The Snelling Center for Government
with Champlain College
presents

Fulfilling our e-state potential:

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN A "CONNECTED AGE"

LISTEN

TALK

Shape Vermont's Future

Strategy Discussion Handouts

SNELLING CENTER FOR GOVERNMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE

1878

Everyday Democracy
Ideas & Tools for Community Change

Building Community in a "Connected Age."

Session 1 – Connections to Community – past and present

Part 1- Introductions & Overview   15 minutes

1. Say your name, where you are from and why you decided to come today.
2. Read the guidelines below out loud and discuss.

- 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 its OK to tell them to other people.

Part 2 – Discussion   45 minutes

1. **Talk 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. Share highlights of your conversation with the whole group.

3. Discussion questions

- 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. What are 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. 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. **Take turns reading the scenarios out loud**.

- Which of these scenarios stands out for you?
- What are some of the pros and cons of these scenarios?
- What other scenarios can you imagine that aren't described here?

E-State Scenarios

A. *Each spring, high school students all over Vermont pore 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. 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**.
3. What are some of the potential **challenges** of Vermont becoming an e-state?
4. Brainstorm **a list of challenges**.

Part 3 – Prioritizing our Ideas   20 minutes

1. 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. Jot down your two or three top picks from each list.
3. Share your top choices and indicate these on each list.
4. Review each list and choose two top opportunities and challenges.

Part 4 – Conclusion   5 minutes

1. What is the most important thing you talked about during this session?
2. During final discussion session you will talk about the values you want to guide Vermont as we become an e-state. You will also identify specific ideas about how Vermont should move forward.

Session 3 – Shaping Vermont's e-Future

Part 1 – Identifying our e-State Values   15 minutes

1. 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. Jot down or think about some words that you would want to be carved into the granite.
3. Share your 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. Discuss the words that stand out for you and to narrow the list to three words.

Here are a few words to spark your thinking

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

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. 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. Brainstorm a list of action ideas. Record these where everyone can see them. 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. Try to come up with ideas that are specific.
3. Choose two top ideas to share with others. Here are some questions to help prioritize your 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   10 minutes

1. 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. Here are some ways you can stay involved
    - 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.