



News Release

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USDA Rural Development Invests More than \$765K in Vermont and New Hampshire Distance Learning & Telemedicine

University of New Hampshire, Vermont State University to Enhance Remote Access to Healthcare and Education in Rural Communities

MONTPELIER, VT, Nov. 30, 2023 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) State Director for Rural Development in Vermont and New Hampshire, **Sarah Waring**, today announced \$765,211 in grant funding for two Twin State institutions. The **University of New Hampshire (UNH) Center for Digital Health Innovation** received **\$129,746**, and **Vermont State University (VTSU)**, **\$635,465** to improve and diversify remote access to healthcare and education through the Agency’s [Distance Learning & Telemedicine \(DLT\) grant program](#).

“No one should have to endure health risks or lack of educational resources because of their zip code,” said Waring. “After the pandemic, we know that online education and healthcare access in our rural communities should be seen as basic human rights. Today’s funding furthers our mission to increase, improve and diversify the connectivity options our rural neighbors need to secure these rights. The Biden-Harris Administration is making historic funding available to enhance remote communication within and between our rural health centers, hospitals, schools and universities, and we’re proud to partner with these deserving institutions to help patients and students thrive.”

The UNH Center for Digital Health Innovation in Durham will use the funding to equip Granite State sites in **Strafford, Sullivan, Carroll and Grafton Counties**, as well as Maine’s Kennebec County, with video conferencing, assistive technologies and virtual-reality equipment. This will allow health professionals at the Center to offer modern physical-rehabilitation and mental-health services to underserved rural areas. Featuring libraries, cooperative extension offices, and youth and senior centers, the sites serve roughly 70,000 rural residents. UNH is making a \$19,462 contribution to the initiative.

To benefit more than 5,500 students, VTSU will invest the DLT funds and its \$96,600 contribution to enhance teleconferencing equipment for learning sites throughout the state. New tools include a specialized software virtualization platform and state-of-the-art technology kits for one-to-one teacher/student engagement. Instructors at multiple **VTSU campuses—including Castleton in Rutland County, Johnson in Lamoille County, Lyndon in Caledonia County, and Randolph in Orange County**—will deliver instructional content for over 75 percent of the offered programs, including science, nursing, and dual-enrollment courses for rural high school students.

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