

CONNECTMAINE

January Meeting Notes

27 January 2021

Zoom Recording: <https://networkmaine.zoom.us/rec/share/0ezNsgmLL7sgl1GQkp3-pr64FvNog9CQX-taOfOZ-WhzBEUXUcMLSoRpEdgZtZRz.PkuOiU-JBighgLz>

Authority Members

Nick Battista, Chair
Jasmine Bishop
Fred Brittain
Susan Corbett
Heather Johnson
Jeff Letourneau
Liz Wyman

Introductions of Members and Staff

Jeff Letourneau, Liz Wyman, Fred Brittain, Susan Corbett, Jasmine Bishop, Nick Battista, Peggy Schaffer, Stephenie MacLagan, Emily Atkins

Notes of Last Meeting

Approval of the December Meeting notes: Susan motioned, Fred 2nd, 6:0

Review of Operations

Executive Director's Report—Peggy

- Connect Kids Now! grants
- Independent quasi-agency activities
- Constituent services & legislature

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Annual report and presentation to the legislative EUT committee
- State Broadband Leaders Network meeting with presentation on Starlink
- Federal funds to and from NTIA

Capacity Discussion

Debrief decisions made at January emergency meeting—Nick

- Content of Requests for Information
- Process for contracting for services and products

Update from Contracts Committee—Liz

- Governance, process and communication flow
- Deliverables from RFIs
- Sole-source contracting
- Timing for deliverables
- Capacity vs expertise needs
- RFI vs RFP

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Approval of the contracts committee (Liz, Jasmine & Susan) to develop & issue RFPs for chosen deliverables (bolded in the committee's document) with one for a grants application portal, one for technical assistance in the grants program, and one for post-award auditing services: Susan motioned, Liz 2nd, 6:0

Approval of an RFP committee (Fred, Jeff & Nick) to develop & issue an RFP for the chosen deliverables (bolded in the committee's document) for a data & mapping platform: Jasmine motioned, Susan 2nd, 6:0

Review Policies and Procedures

- Independent quasi-agency vs state agencies
- Statutory requirements to revise our Policies and Procedures

Action: Staff will revise Policies and Procedures, and contracts committee will review ahead of February meeting for approval

Decisions on Infrastructure Grants

Review and discuss drafted materials for the infrastructure grants program—Peggy

- Drafts provided
- Ongoing input for clarity

Action: Members will provide input within a week

Discuss timing for next application window for infrastructure grants—Nick

- Timing remains uncertain
- Aiming for clarity at the February meeting

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Timing in the context of governance

Potentially eligible areas publicly posted—Stephenie

- Process approved at January emergency meeting
- 30-day comment period ends February 24
- Future opportunities to request to review unserved areas

No Other Business

Public Comments

- Timing of grants program design in context of application portal and auditing
- Process for identifying unserved areas
- Uncertainty of size and number of potential projects
- Next application window for infrastructure grants
- Broadband affordability
- Grants program online portal

Approval of adjournment: Susan motioned, unopposed

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December Meeting Notes

6 January 2021

Zoom Recording: https://networkmaine.zoom.us/rec/share/G0wcPc0DkfuiUi88v24sUzIV0SkQUUjoD_JIa3qmzyY60R9ZcGIlhnhCdmNOW1Q0.mtVysiYO9GtKnWp0

Authority Members

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Meeting Kickoff

Lack of broadband story from Greenbush—Jeff

Notes of Last Meeting

Approval of the November Meeting notes: Fred motioned, Heather 2nd, 7:0

Review of Operations

Executive Director's Report—Peggy

- Connect Kids Now! grants extension request
- 130th Legislature bill titles

Board Discussion Welcomed

- New federal relief funds

Financial Decisions

New England Clean Energy Connect memo and memorandum of understanding—Nick

- Annual planning process for the deployment of funds
- Aligned with the stipulation from the Public Utilities Commission

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Decision making of grantmaking
- Identification of affected communities
- Terms of escrow account
- Staff capacity

Approval of authorizing the ConnectMaine Authority Chair to sign the NECEC MOU once finalized and reviewed by the AAG: Susan motioned, Jeff 2nd, 7:0

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Location for third quarter funds and necessary contracts—Peggy

- Background context for the need to move funds from state administration
- Recap ConnectMaine as an independent body
- Solix managed funds before the state, and currently manages revenue

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Effect on the Office of Broadband at DECD

Action: Staff will develop a contract for financial management services, and the ConnectMaine Authority Chair to contract Solix for financial management services through the end of fiscal year 2021.

Decisions on Planning Grants

Review of additional information—Peggy

Approval of awarding the recommended grant amounts for Community Broadband Planning: Jeff motioned, Fred 2nd, 7:0

Discussion on Infrastructure Grants

Additional capacity to implement grant program and audit processes—Peggy

- Progress to-date and remaining objectives
- Drafted RFI for administrative and auditing services
- Drafted RFI for mapping services

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Online portal for grants process
- Cost and benefit of online portal
- Confidentiality, transparency, competitiveness, conflicts of interest
- Staff capacity
- Preparation for online portal

Approval of directing staff to issue the two RFIs: Liz motioned, Jasmine 2nd, 7:0

Debrief Stakeholder Engagement—Nick

- General support for 2-track process for infrastructure grants program
- Synthesis has been drafted and yet to be finalized or shared
- Chair's initial reactions and questions

