

**Vermont Regional Partnerships  
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Morrisville, Vermont 05661  
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March 10, 1999

Pamela R. Johnson, Deputy Director  
National Partnership for Reinventing Government  
Suite 200, 750 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Ms. Johnson:

I am writing on behalf of Vermont Regional Partnerships to express our interest in application as a performance partnership with the Boost For Kids initiative. We are interested in submitting a combined application that would include all 12 Regional Partnership jurisdictions and allow us to work collectively, with our state partners, to improve conditions of well-being for all Vermonters.

**Vermont's Partners**

During the past few years, 12 Regional Partnerships (see attachment A) have been created across the State as catalysts for collaborative action among community members, and non-profit and state providers of health, education and human services. We have been working together to design, implement and evaluate community-wide, innovative, outcome-based strategies to improve outcomes for children, families and individuals. Vermont's work to build strong, inclusive, community-based Regional Partnerships has received support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Department of Justice's Caring Communities Program and other State and national sources. Our partnerships focus on outcomes that improve the well-being of Vermonters, engage diverse community members as partners, and mobilize resources to enhance local support services and systems.

Our Regional Partnerships work closely with the State Team for Children, Families and Individuals (see Attachments B & C). The State Team was established in 1994 as a way to foster greater collaboration among agencies, organizations, teams and families, and to consolidate the efforts of existing state interagency teams toward improved outcomes. Current membership consists of the Division Directors of state agencies that serve children, families and individuals, state level coordinators of interagency teams, directors of several major service and advocacy organizations, people from higher educational institutions, parents, and the coordinator's of our 12 regional partnerships. The Regional Partnerships and State Team meet monthly to coordinate outcome-based work at the local and state level.

**Vermont Characteristics**

In many ways, Vermont is "one community." The State is small with a total population of 591,000, ranking it 49th among the states, and is 43rd in geographic area (9,615 square miles). Vermont is also rated as the most rural state in the United States (77% of Vermonters live in rural areas), and it has a relatively homogenous population. It has nine cities, 236 towns, and 60 villages. In Vermont there are also direct working relationships between local communities and state government, as there is little county government structure in the State.

### Statewide Outcomes and Community Profiles

The State Team and the Regional Partnerships have adopted 10 common desired outcomes and specific indicators of well-being by which to track the progress of community and state partners. Vermont's ten statewide outcomes include:

Outcome:	Pregnant Women and Newborns Thrive
Outcome:	Infants and Children Thrive
Outcome:	Children Are Ready For School
Outcome:	Children Succeed in School
Outcome:	Children Live In Stable, Supported Families
Outcome:	Youth Choose Healthy Behaviors
Outcome:	Youth Successfully Transition To Adulthood
Outcome:	Families, Youth and Individuals are Engaged In and Contribute To Their Community's Decisions and Activities.
Outcome:	Families and Individuals Live In Safe and Supportive Communities
Outcome:	Elders and People With Disabilities Live With Dignity and Independence in Settings They Prefer

Vermont's reports to communities using *Community Profiles* and *The Social Well-Being of Vermonters* (see Attachments D & E), that embody this outcome framework and measure each outcome by several key indicators of well-being. The *Profiles* report data for each of Vermont's 60 educational supervisory regions, and report the data at the state, county and community level. Each provides multi-year trend data for communities to measure progress over time, as well as understand how they compare to other parts of the state. Regional Partnerships use this information as a starting point to better understand the well-being of their community and to devise community-based strategies for improvement (see Attachment F).

The Agency of Human Services, Division of Planning and Community Support develops and disseminates *What Works* booklets (see Attachment G) of best practice. The *What Works* series offers strategies and programs that research has shown to be effective in achieving our desired outcomes. Partnerships use this information in their community strategic planning processes.

Vermont has made significant investment in areas of prenatal and early childhood care. In many key areas, Vermont spends more per capita on prevention than it does on the "back end." Our record to date demonstrates that community collaboration with state government can produce great results (see Attachment H). In recent years, we have:

- ▶ Reduced our young teen pregnancy rate by 42%.
- ▶ Increased the number of two-year olds fully immunized by 24%.
- ▶ Reduced child abuse and neglect for children of all ages by 42%.

### **Readiness and Commitment**

Vermont partners have been developing effective strategies to support policies that enable the achievement of desired outcomes, equitable allocation of resources, development of creative funding sources and mechanisms, effective training and technical assistance, and alternative ways to provide data to assess the results of our work (see Attachment I). Local and state partners, both individually and collectively, demonstrate our readiness and commitment to "thinking outside the box," in numerous ways. The Secretary of the Agency of Human Services provides an annual budget report to the legislature that presents the agencies budget in an outcome-based framework across all departments (see Attachment J, cover and pages 6-7).

