ConnectME Authority

June 7, 2012 – Meeting Notes

1. Introduction of ConnectME Authority Members and Staff

Authority Members: Jean Wilson, Chair; Dick Thompson; Greg McNeal; Ralph Johnson

Staff: Phil Lindley, Lisa Leahy

2. Seventh Round ConnectME Grant Awards

Discussion regarding the grant process, scoring, and funding per household served. Dick Thompson suggested that at the next meeting the Authority review possible limits for grant funding for areas that may be too expensive to serve, making the grant subsidies high for the number of households served. He also suggested fined tuning the grant review process and scoring to provide more granularity and to making the scoring grids available to potential applicants. This will allow applicants to focus on those items that will impact how their application is scored.

The discussion also centered on the community support (CS) section and that it should be "weighted" by the amount and type of community support. A suggestion was made that this section should be worth more, possibly taking points from one of the other criteria. Currently, the points for CS are either zero or 10 depending on whether support is indicated. We are a bit limited in moving scoring from one category to another because our rule states that the cost benefit category must be worth at least 33 points. It was suggested that scoring should also reflect number of houses served and type of service, such as fiber to the home, which should receive "bonus" points.

After reviewing the scored applications from the review team, the Authority decided to increase the amount of funding available for this round to approximately $2 million. Based on the total scores of each application, grant awards included all applications that scored 70 points or more. This resulted in 23 grant awards for $2.08 million. The awards are:

Axiom Technologies (two grants) for East Machias and Halls Mills

Fairpoint Communications (three grants) for Robbinston, Sweden, and Vinalhaven

Lincolnville Networks (three grants) for Hope, Lincolnville, and Lincolnville Beach

Oxford County Tel and Tel for Hartford

Pioneer Broadband (four grants) for Amity, Big Lake Township, Caribou, and Mars Hill

Premium Choice (two grants) for Grindstone and Williamsburg

Tidewater Telecom (six grants) for Appleton, Bremen, Jefferson, New Harbor, Nobleboro, and South Bristol

Time Warner (two grants) for Alna and Orland

Danny Sullivan from Cooper offered comments on the grant awards stating that DSL, cable modem, and fixed wireless service should no longer be funded as they are obsolete technologies and that fiber to home is the only method for the future.

3. Executive Director Report

- Advisory Council Membership:
  The Authority appointed Bruce Ballantyne, FairPoint, to seat 11.
  All seats are now filled and the Advisory Council will meet before the next Authority meeting.

- Financial statements provided:
  ConnectME Fund Performance Report;
  Broadband Sustainability Fund Report; and
  Forward looking pro forma financial estimate

4. Public comment period

Ben Sanborn, TAM, suggested that wording in the grant application regarding backhaul service be more generic. The reference to the Three Ring Binder project is to notify potential applicants of the existence of a new high capacity backhaul facility that the Authority supported and is funded with NTIA ARRA public funds.

Don Flewelling, Pioneer Broadband, stated that his company is no longer providing new fixed wireless service, but is instead concentrating on more fiber service.