

ConnectME Authority
Grant Review Team Recommendations
Summary of Eighth Round Grant Applications
Final Review Date: April 25, 2013

Below are summaries and recommendations from the Review Team regarding applications submitted for the eighth grant round.¹ Thirty-five applications were received. Twenty applications submitted were scored, receiving from 78 to 50 points.² The team recommends sixteen for funding for a total grant amount of \$1,042,458, for a total projects amount of \$1,740,878, a grant to project ratio of 60%. All propose to provide at least 3 Mbps service to the bulk of the potential households.

See the companion spreadsheet for details and the cash flow report which estimates funds availability for the next two quarters.

The scoring criteria are specified in the ConnectME rule. The four categories are Cost-Benefit (CB) for 35 points; Community Support (CS) for 20 points; Project Scope (PS) for 30 points; and Project Value (PV) for 15; for a total of 100 points. Scores below 50 may not be funded. The two areas that caused the most point deductions were within the Cost-Benefit category: high funding requested per customer eligible to be served combined with the applicants' financial commitment – less than 50% match, resulted in lower Cost-Benefit scores. A number of applications received no Customer Support points for lack of indicated customer support.

The Authority approved a scoring guide that made scoring the first two categories (CB and CS) an objective calculation based on the tables in the guide. CB was broken into two separate calculations: the first based on the grant dollars requested per customer eligible to be served by the project being scored; the second based on the percentage level of the grant request in relation to the total project (see the attached scoring guide). The scoring guide was discussed at two Authority meetings and the final version was attached to the grant application.

While the second two scoring categories (PS and PV) do not have calculation tables contained in the guide, the review team did assign point values to aid in evaluating the applications. In the scoring guide there are three factors listed for the PS category: technology, with FTTH (fiber to the home) to be scored highest; number of potential customers; and applicant's financial commitment. The review team assigned point values to the five possible types of technology that could deliver broadband: FTTH = 20 points; cable modem = 15 points; DSL (digital subscriber line) and TVWS (television white space) = 10 points; and fixed-wireless = 5 points. The team also assigned point values to the number of potential customers to be served by the project: 100 or more = 10 points; and less than 100 as a percentage of 10 points (e.g. 87 = 9 points, 46 = 5 points, 12 = 1 point, etc.). The PV category was more subjectively scored – with more points assigned for an indication of

¹ Review Team: Phil Lindley, Lisa Leahy, Wayne Jortner, Jeff Letourneau, and Wayne Gallant.

² AiroComm submitted 15 applications that were not scored.

business or health care facility connections; lower scores for relatively higher retail prices; and higher or lower scores depending on other factors such as the type of construction required.

The team recommends that the Authority fund all applications that scored 50 points or more. Four applications would not then be funded this round because of either high grant to project cost ratio, high grant dollars per household, or a combination of both. The fifteen applications from AiroComm were not scored due to incomplete or non-existent financial information about the company. AiroComm appears to be a startup company that may have potential in the future for providing fixed-wireless broadband in rural areas of Maine and would be welcome to apply for a grant in a subsequent round.

For this grant round, the review team felt the need to be more objectively critical of each application due to the amount requested – which was more than the estimated available funds. Those not funded are invited to apply again. Authority staff will work with those applicants to improve their scores for the next grant round possibly by increasing the local/provider contribution, increasing the number of households served, or lowering the total project cost.

Applications – Alphabetical by Applicant:

- Axiom Technologies (four applications)
 1. Cathance Lake, Cooper Area, \$89,635, 78 points.
Axiom proposes to use TVWS technology to provide broadband service to 80 unserved households and businesses, including seasonal homes and camps. The use of TVWS will be one of the first applications in Maine and has the potential for greater coverage and higher through-puts.
 2. Grand Falls Flowage, Baileyville, \$79,921, 73 points.
Axiom proposes to use fixed-wireless technology to provide broadband service to 80 unserved households and businesses, including seasonal homes and camps.
 3. Marshfield Road, Guard Point, Harrington, \$144,295, 65 points.
Axiom proposes to use TVWS technology to provide broadband service to 100 unserved households and businesses, including seasonal residences.
 4. Mason Bay Road, Jonesport, \$124,265, 65 points.
Axiom proposes to use TVWS technology to provide broadband service to 100 unserved households and businesses, including seasonal residences.
- North Country Broadband, \$109,000, 65 points.
 5. North Country is a partnership between Cornerstone Communications and Premium Choice Broadband. It proposes to use DSL technology to provide broadband service to 220 unserved households in the Town of Willimantic.

- Pioneer Broadband (five applications)
 6. Caribou-West Presque Isle Rd. RT, \$20,472, 62 points.

Pioneer proposes to use DSL technology to provide broadband to 66 unserved households in the City of Caribou. It will install a DSLAM next to the remote terminal and lease fiber from Maine Fiber Company for backhaul.
 7. Houlton-Smith Rd. RT, \$12,854, 65 points.

Pioneer proposes to use DSL technology to provide broadband to 50 unserved households in the Town of Houlton. It will install a DSLAM next to the remote terminal and lease fiber from Maine Fiber Company for backhaul.
 8. Oxbow RT, \$75,413, 51 points.

Pioneer proposes to use DSL technology to provide broadband to 60 unserved households in the Oxbow Plantation. It will install a DSLAM next to the remote terminal and lease fiber from Maine Fiber Company for backhaul.
 9. Town of Masardis-Garfield Rd. RT, \$65,751, 50 points.

Pioneer proposes to use DSL technology to provide broadband to 48 unserved households in the Town of Masardis. It will install a DSLAM next to the remote terminal and lease fiber from Maine Fiber Company for backhaul.
 10. Town of Westfield-Shorey Rd. FTTH, \$72,426, 63 points.

Pioneer proposes to use FTTH technology to provide broadband to 31 unserved households in the Town of Westfield. It will install a GPON (gigabit passive optical network) Access Module in its nearest node and lease fiber from Maine Fiber Company for backhaul.

- Premium Choice Broadband (two applications)
 11. Kokadjo/Frenchtown, \$24,000, 55 points.

Premium Choice proposes to use fixed-wireless technology to provide broadband to 50 unserved households in the towns of Kokadjo and Frenchtown. It will install a remote wireless repeater on the Lily Bay Road.
 12. Deer Isle, Sunshine Road, \$26,000, 56 points.

Premium Choice proposes to use fixed-wireless technology to provide broadband to 54 unserved households in the Sunshine Road area of Deer Isle. It will install a remote wireless repeater on the Sunshine Road.

- Town of Blue Hill, \$124,952, 65 points.
 13. The Town of Blue Hill in partnership with Time Warner Cable proposes to use cable modem technology to provide broadband service to 101 unserved households in the Turkey Farm Road area of Blue Hill.

- Town of Chelsea, \$6,152, 71 points.
 14. The Town of Chelsea in partnership with Time Warner Cable proposes to use cable modem technology to provide broadband service to 8 unserved households in the Dondero Road area of Chelsea.

- Town of Mapleton, \$8,436, 76 points.
 15. The Town of Mapleton in partnership with Time Warner Cable proposes to use cable modem technology to provide broadband service to 13 unserved households in the Mapleton Road area of Mapleton, near Presque Isle.

- Town of Whitefield, \$58,886, 52 points.
 16. The Town of Whitefield in partnership with Time Warner Cable proposes to use cable modem technology to provide broadband service to 23 unserved households in the Petticoat Lane area of Whitefield.