

# Vermont Evaluation of Rural Technical Assistance (VERTA)



## Core Team Members:

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# A Town on the Brink – Why This Work Matters

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## Meet Maple Hollow, VT (A Fictional, But Familiar Story)

- Population: 1,200. A dedicated town clerk, a volunteer selectboard, and a part-time road crew.
- Their town hall needs repairs, but **they missed the grant deadline**—they didn't have time to apply.
- Their aging water system needs upgrades, but **navigating funding sources is overwhelming.**
- A flood last year damaged the library and general store—**residents worry about rebuilding.**
- They rely on their **regional planning commission for help, but it's stretched thin.**





# A Town on the Brink – Why This Work Matters

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This is not just Maple Hollow—it's a reality for many Vermont communities.

- **Municipal leaders are doing more with less**, often struggling to meet state & federal requirements.
- **Funding and technical assistance resources exists, but accessing it requires capacity that not all towns have.**

This project will help assess Vermont's technical assistance system to help communities like Maple Hollow



# Project Introduction

**Purpose:** To develop actionable recommendations for enhancing Vermont's municipal technical assistance model.

**Collaboration:** Led by UVM's Center for Rural Studies in partnership with DHCD, and other key stakeholders.

**Alignment:** The project aligns with Act 181 of 2024, Section 67.

# Project Goals

Provide

Provide a comparative analysis of Vermont's current model against other states.

Engage

Engage at least 50% of Vermont's municipalities to identify challenges and successes.

Foster

Foster collaboration among policymakers, TA providers, funders, and municipalities.

Host

Host a statewide summit to build consensus.

Develop

Develop strategic recommendations to improve municipal technical assistance.



# Timeline

1

**Phase 1:** Literature review and stakeholder engagement (Jan - Mar 2025).

2

**Phase 2:** Comparative system data collection, surveys, interviews, and listening sessions (Apr - Jul 2025).

3

**Phase 3:** Comparative analysis and best practices research (Aug - Oct 2025).

4

**Phase 4:** Summit and final report drafting (Nov - Dec 2025).

# Stakeholder Engagement



**SURVEYS:** TARGET 50% OF VERMONT MUNICIPALITIES.



**INTERVIEWS:** COLLECT QUALITATIVE DATA FROM POLICYMAKERS AND TA PROVIDERS.



**LISTENING SESSIONS:** REFINE SURVEY FINDINGS AND IDENTIFY ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS.

# How Your Communities Can Get Involved

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## **Participate in upcoming surveys and listening sessions**

Coordination assistance provided by regional planning commissions



## **Attend and participate in the summit (date TBD)**



# How Can You Help?

## Legislative Advocacy

- **Raise Awareness Among Colleagues** – Share information with legislators to highlight how this initiative helps under-resourced communities
- **Champion Policy and Budget Support** – Advocate for policy changes and funding based on project findings
- **Host a Public Event** – Organize a press conference or legislative briefing to showcase final recommendations
- **Host a Legislative Briefing or Regional Meetings** – Convene discussions to keep leaders informed and engaged

## Community Engagement

- **Encourage Participation** – Share project details with town officials and local organizations to boost engagement
- **Join Listening Sessions** – Participate in forums and focus groups to hear directly from rural communities
- **Engage Beyond the Legislature** – Connect with municipal leaders, regional organizations, and community groups
- **Gather Public Support** – Request letters of support or endorsements from municipalities and organizations

# Project Steering Committee

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- Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)
- Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)
- Preservation Trust of Vermont
- USDA Rural Development
- Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD)
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)
- Vermont Community Foundation (VCF)
- Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA)
- Land Access and Opportunity Board
- State Treasurer's Office



# Disclaimers

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