



Between summer 2010 and spring 2011, e-Vermont and the SAS Broadband Committee will deliver on seven sets of projects to improve Sunderland, Arlington and Sandgate's use of the Internet to achieve key goals and engage more citizens:

- I. Assist SAS Businesses to Better Utilize Internet Applications and Tools*
- II. Improve e-Government Strategies in Each SAS Town*
- III. Increase Understanding and Appreciation for SAS' Rich History*
- IV. Ensure that All SAS Residents Have the Opportunity to Benefit from Broadband Access*
- V. Upgrade Martha Canfield Library's Online Services and Strengthen its Public Computing Capacity*
- VI. Develop New Ways for SAS Residents to Communicate with their Neighbors Online*
- VII. Take Advantage of 21st Century Educational Opportunities*

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I. ASSIST SAS BUSINESSES TO BETTER UTILIZE INTERNET APPLICATIONS AND TOOLS

CONNECT BUSINESSES WITH INDIVIDUALIZED, ADVANCED ADVISING

Through e-Vermont, the VT Small Business Development Center offers businesses one-on-one counseling and advising to help identify individual broadband-related needs and develop plans to meet those needs. The focused e-Vermont advising builds from the strong business assistance programs already in place at VtSBDC. The e-Vermont Business Advisor can assist businesses with website development and redesign, establishment of e-commerce online storefronts, social media marketing strategies, professional networking and other needs based on each individual business' situation. This one-on-one assistance is in addition to any training, workshops, or collective projects developed through e-Vermont.

PROVIDE INTRODUCTORY TRAINING ON BUSINESS USES OF THE INTERNET

While some businesses have advanced needs for Internet training tailored to their particular goals, others simply need more experience in understanding what the Internet can bring to their operations. This training can be an introduction to all the tools available, or basic training in commonly used applications, such as social media or e-commerce. These general information sessions should complement the one-on-one work described above.

PROVIDE A PLATFORM FOR BUSINESS COOPERATION IN USING THE INTERNET STRATEGICALLY FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Businesses in the SAS area see multiple opportunities for cooperation around internet issues. Examples include finding a way to subsidize broadband subscriptions for small businesses, working collectively to reach tourists & visitors, and potentially forming a cooperative of locations where the public can access Wi-Fi. More projects would likely emerge if businesses come together specifically to identify common needs and common solutions. At the same time, SAS area businesses hope that the Manchester-based Manchester & the Mountains Chamber of Commerce will increase the attention paid to their region and broadband may be a good starting project. Whether through the Chamber of Commerce or through a more local structure, the small businesses and organizations of SAS should be proactive in ensuring that they do not get caught in a digital divide.

II. IMPROVE E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES IN EACH SAS TOWN

The Internet can be a very effective tool for improving local governments' ability to respond to citizen needs for both information and services. However, given rural Vermont's heavy reliance on community volunteers and paid positions with few hours in a week to accomplish all town business, phasing in online tools can be a long process. Arlington has a town website that residents feel can be improved. Sandgate has an unofficial town website that is maintained by a local resident who is eager to hand the job over to the town. Sunderland does not have a town website, but does have local interest in online services such as a calendar of events, posted forms, and new ways to interact with local officials. Through e-Vermont each of these towns should receive individualized assistance in bringing e-government to the next level.

III. INCREASE UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF SAS' RICH HISTORY

The Sunderland, Arlington, Sandgate area has a rich history to share with local residents and visitors alike, and the e-Vermont program offers many opportunities to improve how that story is told. For example, the Martha Canfield library is home to the Russell Collection, a collection of rare books and chronicles about Vermont, which can be better catalogued and showcased online. The Digital Wish program at the local elementary school will be training students and teachers in using new technology for community projects. The e-VT trainings for businesses will help tourist-oriented businesses introduce visitors to the region and the general workshops provided by the Vermont State Colleges can help local volunteers develop the skills they need to share their knowledge of the local area with the public. Not every option for applying new technologies to sharing SAS' local heritage can be pursued over the e-Vermont year, but work during this year can produce early, visible results and build momentum for continuing projects into the future.

