



**VERMONT**

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**VERMONT COMMUNITY BROADBAND BOARD**

**Senate Finance- January 29, 2025**

Christine Hallquist, Executive Director  
Rob Fish, Deputy Director

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



[Connected Documentary Teaser – YouTube](#)

[Connected Documentary: Full Film \(youtube.com\)](#)

The VCBB was created to coordinate, facilitate, support, and accelerate the development and implementation of universal community broadband solutions.




# Board

# Members




## Patty Richards, Chair

- [Patty.Richards@partner.vermont.gov](mailto:Patty.Richards@partner.vermont.gov)
- President of Richards Innovative Services in Energy



## Dan Nelson, Vice Chair

- [Dan.Nelson@partner.vermont.gov](mailto:Dan.Nelson@partner.vermont.gov)
- serves as Chief Technology Officer for Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO)



## Brian Otley

- [Brian.Otley@partner.vermont.gov](mailto:Brian.Otley@partner.vermont.gov)
- served as Chief Operating Officer at Green Mountain Power



## Laura Sibilia

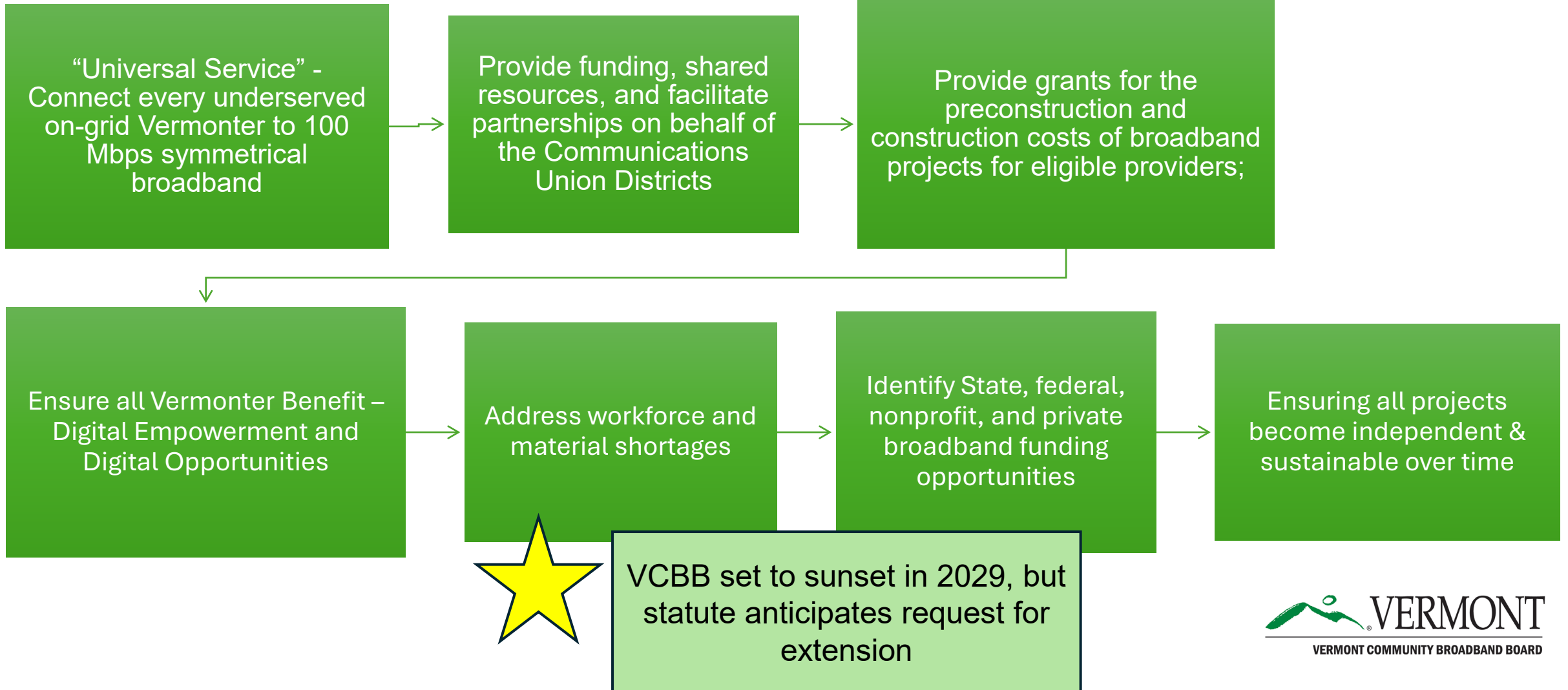
- [Laura.Sibilia@partner.vermont.gov](mailto:Laura.Sibilia@partner.vermont.gov)
- serves as a State Representative and Director of Regional Economic Development Strategies at the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

