CONNECTMAINE Authority

Broadband Infrastructure Grants, Potential Applicants, 10 March 2021

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Agenda

- Ground Rules
- Orientation of Slides
- Application Run Through
- Q&A Session

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The first part of this workshop will be informational and more interactive at the end. We're starting with the assumption that you're familiar ConnectMaine and its programs, but if not feel free to review our website. You can join our email list by subscribing at the bottom of the website.
Orientation of the slides will describe the flow of this presentation—the run through of application elements, which is when questions asked ahead of time will be answered.

Ground Rules

1. Are you a potential applicant?
2. Do you have relevant questions?
3. Can you find needed answers?

• ConnectMaine is a staff of two
• Patience is greatly appreciated
• Peer learning is highly encouraged

www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/infrastructure-grants/process

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1. Workshop is for potential applicants of broadband infrastructure grants. Let's provide space to ensure that potential applicants in this application window have time to ask their questions.
2. Feel free to use the chat window to share your attendance with others—what community or ISP—and generally connect during and after this workshop. We might not get to all questions, so please keep questions relevant to applying during this window. The next slide has good examples of questions to be answered in the future instead of now.
3. This workshop is being recorded and will be available for 30 days. We'll provide contact information at the end if you don't have it already. Please make sure you've reviewed the application materials, the grants program objectives and framework, and the ConnectMaine statute and rule.

Questions to be answered in the future

- What other capital financing is available to reduce the local debt burden?
- Why isn't satellite, 5G or _____ considered advanced communications technology infrastructure?
- Would scholarships help fill the electrical & line labor needs?
- Why was the 3-ring binder, which was largely funded by taxpayers, sold to a private company?

www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org

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Making grants available brings up many new ideas or questions for investigation, but focusing on the open application window leaves little time to answer these questions. While some could be discussed during the next ConnectMaine strategic planning process, many of these should be investigated by communities, ISPs or others. Consider taking these conversations to the Maine Broadband Coalition.

Orientation: Application Element

Purpose
- Why? Where does it come from?
- How does it fit into goals?
- Is it required?

Detail
- What information is required?
- How complete does it need to be?
- Does it affect competitiveness?

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This presentation will focus on elements in the current applications. Slide titles will correspond with application sections. For almost all application elements, I'll run through the origin of each, statute or rule, and the way it fits into the grants objectives or framework. This isn't a place to argue the application elements or scoring, but is intended to provide background that could help applicants fill in their applications.

After going over the purpose of the application element, details will be covered including differences among eligibility requirements, completeness or competitiveness.

In this way, we hope to provide general guidance, consistently to everyone, and answer the most FAQ relevant to applying to the infrastructure grants program. Be listening for the answer to your questions during this presentation.

Which track to use?

Community-Driven Projects
- Will broadband be universal?
- Is the network forward-looking?
- Is the solution goal-driven?
- Was there community planning? Are there local investments?
- Serving >50% of households, even >75% of households?

Provider Expansion Projects
- Is the project area small, within or between communities?
- Is the broadband filling gaps?
- Are existing networks leveraged?
- Is there low/no local investment?
- Serving ~130-600 customers? Density less than 20/mi?

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Before getting to the application elements, which application or track should be chosen?

The idea of two tracks comes from the state broadband action plan. Developed through recent stakeholder engagement, this process aligns with the grants program objective of maximizing investment in broadband infrastructure by leveraging existing resources, while also aligning with community visions and goals, another objective. Elements of the framework for the grants program are the focus on the percentage of households and the focus on potential customers and density.

It's inappropriate for us to tell you which track to choose; this is a question you'll need to answer for yourselves, but hopefully these lists of questions are helpful to you: Which list do you answer with yes most often?

Applicant Information

Purpose

ConnectMaine Rule, policies, plan

- Fiscal Agent
- Applicant
- Partner
- Communications Service Provider
- Capability

Detail

- Eligibility requirements
- Must be completed for review
- Otherwise doesn't affect competitiveness

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The first section of applications asks for applicant information, and none of these elements are new, but the format and thoroughness of this may feel new.