IV. ENSURE THAT ALL SAS RESIDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT FROM BROADBAND ACCESS

IMPROVE OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS POINTS

A common theme, across several eVT communities, is to develop greater public access to the web. SAS faces the particular challenge of being a community of three different towns. The local Martha Canfield Library serves as one central location with access. Other locations have the potential of being a hot spot because of their relatively high traffic and convenience. However, not every possible location has the capacity for serving Wi-Fi “customers” along with managing their core work. Several of the e-Vermont projects already identified for SAS, including work with the library, business collaboration, and the proposed e-training center (see below), can increase public internet access.

Part of the coordination for the e-Vermont project in SAS should be tracking how projects increase public Wi-Fi access, providing guidance and support to locations that *want* to make wireless available, and identifying any critical gap areas for access and working to fill those in.

CREATE AN E-TRAINING CENTER FOR BOTH INTERNET ACCESS AND TRAINING, ADVICE, AND COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

For all SAS citizens to effectively use the web, they need not only access but also appropriate skills. A local e-training center can provide those skills in a sustainable way beyond the e-Vermont year. A central location, such as Burdett Commons or the Martha Canfield Public Library, can bring community members together to build these skills and also engage different community groups in learning from each other, for example youth and seniors or community leaders trained through a train the trainer program.

A sustainable local e-training center will require careful planning, funding development, and staffing development. While e-Vermont leads the SAS community in conducting this background work, “trial run” programs can take place using the workshop offerings of the Vermont State Colleges and the regional symposia (which include train the trainer tracks) offered through the Snelling Center for Government. These projects can try out host sites, engage possibly interested organizations in the e-training center concept (for example the SASSIES), and train community members who will be leaders in future offerings.

V. UPGRADE MARTHA CANFIELD LIBRARY’S ONLINE SERVICES AND STRENGTHEN ITS PUBLIC COMPUTING CAPACITY

Public libraries are using the Internet to improve their options for providing services remotely and increasingly serving as centers of public access to the web. The Martha Canfield Library will work directly with Department of Libraries consultant Amy Howlett to decide how to utilize the

mini-grant funding available for equipment upgrades and contracted services, as well as to utilize e-Vermont and Department of Libraries services, such as staff training. Several ideas for library projects were identified at the SAS Community Forum; upgrading library computers, especially in the children's section and upgrading the library website so the library will no longer need to pay for the module that allows online interaction with the catalog. The Martha Canfield Library will be integrated into a range of other e-Vermont projects, for example serving as a location for workshops and helping connect library patrons with new services, such as e-government applications.

VI. DEVELOP NEW WAYS FOR SAS RESIDENTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS ONLINE

Front Porch Forum (FPF) has established an online platform for SAS residents to connect and share items of local interest. The FPF neighborhood forums not only improve online communication, they spill over into more community engagement offline as well. The e-Vermont Steering Committee and interested community members will have access to materials to help promote FPF in their towns. However, the success of the program is measured as much in the value of the messages exchanged and conversations started as in the number of subscribers. By the end of the e-Vermont year, SAS will have robust, ongoing town conversations through Front Porch Forum and can be an anchor town as FPF services expands to cover neighborhoods throughout the region.

VII. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF 21ST CENTURY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Sunderland, Arlington, and Sandgate school system has a goal of excelling in 21st Century learning. Digital Wish is bringing its one:one computing program to 4th and 5th grades in Fisher Elementary School. Their services include donation of enough netbooks to ensure that every child in the participating classes has access to their own computer, technical support for these computers, intensive teacher training, curriculum development, and innovative community connections using the most up to date technology. This classroom modernization project is expected to have long lasting impacts and spill over benefits for all classes in Fisher Elementary.

