ConnectME Fund
Eighth Round Grant Application
March 5, 2013

Due April 15, 2013

1. **Date:**

2. **Project Title:**

3. **Submitting Entity:**

4. **Grant Amount Requested:**

5. **Total Project Cost:**

6. **Project Contact Information**
   (Please include: Name, Title, Address, Telephone Number, Fax Number, and E-mail Address.)

7. **Party Who Prepared Application**
   (Please include: Name, Title, Address, Telephone Number, Fax Number, and E-mail address).

8. **Executive Summary of the Project**

9. **A description of the geographic area proposed to be served** by the project and sufficient information to establish that it is an **unserved** area, preferably at street-level granularity, and not likely to be served in the foreseeable future. (Most applicants conduct independent research to determine if a community has broadband or are sufficiently familiar with the community to know that there isn't any terrestrial broadband available).

   We recommend that applicants find partners among the various providers of broadband services or community-based organizations to use the grant as "gap-financing" to get operational infrastructure installed. The amount of local public and private funding and in-kind contributions will be considered when reviewing the applications. Applicants should also be aware of Maine Fiber Company's "Three Ring Binder" project for backhaul and middle mile transport (www.mainefiberco.com).

   Applicants must be aware that the ConnectME Authority will give priority to grant proposals that, relative to other proposals, seek to extend access to broadband internet service to a higher percentage of an "unserved" area within a municipality or other appropriate geographic area. The Authority will also consider the percentage of households with access to broadband service when establishing criteria to define unserved and "underserved" areas.

   The Authority recently updated its definition of broadband, which can be found on our website at http://www.maine.gov/connectme/connectgrants/index.shtml. Preference will

be given to projects that will provide Tier 3 or better service (3 Mbps to 6 Mbps download). As this currently applies only to unserved areas, previously funded projects would not qualify for grants to upgrade service.

The Authority's broadband availability map showing served and unserved areas is now available at http://www.maine.gov/connectme/broadbandmapping/index.htm. It is a work in progress and you should review the disclaimer. Pre-prepared maps are also available in the Static Map Gallery.

All ConnectME Authority grant awardees will be **required** to fully cooperate with the Authority and its contractor, James W. Sewall Company, regarding data collection for the Broadband Mapping and Planning Projects.

10. **A description of the proposed project,** including:

    a. public-private partnerships and collaborations that have been established;
    b. evidence that the private partners in the project are eligible to receive funding from the Authority;
    c. sufficient information that allows the Authority to determine that without the Authority's action, the installation of advanced communications technology infrastructure in an unserved area would not otherwise occur;
    d. the type of service to be provided, indicating the technology used and the upstream and downstream speeds of the service to be provided;
    e. an estimate of the time required to complete the proposed project;
    f. the number and percentage of households and businesses within the area to be served by the project (i.e. who can be served given technical limitations);
    g. the estimated price per customer of the service to be provided by the proposed project; and
    h. a map (preferably GIS compatible) or list of municipalities or parts of municipalities that may be covered by the proposed project with GEO Codes.

11. **The applicant's financial commitment** to the project in addition to the funding requested from the Authority (additional funds and in-kind contributions);

12. **The estimated number of customers/households who will directly benefit** from the project who are currently **unserved** (provide lists or numbers of potential customers that have indicated a strong commitment to subscribe);

13. **Evidence of community support** for the proposed project, which may include letters or signatures of residents or businesses located within the area of the proposed project (also, provide letters of interest from landowners for placement of facilities and support commitments from municipalities or community groups);

14. **A description of the applicant's experience** relevant to the proposed project; and

15. **A demonstration of financial viability** provided by pro-forma financial statements for the project and company financial statements. Confidential information may be submitted and should be so marked.

Completed applications are due **April 15, 2013**. The ConnectME Authority will make grant awards after reviewing and ranking the applications; based on the availability of funds.

Applicants should also be aware of the grant award challenge process specified in the Authority's rule at Section 6 (G), http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/90/99/639/639c101.doc. A successful challenge would cause the grant award to be cancelled.

To ensure that all applications are completely and effectively reviewed, please follow the numbered/lettered format of the application above, addressing each section and subsection. See attached Grant Scoring Guide for evaluation criteria. Additional information may be included as necessary. Electronic formats are preferred (Adobe PDF or MS Word) and confidential information should be in a separate file. Submit applications electronically or by mail to:

ConnectME Authority
Phillip Lindley, Executive Director
Statehouse Station 78
Augusta, ME 04333-0078

Phone: (207) 624-9970
Mobile: (207) 441-0498
Email: phil.lindley@maine.gov
Website: www.maine.gov/connectme/

Financial Analysis and Budget

The budget will be reviewed on reasonableness and accuracy. Provide the following financial information with as much detail as possible:

	ConnectME Grant Funding	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Other Funding Sources	Total
Personnel					
Contractual Services					
Start up Expenses and Capital Expenditures (Hardware, software, etc.)					
Supplies and Materials					
Telecommunications					
Training					
Travel					
Other costs					
Total					

The ConnectME Authority reserves the right to request additional information deemed necessary to properly evaluate the application.

Please be aware that some of the information in the application may be made available to existing broadband service providers, as required by the ConnectME law and rule.

Confidential information may be submitted, but only those specific portions considered proprietary should be so marked (see also § 4 of the ConnectME rule).

Appendix – Important Information

Information from Chapter 101

Applicants must be familiar with the ConnectME Authority rule, Chapter 101, and the authorizing statute, both of which may be found at http://www.maine.gov/connectme/.