Fiscal agent is the entity that would contract with ConnectMaine, producing a w9 form, to receive the grant funds. It's helpful but not required that this be the same as the applicant.

ConnectMaine rule says who can be an applicant, and the options are given in the applications.

ConnectMaine encourages but doesn't require communications service providers and community leaders to partner on applications, so the partner is the entity that isn't listed as the applicant.

ConnectMaine rule requires capability of installing, using and managing broadband infrastructure, so demonstrating technical, managerial and financial capacity, and experience to operate the network capability is an eligibility requirement. If those lists in the application aren't completed, it could affect whether or not the application is reviewed.

Applicant Information: Unserved Areas

Purpose
- ConnectMaine Rule
- Broadband Availability Map:
  https://maps.sewall.com/connectme/public
- Unserved Reports:
  www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping
- Community Broadband Plans posted:
  www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/planning-grants/awards

Detail
- Point to the source(s) used
- Date of recent designation, if applicable
- Eligibility requirement

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Also not new, state funds can only be applied in unserved areas; project areas may also contain underserved areas. There's a fine line between designation as an unserved area and identified as an unserved area.

The framework provided ways to identify unserved areas and referred to ConnectMaine rule for designating areas as unserved that aren't already identified as unserved. Because ConnectMaine must vote to designate unserved areas, and there's a required public comment period, it's now impossible to designate unserved areas for this application window.

If you decide to apply even though the proposed project area isn't identified as unserved in at least one of these sources, and too many households are shown to have broadband service for the area to be underserved, you can still indicate how you've determined the lack of broadband service availability in the application and reference lack of response during the required provider outreach. While these areas may be ineligible for grant funds, and there isn't guarantee that the application would be reviewed for a grant award, providing us that information would be considered for this possibility and would be helpful in the effort to improve ConnectMaine mapping.

Unserved Areas: Speed Testing
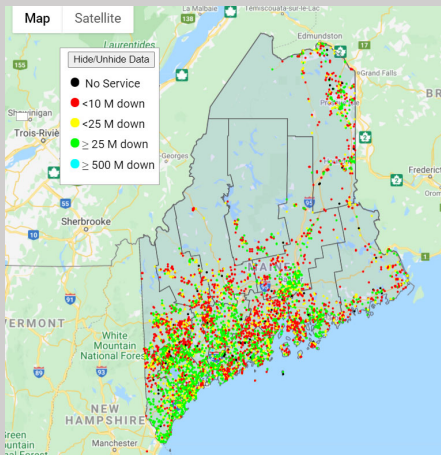
- Take the speed test: www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org
- Learn more about it there
- Community engagement tool

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If you decide to apply even though the proposed project area isn't identified as unserved in at least one of the 3 sources listed on the last slide, how would you demonstrate the lack of broadband service availability in the application? One source of data could be the Maine speed testing initiative. Whether toward applying for grants, or to engage your community on broadband, or to help improve ConnectMaine mapping, please take the speed test and encourage all your neighbors to take it, as often as you have tolerance to do so.

Applicant Information: Provider Outreach

Purpose

- ConnectMaine Rule
- Maximize broadband investments
- Outreach
- Responses

Detail

- Conduct outreach ASAP
- Completeness of responses
- Eligibility requirement

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ConnectMaine directs state funds to expand broadband service availability in places where the private sector hasn't plans to install broadband infrastructure during the same time period. All satellite service fails to meet the definition of advanced communications technology infrastructure, so there isn't concern with any federally-subsidized satellite expansion projects. In addition to being in the rule, ensuring no plans already exist for broadband expansion fits the objective of maximizing investments. The stakeholder engagement process involved refinement of the guidance outlined in the action plan.