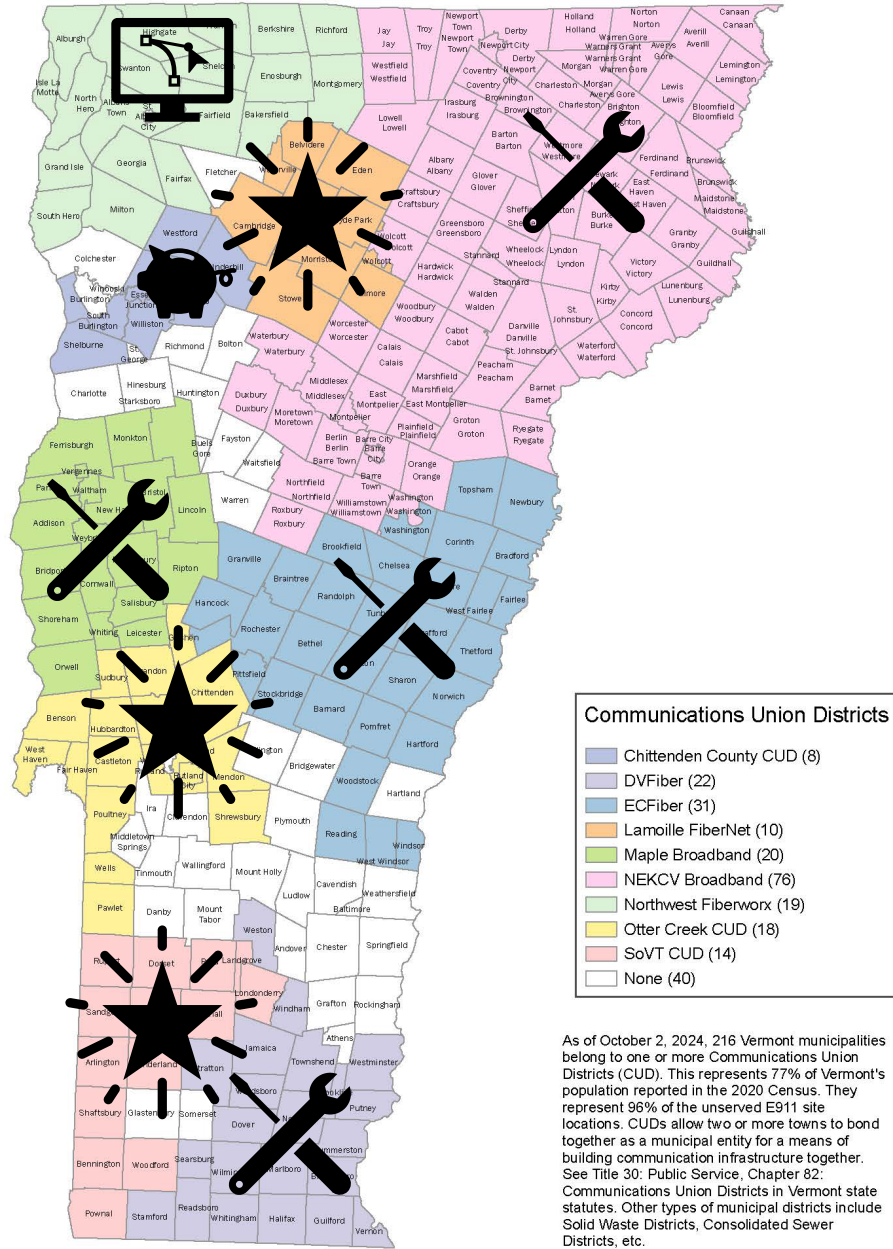


## Sarah Hofmann

- [Sarah.Hofmann@partner.vermont.gov](mailto:Sarah.Hofmann@partner.vermont.gov)
- served on the Vermont Public Utility Commission, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners Board of Directors, the Telecommunications Committee and the Subcommittee on Nuclear Issues