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Value of stakeholder engagement process
- Benefits of the 2-track process
- Cost-Benefit scoring category vs award amount based on premises served
- Cost-Benefit scoring category vs long-term benefits of the proposed project
- Future development of the infrastructure grants program in strategic planning
- Weighting of Cost-Benefit in Provider Expansion Projects vs Community-Driven Broadband Projects

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Designation of Unserved Areas

Review process for identifying unserved areas—Nick

- Process set in rule and designation is subject to 30-day comment period
- Opportunity to request review of areas

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Benefits of using the Opportunity to Request, Section 5.D
- Information that the area is served (Section 5.D) vs information that the area will be served (Section 6.D)
- Eligibility vs Accountability
- Future consideration of community plans generated without ConnectMaine funds

Approval of the process for identifying unserved areas, which is based on the designation of unserved areas in accordance with the ConnectMaine rule, in that the ConnectMaine Authority finds this process utilizes data filed in accordance with §3 of its rule and data from other sources deemed credible and appropriate for the designation of unserved areas in accordance with §5 of its rule: Jeff motioned, Susan 2nd, 7:0

Public Comments Welcomed

- Timing of this process in relation to planning projects and work schedules of communications service providers
- ConnectMaine outreach on grants program
- Logistics of potential applicants submitting requests and communication service providers submitting information

Other Business

Rulemaking—Peggy

- Comments addressed
- Minor revisions to the proposed rule
- Omission of changing “household” to “premise”
- Inclusion of rearranging provisions under grants

Approval of the adopting the proposed rule: Jeff motioned, Susan 2nd, 7:0

Public Comments

- Timing of online portal for infrastructure grants program
- Speed testing continues

Approval of adjournment: Liz motioned, Jeff 2nd, 7:0

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Executive Director's Report

27 January 2021

Peggy Schaffer, Executive Director

Authority Members

Nick Battista, Chair
Jasmine Bishop
Fred Brittain
Susan Corbett
Heather Johnson
Jeff Letourneau
Liz Wyman

Active grant awards

The infrastructure grant project of Premium Choice Broadband for Cambridge has been completed, which provides universal broadband in that municipality and also expands broadband service to 119 premises in Parkman. The community leaders are going to work to get a 90% take rate.

State approval of an extension on the coronavirus relief funds was required even though the federal legislation allowed it. With the extension, more providers are able to ensure greatest impact of Connect Kids Now! grants. Utility pole processes remain a major obstacle to implementing work toward state broadband goals. Axiom has a grant from the Island Institute to provide low cost service to the students it will cover. Status of projects:

Geography	Provider	Complete	Student/Teacher	Take Rate
Midcoast	LCI	96%	325	75%
Canaan	Charter	100%	2	50%
Statewide	Redzone	82%	59	27%
Berwick & Woolwich	Comcast	17%	1	100%
Northern Maine	Pioneer	9%	2	50%
East Machias & Whiting	Axiom	5%	0	
Androscoggin & Oxford	FirstLight	22%	4	75%

Federal funding update

NTIA is charged with administering the most recent coronavirus relief funds and will likely require states to submit an application each. The State Broadband Leaders have met with them once to share our thoughts. We suggested a pilot project for state block grants.

Staff and program management

No less than 20 potential applicants have discussed projects with staff, including a proposal for six communities in Western Maine and another discussion involving eleven different areas. There's an agenda item to debrief decisions made around the request for information on the infrastructure grants program.

The contract with Solix has been executed and then amended in order to set up financial systems for the New England Clean Energy Connect Broadband Escrow and Fund. Staff met with key stakeholders as the annual plan for the funds was made and approved by the parties to the memorandum of understanding.

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Local and regional planning support

Staff acquired clarification on the communities impacted by NECEC, in order to conduct outreach around infrastructure grants.

As the Public Utilities Commission undertakes rulemaking around pole processes, staff met with municipal and provider stakeholders who are exploring ways to alleviate uncertainty around pole processes and costs.

New speaking engagements have ramped up: Nick, Susan and I are doing a series with the BDN, February-April; PPH is doing one reflecting on how we were a national leader under King with the laptop initiative but now are no longer, a discussion of the policies that landed us here; I am also speaking on a national panel for utilities interested in getting into the broadband space, talking about digital inclusion; then in Feb, a Bangor Chamber panel.

Constituent work has ramped up again with the legislature coming in. Use of the Connect.ME@maine.gov email is the best way for streamlining inquiries, ensuring that constituents get timely responses that are consistent and effectively address their needs.

State legislative activities

The Governor finalized a proposed supplemental budget, including nearly \$1.8 million for ConnectMaine. The public hearing on this is going on right now. The EDU Committee got a presentation on Connect Kids Now! programs on Monday, and we are presenting our annual report to the EUT Committee on Thursday.

Federal partnership activities

Broadband Connects America Steering Committee met with the Biden FCC transition team. The conversation focused on due diligence for the long forms of RDOF, changing the definition of broadband from 25/3 to one that reflects actual consumer demands, especially upload, and the commonality between urban and rural areas around affordability and quality of service. The team was very engaged and asked good questions.

Mapping and data update

Sewall mapping of recent grant projects should be completed by the end of the month.

Speed testing continues, with nearly 10,000 unique test locations. We've joined a working users group from across the country to learn what other states are doing on promotion, and to share what we're all doing with the data and how to add new features.