The application provides the timeframes for required outreach by applicants, and the timeframe for any responses from providers; no response within the timeframe is effectively responding that no plans exist. These correspondences must be cc'd to ConnectMaine, so providing the date is sufficient for us to determine completeness of this application element.

While not the burden of the applicant, any responses from providers should be as complete as possible—responding with only "yes there are plans" may be insufficient; can you provide accurate mapping of address-specific, availability data of actual speeds in the relevant area, including a map of the geographic area at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data, and provide the GIS data behind the map; can you also optionally provide the dates and times when the Maine speed testing

initiative was conducted, customer testimonials, engineering schematics or other evidence of the availability of or plans for broadband service?

Cost-Benefit

Purpose
- Factors in ConnectMaine Rule
- Maximize broadband investments
- Required element

Detail
- Economically unfeasible otherwise
- Other needs for the grant
- Scored on grant/customer

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This is the third section of the application and the first of four scoring categories. Rule requires preference to be given to projects that propose the greatest relative improvement, which includes the factor that the infrastructure installation wouldn't occur without this grant being awarded. This also contributes to the objective of maximizing broadband investments. While that description isn't a factor specifically scored, answering that is required for completeness.

We'll come back to the customer definition and others in a moment. The main factor considered in the cost-benefit category is the grant amount per eligible customer. Obviously this about maximizing broadband Investments. To meet the requirements of the rule, cost-benefit is the category weighed most in scoring. Because potential projects are likely to be different than recent ones, the scoring breakpoints were based on both recent projects and expansion estimates; these breakpoints might be adjusted before future rounds based on what we learn as we go.

Please note that the score of an application isn't the only consideration in awarding grants; there are many other factors required or allowed to be reviewed in accordance with the statute and rule.

Subscriber, customer, household, etc.

Purpose
- Statute & Rule: availability
- Action Plan: universal service
- Future intent

Detail
- Read instructions carefully
- Must be completed for review
- Scoring varies between tracks

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Both applications ask about potential subscribers; this term comes from the rule, and ConnectMaine has interpreted it to refer to potential subscriber locations; specifically, the action plan provides the definition of: A residential or business location that could potentially subscribe to broadband service.

The statutory goals speak to universal broadband service for use by all Maine residents and businesses, and the action plan speaks to individual locations versus roads or areas. In order to track progress to goals, we need to know about locations, points on a map not lines or polygons.

The rule uses the term customer in reference to individual companies, whole project areas, those subscribing and potential customers in the future, so again, ConnectMaine interprets a customer to be a potential subscriber location.

Aligning with the action plan, the support of potential customers is reviewed as the primary factor of community support for provider expansion projects.

The only place where inclusiveness should be avoided is that the rule, refers to the percentage of households to be served, which the rule defines as a house and its occupants, regarded as a unit; this is scored for community-driven broadband projects in alignment with the action plan.

Legislation or at least rulemaking would be required to use consistent terms across the board. If you're counting the cost of expanding broadband, then count the

benefits of that expansion.

Read carefully as to whether the information to be provided is for all those in the community, only the project area, those to be served or those to be served who are currently unserved. The application tables are intended to help navigate these differences.

Requirements of the rule also include grant reporting at the household and business levels, which will be a component of contracts for grant awards.

Project Scope: Project Area

Purpose

- Statute & Rule: data collection
- Action Plan: tracking goals
- Required for completeness

Detail

- Map: pdf or viewable to scale
- Boundaries of project area or community, and identifiers such as road names
- Broadband service at street-level, line data scale, at least
- GIS data files, csv, shp, kml

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ConnectMaine requires filing of data of the extent of broadband service. As mentioned before, we're moving to tracking progress on broadband goals at the address-specific or location level. At a minimum, the rule requires a GIS enable map as part of the grant application, and the rule requires infrastructure grant tracking that includes reporting data; in a way, this application element is preparing the grant recipient for future reporting requirements. All reporting requirements will be elements of the contracts with those receiving grants.

