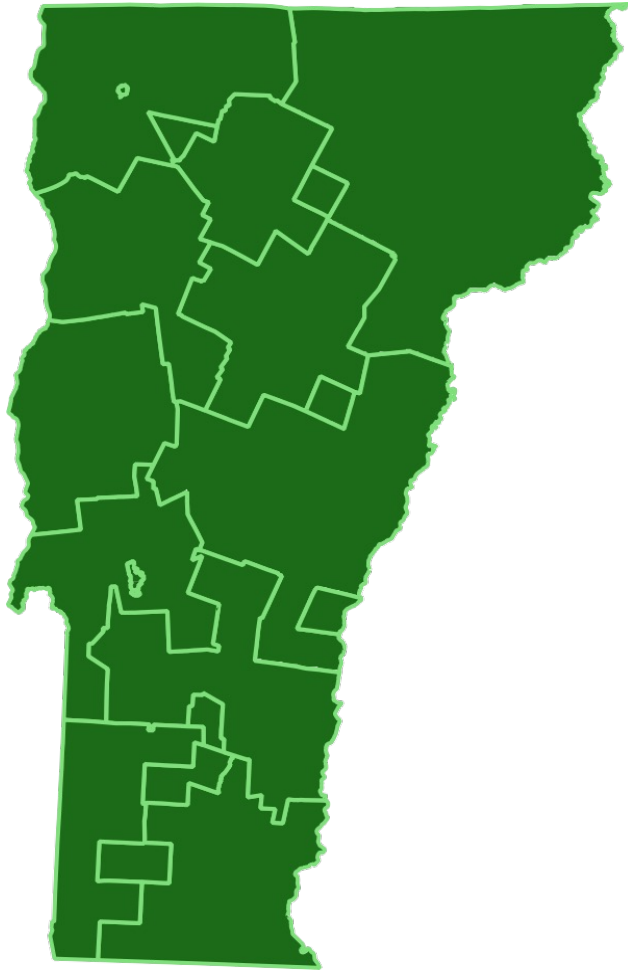
Vermont Community Broadband Board

- *Questions?*

Christine Hallquist, Executive Director
Vermont Community Broadband Board
Christine.Hallquist@vermont.gov

Communications Union Districts
Contact info:
<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-communications-union-districts>





VCUDA

The Vermont Communications Union Districts Association serves to unite the interests of Vermont's growing municipal internet networks, devising ways to share resources and voicing CUD consensus on critical policy issues.

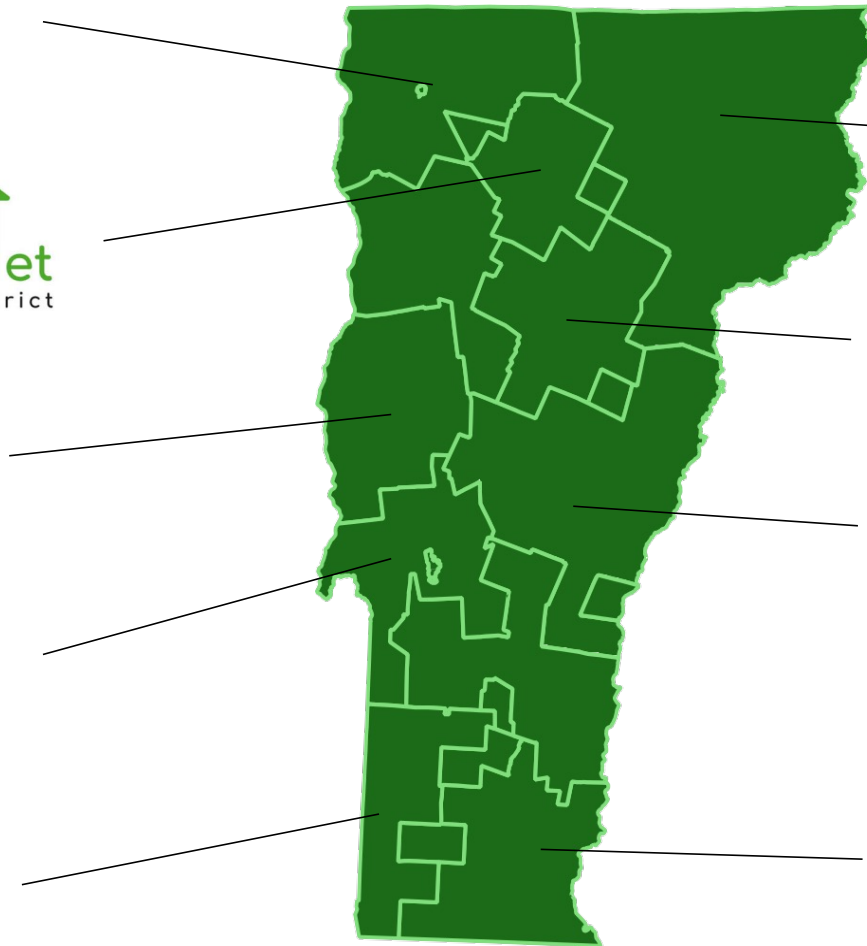
Before the Joint Information Technology Oversight Committee
November 3, 2022