There's an agenda item to debrief any potentially eligible areas for infrastructure grants that were publicly posted on the 25th. The data received during this process of identifying unserved areas should be helpful as we move forward with the mapping activities outlined in that RFI. Another agenda item debriefs the decisions made on the RFIs this past Friday.

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1. MEMBERSHIP DUES AND FEES

Guidelines for Processing Dues/Subscription Payments – DAFS Policy

Agencies may use a procurement card (P-Card) for dues and subscriptions totaling up to \$5,000, so long as:

- The membership dues and/or subscription fees identified on the invoice provide services, resources, and/or other benefits to the State agency that directly relate to the agency’s mission and purpose;
 - The vendor identified on the invoice offers specialized services not available by other means;
 - The costs stated on the invoice are the due/fees specific to the identified vendor and are set by the vendor; and
 - The invoice clearly indicates the period of time covered by the dues/fees.
- Membership dues and subscription invoicing amounts greater than \$5,000 may qualify for P-Card use based on special request from the agency and approval by the Division of Procurement Services. Please contact your agency point of contact within Procurement Services or the Director of Procurement Services with these requests.

DUES/FEES ARE \$5,000 OR LESS	DUES/FEES ARE GREATER THAN \$5,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a P-Card; OR• Create a purchase order (PO) in Advantage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact Procurement Services for approval to use P-Card.<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ If approved, Procurement Services will temporarily lift the dollar threshold restriction.OR• Enter a requisition (RQS) in Advantage.<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Attach invoice with description.⇒ No additional forms required.⇒ Procurement Services will create the buyer purchase order (BPO).

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2. GIFTS, DONATIONS AND SPONSORSHIPS - Title 35-A: PUBLIC UTILITIES Part 7: TELECOMMUNICATIONS Chapter 93: ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

§9212. Gifts and contributions

The authority may accept gifts and contributions on behalf of the authority for the purpose of designing, constructing, reconstructing, renovating or acquiring a project. [2005, c. 665, §3 (NEW).]

The authority, in accepting gifts of money, federal funds or other types of income, shall place this money in a special account for the purpose for which it is provided. The authority may invest the money in accordance with the purposes of this chapter, subject to any limitations imposed by the donor. [2005, c. 665, §3 (NEW).]

§9205. GENERAL POWERS

12. Accept aid or contributions. To receive and accept from any source aid or contributions of money, property, labor or other things of value, to be held, used and applied to carry out the purposes of this chapter, subject to the conditions upon which those grants and contributions are made, including, but not limited to, gifts or grants from any department or agency of the United States or the State for any purpose consistent with this chapter;

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3. TRAVEL

Meals and Entertainment

ConnectMaine follows the State of Maine policies outlined in the State Administrative & Accounting Manual. <https://www.maine.gov/osc/administration/saam>. If you have any questions concerning these guidelines, please contact the Director.

- a. Meals. Per Diem meal rates are set every fiscal year by the General Services Administration agency of the United States Government. The rates are based on your destination state and city. If you would like to see the rates before you travel here is the website <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. Per Diem reimbursement will be paid upon your return. The breakdowns for individual meals are, breakfast is 20%, lunch is 24% and dinner is 51% of your per diem total. No receipts are required. You may also be reimbursed for meals if you travel to a night meeting. For night meetings, your reimbursement amount will be made based on your actual cost (not to exceed the per diem amount) and must be verified by a receipt.
- b. Transportation. Mileage reimbursement is based on travel from the point of the start of your trip and the point where your trip ends. These points may be your home residence, work location or a meeting location. The current mileage rate is .44 per mile and will be reimbursed upon return with review of your route. Taxi, bus, train, ferry & tolls are reimbursable but require a receipt. Parking for meetings, airports and bus stations will be reimbursed with a receipt. If traveling out-of-state, please follow the DAFS preapproval process. If airfare is required, flights will be booked through the State of Maine travel management website. Exception can be made if flights are not available or if lower costs are available.
- c. Lodging. The Agency will reimburse lodging expenses at actual costs up to the specific daily maximum allowable lodging rate in effect at the time of travel for the specific area or locality, unless it is approved by the Agency Head or Authorized by Subsection 10.30.20 in the SAAM manual.

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4. INTERNAL CONTROLS

Contracts:

MRSA 35-A Chapter 93, §9025 Sub-10. Make and execute contracts. To make and execute contracts and other instruments and enter into such transactions as necessary or convenient for the exercise of the authority's powers and functions under this chapter.

- Contracts for grants. Grants approved by the board for infrastructure or community planning grants shall be drafted by the Assistant Director. The contracts will identify specific services to be covered, and include project milestones, with based on those milestones. Generally, there will be four even payments for infrastructure contracts, commencement at the beginning of the project, then two interim payments and a final payment, when the project is finished. All submissions for payment will include invoices that document detailed expenses for the project. Community Planning grants will be in two payments, commencement when the planning process begins and completion when the grantee submits its final report to the Authority.
- Contract for services. Services required by the authority will be generally done through a Request for Proposal process that follows the state procurement process outline in the Division of Purchases rules (Chapter 110).
- Request for Information. Because of the specialized nature of some services the Authority requires, the board may approve the release of a Request for Information. The RFI will be send out to the Authorities interested parties list and be posted on the Authorities website for a minimum of 10 days. The Director and Assistant Director will make a recommendation based on the responses from the RFI to the board to enter into a contract for purchasing services from the response to the RFI that best matches the need of the Authority, as defined by the RFI. The Director and Assistance Director will negotiate with the chosen vendor to define the contract scope, cost structure and deliverables, if that was not specified

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in the RFI. That final contract will be approved by the board. This approval may be done electronically.