# Meeting the Intent and Goals of Act 71





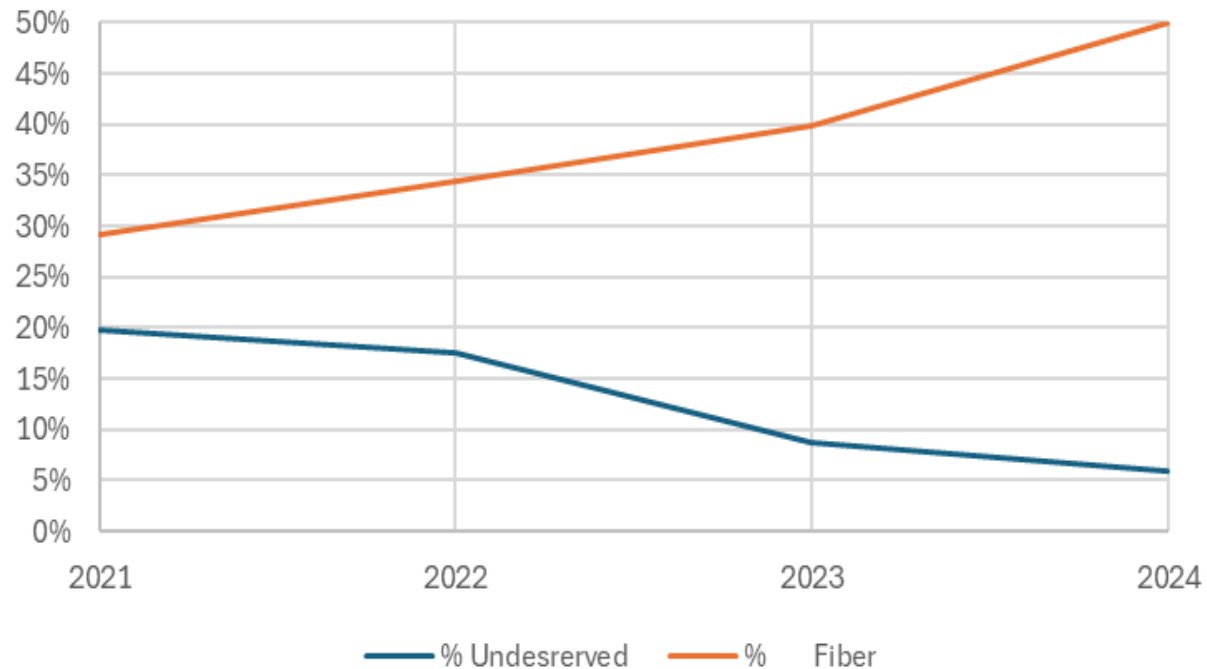
# Progress

- 9 Districts
- 216 Member Towns
- 428 Volunteer Board Representatives & Alternates
- More than 76% the state's population
- 93% of premises statewide without access to 25/3
- 76% of all serviceable addresses
- All CUDs awarded construction grants
- 3 nearing universal service
- 4 in construction
- 1-2 starting construction in 2025

	Build out complete		Funded
	Construction ongoing		Design/pole work – construction starting soon

# Progress

## Vermont Broadband Connectivity



PSD data as of June 2024 (construction continued throughout Summer & Fall)

# Accountability - Construction Grant Review

## CUD

- 3<sup>rd</sup> party review
- Confirmation of a sustainable business plan (cash flow positive by year 4)
- Consumer Protections
- Confirmation of Universal Service
- Compliance with Outside Plant Design Standards
- Review of other service in the area – compliance with overbuild policy
- Final inspections on all projects

## CUD + Private Partner

- 3<sup>rd</sup> party review
- Private match required (60/40%)
- Preference for public ownership of grant funded infrastructure
- Enforceable agreements for consumer protections
- Compliance with Outside Plant Design Standard Goals
- Work with other existing providers to ensure universal service
- Agree to “as built” inspections



# What's Next at VCBB

## Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)

- \$42.45 billion nationwide to expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure, deployment, and adoption programs
- \$229 million for VT (VT expected ~ \$125M!)
- Competitive program
- Cover BOTH On and Off Grid Address
- 100/20 Mbps required; Fiber first!
- Funds must first cover All Unserved (including off-grid); then Underserved; then Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs)
- Funds likely available late 2025\*

# What's Next – Digital Empowerment



The State of Vermont seeks to ensure every individual in Vermont has high-quality, accessible, affordable technology resources.