Rob Vietzke, Program Coordinator
Rob@vcuda.org www.vcuda.org

Vermont Communications Union Districts



SoVT CUD



A National Perspective on Vermont Leadership:

- Vermont's pre-pandemic leadership through Act 79 and Act 71 has set it ahead of many states in having solid plans to bring world class universal availability to unserved and underserved residents.
- Vermont's Community-Based Broadband program is a national leader in converting federal funding opportunities into universal service with advanced broadband on previously unserved doorsteps.
- There is momentum building across Vermont in realizing Communications Union District Universal service plans.



- **Hired** talented and experienced executive director: Jennille Smith
- **Make Ready:** achieved its first utility make ready licenses and is in discussions with contractors for construction of its network to start
- **Materials:** ordered and received most of its 400 miles of construction materials and obtained warehousing for storage of the materials
- **Volunteer Resident Professionals:** CVFiber continues to operate through a committed staff of volunteer professionals





New Staffing: Fulltime bookkeeper/grant manager, community relations manager, part time treasurer. Posting for fulltime: CFO, GIS Specialist, Executive Assistant, Installation Technicians.

Grants: \$16 million plus \$5 million = \$21 million in construction grants. Applied for additional \$23.3 million federal construction grant. Loan approval from VEDA for \$5 million loan

Construction and Customers: added 13 additional miles for a total of 34 miles with service to 432 premises. Long-term contract with Eustis Cable with 90% of workers to be residents of NEK. Affordable Connectivity Program process complete. Online billing available.

Warehousing and Parts: Long term Saint Johnsbury warehouse. Warehouse in Brighton Vermont. Receipt of 300 miles of parts, 800 miles of fiber, and equipment for one location.

Make Ready: Applications for 463 miles and over 11,000 poles (licenses received for 38 miles).

Easements and Licenses: Out of 23 equipment cabinet locations, several are secured, many are identified and confirmed with easements in process, roughly half are still in development. Variety of permits including underground, aerial interstate crossings.





- **Hiring:** Hired experienced and talented Executive Director, Ellie de Villiers, who has a decade of experience in telecommunications operations and strategy, with a focus on affordable access in emerging markets.
- **Funding:** Received \$8.7M grant for construction in portions of Cornwall, Leicester, Middlebury, Orwell, Salisbury, Shoreham, and Whiting.
- **Contracting:** Awarded initial contract to Syracuse Utilities through competitive bid.
- **Construction:** Began network construction.
- **Service launch** planned for early 2023.

- **Community Involvement:** Estimated 2,600 volunteer hours contributed by CUD residents in past 6 months.





