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## **Regional Teams Develop Technology Innovation Strategies**

Regional Technology Innovation Teams have been meeting across Vermont to develop strategies for maximizing the benefits of universal high-speed broadband availability. Local government, schools, business, non-profits, and others are participating in this effort, led by Vermont's Regional Commissions.

In Windham County, because there has been so much in the news around the Sovernet Fiberconnect project and the VTel WOW project, access issues dominated the initial work. However, regional leaders moved the group quickly forward on adoption issues. According to Chris Campany, Executive Director of Windham Regional Commission "The team understands that just having access to broadband isn't going to effect change; it's knowing how to use it once we have it that is key."

Regional Technology Teams are also benefiting from the advice of key leaders in sectors of the economy that are crucial to a region's future growth. Seth Jensen, Senior Planner at Lamoille County Planning Commission reports that their team will learn a great deal from his visits with value-added agricultural producers. "I got a very good picture of how someone in the agricultural sector is using the internet and what barriers they face- this will help us as we develop strategies to maximize innovative use and application of broadband."

Several regional teams are exploring strategies to use universal broadband access as a tool to make rural Vermont more attractive to young Vermonters. Many regions are discussing strategies to promote telecommuting to area employers thereby using broadband access to reduce energy use, protect our environment and save on individual and corporate costs.

Each regional team will develop a strategic plan that identifies needs and opportunities related to new technologies, provide strategies to drive adoption of broadband, identify key partnerships that will benefit from the coordinated use of information technology (such as government services, education, health care, business, etc.) and encourage innovation among those key partnerships.

Participants will also identify broadband technology gaps, set achievable goals for improving use, and convene local & regional events to inform the public about Regional and State Telecommunications Plans. The regional strategies and plans will be used by state, regional and local officials, including the Vermont Telecommunication Authority.

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