Additionally, the action plan and stakeholder engagement emphasized needs to improve accountability on grant funds. To that end, we need baseline data to evaluate the need for grant funds and to compare to grant reporting—what actually gets built and where connections are actually made.

A map of the extent of broadband service in the project area that is at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data is required while we continue activities toward data consolidation and visualization that will eventually allow us to view and analyze GIS data files instead. Contributing to these data collection activities though, the file(s) of the GIS data behind the map are also required.

Project Scope

Purpose
- Statute, all the way down
- Action Plan: speeds
- Build-to standard required
- Framework: density (optional)

Detail
- Describe existing service
- Describe capacity in years
- Scoring upload speed
- Bonus points for density

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Project Scope is also the place in the application to describe how the proposed project results in forward-looking infrastructure that meets future broadband needs. This is referred to in various ways among the statute, rule, action plan, and grants program objectives and framework.

In addition to describing the existing service available, the applicant is also asked for a description of the type of service to be provided, including years of growth with proposed capacity. In other words, answer how the proposed network will meet future broadband needs. Performance criteria are likely to be further developed in future strategic planning, but for now the review committee will be able to review applications based on years of growth and learn from other information provided in these answers. The contract for grant awards will require meeting the performance criteria proposed in the application.

The faster upload speed of the offering that will be available to the most customers in the project area will score higher. The breakpoint floor was based on the current build-to standard, the middle breakpoint on the action plan, and the ceiling breakpoint on the framework and stakeholder engagement.

This application element is one example of many where choosing or knowing the ISP that will provide service increases competitiveness of the application.

While the framework and stakeholder engagement led to a focus on subscriber

density, ConnectMaine hasn't yet collected enough data to identify the breakpoints in the relationship between subscriber density and project feasibility, especially for entire communities. Based on recent projects and typical franchise agreements, ConnectMaine felt comfortable adding bonus points to provider expansion projects as a learning tool for future scoring criteria on this.

Project Scope: Financial Commitment

Purpose
- Rule: itemize costs
- Action Plan: connected premises
- Include the cost or enter $0

Detail
- Breakdown dollars to be spent
- Scoring based on remaining proportion of cost covered by the grant requested
- Breakpoints vary between tracks

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It isn't new that costs have to be itemized, which is required for the application to be deemed complete; this is also in alignment with the framework regarding accountability. The action plan speaks to connecting premises, which includes service drops and other costs related to ensuring true broadband service availability at the potential subscriber location level. Either those costs are included in the project and should be listed, or they aren't included and that expense line should include $0. Committed dollars includes all secured financial commitments from the applicant, any partner, and other sources that may include federal grant funds awarded for the same project area, such as coronavirus relief funds. If the financial commitment isn't secured, don't include it. Future refinements to the grants program may allow anticipated commitments, in-kind contributions, or seek a grant as seed funding. A positive vote on a municipal commitment is secured, but a warrant article to vote is only an anticipated commitment. While financial commitments aren't required, it could affect the competitiveness of the application.

Financial commitment is a significant factor in the project scope scoring category, which is scored based on the percentage of total cost covered by the grant amount requested. The scoring breakpoints are based on recent grants with the floor breakpoints based on the action plan.

Note for Provider Expansion Projects

- Expanding broadband to these groups helps realize economic and social benefits of broadband, and contributes to project value; 2 points, if ~~the list is deemed complete~~, or 0 points

- 2 points, if <u>letters describe evidence of benefits</u>, or 0 points

- Proposed projects that result in affordability offerings help address affordability barriers to the adoption or use of internet service, and contributes project value; 3 points, if ~~the list is deemed complete~~, or 0 points

- 3 points, if <u>an affordability offering will be available</u>, or 0 points

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There are typos in Project Value, from pasting a phase used elsewhere, that a list must be deemed complete to get points on economic & social benefits and on the affordability offering. Lists aren't actually requested there, please refer to the application element in order to get these points: letters that attest to the benefits and information about the affordability offering.