NORTHWEST FIBERWORX

- **Planning:** Recently refocused on new network tenants and re-analyzed finance modeling (Internet Service Providers).
- **Rates:** Develop rates and required provisions for network licensing.
- **Request for Information:** Soon to publish RFI for network licensing.
- **Pole Surveys and Build Sequencing:** Completed 250 miles of aerial LIDAR surveys in Enosburgh and Swanton. Completed build sequencing and technical standards with NRTC.
- **Detailed Design:** Starting on Zone 1 of detailed design.
- **Fiber Delivery:** due early December.



Southern Vermont CUD



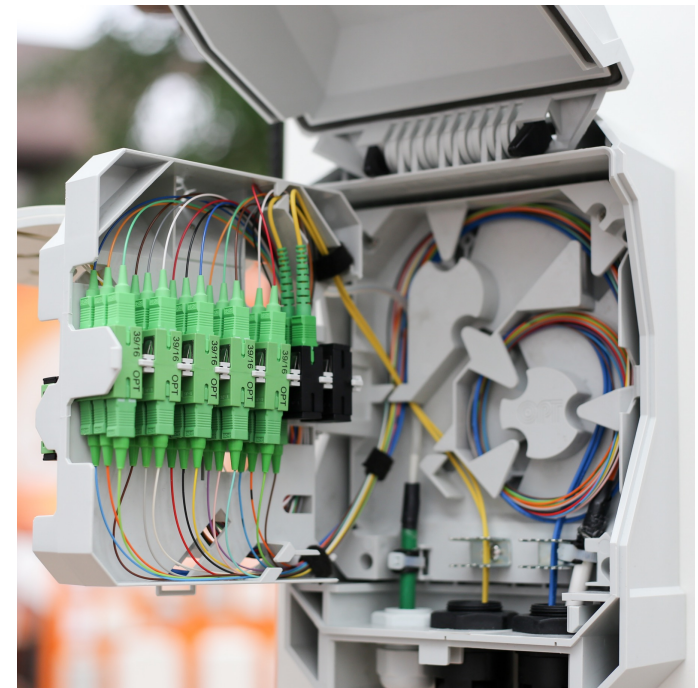
- **Signed:** Master Services Agreement in place with Consolidated Communications, Inc to begin construction of a fiber network in the CUD's territory.
- **Phase 1:** Currently underway, is financed by CCI as part of their Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) obligations and covers most of the Southshire, including Bennington, Woodford, Glastenbury, and part of Pownal and Shaftsbury. Phase 1 was completed during 2022.
- **SoVT CUD Grant:** Application to the Construction Grant Program approved for \$9,009,085 in partnership with Consolidated Communications Inc (CCI).
- **Phase 2A:** Financed by Construction Grant. Currently in engineering and planning, set to begin deployment in early 2023, will cover approximately 2000 unserved and underserved addresses in the CUD's territory.
 - Most of SoVT CUD's territory will be covered at the conclusion of this phase.
- Identified and confirmed the "hardest 100" addresses - now narrowed down to the "hardest 17" - and developing a plan to serve those locations.
- **Partnerships:** The CUD has greatly benefited from collaboration with the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC). The administrative assistance and expertise in navigating the public funding arena provided by Community and Economic Development Specialist Jonathan Cooper and Regional Planner Callie Fishburn has been invaluable.

DVFiber

empowering our connection to the future



- **Hiring:** An experienced leader, Gabriel Ciuffreda, as Executive Director. Plan to add additional administrative support in the upcoming months.
- **Executive Committee:** To support the pace and volume of work, empowered an Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Governing Board for quicker decision making.
- **2nd grant,** for \$21.9 million, awarded on July 11, 2022. This grant, which was signed by DVFiber on August 12, 2022, will fund the construction of 513 miles of fiber optic cable capable of connecting up to two-thirds of the more than 7,700 unserved and underserved addresses in our district.
- **First Customers to go Live:** We plan to go “live” with an initial group of customers by the end of 2022.
- **Construction Continues:** Construction of the southern backbone ring will continue unabated into 2023. A special taskforce is working to develop DVFiber’s capacity to subsidize eligible customers who cannot afford the monthly charges for our service.