Cash Receipts & Disbursements

Approval & Payment of Invoices

- Invoices and reports are checked thoroughly by the Assistant Director and the Director to make sure all documentation required is received.
- Director reviews invoice and if approves signs the invoice. Payments under \$10,000 can be approved by the Director and payments over \$10,000 are sent to the Board Chair for approval.
- If invoice/payment need a Board approval vote all material will be brought to the next Board meeting and voted on for approval.
- Assistant Director provides DAFS with an original signed by the Director invoice requesting a payment be made.
- When monthly financial reports are received from DAFS both the Director and Assistant Director review report thoroughly to confirm accuracy and contact DAFS with any questions or concerns.



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ConnectMaine Authority Members: Nick Battista, Jasmine Bishop, Fred Britain, Susan Corbett, Heather Johnson, Jeff Letourneau, Liz Wyman

27 January 2021

Press Release

BROADBAND GRANTS ANNOUNCEMENT

The ConnectMaine Authority seeks grant applications to plan and expand the availability of broadband service in the state.

In July, Maine voters approved a state bond of \$15 million toward expanding the availability of broadband service in the state. ConnectMaine grants are also funded through assessments or surcharges on certain communications, video and internet service bills. Along with other sources of funds, ConnectMaine anticipates awarding up to \$7.5 million at this time. Broadband service enables civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning and access to essential services.

Infrastructure grants are awarded to support investments in expanding the availability of broadband service in the state. Communications service providers and community leaders are encouraged to partner on infrastructure grant applications. Currently, preference is given to projects that propose the greatest relative improvement to existing internet service in unserved areas only.

Many communities in Maine have gone through a community-driven planning process. Looking to meet the current and future broadband needs of the community, and ensure equitable access, most plans call for broadband service that is universally available. Community-Driven Broadband Projects are substantial and seek to widely expand infrastructure that brings affordable and reliable connectivity. Many of these communities are actively seeking enough funds to implement projects.

To-date most projects receiving state grants have been proposed by internet service providers to address coverage gaps within or between communities, such as providing line extensions or filling dark pockets. Given that these types of coverage gaps aren't experienced by whole communities, less community engagement occurs. By leveraging and expanding the existing broadband networks, Provider Expansion Projects help achieve the state's broadband vision.

The mission of ConnectMaine is to facilitate the universal availability of broadband to all Maine households and businesses, and to promote the valuable role it can play in enriching their lives and helping their communities thrive. The state has set a goal to contribute 25% of the total cost of expanding the availability of broadband, to connect 95% of potential subscriber locations by 2025.

More information and applications can be found on the ConnectMaine website: www.maine.gov/connectme. Please direct any questions to ConnectMaine staff at Connect.ME@maine.gov.

CONNECTMAINE

Infrastructure Grants Application

Community-Driven Broadband Projects

Contact Staff

Connect.ME@maine.gov

207.624.9894

Authority Members

Nick Battista, Chair

Jasmine Bishop

Fred Brittain

Susan Corbett

Heather Johnson

Jeff Letourneau

Liz Wyman

This application binder is for community-driven broadband projects. This type of project is substantial and seeks to widely expand infrastructure that brings affordable and reliable connectivity. Many communities in Maine have gone through a community-driven planning process. Looking to meet the current and future broadband needs of the community, and ensure equitable access, most plans call for broadband service that is universally available. Given that most of these planning efforts were goal-driven, leveraged local investments and engaged the private sector, applications are scored heavily based on the cost-benefit and community support categories.

This application window is January 27 to April 15. Please submit your application materials by emailing Connect.ME@maine.gov with the subject heading Grant Application.

The current window for identifying unserved areas is January 6 to January 25, with any 30-day public comment period ending February 24.

The current window for provider outreach is January 27 to March 13, with the response window effectively being February 10 to March 27.

Instructions

Please don't include attachments or reference attachments; please insert evidence in the order requested. Any information that may be deemed confidential must be submitted as separate files to remain confidential. Please note that applications submitted are made publicly available; please submit confidential information as separate files. Some details of projects funded with grants are posted on the ConnectMaine website.

If any elements of the application can't be completed, then in those locations demonstrate how those elements will be developed as part of the proposed project. The ConnectMaine Authority reserves the right to request additional information necessary to evaluate applications for infrastructure grants.

Please contact ConnectMaine staff for any assistance.

Please note that the score of an application is only one factor considered by ConnectMaine in awarding grants, among many other factors required or allowed to be reviewed in accordance with the statute and rule, including that infrastructure be forward-looking to meet future broadband needs.

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I. Applicant Information

Applicant Signature:

Date Submitted:

A. Fiscal Agent

Entity Name:

B. Grant Requested

Amount:

C. Affected Communities

List each affected municipality, local government or local government authority, or a local nonprofit providing economic development programs, as applicable to the proposed project.

