Community Broadband Planning Grant Program

ConnectME Authority
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Augusta, ME 04333-0059
http://maine.gov/connectme

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Application Due: March 30, 2018
Grants Awarded: May 2018

Community Broadband Planning Grant Application Round Three

The ConnectME Authority is a component unit of Maine state government whose mission is to promote use of broadband service by identifying and sharing best practices that encourage use of broadband service, eliminating barriers to use of broadband service and facilitating and supporting public-private partnerships to increase use of broadband. The authority provides funds for broadband planning grants to municipalities, groups of municipalities or nonprofit local or regional community organizations that are providing local or regional economic development programs to develop plans to expand the availability of broadband services in unserved and underserved areas. [1]

Community Broadband Planning Grant Overview

The Authority awards funds to communities to produce plans that define local broadband needs, goals and encourages adoption of identified best practices by participating municipalities and organizations.
Plans must inventory existing broadband infrastructure assets within the municipality, municipalities or regions and include a gap analysis defining the additional broadband infrastructure necessary to meet identified needs and goals.

Plans are to include one or more potential network designs, cost estimates, operating models and potential business models based on input from broadband providers operating within the municipality, municipalities or region and any other parties that submit a network design solution in the course of developing the plan to address any broadband gaps identified. An assessment of all municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances that have the effect of delaying or increasing the cost of broadband infrastructure deployment are part of the process. Plans also call for digital inclusion piece that addresses affordable internet, equipment, digital literacy and public computer access.

Planning grants awarded under this program are to be equitably distributed throughout the unserved and underserved areas of the State and encourage collaboration between multiple communities.

The Authority will make all precertification check lists and plans to this program available on the Authority's website.

Grant applications received in the first round:

http://maine.gov/connectme/grants/community-planning/roundoneapplications.shtml

Grants funded in first round:

http://maine.gov/connectme/grants/community-planning/awarded-grants.shtml

ELIGIBLITY CRITERIA

A Precertification Checklist and Scoring Criteria determine eligibility for Community Broadband Planning Grant funding.

Once a community has submitted a completed Precertification Checklist and it has been certified by the Authority the community may apply for a Broadband Community Planning Grant. Certified Communities and their checklists will be listed on the Authority's website.

Attachment A – Precertification Checklist Template

Attachment B – Scoring Criteria

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[1] Public Law 2015, chapter 93, Part 7, section 9217 http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/35-A/title35-Asec9217.html

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Authority has grant reporting requirements to include progress reports and final plan submission submitted by the community point of contact.

- 25% of initial funding will be released at onset of grant.
- 25% toward invoiced work, documentation submitted by community point of contact.
- 25% toward invoiced work, documentation submitted by community point of contact.
- 25% final payment which includes the completed community plan, in PDF format, emailed to the Authority's point of contact for posting on Authority's website.
- No more than four payments will be made during grant period.

Completed applications are due **March 30, 2018**. The ConnectME Authority will make grant awards after reviewing and scoring the applications; based on the availability of funds, in May 2018.

To ensure that all applications are completely and effectively reviewed, please follow the numbered/lettered format of the application template, addressing each section and subsection. See Grant Scoring Criteria for evaluation criteria. Applications will be emailed in electronic format (Adobe PDF or MS Word) and confidential information should be in a separate file.

Submit applications electronically to:

ConnectME Authority
Connect.me@maine.gov
Heather Johnson (207) 624-9838
Brooke Johnson (207) 624-9849

The ConnectME Authority reserves the right to request additional information deemed necessary to properly evaluate the Precertification Checklist and Community Broadband Planning Grant Application.

After awards are made, all applications will be posted on the Authority's website.

APPLICATION TEMPLATE

Round Three Community Planning Grant Application

Due Date: March 30, 2018

1. **Date:**

2. **Submitting Community - the Applicant:**

3. **Vendor Partner:**

4. **Grant Amount Requested:**

5. **Community Project Point of Contact:**
   (Please include: Name, Title, Address, Telephone Number, and E-mail Address.)

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

7. **Executive Summary of the Project:**

ATTACHMENT A

Precertification Checklist

A community must answer each of these items, in the format below, to be certified for the planning grant process. A "no" answer is perfectly acceptable; this is stakeholder and information gathering process. A "no" answer is perfectly acceptable for those items under this section that are verifying resources in a community. For example:

Is there local or regional economic development plans in which broadband could play a role? If so, provide a list of these documents. "No" would be perfectly acceptable.
<center>Or</center>
Does the town have a cable franchise agreement? "No" would be perfectly acceptable.

However, it is not acceptable to answer "no" to items asking for list of members, documentation of meetings, and designation of single point of contact.

Once certified, a community will be eligible to participate in the competitive process to receive funds from the ConnectME Authority for a broadband planning grant.

