

# Northwest Vermont Communications Union District Annual Report 2020

## Introduction

Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 3075, the Northwest Vermont Communications Union District (NWCUD) is pleased to present its annual report and budget for your review. The NWCUD was officially formed on August 3, 2020. The NWCUD is a municipal body consisting of representatives from Northwest Vermont municipalities for the purposes of building communication infrastructure.

As of October 5, 2020, the NWCUD represents 11 Northwest municipalities: Alburgh, Bakersfield, Berkshire, Enosburgh, Fairfield, Fairfax, Georgia, Highgate, Montgomery, Richford and Sheldon. It is expected that the NWCUD may continue to expand to new Franklin and Grand Isle County municipalities.

The mission of the NWCUD, as adopted by the Board of Representatives is:

*“Leverage partnerships and procure funding to connect Northwestern Vermont via Open Access Fiber to ensure opportunity for all homes and businesses in our region.”*

The NWCUD has received a \$10,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foundation for general operating expenses and a \$100,000 grant from the Department of Public Service to support broadband expansion.

## Activities of the Northwest Communications Union District

### *Organizational Development*

Much of the NWCUD's activities so far have centered around developing the necessary organizational infrastructure such as developing bylaws, organizational structure, and financial processes. These activities will ensure the NWCUD is well-positioned to move towards in-depth planning for broadband expansion in 2021.

### *Survey & Community Outreach*

By December 31, 2020 the NWCUD will conduct a survey of all residents in the NWCUD district regarding current broadband access and interest in a fiber service. The NWCUD will conduct additional outreach to residents about the CUD's planning activities.

### *Wi-fi Hotspot Program*

By December 31, 2020 the NWCUD will support the development of several new public wi-fi hotspots in the NWCUD district. These hotspots will provide a short-term solution to broadband access for individuals requiring broadband service for remote work, telehealth and remote education.

### *Broadband Planning Activities*

The NWCUD is in the process of hiring a consultant to advise the NWCUD on various business models, provide project management support, and to support its fundraising efforts. The NWCUD is supporting the efforts of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to conduct a feasibility study and business plan for the 21 municipalities in the Northwest region. These planning efforts will aid the NWCUD in understanding a feasible model for expanding fiber broadband service in the region.

## Budget

Attached is the NWCUD's budget for the FY2021.