Points of Contact for Affected Communities and any community broadband committees:

Community	Name	Title or Role	Email or Phone

D. Applicant or Agent

Name:

Title or Role:

Mailing Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

E. Communications Service Provider

Company Name:

Point of Contact Name:

Title:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

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F. Applicant Eligibility

Either the applicant or its partner must demonstrate technical, managerial and financial capacity, and experience to operate the network capability, for ConnectMaine to determine whether or not the responsible entity is capable of installing, using and managing broadband infrastructure. Indicate the date of the most recent grant award by ConnectMaine, if any, and the entity receiving funds.

Date of last award:

Applicant of last award:

List prior experience in designing, installing, operating and managing infrastructure, if necessary.

Also briefly describe the public-private partnership, if any.

Any communications service provider (ISP) that is an applicant, or partner to this application, must be in good standing with all ConnectMaine reporting obligations. Indicate the date of the most recent “infrastructure grant tracking” report, if applicable, and most recent “required filing of data.”¹

Date of grant report:

Date of data filing:

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. State the legal entity of this applicant or partner, if applicable.

Name and type of entity:

¹ Details of these reporting requirements are contained in ConnectMaine rule: <https://www.maine.gov/connectme/about/statutes-rulemaking>

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G. Unserved Areas

Granted funds may be applied in unserved areas only; however, proposed project areas may include areas designated underserved.² Areas designated as unserved may be identified in any or all of the following sources:

- The ConnectMaine Broadband Availability Map: <https://maps.sewall.com/connectme/public/>
- The ConnectMaine Unserved Reports: www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping
- Community Broadband Plans posted on the ConnectMaine website: www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/planning-grants/awards

Indicate how the project area was identified as unserved or underserved.

If the project area wasn't identified as unserved in the above sources, indicate the date that a request under the opportunity to review such areas was submitted to ConnectMaine. That request must have included accurate mapping of address-specific, availability data of actual speeds in the proposed project area, including a map of the geographic area at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data, and the GIS data behind the map. The request may have also included the dates and times of speed testing conducted by the method directed by ConnectMaine, customer testimonials or other evidence demonstrating that the areas are unserved. For a 30-day period, ConnectMaine posts the general information of the relevant areas for any public comments on the availability, or lack thereof, of broadband service.³

Date of Request:

H. Provider Outreach

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. Indicate the date of when provider outreach occurred. Within 45 days of the application window being opened, the applicant must have sent an email, which must have been cc'd to Connect.ME@maine.gov, followed with a letter sent certified-mail to existing ISPs to confirm that "no plans exist to provide service meeting or exceeding the minimum build standard for broadband⁴ within the following 12 months" in the project area; any responses from ISPs must have been cc'd to Connect.ME@maine.gov, within 14 days of receiving the applicant's email.

Date of Outreach:

² At least annually, and subject to 30-day comment period, ConnectMaine designates geographic areas that are unserved. Currently 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.

³ Details about this process for identifying unserved areas is posted on the ConnectMaine website: <https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping>

⁴ Either annually or through its strategic planning process, 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.

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II. Executive Summary

The executive summary should be about five sentences only: Who's the applicant, providing what type of infrastructure, where in Maine, resulting in what level of service, and when is completion anticipated. This serves the purpose of quickly identifying the proposed project among applications and past projects. Being brief, this summary will be used when announcing awards of successful applications.

III. Cost-Benefit

In total the cost-benefit scoring category accounts for 50 points.

Describe whether or not the infrastructure would be installed without this grant being awarded.

A. Potential Subscribers

In awarding grants, ConnectMaine is directed to consider the number of potential subscribers to be served by the project. In the affected communities, indicate the total number of potential subscribers; of those, the number currently unserved; and of those currently unserved, the number to be served by the proposed project.

Potential Subscribers	Currently unserved	To be served

B. Grant Funds

Calculate the grant amount requested per customer eligible to be served by the project. Use the number "to be served" above for the number of customers below.

Grant amount (\$)	Unserved customers to be served (#)	Funds per customer (\$)

The grant amount per eligible customer is a factor considered in the cost-benefit scoring category, with lower funds per customer receiving a higher cost-benefit score, up to 50 points.

Grant/Customer	Points
<\$2,000	50
\$2,000-4,000	1-49
>\$4,000	0

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IV. Community Support

In total the community support scoring category accounts for 25 points.

Describe evidence of community support for expanding availability of broadband service, such as results of speed testing or surveying.

Indicate the results of community(ies) vote(s) to financially commit to the proposed project.

Supportive votes to financially commit to proposed projects help ensure successful projects and help demonstrate sufficient community support, an additional 5 points.

A. Project Focus

The percentage of households to be served, a community support factor, is calculated from the total number of households, which is separately considered as a project scope factor. In the affected communities, indicate the total number of households and those that are proposed to be served.

All households	Households to be served

ConnectMaine collects data on the type, number and percentage of premises and unserved areas that become served by awarded funds. The percentage of households that will be served is a factor considered in the community support scoring category, with higher percentages scoring higher, up to 15 points.

Households	Points
<50%	0
50-75%	1-14
>75%	15

B. Active Community

List the community broadband committee members, their backgrounds and the expertise or roles⁵ contributed.

Name	Background	Role

Involving relevant backgrounds and essential roles helps ensure successful projects and helps demonstrate adequate community support, an additional 5 points.

C. Inclusion Commitment

List community commitments and strategies to increase the subscription rate and maximize the use of the proposed broadband infrastructure. These are often developed and included in community broadband plans, which may be referenced.

