

Limited infrastructure inhibits commerce, connections

Broadband Internet access, cell phone coverage, quality roads, public transportation—these networks are essential to daily life in modern working communities. In Vermont, such infrastructure is limited and unreliable.¹¹³

Even Vermont's many traditional, low-tech workers and microenterprise need an adequate infrastructure to flourish in a highly connected, high-speed world market. Job searches and applications are fewer and slower without Internet access. Spotty cell phone service hinders communication. With limited public transportation, travel is more expensive and produces more pollution on an individual basis.

GIVING THOUGHT

Investing in leadership

Sometimes the organizations working in areas of urgent need and the organizations with the best leaders are not the same.

What to do as a grantmaker?

When an organization (and its leadership) has a proven track record of performance, you can expect a good return from an investment in its programs and operations. When an organization is fledgling or limited in its abilities, but working on a critical mission, sometimes an investment in growing its abilities is the right thing to do.

These *capacity-building* approaches take several forms—and can range from helping to add or upgrade computers and phone systems to supporting leadership development for executive staff. The Vermont Community Foundation has knowledge of nonprofit organizations and their needs, and is actively involved with our donors in supplying a range of capacity development activities for the nonprofit community.

the FACTS

- Cell phone coverage is poor even on primary state highways. High-speed Internet service is available in only 60% of the state. These gaps in service make Vermont less appealing for businesses of all types and sizes, and increase isolation among the state's residents.¹¹⁴

Vermont's abundant libraries contain more books per person than libraries in all but four other states, yet Vermont ranked 48th in the nation for libraries with Internet access.

- Libraries represent one of the few places where low-income residents can access the Internet for job application, tax preparation and other needs.¹¹⁵
- Inadequate public transportation is a problem throughout Vermont, all but stranding the working poor, the elderly and those needing regular medical treatment for chronic illnesses. It is commonplace for a Vermont senior citizen to pay \$100 for a single trip to receive dialysis. For some, this travel expense means reducing the number of treatments against doctor's orders.¹¹⁶