## Key elements of program:

- Research
- Grants to organizations
- Devices
- Digital navigator program
- Workforce training
- Received \$5.3 million Digital Equity Capacity Grant

# What's Next at VCBB

## Affordability and Sustainability

### Long Drop Program

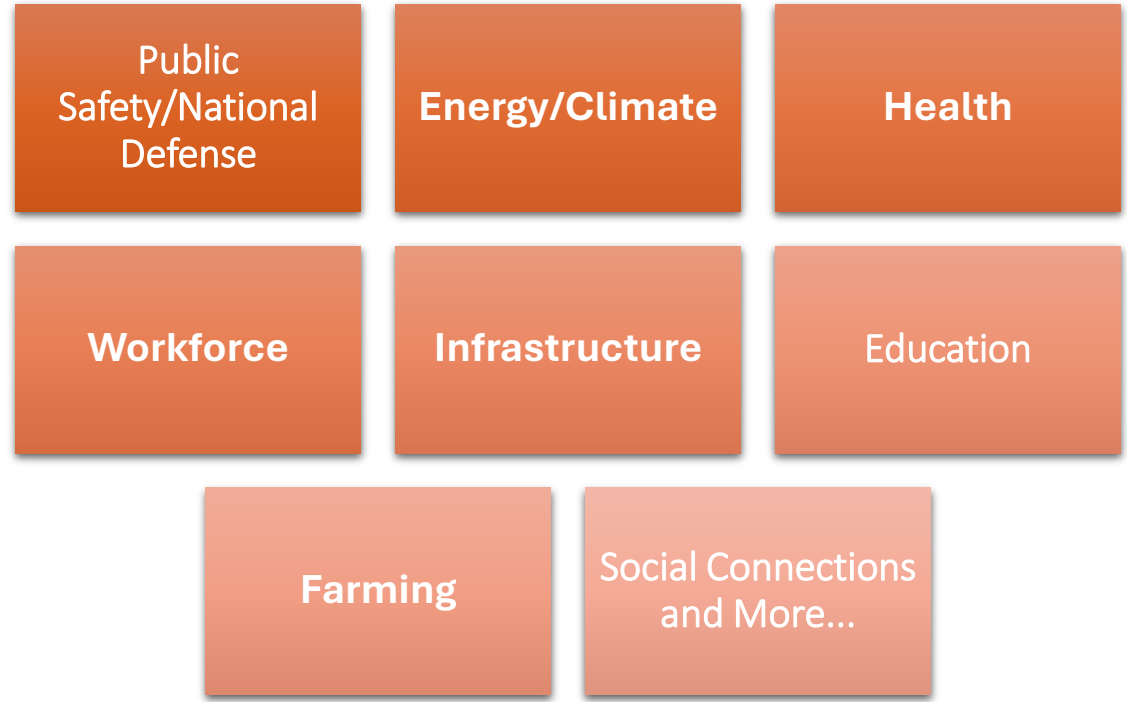
- Cover extra cost to connect low-income Vermonters who live more than ~400 ft from the fiber along their road, including underground drops.
- Costs up to several thousands of dollars for aerial drops and more for underground drops where required, such as in manufactured home communities.
- Increases affordability and assists CUD business plans by removing a barrier to getting more customers to sign up for service.

### Flexible Financing

- Exploring ideas to leverage funds to ensure sustainability, affordability, and longevity of Vermont's community broadband expansion.
- Aligns with the NBRC Leveraging Financing Grant and Auditor Recommendations.
- Aligns with the intent of the VCBB – “all projects become financially self sustainable” –

**Grants → Favorable Financing → Market Financing/Bonds → Revenue**

# Ensuring All Vermonters Benefit from Broadband Expansion



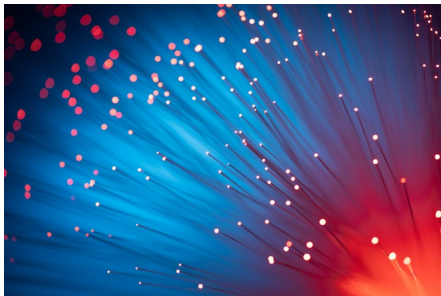
# Additional Policy Issues



- Regulation – Performance, Privacy, and Consumer Protections



- Approaches to Affordability – End of the Affordable Connectivity Program, NY State approach, USF



- The End of Copper – Carrier of Last Resort implications, Battery Back Up, etc.

# Key Takeaways

- \$545 Million in Broadband grants
- Vermont will achieve Universal Service ahead of schedule\*
- Now – working to maximize the social benefits of broadband for all Vermonters
  - Telehealth
  - Reducing climate change
  - Smart agriculture
  - Workforce development
  - Digital Empowerment



# Thank you!

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Rob Fish, Deputy Director [Robert.Fish@Vermont.gov](mailto:Robert.Fish@Vermont.gov)

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