⁵ Review the relevant backgrounds and necessary expertise or roles on a broadband committee that are listed in the Community Broadband Planning Grants Precertification Form.

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V. Project Scope

In total the project scope scoring category accounts for 15 points.

ConnectMaine requires filing of data of the extent of broadband service. As a separate file, submit a map of the extent of broadband service in the project area that is at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data. Also submit separate file(s) of the GIS data behind the map.

Applicants who are awarded and receive funds must submit grant reports, including infrastructure grant tracking for five years, which may include accurate mapping, cost and speed-level data; address-specific, availability data of actual speeds; and verification of performance criteria by submitting as-built drawings and/or notification of speed testing. Please contact ConnectMaine staff with any questions about accountability requirements.

A. Existing Service

Describe the existing internet service in the unserved areas of the affected community, for ConnectMaine to evaluate the proposed project for the greatest relative improvement.

B. Proposed Service

Describe the type of service to be provided, including years of growth with proposed capacity.

Also indicate the available download and upload speeds of current and proposed service to customers in the project area.

Current (mbps/mbps)	Customers (#)	Proposed (mbps/mbps)	Customers (#)

Applicants are held accountable for funded projects meeting performance criteria, including that resulting service meets the minimum build standard for broadband. The speeds of service to be offered is a factor consider in the project scope scoring category, with faster speeds, of the offering that will be available to the most customers in the project area, scoring higher, up to 10 points.

Proposed upload speed	Points
Less than or equal to 10mbps	0
Up to and including 100mbps	1-5
Greater than 100mbps	10

C. Potential Customers

Indicate the type and number of customers to be served by the project.

Customers	Households	Businesses

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D. Road Miles

ConnectMaine collects data on the miles of roads that are unserved in the state. In the affected communities, indicate the total miles of roads; of those, the miles in currently unserved areas; and of those currently unserved, the miles proposed to be in served areas.

Total miles	Currently unserved	To be served

E. Timeline and Milestones

Insert a timeline that lists the milestones of the proposed project and indicates an estimate of the time required to complete the proposed project.

F. Financial Commitment

List all costs of the proposed project and the secured, financial commitments from the applicant and other sources. The applicant attests that the entity proposing to build, operate or provide retail services using broadband infrastructure constructed pursuant to a planning grant made no contribution to that planning effort. Itemized costs may be estimated at time of application; applicants who are awarded and receive funds are required to itemize all expenses.

Capital & Operations	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Costs	Committed Dollars	Grant Dollars
Totals	-	-			

Calculate the percentages of total cost covered by the communications service provider's (ISP) financial commitment, the community financial commitment and the financial commitments from any other sources, and the percentage of total cost covered by grant amount requested.

ISP/Cost	Community/Cost	Other/Cost	Grant/Cost

The applicant's financial commitment is a factor considered in the project scope scoring category, with lower proportions of grant funds scoring higher, up to 5 points.

Grant/Cost	Points
<25%	5
25-49%	3-4
50-65%	1-2
>65%	0

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VI. Project Value

In total the project value scoring category accounts for 10 points.

Describe evidence of project benefits to students, remote workers, telehealth patients and support facilities, and small businesses.

A. Service Prices

Describe the service levels to be offered and the price per customer to receive service, which must be equal to or less than the price per customer offered elsewhere in the state, including at least one affordability offering for low- to moderate-income households.

Service (mbps/mbps)	Price (\$/mo)	Details

ConnectMaine collects data on service levels and prices per customer for various offerings provided in the state. The estimated price per customer to receive service is a factor considered in the project value scoring category, with the lowest monthly price of service offerings that have an upload speed of at least 10mbps scoring higher, up to 10 points.

Price per customer per month	Points
<\$65	10
\$65-100	1-9
>\$100	0

Describe any affordability offering to be available to potential subscribers in the project area, including the criteria or requirements for eligibility. Submit as a separate file, the affordability plan.

Service (mbps/mbps)	Price (\$/mo)	Eligibility

B. Subscription Rate

Ensuring project value includes addressing the adoption or use of internet service available. Of potential customers, state the estimated subscription rate or take rate anticipated in the project area.

CONNECTMAINE

Infrastructure Grants Application

Provider Expansion Projects

Contact Staff

Connect.ME@maine.gov

207.624.9894

Authority Members

Nick Battista, Chair

Jasmine Bishop

Fred Brittain

Susan Corbett

Heather Johnson

Jeff Letourneau

Liz Wyman

This application binder is for provider expansion projects. This type of project helps achieve the state's broadband vision by leveraging and expanding the existing broadband networks. To-date most projects receiving state grants have been proposed by internet service providers to address coverage gaps within or between communities, such as providing line extensions or filling dark pockets. Given that these types of coverage gaps aren't experienced by whole communities, applicants are scored heavily based on cost-benefit and project scope.

This application window is January 27 to April 15. Please submit your application materials by emailing Connect.ME@maine.gov with the subject heading Grant Application.

The current window for identifying unserved areas is January 6 to January 25, with any 30-day public comment period ending February 24.

The current window for provider outreach is January 27 to March 13, with the response window effectively being February 10 to March 27.