Two agreements are in place between state departments and regional partnerships for cost-savings reinvestments. These agreements provide maximum flexibility to a partnership in return for "turn the curve" strategies that produce favorable results. One agreement, between the Lamoille Valley partnership and the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, targeted a reduction in the number of youth in out-of-district placements and a net reduction in the total cost of that district's substitute care budget. The Partnership's success to date has allowed reinvestment of Social Services general funds dollars in non-traditional, early intervention activities for families at risk.

The Agency of Human Services supports block grant funding to community agencies for the development of integrated, interagency applications for coordinated systems of care for children and family programming. In 1994, Vermont's Families First initiative distributed funds to communities for the development of community-based strategies to enhance family crisis supports and prevent children from entering custody. Our results to date have been impressive and have helped contribute to reduced levels of children and youth entering custody. The Childrens UPstream Services (CUPS) initiative started up in 1998 to develop community capacity to support children aged 0 - 6 with mental health difficulties. These opportunities have begun to create sustainable support for our partnerships, and in return have created inclusive and broad-based strategies for family support that are making a difference in the lives of children and families.

Vermont communities have been developing the British "patch" model for the past few years. Patch promotes community-oriented practice that: localizes services in a community, integrates the formal and informal resources, defines a wider role for social workers, creates greater autonomy for staff to produce results, and focuses on prevention. Community members are vital partners of patch and are an integral part of the decision-making process. The Hardwick Area and Parks Place patch have been operational for the

past three years and provide a multi-disciplinary array of services and support in their community. The Hardwick Area Patch is implementing a "Common Application" that will integrate the application processes of eight different agencies, providing streamlined access to services for citizens. Currently, there are several Vermont communities developing patch models.

### **Long-Term Planning**

The success of our local/state partnerships has prompted us to develop long-term strategies to sustain our efforts. In 1998 Vermont was successful in embedding our statewide outcomes in legislation (see Attachment K), along with the development of a long-term research relationship between the Agency of Human Services, the Department of Education, and the University of Vermont. Regional Partnership coordinators are included as members. This partnership is responsible for reporting to the Vermont General Assembly "...regarding the development and accomplishments of state and regional partnerships, the status of outcomes on a state and local level, and findings of research undertaken." An initial research project is focused on two communities, one rural and one urban, that have indicators of low social-economic status, but, contrary to expectations, have made significant progress on other indicators of social well-being. This year, it is proposed to add the health care system as a partner to this legislation.

For three years we have conducted quarterly trainings for Regional Partnership and State Team members designed to promote collaborative, outcome-based work. Last year we expanded the quarterly trainings to include the development of a statewide partnership training series that links community partners across health, education, and human services to our partners in economic and community development (see Attachment L). We are working with Georgia, Missouri, the Kennedy School of Government, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy developing core curriculum materials to strengthen the capacity for local decision making on behalf of children and families. This multi-state partnership will design the tools and technical assistance opportunities to help prepare local citizens, neighborhood leaders, education and human service professionals, elected officials and parents to be full partners in the new world of decentralized service and supports.

### **Potential Impact**

We see the possibility of recognition as one of ten "performance partnerships" creating both challenge and opportunity for Vermont. It challenges us to both broaden and deepen our work in ways that can be sustained beyond the shifts of politics, office holders or federal funding; and, it challenges us to further develop the vital relationships that go beyond traditional boundaries and categorization. It creates opportunity in that it offers Vermont continued incentive to be in the vanguard of states' efforts to improve the lives of their citizens. Specifically, we can imagine:

- 1) changing and using systems to improve citizen access to streamlined supports and services, e.g. statewide implementation of the Common Application and further development of Patch service models;
- 2) that citizens will have the necessary tools and resources to act as experts, and have enhanced opportunity to participate in integrated decision-making between local and state partners;
- 3) a local, state and federal technical assistance collaborative that enhances the ability of communities to access and use data in a practical and timely way, and that improves community capacity for ongoing self-evaluation of local results; and

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4) the further development of innovative financing methods, e.g. pooled funding, cost-savings reinvestments, endowment funds for kids, block grant funding to Regional Partnerships and Patches.

The package we have submitted reflects the progress of partnership development in Vermont to date. The continuation of this journey is geared to bring Vermont partnerships to a new and more effective level over the next three to five years. We look forward to the possibility of working with you and others connected to the National Partnership for Reinventing Government to help make this possible.

I have enclosed several documents that are intended to serve as resources in your review of Vermont's application. If I can answer any questions regarding this letter or the enclosed material please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Scott Johnson, Coordinator  
Vermont Regional Partnerships

cc: Cornelius Hogan, Secretary, Agency of Human Services  
Marc Hull, Commissioner, Department of Education  
Cheryl Mitchell, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Human Services  
Chair, State Team for Children, Families and Individuals  
Vermont Regional Partnership Coordinators