

## Summary of the Impact of the Termination of Vermont's \$5.3 Million Digital Equity Capacity Grant

The Digital Equity Act was passed by Congress to help populations they found face barriers to using the internet effectively and safely. These are the covered populations: rural, aging (60+), low-income, veterans, people with disabilities, those with language barriers, members of racial and ethnic minorities, and incarcerated people. This covers **95%** of Vermonters. These demographics face unique challenges to fully engaging in the growing digital world where almost every aspect of daily life requires internet access, devices, and skills.

### Impacts of the Termination of \$5.3M DE Capacity Grant on Vermonters:

1. Threatens Economic and Workforce Development
  - a. Economic opportunities for Vermonters - Basic digital skills increased income by about 23%, advanced digital skills increased income an average of 45%, and AI related skills boosted salaries up to 47%.
  - b. Increases digital divide for veterans.
  - c. Weakens the state's ability to prevent and respond to cybercrime.
  - d. Weakens Vermonters' ability to protect themselves
    - Concerns about cybersecurity echoed throughout VCBB's community engagement, including listening sessions and focus groups. Many Vermonters shared fears about falling victim to online scams and predatory behavior, underscoring the need for more accessible cybersecurity education and support.
  - e. [CORI study](#) - rural counties with broadband adoption rates of over 80% have significant advantages over those with low usage including: 213% higher business growth rates, as well as higher self-employment growth, GDP growth rates that are 44% higher, and per capita income growth rates 18% higher.
2. Impact on Sustainability of State and Federally Funded Broadband Projects
3. Less Support for Vermonters to Access Healthcare - nearly 90% of VT's population lives in rural areas and nearly 30% are aging adults, far above national averages. These demographics face unique healthcare challenges, particularly as older adults often lack the digital skills needed to fully engage in the growing digital world, including critical services like telehealth.
4. Less Support for Vermonters to Access Education
5. Less Support for Vermonters to Participate in Civic and Social Engagement
6. Less Support for Vermonters to Have Access to Courts
7. Decreased Delivery of Other Essential Services

In addition to the many impacts the termination has on Vermonters, there are also immediate impacts on the VCBB, including possible job loss, funding cuts, interrupted progress, loss of trust, reputational damage, and other cascading impacts. More detailed information about all of these topics is included in the full Impact Document.