Instructions

Please don't include attachments or reference attachments; please insert evidence in the order requested. Any information that may be deemed confidential must be submitted as separate files to remain confidential. Please note that applications submitted are made publicly available; please submit confidential information as separate files. Some details of projects funded with grants are posted on the ConnectMaine website.

If any elements of the application can't be completed, then in those locations demonstrate how those elements will be developed as part of the proposed project. The ConnectMaine Authority reserves the right to request additional information necessary to evaluate applications for infrastructure grants.

Please contact ConnectMaine staff for any assistance.

Please note that the score of an application is only one factor considered by ConnectMaine in awarding grants, among many other factors required or allowed to be reviewed in accordance with the statute and rule, including that infrastructure be forward-looking to meet future broadband needs.

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I. Applicant Information

Applicant Signature:

Date Submitted:

A. Fiscal Agent

Entity Name:

B. Grant Request

Amount:

C. Affected Communities

List each affected municipality, local government or local government authority, or a local nonprofit providing economic development programs, as applicable to the proposed project:

Points of Contact for Affected Communities and any community broadband committees:

Community	Name	Title or Role	Email or Phone

D. Applicant or Agent

Name:

Title or Role:

Mailing Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

E. Communications Service Provider:

Company Name:

Point of Contact Name:

Title:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

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F. Applicant Eligibility

Either the applicant or its partner must demonstrate technical, managerial and financial capacity, and experience to operate the network capability, for ConnectMaine to determine whether or not the responsible entity is capable of installing, using and managing broadband infrastructure. Indicate the date of the most recent grant award by ConnectMaine, if any, and the entity receiving funds.

Date of last award:

Applicant of last award:

List prior experience in designing, installing, operating and managing infrastructure, if necessary.

Also briefly describe the public-private partnership, if any.

Any communications service provider (ISP) that is an applicant, or partner to this application, must be in good standing with all ConnectMaine reporting obligations. Indicate the date of the most recent “infrastructure grant tracking” report, if applicable, and most recent “required filing of data.”¹

Date of grant report:

Date of data filing:

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. State the legal entity of this applicant or partner, if applicable.

Name and type of entity:

¹ Details of these reporting requirements are contained in ConnectMaine rule: <https://www.maine.gov/connectme/about/statutes-rulemaking>

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G. Unserved Areas

Granted funds may be applied in unserved areas only; however, proposed project areas may include areas designated underserved.² Areas designated as unserved may be identified in any or all of the following sources:

- The ConnectMaine Broadband Availability Map: <https://maps.sewall.com/connectme/public/>
- The ConnectMaine Unserved Reports: www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping
- Community Broadband Plans posted on the ConnectMaine website: www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/planning-grants/awards

Indicate how the project area was identified as unserved or underserved.

If the project area wasn't identified as unserved in the above sources, indicate the date that a request under the opportunity to review such areas was submitted to ConnectMaine. That request must have included accurate mapping of address-specific, availability data of actual speeds in the proposed project area, including a map of the geographic area at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data, and the GIS data behind the map. The request may have also included the dates and times of speed testing conducted by the method directed by ConnectMaine, customer testimonials or other evidence demonstrating that the areas are unserved. For a 30-day period, ConnectMaine posts the general information of the relevant areas for any public comments on the availability, or lack thereof, of broadband service.³

Date of Request:

H. Provider Outreach

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. Indicate the date of when provider outreach occurred. Within 45 days of the application window being opened, the applicant must have sent an email, which must have been cc'd to Connect.ME@maine.gov, followed with a letter sent certified-mail to existing ISPs to confirm that "no plans exist to provide service meeting or exceeding the minimum build standard for broadband⁴ within the following 12 months" in the project area; any responses from ISPs must have been cc'd to Connect.ME@maine.gov, within 14 days of receiving the applicant's email.

Date of Outreach:

² At least annually, and subject to 30-day comment period, ConnectMaine designates geographic areas that are unserved. Currently 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.

³ Details about this process for identifying unserved areas is posted on the ConnectMaine website: <https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping>

⁴ Either annually or through its strategic planning process, 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.

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II. Executive Summary

The executive summary should be about five sentences only: Who's the applicant, providing what type of infrastructure, where in Maine, resulting in what level of service, and when is completion anticipated. This serves the purpose of quickly identifying the proposed project among applications and past projects. Being brief, this summary will be used when announcing awards of successful applications.

III. Cost-Benefit

In total the cost-benefit scoring category accounts for 50 points.

Describe why the infrastructure wouldn't be installed without this grant being awarded.

A. Potential Subscribers

In awarding grants, ConnectMaine is directed to consider the number of potential subscribers to be served by the project. In the project area, indicate the total number of potential subscribers; of those, the number currently unserved; and of those currently unserved, the number to be served by the proposed project.

Potential Subscribers	Currently unserved	To be served

B. Grant Funds

Calculate the grant amount requested per customer eligible to be served by the project. Use the number "to be served" above for the number of customers below.

Grant amount (\$)	Unserved customers to be served (#)	Funds per customer (\$)

The grant amount per eligible customer is a factor considered in the cost-benefit scoring category, with lower funds per customer receiving a higher cost-benefit score, up to 50 points.

Grant/Customer	Points
<\$2,000	50
\$2,000-4,000	1-49
>\$4,000	0

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IV. Community Support

In total the community support scoring category accounts for 10 points.

Describe evidence of community support for expanding availability of broadband service, such as results of speed testing or surveying.