Project Value: Subscription Prices

Purpose
- Statute, all the way down
- Action Plan: consistent prices
- Digital equity & inclusion
- Must be completed for review

Detail
- List every service level offered
- Future verification & validation
- Scoring varies between tracks

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The statute requires ConnectMaine to collect and report on market conditions. The rule requires applications to include information about the price per customer of the service to be provided by the proposed project. Subscription prices of offerings by various types of subscribers are also required in grant reporting.

This is another application element preparing the applicant for future reporting requirements, which will be elements of the contract for grant awards. Verification and validation will likely include comparing proposed prices to those offered elsewhere in the state, aligning with the action plan. The objectives for the grants program include consideration of subscription prices, including an affordability offering.

Here is also an example where choosing or knowing the ISP that will provide service increases competitiveness of the application. The scoring breakpoints were based on both recent reporting and stakeholder engagement; these breakpoints might be adjusted before future rounds based on what we learn as we go.

Questions?

ConnectMaine Staff

Connect.ME@maine.gov

www.maine.gov/connectme/

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Answers to Additional Questions from the Grants Workshop

Q: Will the presentation and speaking notes be available in recorded form on the website after the event?
A: Yes, the document is posted, and the recording is available through March, on the ConnectMaine website: https://www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/infrastructure-grants/process

Q: Are two separate applications required for two areas identified as unserved in the same community?
A: No, if you have multiple project areas in the same community, and the proposal is to expand service to all of them within a year, then you're welcome to use one application per community, instead of one application per contiguous project area. If your proposed project involves building infrastructure through multiple, adjacent communities within a year, then feel free to use one application.

Q: Can the applicant be a town and have an ISP partner?
A: If the applicant isn't an eligible ISP, the applicant may be any unit of local government, including town, city, county or regional council of governments; or any broadband utility district or corporation, wholly or partially owned by a unit of local government. Any communications service provider (ISP) that is an applicant, or partner to this application, must be in good standing with all ConnectMaine reporting obligations.

Q: Is it okay for the "Partner" and the "Service Provider" to be the same entity?
A: Yes

Q: Can the partner be the fiscal agent?
A: Yes

Q: Are three municipalities, which are establishing a broadband utility to build fiber-to-the-premise infrastructure, eligible for a grant?
A: Yes; however, there are other eligibility requirements including that the project area was identified as unserved or underserved.

Q: Does the federal definition of broadband affect whether or not a community could apply?
The FCC definition of broadband is 25/3mbps. Senator Angus King and 3 other Senators wrote a letter to the FCC to redefine "unserved" to include households with speeds under 100/100mbps.
A: Currently in Maine, areas are designated as unserved where internet service is less than 25mbps/3mbps, and areas are designated as underserved where less than 20% of the households have access to internet service of at least 25mbps/3mbps. Future changes to the designation of broadband service or unserved areas are possible but won't affect this round of grants.

Q: Is there a map of "unserved areas"?
A: Areas designated as unserved may be identified in any or all three sources, including a map, which are listed in the application; additional information is in slide 8.

Q: Will the Maine speed testing initiative continue through the summer so that seasonal residents can also participate? Where can I learn more about the speed testing platform and how that data is collected?
A: The Maine speed testing initiative will be active through calendar year 2021, and you can learn more at the same website: https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/

Q: When will the next opportunity be for areas to be designated unserved?
A: At least annually, and subject to 30-day comment period, ConnectMaine designates geographic areas that are unserved. The ConnectMaine Authority next anticipates designation of broadband service before July 2021, an more information about the comment period will be posted on the website: https://www.maine.gov/connectme/about/statutes-rulemaking

Q: Is ConnectMaine considering another opportunity to request review of unserved areas before the next grant round?
A: The ConnectMaine Authority hasn't determined when it may announce the next opportunity to request review of unserved areas. Such an announcement would occur at one of its public meetings. According to ConnectMaine rule, the ConnectMaine Authority approved the process for identifying unserved areas, which is posted on the ConnectMaine website: https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping

