

CONNECTMAINE

Proposed Objectives for Infrastructure Grants

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Background: www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/engagement

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Purpose

The ConnectMaine Authority administers grants, including the recently passed state bond. The mission of ConnectMaine is in part to facilitate the universal availability of broadband to all Maine households and businesses. These objectives are intended to guide ConnectMaine in developing its broadband infrastructure grant program.

Goals

The state Broadband Action Plan contains goals that guide ConnectMaine activities. Broadband service enables civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning and access to essential services. The state has set a goal of expanding the availability of broadband to connect 95% of potential subscriber locations by 2025.

Duties

ConnectMaine awards broadband infrastructure grants to support investments that propose the greatest relative improvement to existing internet service. ConnectMaine considers its statutory goals and policies, including that all infrastructure projects funded meet or exceed a minimum build standard and must be forward-looking to meet future broadband needs.

Objectives

To meet these goals, changes to the broadband infrastructure grant program will aim to meet the following objectives:

- Maximize investment in broadband infrastructure, and maximize opportunities to leverage resources and funding from other sources to support deployment of broadband infrastructure; aim to correct market failures due to low premise density.
- Balance awards in consideration of investment incentives and regional equity; create a geographically equitable distribution of projects around the State.
- Align with community visions and goals for economic development, education, civic engagement and healthcare.
- Fund forward-looking, scalable infrastructure that provides ubiquitous, universally available broadband service, with sufficient capacity for future growth for the greatest number of years, giving preference to projects providing symmetrical service.
- Advance digital equity and inclusion; consider projects that propose the lowest price for the highest quality of service of the lowest service level offering; no grant will be awarded for proposed projects that allow data caps on service provided; all projects funded must result in providing standardized tiers of service, including one for income-eligible individuals.