A. Project Focus

The percentage of customers to be served, a community support factor, is calculated from the total number of potential customers, which is separately considered as a project scope factor. In the project area, indicate the total number of customers and those that are proposed to be served.

All customers	Customers to be served

ConnectMaine collects data on the type, number and percentage of premises and unserved areas that become served by awarded funds. The percentage of customers that will be served is a factor considered in the community support scoring category, with higher percentages scoring higher, up to 5 points.

Customers	Points
<35%	0
35-75%	1-4
>75%	5

B. Active Community

Briefly describe the community engagement in the planning process.

Engaging the community in the planning process helps ensure successful projects and helps demonstrate adequate community support, an additional 5 points.

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V. Project Scope

In total the project scope scoring category accounts for 25 points; additionally, 10 bonus points are available.

ConnectMaine requires filing of data of the extent of broadband service. As a separate file, submit a map of the extent of broadband service in the project area that is at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data. Also submit separate file(s) of the GIS data behind the map.

Applicants who are awarded and receive funds must submit grant reports, including infrastructure grant tracking for five years, which may include accurate mapping, cost and speed-level data; address-specific, availability data of actual speeds; and verification of performance criteria by submitting as-built drawings and/or notification of speed testing. Please contact ConnectMaine staff with any questions about accountability requirements.

A. Existing Service

Describe the existing internet service in the unserved areas of the affected community, for ConnectMaine to evaluate the proposed project for the greatest relative improvement.

B. Proposed Service

Describe the type of service to be provided, including years of growth with proposed capacity.

Also indicate the available download and upload speeds of current and proposed service to customers in the project area.

Current (mbps/mbps)	Customers (#)	Proposed (mbps/mbps)	Customers (#)

Applicants are held accountable for funded projects meeting performance criteria, including that resulting service meets the minimum build standard for broadband. The speeds of service to be offered is a factor consider in the project scope scoring category, with faster speeds, of the offering that will be available to the most customers in the project area, scoring higher, up to 15 points.

Proposed upload speed	Points
Less than or equal to 10mbps	0
Up to and including 100mbps	1-14
Greater than 100mbps	15

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C. Potential Customers

Indicate the type and number of customers to be served by the project.

Customers	Households	Businesses

The number of customers that will be served is a factor considered in the project scope scoring category, with higher numbers scoring higher, up to 5 points.

Customers	Points
<130	0
130-600	1-4
>600	5

D. Road Miles

In the project area, indicate the total number of potential subscribers and total miles of roads.

Subscribers	Miles

ConnectMaine collects data on the number of premises and miles of road in unserved areas. The number of customers to be served is a factor in the project scope scoring category, and state funds are intended to support expansion of broadband availability in places where the private sector alone can't justify the investment; less densely populated areas score higher, up to 10 bonus points.

Subscribers/Mi	Bonus
<10	10
10-20	1-9
>20	0

E. Timeline and Milestones

Insert a timeline that lists the milestones of the proposed project and indicates an estimate of the time required to complete the proposed project.

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F. Financial Commitment

List all costs of the proposed project and the secured, financial commitments from the applicant and other sources. The applicant attests that the entity proposing to build, operate or provide retail services using broadband infrastructure constructed pursuant to a planning grant made no contribution to that planning effort. Itemized costs may be estimated at time of application; applicants who are awarded and receive funds are required to itemize all expenses.

Capital & Operations	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Costs	Committed Dollars	Grant Dollars
Totals	-	-			

Calculate the percentages of total cost covered by the communications service provider's (ISP) financial commitment, the community financial commitment and the financial commitments from any other sources, and the percentage of total cost covered by grant amount requested.

ISP/Cost	Community/Cost	Other/Cost	Grant/Cost

The applicant's financial commitment is a factor considered in the project scope scoring category, with lower proportions of grant funds scoring higher, up to 5 points.

Grant/Cost	Points
<25%	5
25-49%	3-4
50-55%	1-2
>55%	0

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VI. Project Value

In total the project value scoring category accounts for 15 points.

Describe evidence of project benefits to students, remote workers, telehealth patients and support facilities, and small businesses. Submit separate file(s) of letters identifying these groups.

Expanding broadband to these groups helps realize economic and social benefits of broadband, and contributes to project value, an additional 2 points.

A. Service Prices

Describe the service levels to be offered and the price per customer to receive service, which must be equal to or less than the price per customer offered elsewhere in the state, including at least one affordability offering for low- to moderate-income households.

Service (mbps/mbps)	Price (\$/mo)	Details

ConnectMaine collects data on service levels and prices per customer for various offerings provided in the state. The estimated price per customer to receive service is a factor considered in the project value scoring category, with the lowest monthly price of service offerings that have an upload speed of at least 10mbps scoring higher, up to 10 points.

Price per customer per month	Points
<\$65	10
\$65-100	1-9
>\$100	0

Describe any affordability offering to be available to potential subscribers in the project area, including the criteria or requirements for eligibility. Submit as a separate file, the affordability plan.

Service (mbps/mbps)	Price (\$/mo)	Eligibility

Proposed projects that result in affordability offerings help address affordability barriers to the adoption or use of internet service, and contributes project value, an additional 3 points.

B. Subscription Rate

Ensuring project value includes addressing the adoption or use of internet service available. Of potential customers, state the estimated subscription rate or take rate anticipated in the project area.