Q: Will federal programs affect ConnectMaine grant eligibility, like the FCC's Rural Opportunity Digital Fund affected USDA grants? Will this ever affect Connect Maine Grants like it has affected USDA grant availability? What about proposed deployment of satellite under RDOF?
A: Federal programs only affect proposed projects when existing ISPs have plans to provide service meeting or exceeding the minimum build standard for broadband within one year. ConnectMaine directs state funds to expand broadband service availability in places where the private sector hasn't plans to install broadband infrastructure during the same time period proposed by the grant applicant. Provider outreach is required as part of applying to ConnectMaine grants. Currently, satellite doesn't affect ConnectMaine grants, because it doesn't meet the current definition of advanced communications technology infrastructure.

Q: Does the applicant need to do outreach to both ISPs or just the one that is the partner in the project, if there is an area could potentially be served by two different ISPs?
A: Yes, the applicant must conduct outreach to all existing ISPs.

Q: How is latency accounted for in scoring?
A**: Latency can be used in describing the type of service to be provided** in the executive summary and project scope; however, latency isn't currently defined in the ConnectMaine rule.

Q: Why are the scoring guides different between the two tracks?
A: This is based on the framework for the infrastructure grants program. Provider expansion projects are scored with more weight on project scope, while community-driven broadband projects are scored with more weight on community support; additional information is provided in the first paragraphs of the applications.

Q: How can ConnectMaine consider factors that aren't scored in awarding grants?
A: In accordance with the ConnectMaine statute and rule, many other factors are reviewed outside of the scoring categories. ConnectMaine must consider whether or not the proposed infrastructure would be installed without a grant. The proposed project must be evaluated for the greatest relative improvement. ConnectMaine tries to ensure funded infrastructure is forward-looking to meet future broadband needs. ConnectMaine considers the timeline proposed for whether or not the project can be completed within a year.

Q: Does ConnectMaine consider 911 addresses and or US postal service locations?
A: ConnectMaine considers potential subscribers, households and businesses; additional information is provided in slide 12.

Q: How are potential subscribers counted, only those who don't already have service?
A: No, read the application carefully to count the total number of potential subscribers; and of those, count the number currently unserved; and of those currently unserved, count the number to be served by the proposed project.

Q: Are residences, businesses, schools and libraries all counted as potential subscribers?
A: Yes; however, the vast majority of schools and libraries aren't counted as currently unserved because, the Maine School and Library Network serves about 85-99% of these institutions. Contact your local schools and libraries to determine if they are part of the MSLN.

Q: Are home-based businesses counted as both a household and a business?
A: Maybe, read the application carefully to count one potential subscriber only once, to count the household toward that number and to count the business when applicable; additional information is provided in slide 12.

Q: Does "proposed to be served" mean commitments to take service or locations which the design can serve if a drop is added?
A: No commitments to take service are required. If the proposed project could result in service, then it's counted as a potential subscriber. Read the application carefully; additional information is provided in slide 12.

Q: Is there any distinction given to areas with a high number of seasonal residents?
A: No, ConnectMaine doesn't distinguish between seasonal and year-round residents at this time.

Q: What resource is acceptable for submitting a GIS map? Is there a specific program you have recommended to for creating the GIS map?
A: The map must be submitted as a separate file and must depict the extent of broadband service in the project area that is at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data. Also separate file(s) of the GIS data behind the map must be submitted; file types and additional information is in slide 13. The ISP likely has ability to create a GIS map and export the data files behind the map. Other consultants may also offer this service: https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/consultants

Q: In describing type of service to be provided, what is meant by years of growth with proposed capacity? Broadband speeds?
A: Capacity is one factor for evaluating the proposed infrastructure as forward-looking to meet future broadband needs; in other words, will the infrastructure be scalable and can it be leveraged in the future for universally available broadband service? While the broadband needs and service provided are most often measured in download/upload speeds, the application also asks for other information related to capacity of the proposed infrastructure. ConnectMaine considers proposed infrastructure with sufficient capacity for future growth for the greatest number of years; in other words, for how many years would the proposed infrastructure be able to support service offerings of increasing speeds without oversaturation or high latency without major upgrades in the infrastructure? ConnectMaine considers whether or not the proposed infrastructure has the capacity to meet subscriber needs as demand grows, without major upgrades or rebuilds; in other words, would the proposed infrastructure be capable of delivering gigabit symmetrical service with minimal upgrades to the electronics? Additional information is provided in slide 14.