- **Already providing Service:** Original 23 towns are either complete, being lit, or under construction. Have constructed 1700 miles of network serving over 7500 customers.
- **Financing:** Have borrowed 63.5 million in municipal revenue bonds and received \$1 million of in-kind support in the form of the VTA's Orange County Fiber Connector, and has currently drawn down about \$350K of \$2.8M in pre-construction grants.
- **New Service Areas:** In the Town of Hartford, the unserved/underserved areas of West Hartford are done and the cabled areas in White River Jct, Wilder, Quechee and Hartford Village are under construction.
- **New Towns Being Added:** Supported in part by a grant from the broadband fund, design of 8 new towns and poleshed border areas is either finished or will be shortly.
- **Expansion to New Towns:** In newly admitted towns of Fairlee, West Fairlee, and Bradford (and hub construction in all new towns) construction is underway.



High Level view of program Risks & Mitigation:

Risk:

FCC Mapping Program, finalizing the IJA
BEAD Program's benefits for Vermont and
Delays

Pace and Cost of utility pole "Make Ready "

Potential Gap in funding to continue rapid
progress that is underway

Mitigation:

Continue leveraging community
knowledge and data from CUD's
and the State to correct
inaccuracies and improve data.

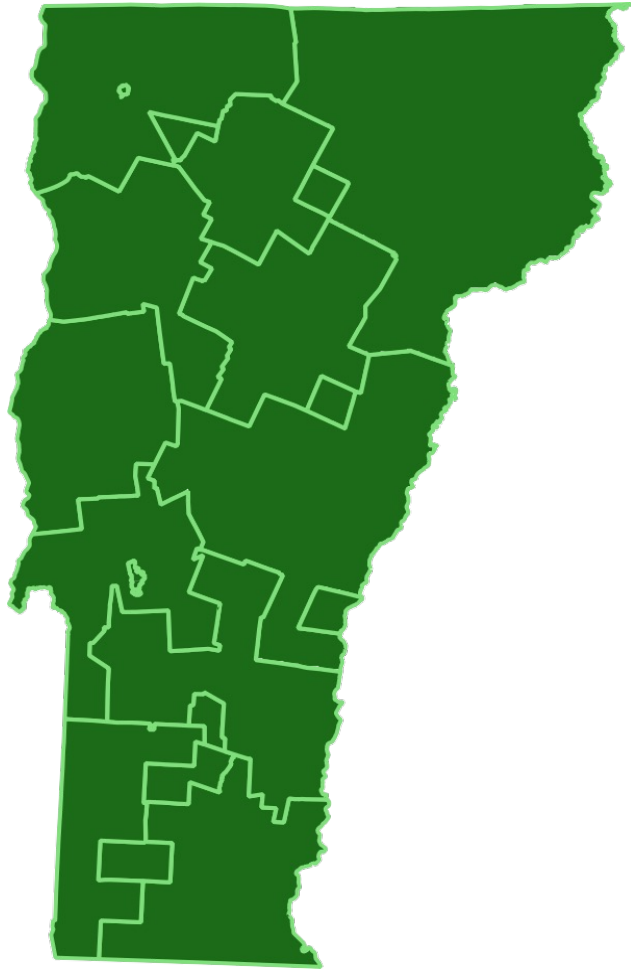
Increase Collaboration and
Communications between
CUD's, VCBB and Pole Owners

Begin to consider gap
approaches to avoid buildout
stalls.

Celebrate progress and people of the CUD's

Led by experts and hundreds of community volunteers, Vermont and its Communications Union Districts are on the move, delivering world class broadband where it has never been available before.





VCUDA

Thank you!

