**ConnectMaine Authority Precertification Checklist**

**How do we Start?**

Community planning grants are designed to help a community determine what is the current coverage, why and who in the community would like better coverage, and to work with internet service providers (ISP), both existing (incumbent) and possible new ISPs to bring the internet service the community would like to its residents.

This is a process that includes gathering information, identifying common interests and outreach to the entire community to determine how best to meet the broadband needs of the majority of the community members, residents, businesses, non-profits and others.

**Are you ready to begin?**

* Understand whether your community has a broadband gap.
* Understand whether others are already working to address the broadband gap.
* Understand that this is a marathon, not a sprint. Closing the broadband gap will take a long time and a lot of personal effort.

**Seek out existing efforts**

* Talk with local elected officials about any existing efforts or with other interested residents.
* Talk with your library, healthcare centers, schools, large businesses, town government (these are “community anchor” institutions) about any existing efforts.
* Talk with community groups and community leaders about any existing efforts.
* Build your team: These are the types of activities your Community Broadband team will need to undertake:
* Use the convening power of your local government to bring together stakeholder groups for conversation, information sharing and brainstorming.
* Leverage any community anchor institutions, community groups and local businesses that could help involve residents in broadband discussions.
* Identify existing community leaders and trusted members of the community. Seek their advice, keep them informed of progress and when possible recruit them to be involved.
* Establish methods of communication that fit your group and community (email group, Facebook page, et cetera).
* Create a communications plan that is consistent, transparent and inclusive.

To apply for a Community Planning Grant, ConnectMaine requires that you fill out this pre-certification check list. Use this list to build your team and to get started. This check list is designed to be a starting point to help communities start down the path of how to improve access to high-speed internet in your community.

While a completed check list is required to apply for a grant (either before you submit your planning grant proposal, or when you submit your proposal), ConnectMaine’s hope is that you use this check list as a guide and a starting point from which to build the planning grant process and effort.

Once you have completed this check list, please contact the ConnectMaine staff so we can walk through this list with you.

**1. Creation of a Community Broadband Team**

* Provide list of members, including name and title that will be part of your community’s team:
  + Must include at least one representative from municipal government for each community seeking certification
  + 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
  + Members could include residents and representatives with experience in health care, business, and education.
* Designate single point person for communications with ConnectMaine for certification process, provide email address to ConnectMaine.

**2. Hold at least one Community Broadband Meeting – start the process!**

* Identify the broadband providers currently serving your community and invite them to a community meeting.
* Check out and share ConnectMaine Mapping for this community. As a starting point for your process. <https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping>
* Questions for attendees:
  + Which providers are currently serving your community?
  + How do the mapping results compare with members' actual experiences?
  + Does existing broadband access meet your needs?
  + If it is inadequate in what ways does it fall short?
  + If you have broadband, how do you use it now?
* Provide any documentation showing meeting dates, notes, agenda and number of attendees, emails to providers and responses to the questions above.

 [ConnectMaine can help to provide guidance/suggestions on how to 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 TIF 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?

[ConnectMaine can help to provide guidance/suggestions on how to address areas of this section]

**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 process for your community to develop 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.