Q: Is Maine's broadband minimum 10/10mpbs?
A: ConnectMaine sets a build standard for broadband, an accountability requirement for all state funded projects, which currently is offering a service level of at least 10/10mpbs. Future changes to the build standard for broadband are possible but won't affect this round of grants.

Q: Which upload speed is considered in scoring the Proposed Service? Even though the proposed network could support service with an upload speed of 100mbps or faster, the offerings available from the ISP will be slower.
A: For this grant round, the offering that will be available to the most customers in the project area will be considered for scoring; additional information is provided in slide 14.

Q: How are the density bonus points counted? Aren't grants intended to help expand service in less populated areas?
A: The application provides a table to help in calculating density as the number of potential subscribers per mile of road. Less densely populated areas score higher, up to 10 bonus points for provider expansions projects only; additional information is provided in slide 14.

Q: Is there a difference in benefits between households and businesses?
A: Both are counted as potential subscribers. The application asks for evidence of project benefits to students, remote workers, telehealth patients and support facilities, and small businesses.

Q: How do you measure community support?
A: There are many application elements under the community support section. For provider expansion projects, ConnectMaine considers the description provided of any community engagement in the planning process. For community-driven broadband projects, ConnectMaine considers the list of community broadband committee members, their backgrounds and the expertise or roles contributed.

Q: Are operating expenses eligible uses of grant funds?
A: Only expenses associated with the project of installing broadband infrastructure, because this grant round will use bond funds, which can only be used for infrastructure, not on-going operations.

Q: Does a "guarantee" of a loan count the same as a secured loan?
A: Having a loan and a guarantee on that loan is considered a secured commitment; however only a promise of a loan, no approval, isn't secured. ConnectMaine neither considers repayment terms nor your ability to make payments.

Q: Is a town warrant article sufficient for financial commitment from the community?
A: No, a public vote after the application window has closed isn't a secure, financial commitment; additional information is provided in slide 15.

Q: Will individual applications and details of scores be publicly shared?
A: Executive summaries of successful applications will be publicly shared. All information that isn't deemed confidential is public information. ConnectMaine has neither the practice nor the requirement to make public details of scoring beyond the scoring guide provided in the application. ConnectMaine staff would be happy to talk with applicants about how to improve their applications for future grant rounds.

Additional Guidance for Potential Applicants

Applications:
If there are several project areas in the community, and the proposal is to expand service to all of them within a year, then the applicant is welcome to use one application per community, instead of one application per contiguous project area. If your proposed project involves building infrastructure through multiple, adjacent communities within a year, then feel free to use one application per project area.

Applicant Eligibility:
Public-private partnerships are encouraged.
- If a communications service provider and another entity are involved in the application, as any of the following applicant, agent, fiscal agent, to meet eligibility or capability requirements, or for financial commitments, then this indicates a public-private partnership. Briefly describe the partnership; don't leave this blank.

Good standing of communications service provider is required.
- Infrastructure grant tracking reports are due annually for five years following the completion of the project. A completion report isn't the same as the grant tracking report. Either the provider received the grant funds and was contracted to submit tracking reports, or their community partner was contracted to do so but would require the provider to share data necessary for their reporting. In either case, indicate when the provider last met this obligation.
- Additionally, the required data filing is most often accomplished by submitting FCC 477 form data, but could also be accomplished by submitting more refined or updated data. Indicate when the provider last filed required data to ConnectMaine's contractor, Sewall Company.