1. **Create a Community Broadband Team**
   - Provide list of members, including name and title:
     o Must include at least one representative from municipal government for each community seeking certification
     o If it is known that a non-profit or economic development entity will ultimately be seeking a grant using this precertification, should include one member of that non-profit
     o Members could include residents and representatives with experience in health care, business, and education.
   - Must designate single point person for communications with ConnectME for certification process, provide email address to ConnectME.

2. **Hold at least one Community Broadband Meeting**
   - Send emails to broadband providers currently serving your community and invite them to the community meeting.
   - Share results of ConnectME Mapping for this community.
   - Questions for attendees:
     o Which providers are currently serving your community?
     o Which providers attended your meeting?
     o How do the mapping results compare with members' actual experiences?
     o Does existing broadband access meet your needs?
     o If it is inadequate in what ways does it fall short?
     o If you have broadband, how do you use it now?
   - Provide documentation showing meeting dates, notes, agenda and number of attendees, emails to providers and responses to the questions above.
   - [ConnectME may need to provide guidance/suggestions on how address areas of this section]

3. **Identify Key Documents/Existing Efforts**
   - Does the municipality use broadband to deliver municipal services? Describe the services, and how broadband is used to deliver these services. (e.g., town office has a broadband connection it uses to submit information to state government, police department uses broadband to communicate with state or federal databases or assessors' office make access to property records and maps available to the general public)
   - Is there local or regional economic development plans in which broadband could play a role? If so, provide a list of these documents.
   - Does the town have a cable franchise agreement?
   - Are there any on-going community projects focusing on the digital divide or information technology (public access through schools or libraries, training, improving access to broadband, etc.?)
   - Is there a TIFF or other economic development grant for all or part of the area to be served?
   - Does the town have a municipal electric company? If not, what electric utilities serve the area?

4. **Identify potential Community Anchor Institutions**
   - Provide a list of potential community anchor institutions.
   - Community anchor institutions are entities such as schools, libraries, hospitals and other medical providers, public safety entities, institutions of higher education. Anchor institutions can also be community support organizations that facilitate greater use of broadband by vulnerable populations, including low-income, the unemployed, and the aged.
   - Provide a list of commercial institutions that could benefit from lower cost, higher bandwidth, and/or improved reliability of broadband.

5. **Create a Vision Statement**
   - A Vision Statement is created by Community Broadband Team with input from public at the Community Broadband Meeting, with the goal to take a first step toward being able to set a direction for the community's future broadband efforts.
   - The statement should describe the role broadband would play in this community's future, using input from the other steps in the precertification process.
     - Identify specific priority areas (*e.g*., connecting community anchor institutions, ensuring older citizens can age in place, closing the "homework gap", providing affordable high speed connections to a business park).
   - Explain how this effort conforms to other planning documents/published visioning efforts on other issues in your community.

ATTACHMENT B

Scoring Criteria

A community should provide a response to each of the items below, in the format outlined.

1. **Community Support – 30 points**
   The community support score is based on relevant factors including but not limited to, evidence of community support for the project. Strong consideration 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.
   a. Provide a brief description of team member's background and roles.
      1.a.1. Principal point of contact.
      1.a.2. Team member bios and role in planning project, to include vendor information.
      1.a.3. Provide proof of support and endorsement from the participating local municipalities.
      1.a.4. Provide the names of local officials and community representatives that will be directly involved as members of the team.
      1.a.5. Provide three client references for selected vendor
   b. Demonstrate Collaboration

2. **Project Focus – 30 points**
   The project focus score is based on the degree to which the application proposes a project that:
   a. Defines local broadband needs and goals
   b. Inventories existing broadband infrastructure assets within the community
   c. Includes a gap analysis defining the additional broadband infrastructure necessary to meet the identified goals
   d. Include one or more potential network designs, cost estimates, operating models and business models
   e. Include an assessment of municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances that impact or influence broadband infrastructure deployment.
   f. Digital Inclusion
      o Affordable Internet –Describe how community will address providing affordable internet options.
      o Affordable Equipment - Describe how community will expand the availability of affordable equipment to low-income residents.
      o Digital Literacy Training – Describe how community will teach people to use technology.
      o Public Computer Access –Describe how community will increase public computer access locations.

3. **Financial Commitment and Budget- 25**
   a. Submit a budget for the plan aligned to significant project plan milestones, costs and tasks.

   b. Include the vendor's financial feasibility including a balance sheet and income statement and applicant's financial statement. Confidential information should be so marked and submitted under separate cover to the ConnectME Authority directly, marked confidential, indicating which community they are partnering with. This information is due at the time of the application deadline.

   c. Include letters of commitment for community funding

4. **Project Preparedness - 15**
   Please complete the precertification checklist and the application. A comprehensive application will allow us to more accurately understand and evaluate your project.