Before the Joint Information Technology Oversight Committee
November 3, 2022

Rob Vietzke, Program Coordinator
Rob@vcuda.org www.vcuda.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 31, 2022

Contacts: Heryn Herzog, Communications & Outreach Coordinator,
Vermont Community Broadband Board
phone: (802) 522-3396 email: Heryn.Herzog@Vermont.gov

Rob Fish, Deputy Director, Vermont Community Broadband Board
phone: (802) 522-2617 email: Robert.Fish@Vermont.gov

VERMONT COMMUNITY BROADBAND BOARD EXPANDS TOWN MATCH GRANT FOR TOWNS TO BRING BROADBAND TO ALL VERMONTERS

Montpelier, Vermont –The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) will match town Local Fiscal Recovery ARPA fund contributions dedicated to broadband in an expanded town match program as part of the VCBB’s Act 71 Broadband Construction Grant Program. To be matched, the funds must be pledged to the Communications Union District (CUD) serving the town or to an eligible provider committing to build out to all underserved locations in a community if the town is not a member of a CUD. The goal of the program is to accelerate the build-out of 100/100 Mbps broadband while decreasing its cost and providing affordable service for town residents.

“This is a great opportunity for towns to boost the power of the dollars they spend getting their residents connected. This match enables their funds to go much further, getting them connected faster and ultimately at a lower cost. The more money that comes from grants like this, the better for our towns,” said Governor Phil Scott.

Most pledges will flow through the Communications Union Districts. The CUDs plan to use the funds to overcome obstacles unique to each town, cover the cost of drops to low-income residents, accelerate the build-out in the town, or support build-out to areas with existing service not meeting the needs of the community. The funds may also allow a CUD to pursue innovative

financing to save residents money over the long term. This could include using the town funds to leverage other federal programs, buying down of interest rates, letters of credit, or creating revolving loan funds for the purpose of expanding broadband.

“VLCT has encouraged towns, cities and villages that accepted ARPA funds to be patient and look for opportunities to leverage their local awards. The VCBB Town ARPA Match Program is an excellent opportunity for the local leadership of Vermont communities that have identified access to broadband as one of their top priorities to multiply their ARPA dollars and deliver this essential service to their residents,” said Katie Buckley, Director at Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

“The VCBB would like to thank all the towns that have already pledged money to this program and encourage other towns to consider it. These funds offer the Communications Union Districts increased flexibility and will drive down the overall cost of deploying a fiber optic network and the end cost to consumers,” said Rob Fish, VCBB Deputy Director.

So far, 40 towns from across the state have pledged a total of \$2.49 million to their CUDs or providers that will be matched. Cornwall and Holland are two of those towns.

Cornwall Select Board Chair Benjamin Marks said, "I am proud that Cornwall was able to take a leadership role in early ARPA fund allocation to Maple Broadband. The VCBB grant match doubles the good we were able to do with our initial grant and will be an important consideration for our future allocation of ARPA funds. Cornwall is underserved by the legacy DSL copper-wire currently in place. I firmly believe that fiber optic service at the highest speeds is necessary for us to function in a 21st century environment. The more Maple Broadband's build-out is funded outside of the debt markets, the lower the cost will be to Cornwall residents who need this vital service."

“The Select board in the town of Holland earmarked 68% of its total ARPA funds towards accelerating NEK Broadband's network build, which is the highest proportionally that a town has contributed to date. These funds (along with the matches from both the Vermont Community Broadband Board and NEK Broadband) will result in service to 93 addresses (11 of which have been designated by the state as priority), and over 9.1 miles of fiber optic cable in the town of Holland," said Christa Shute, Executive Director of NEK Community Broadband.

Town pledges will be matched up to \$100,000 per town. The Local Fiscal Recovery Funds must be provided to the Communications Union District (CUD) serving the town or to an eligible provider in towns that are not members of a Communications Union District. The CUD or the nonmember towns must be participating in the Act 71 Broadband Construction Grant Program to receive the match. Towns must pledge the funds before May 31, 2023, to be eligible for the match.

