

Connectivity Initiative
(30 VSA § 7515b, enacted in 2014)
(55% of the Connectivity Fund)

(a) The purpose of the Connectivity Initiative is to provide each service location in Vermont access to Internet service that is capable of speeds of *at least 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload*, or the FCC speed requirements established under Connect America Fund Phase II, whichever is higher, *beginning with* locations not served as of December 31, 2013 according to the minimum technical service characteristic objectives applicable at that time. Within this category of service locations, *priority* shall be given first to unserved and then to underserved locations. As used in this section, "*unserved*" means a location having access to only satellite or dial-up Internet service and "*underserved*" means a location having access to Internet service with speeds that exceed satellite and dial-up speeds but are less than 4 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload. Any new services funded in whole or in part by monies from this Initiative shall be capable of being continuously upgraded to reflect the best available, most economically feasible service capabilities.

(b) The Department of Public Service shall publish annually a list of census blocks eligible for funding based on the Department's most recent broadband mapping data. The Department annually shall solicit proposals from service providers to deploy broadband to eligible census blocks. The Department shall give *priority* to proposals that reflect the *lowest cost* of providing services to unserved and underserved locations; however, the Department also shall consider:

- (1) the proposed data transfer rates and other data transmission characteristics of services that would be available to consumers;
- (2) the price to consumers of services;
- (3) the proposed cost to consumers of any new construction, equipment installation service, or facility required to obtain service;

(4) whether the proposal would use the best available technology that is economically feasible;

(5) the availability of service of comparable quality and speed; and

(6) the objectives of the State's Telecommunications Plan.