Eligible Applicants. Any grants, direct investments, or loans under this Chapter will be made on behalf of, in partnership with, or in support of, one or more communications service providers that are remitting assessments to the Authority under 35-A M.R.S. A. §9211. Projects contained in approved proposals must be completed within one year of funding unless a waiver is granted by the Authority due to unique or unforeseen circumstances. The Authority must also determine that, without the Authority's action, the installation of adequate advanced communications technology infrastructure in an unserved or underserved area would not otherwise occur. Applicants eligible to receive Authority support for advanced communication infrastructure projects may include:

1. General-purpose local governments (municipalities and counties);

2. Local government authorities, and joint or multi-county development authorities;

3. Private for-profit companies that provide broadband; and

4. Any other responsible entity or group determined by the Authority to be capable of installing, using, and managing advanced communications technology infrastructure in the area.

Eligible Activities. Eligible uses of funds provided under the ConnectME Fund include activities, facilities, and services described in 35-A M.R.S.A. §§ 9204-9205. Eligible activities include: the provision of public infrastructure, services, facilities, and improvements needed to implement new broadband services, enhance existing broadband services, implement new mobile communications service, or enhance existing mobile communications service. Funds may also be used for matching requirements, “gap” financing, and grants, that may assist projects in qualifying for other sources of funding, as well as any other necessary activities that are integral and necessary for the development, installation, and use of a broadband or mobile communications system.

Please note: The priority of this grant program is **unserved** areas. A project that serves an underserved area may only be funded if funds are available after all eligible applications for projects to serve unserved areas have been funded.

Also, be aware of the provisions in subsection 6(G) of the rule, Private Investment Criteria, which states that, after notice, a broadband service provider or mobile communications service provider may submit a certification to the Authority that it will commence within 45 days, and will completely install within one year of the date of the Authority’s notification, sufficient advanced communications technology infrastructure to provide broadband or wireless service in a manner that would render the Authority's support of other projects in an area unnecessary or redundant (unless a waiver is granted by the Authority due to unique or unforeseen circumstances).

Broadband Grant Application Scoring Guide

The grant application evaluation process will allow the ConnectME Authority to evaluate all applications submitted during a particular application period set by the Authority. The scoring of applications is based on a 100-point scale. A project with a total score of less than 50 points may not be funded. Applications will be judged using the following four scoring categories, as described in the Authority rule:

Cost-Benefit. This category is worth **35** points.

The cost-benefit scoring is based on relevant factors, **including, but not limited to, the amount of funding requested from the Authority per customer eligible to be served by the project, with lower funding per customer receiving a higher cost-benefit score.** Applicants should demonstrate financial viability by providing pro-forma financial statements and detailed business plans.

Grant dollars requested/customer eligible to be served	Points
Less than or equal to $500	25
$501-$1,000	20
$1,001-$1,500	15
$1,501-$2,000	10
$2,000-$2,500	5
Greater than $2,500	0

A maximum of ten additional points will be added to the C-B score for any application requesting a 50% or less grant for the proposed project. A sliding scale will be used for those grant applications above 50% (≤ 50% = 10pts; 51% - 60% = 5pts; >60% = 0 pts.)

Community Support. This category is worth 2**0** points.

The community support score is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, evidence of community support for the project and the percentage of the geographic area to be covered by the proposal that will be served by the proposed project. Strong consideration (and higher point value as shown in the table below) will be given to those applications that include petitions or listings of a significant number of the available households and businesses expressing a strong desire to subscribe to broadband service provided from the proposed project.

Support as a percent of homes/businesses passed by project	Points
100%	20
50%	15
25%	10
<25%	5

Project Scope. This category is worth **30** points.

The project scope score is based on relevant factors prioritized below:

- The technology, or type and "speed" of the broadband service to be offered by the proposed project. For example: Fiber to the home (FTTH) service will be scored highest; and projects will receive more points for service that provides up and down speeds in the higher FCC Broadband Tiers. [1]

- The number of potential customers to be served or households passed by the project. For example; a project that proposes to provide broadband service to 300 households will receive more points that a project that will provide service to 50 households.

- The grant applicant's financial commitment to the project (cash, in-kind, donations, etc).

Project Value. This category is worth **15** points.

The project value score is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the estimated retail price per customer to receive service from the proposed project and any other details of the project that may benefit customers in the area proposed to be served by the proposed project. For example; more points will be awarded for a higher number of businesses and/or health care facilities in the project area that do not have access to broadband service. Applicants should use this category to introduce elements of their project which may be significant and not incorporated in one of the other three categories.

Note: Legislative changes to the ConnectME Authority statute (to 35-A M.R.S.A. §9204) [2] state that, "(I)n awarding grants, the authority shall give priority to those proposals that, relative to other proposals, extend access to broadband service to a higher percentage of an unserved area within a municipality or other appropriate geographic area."

---

[1] Basic Broadband Tier 1, 768 kbps to 1.5 Mbps; Broadband Tier 2, 1.5 Mbps to 3 Mbps; Broadband Tier 3, 3 Mbps to 6 Mbps; Broadband Tier 4, 6 Mbps to 10 Mbps; Broadband Tier 5, 10 Mbps to 25 Mbps; Broadband Tier 6, 25 Mbps to 100 Mbps; Broadband Tier, 7 Greater than 100 Mbps. As defined by the Authority, May 12, 2011.

[2] See Public Law, Chapter 63, (LD 850, HP 0585), 124th Maine State Legislature, "An Act To Ensure Local Broadband Coverage."