[Click here for information on how to apply.](#)

To-Date: 40 Towns Have Committed \$2,485,622

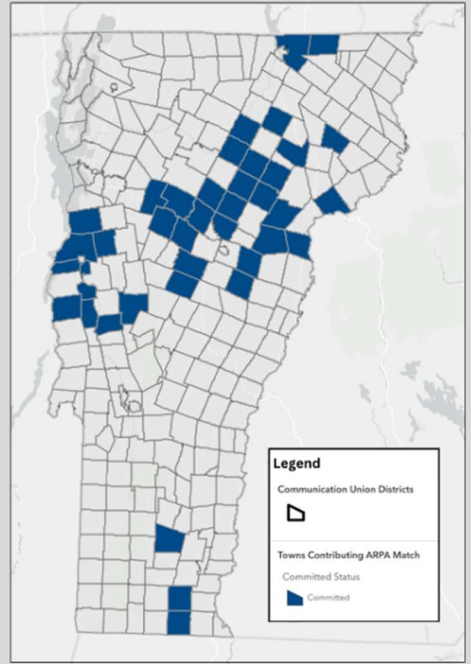
CVFiber Total Match To-Date:	
\$833,000	
Calais	\$200,000
Moretown	\$50,000
Roxbury	\$20,000
East Montpelier	\$100,000
Waterbury	\$50,000
Woodbury	\$50,000
Washington	\$20,000
Cabot	\$50,000
Duxbury	\$20,000
Northfield	\$90,000
Middlesex	\$100,000
Worcester	\$53,000
Orange	\$30,000

DVFiber Total Match To-Date:	
\$86,742	
Marlboro	\$24,642
Jamaica	\$22,100
Halifax	\$40,000

WCVT Total Match To-Date:	
\$243,830	
Bolton	\$200,000
Charlotte	\$43,830

NEK Broadband Total Match To-Date:	
\$942,050	
Peacham	\$30,000
Groton	\$40,800
Rygate	\$76,000
Walden	\$40,000
Hardwick	\$139,800
Derby	\$72,417
Waterford	\$110,883
Wheelock	\$40,900
Holland	\$123,833
Craftsbury	\$116,733
Wolcott	\$52,917
Glover	\$41,267
Burke	\$56,500

Maple Broadband Total Match To-Date:	
\$380,000	
Bridport	\$40,000
Cornwall	\$50,000
Ferrisburgh	\$50,000
Monkton	\$50,000
Panton	\$50,000
Ripton	\$25,000
Salisbury	\$30,000
Waltham	\$45,000
Weybridge	\$40,000



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Vermont Department of Public Service
 112 State Street
 Montpelier, VT 05601-2601

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 3, 2022

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VERMONT COMMUNITY BROADBAND BOARD ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP TO FILL WORKER SHORTAGES WHILE PROVIDING VERMONTERS WITH BETTER-PAYING JOBS AND UNIVERSAL BROADBAND

Montpelier, Vermont – Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) released a Workforce Development Plan Thursday focusing on targeting, recruiting, and training people to work on all aspects of Vermont’s universal build-out of broadband. The VCBB is partnering with Vermont Department of Labor, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Communications Union Districts (CUDs), the Vermont Technical College, Vermont State Colleges, and industry leaders to launch education and training programs to address worker shortages, speed up the build-out of universal broadband, and provide high-paying jobs and career paths for Vermonters.

The build-out will require the construction of 8,000 miles of fiber optic network over a five-year period. This will create additional demand for more than 200 fiber optic technicians, as well as interrelated jobs, such as tree-trimmers to prepare rights-of-way and electric utility lineworkers.

“With the tight labor market, we need every able-bodied person to be in the workforce. In each aspect of the program, the VCBB Workforce Development Team will consider how to support a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Workforce programs that build coordination of service

and support delivery will proactively mitigate barriers that limit workforce participation, such as physical, financial, and child-care,” said Christine Hallquist, VCBB Executive Director.