Applicant must be eligible to receive grant funds.
- The application lists the eligible entities, in addition to eligible communications service providers. Indicate the name and type of the entity applying. While a homeowner's association for example can be an agent of an application, it can't be an applicant.

Unserved Areas:
The project area must be identified as unserved or underserved using one of the three sources listed, or by already having completed the opportunity to request review areas such that the project area is posted as unserved on the ConnectMaine website:
https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping
- Indicate which of the three sources were used; don't take up space contesting these sources. If the area isn't identified as unserved or underserved in those sources, and a request under the opportunity to review areas wasn't submitted, then refer to slide 8 for other information about applying.
- Only if the area is posted on the website after a request under the opportunity to review areas was previously submitted to ConnectMaine, indicate the date of that request.

Provider Outreach:
Include only the date of provider outreach; don't include any other information in this section of the application.

- Potential applicants were welcomed to obtain preferred contract information of their existing providers, for this outreach which was required to occur by March 27. Potential applicants can determine the existing providers using the search tool in the Broadband Availability Map: https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping
- Providers were required to respond within 14 days of the outreach, and share as much information as possible about the broadband or plans that exist for speeds at or above 10/10mbps. Responses of only "yes, there are plans" are insufficient; refer to slide 10 notes.

Potential subscribers, households, customers, etc.
Read the instructions carefully; refer to slide 12.

Project Scope:
The guidance on applications above corrects for the number of applications per project area; refer to Applications above.
A GIS-enabled map files of data behind the map are required; refer to slide 13.

- The map and data files need to show broadband availability and street-level data; in other words, speeds by road or road segments, with road names identifiable.
- The map file may be a pdf or other accessible format, as long as it can be viewed at the required scale. The data files behind the map may be in shp, kml or even csv file format.
- Refer to slide 13: ConnectMaine is working toward locational-level (point) data from area-level (polygon) or street-level (line) data, so the more refined the data the better.
- While lists of addresses aren't requested in the application, if addresses help define the project area, start and end points along a road, or there's availability data (speeds) associated with the address points, then show them on the map and include these data files. If addresses help define the project area or provide answers to other application elements, feel free to insert them in those elements of the application.

Financial Commitment:
The table is to help in itemizing all costs of the project and show sources of funds to support the project.

- Rows could be "fiber materials," "make-ready," "attachment equipment," "surveying," "labor," "electronics," "central office property," "service drops," etc., adding as many as the applicant needs. The like-expenses can be grouped that way, and don't need to be itemized as much as the invoices that'll document expenses. In the past, costs would be described as "project costs" as a single expense line, and that obviously isn't itemizing costs.

- All secured, financial commitments would be combined for the committed dollars column, with the grant dollars column covering the remaining costs. Potential, future contributions from customers, such as those toward service drops, aren't secured, financial commitments. Refer to slide 15: The action plan speaks to connecting premises, which includes service drops and other costs related to ensuring true broadband service availability at the potential subscriber location level. Either those costs are included in the project and should be listed, or they aren't included and that expense line should include $0.

Proposed Service:
The available download and upload speeds of current service are the service levels offered by the existing provider, not the realized speeds from speed testing or estimates of service availability. The download and upload speeds of proposed service are the service levels that will be offered, not the capacity of the network.

Project Value:
For provider expansion projects only, evidence such as letters of support could have been submitted to describe project benefits, which would have been submitted these as separate files. Otherwise, and for community-driven broadband projects, don't attach, insert or submit letters or supporting documentation that aren't requested in the application.

Subscription Prices:
The service levels and prices are those that will be offered, not estimates of potential speeds or realized speeds, and not prices that are "subject to change." Refer to slide 17: The rule requires applications to include the price per customer of the service to be offered as a result of the project. The objectives of the grants program include consideration of subscription prices.

Subscription Rate:
The subscription rate or take rate is recognized as being an estimate of what's anticipated; don't leave this blank.