Fulfilling our e-state potential:

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN A “CONNECTED AGE”

Facilitator Guide
Building Community in a “Connected Age.”
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Session 1 – Connections to Community – past and present

Part 1- Introductions & Overview 15 minutes

1. Invite participants to say their name, where they are from and why they decided to come today.
2. Invite someone in the group to read the guidelines below out loud (refer people to the handouts) and ask the group if they are willing to adopt these.

- Be respectful.
- Everyone gets a fair hearing.
- Share “air time.”
- One person speaks at a time. Speak for yourself, not for others.
- If you are offended or upset, say so, and say why.
- You can disagree, but don’t make it personal. Stick to the issue.
- Everyone helps the facilitator keep us moving and on track
- Personal stories stay in the dialogue unless the group decides it’s OK to tell them to other people.

Part 2 – Discussion 45 minutes

1. Ask people to spend a few minutes talking in pairs using the following questions.

- Talk about the neighborhood where you grew up.
- What was it like?
- What made you feel connected to your neighbors?
- Your community?

2. Invite a few people to share highlights of their conversation with the whole group.

3. Lead group discussion using the following prompts.

- What makes you feel connected to the community where you live now?
- In what ways do you interact with your neighbors, school, or town?
- How do you use the internet, cell phones or other devices to keep in touch with neighbors, town or school events?
- In what ways is technology helpful? Are there ways that technology interferes with community connections?

Part 3 Conclusion 5 minutes

1. Summarize the discussion OR invite members of the group to name a few key themes from the discussion.
Session 2 – Exploring the Opportunities & Challenges Associated with Becoming an E-State

Part 1 – Imagining the Future 30 minutes

1. Pose opening question to the group.
   - When you think about all of Vermont being “connected” through technology, what kinds of things do you think might be possible that aren’t possible now?

2. Invite group members to take turns reading the scenarios out loud (invite people to follow along with their handouts). Once the scenarios have been read, ask the group to discuss them. Here are some prompts to help the discussion.
   - Which of these scenarios stands out for you?
   - What are some of the pros and cons of these scenarios? (If everyone seems to share the same view, ask what someone with a different point of view might say.)
   - What other scenarios can you imagine that aren’t described here?

### E-State Scenarios

**A.** Each spring, high school students all over Vermont pour over an online catalogue which contains descriptions of every public high school class taught in the state of Vermont. Students across the state exchange a flurry of text messages and compare notes on interesting subjects and teachers. Students register using their cell phones.

**B.** Vermont is facing a fiscal crisis. A statewide summit is quickly planned with meetings held online and in schools, libraries and churches around the state. Residents from every town and village in the state share their cost-savings ideas. At the end of the summit citizens vote on budget priorities via e-mail, the internet, cell phones, or other handheld devices.

**C.** A new person moves into a small Vermont town. Residents want to know more about the person and conduct an online search for information.

**D.** People without computers go to the library or community center to find out about job opportunities, school events, and public meetings, shop online, and connect with friends.

**E.** Now that a statewide network is in place, more and more people are opting to work from home.

**F.** Residents in all corners of Vermont are able to participate in online communities with other like minded people. These communities include people around the state and around the world and are organized around specific interests.

**G.** Town meetings are streamed live online and people can participate remotely by sending in comments and voting using their cell phones or other handheld devices.

**H.** Doctors and patients in every town have access to online medical histories and records, making it possible for doctors to consult with far away specialists, and for patients and doctors to share information online.

**I.** There is a natural disaster in the state and all alerts and notifications are posted via cell phones and the internet.
Session 2 (cont’d)

Part 2 – Exploring Opportunities & Challenges  20 minutes

1. Ask participants to jot down their thoughts about the following question: How do you think becoming an e-state will benefit Vermont communities and the state as a whole? What are our opportunities?
2. Brainstorm a list of opportunities that everyone can see.
3. Ask participants to take a minute to jot down their thoughts about the following question: What are some of the potential challenges of Vermont becoming an e-state?
4. Brainstorm a list of challenges that everyone can see.

Part 3 – Prioritizing our Ideas 20 minutes

1. Invite people to make a case for the most important opportunities & challenges on the lists.
   ▪ Which of the opportunities seem most important to pursue? Which seem like they could be most important or helpful for building strong communities in Vermont?
   ▪ Which challenges will be most important to address as Vermont moves forward?
2. Ask people to take a minute to jot down their two or three top picks from each list.
3. Invite everyone to share their top choices and indicate these on each list.
4. Review each list and invite the group to choose two top opportunities and challenges.

Part 4 – Conclusion  5 minutes

1. Ask people what they think is the most important thing they talked about during this session?
2. Let people know that during the final discussion session they will talk about the values that they want to guide Vermont as we become an e-state. They will also identify specific ideas about how Vermont should move forward.

IMPORTANT: Record the group’s top two opportunities and top two challenges on the group’s wiki page OR on the Session 2 form.
Session 3 – Shaping Vermont’s e-Future

Part 1 – Identifying our e-State Values 15 minutes

1. Describe the following to the group: Imagine that as you are traveling through our state, you come upon a beautiful statue, carved out of Barre granite. A picture of this statue also appears on websites and other digital media that direct people to Vermont. The purpose of the statue is to welcome you to Vermont, an e-state. There is room on the statue for about five words that describe what Vermonters value about being an e-state.

2. Ask people to take a few minutes to jot down or think about some words that they would want to be carved into the granite.

3. Go around the circle and invite each person to share their words. Record these where everyone can see. If a word is mentioned more than once, put a check next to it each time it is mentioned. Ask the group to discuss the words that stand out for them and to narrow the list to three words.

Here are a few words to spark the group’s thinking:

- Innovation
- Dependability
- Inclusiveness
- Privacy
- Civic participation
- Prosperity
- Fairness
- Open communication
- Simplicity
- Integrity
- Restraint
- Interdependence
- Transparency
- Paperless
- Connected
- Accessibility
- Flexible

Part 2 – Ideas for Vermont’s Future as an e-state 30 minutes

Thinking about our vision for Vermont’s e-state future, let’s develop some steps we can take to move toward it.

1. Ask people to think quietly for a moment about this question.
   - What can we do to help Vermont use new communication technology to connect to one another, strengthen our communities, and help improve our quality of life?

2. Invite the group to brainstorm a list of action ideas. Record these where everyone can see them. Encourage people to try to come up with different kinds of ideas, such as things people can do individually, working in small groups, working with institutions, working with government. Encourage people to come up with ideas that are specific.

3. Ask the group to choose two top ideas to share with others. Here are some questions to help the group prioritize its ideas:
   - Which ideas really address the issues we’ve been discussing?
   - Which ideas seem most practical or doable?
   - Which ideas might have a long term impact?
Session 3 (cont’d)

Part 3 – Closing  

1. Invite the group to talk about these closing questions.
   - What has it been like to participate in this discussion? What did you learn? What surprised you? What questions are you left with?
   - After participating in this summit, how do you feel about Vermont’s moving toward becoming an e-state? What actions might you take when you leave here today?

2. Let people know their ideas will be posted online and shared with work groups that will form following the symposium.

3. Let people know of some ways they can stay involved (refer to the handouts)
   - Join a work group.
   - Go to the e-state wiki and share ideas, resources, and continue the discussion.
   - Find out more about what your town or school is doing to become connected and see what plans it has for using the technology. Volunteer to help.
   - Share what you learned during this discussion with others.

IMPORTANT: Record the group’s key values and top ideas on the group’s wiki page OR on the Session 3 form.