The Workforce Development Plan addresses the need for additional human resources with apprenticeship programs, tuition assistance for job training, job placement, an earn-to-learn program, a centralized resource for sourcing workers, programs targeting the underemployed, and housing support.

“Vermont Technical College is excited to work with the fiber industry in Vermont to provide apprenticeship training for this sector. We are working on developing all the elements of the program with the CUDs, VCBB and construction firms who are doing this work,” said Patricia Moulton, Vermont State Colleges Workforce Division Executive Director.

Some of the Workforce Development Plan’s training and apprenticeship programs are underway, including a well-attended fiber training session. Additional components are in the planning stages and will begin next year.

[Click here for more information on the programs.](#)

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Vermont Department of Public Service

112 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05601-2601

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 10, 2022

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CHITTENDEN COUNTY COMMUNITIES VOTE TO FORM VERMONT'S TENTH COMMUNICATIONS UNION DISTRICT

Montpelier, Vermont – Residents in five Chittenden County municipalities voted Tuesday to form a Communications Union District (CUD) to pool demand, resources, and speed up the build-out of universal broadband. 89% of voters cast a ballot in favor of forming the Chittenden County CUD.

"I am thrilled by the overwhelming response from South Burlington voters in support of forming and joining a regional Communications Union District in what promises to be a huge step forward towards improving the affordability, quality, and access to high-speed broadband connectivity and service in our region," said Andrew Bolduc, South Burlington Deputy City Manager.

Voters in Essex, Essex Junction, Shelburne, South Burlington, and Williston approved the CUD, a municipal organization of two or more towns for the purpose of building communication infrastructure together. Forming a CUD creates a single point of contact to negotiate with providers and leverage grants, making it more likely for municipalities to attract a provider and leverage financial resources.

“We are grateful for the overwhelming support of our voters. While there are no guarantees of success, forming a Communications Union District is clearly our best chance to help facilitate expanded broadband connectivity throughout our region,” said Shelburne Town Manager Lee Krohn.

According to the Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB), creating a CUD allows towns to aggregate their addresses and their voice. By working together to expand broadband, member towns can attract new partners, negotiate effective deals for better service, and provide ongoing oversight to broadband providers building with the support of the CUD. It also decreases financial risk to individual towns, while ensuring no address will be left unserved and provides additional access to federal and state grant programs.

“Congratulations to the residents of Shelburne, Williston, Essex, Essex Junction, and South Burlington for voting overwhelmingly in favor of creating a public entity to finish the job of delivering world-class broadband to every consumer in the county,” said F.X. Flinn, Chair of the Vermont Communications Union District Association (VCUDA). “Creating the Chittenden County Communications District is a critical step in securing digital equity and access in Chittenden and for all Vermonters.”

Each member municipality is now looking for residents interested in volunteering to be appointed as a representative or an alternate to serve on the CUD board. That board will work with the VCBB to develop a feasibility plan for building the network and raise funds to construct and manage it.

This vote means 213 of Vermont’s 252 towns are members of a Communications Union District. This includes more than 93% of the locations in the state without broadband of at least 25/3 Mbps. More than 76% of Vermonters are now represented by community-grounded organizations with the goal of ensuring residents have broadband service capable of nearly unlimited speeds.

“Broadband is an essential service and should be equitably available to all Vermonters. Through partnerships or building themselves, these CUDs are essential to providing oversight and holding providers accountable to the needs of the member towns. We look forward to additional towns joining the Chittenden County CUD and are committed to the success of the effort,” said Rob Fish, Deputy Director of the VCBB.

The new CUD has 367 addresses that do not have access to internet speeds of at least 25/3 Mbps. 18,415 addresses do not have access to symmetrical speeds of 100/100 Mbps. Every CUD is working to achieve universal access to 100/100 Mbps while serving the underserved addresses first.

For more information on Communications Union Districts (CUDS) and a map, please visit <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-communications-union-districts>.