

Broadband Mapping in Maine – Project Abstract

Opportunity No. 0660-ZA29

Submitted by the State of Maine, ConnectME Authority

The ConnectME Authority (ConnectME) requests **\$2.759** million in NTIA grant funding to map broadband service and availability in Maine with a contracted mapping company partner and other interested stakeholders in Maine, by utilizing service provider (SP) address data and the state's substantial investment in E911 roads data. ConnectME proposes a phased approach to this project which will initially provide the base data required by NTIA, and in subsequent years provide refinements and updates to the data. In the first phase, ConnectME proposes to use the sophisticated addressing of Maine's E911 roads data to correctly place current broadband customers, and follow that with a review of as-built infrastructure plans provided by the service providers to fill in missing areas. For wireless broadband mapping, ConnectME will work with the service providers to either acquire accurate propagation models or will generate such models manually. Using the state's E911 address ranges, ConnectME will finally generate a database of all possible addresses that have broadband access, including information about the types of service available at each address, as required by this grant program. After this first phase is complete, ConnectME will work on further refinements to the database by acquiring semiannual updates and by refining wireless propagation models with sophisticated light detection and ranging (LIDAR) data in urban areas.

ConnectME also requests **\$436,000** for planning purposes to address a major concern of the ConnectME Authority that is beyond the simple availability of broadband service, the low take-rate or penetration of subscribership to available broadband services. Maine's average penetration rate is significantly lower than the national average. Factors contributing to a lower than average penetration rate, are socio-economic – low income consumers cannot afford the computer or the cost of subscribing to broadband service; lower education level consumers are not aware of the services available online; and many consumers do not see value in being online.

ConnectME will advertise for the services of market research and marketing firm to collect and analyze market data concerning the use and demand for broadband service. The marketing firm will develop and coordinate website activities, a public awareness campaign, and market research.

In addition to proactively gathering data to analyze barriers to user adoption, ConnectME intends to initiate a public awareness campaign designed to further educate consumers of the social and economic opportunities available through broadband use. Using mailings, media outlets, and our website, we will enhance the public's ability to better understand the options for services available and those being developed. We will also promote the broadband industry by highlighting projects that expand service in a way that creates economic opportunity and growth throughout the state and the region.