

CONNECTMAINE

August Meeting Minutes

1 September 2021

10:00 A.M.

Temporary Recording: https://networkmaine.zoom.us/rec/share/bO4DCRdZa_H7n8od5hzQ-rc-L6WK5GYt6ICzTHDNIWDaggUvH3SPjSc6qBl8n_4U.acGUL0qyMI_VAUAF

Authority Members

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

Introductions of Members and Staff

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

Notes of Last Meeting

Approval of the July minutes: Fred motioned, Susan 2nd, 5:0

Review of Operations

Executive Director's Report—Peggy

- Required data filing and grant tracking reports due 9.21

Data filing occurs with Sewall Company, and any grant tracking reports are submitted to ConnectMaine.

- Other federal-level activities

Infrastructure bill contains about \$65 billion for broadband, \$14.8 for digital inclusion and 42 million for infrastructure. House votes around 9.27, but intended to be grants to the state. Each state should be getting a minimum of \$100 million plus more based on new FCC maps, so Maine might be getting \$2-300 million in 1.5 years or so. The American Rescue Plan funds through the Treasury for Capital Projects will likely be about \$129 million, and additional guidance should be forthcoming in October.

- NTIA Grant application submitted

ConnectMaine submitted an application for almost \$28 million to serve almost 15,000 potential subscriber locations in seven different areas of the state. A total of \$2.5 billion was requested of only \$288 million available, so this will be very competitive but we should hear something in November. ConnectMaine is also supporting an application to another NTIA grant program by the Passamaquoddy. If that is submitted, the field is less competitive, with more funds available in that program.

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Update on Maine Connectivity Authority—Heather & Nick

- Debrief first meeting

Board was seated and held first meeting. For next meeting, the board is seeking an update from ConnectMaine on its activities.

- Search for President

Committee is doing the interviews but the ultimate nomination made by the Governor to be confirmed by the legislature.

- Review timeline

The recording of the last meeting and information might be on the DECD website. No update on meeting frequency, but there will be public notice ahead of the next meeting. There are legislative requirements for ConnectMaine and MCA to work together on reporting recommendations for statutory changes in the next legislative session.

Review of Financials—Stephanie

- Update on audit

Field visit is scheduled for mid-September. If it isn't completed and ready for adoption at the September meeting, then we'll know to submit a waiver to vote on the audit at October or November meetings.

- Review monthly financial statements

Flow of funds is slower at the start of a fiscal year, so these show what was captured in July. The \$2.5 million NBRC grant is almost fully obligated and funds are starting to flow. NECEC Broadband Fund collects interest. Bond funds are finally moving, and we'll be seeking a second quarter allotment to continue covering the expenses of the projects awarded infrastructure grants.

Decisions on Programs

Review NBRC Grant Workplan—Peggy

- Debrief progress on Broadband Intelligence Platform and Grants V&V process

As mentioned, these funds are flowing and work is well underway.

- Plan for remaining portion relating to evaluation of business models

There was a bit of the grant funds set aside for business models, strategies, for middle mile—information that would be helpful to ConnectMaine but especially for MCA, to estimate costs of projects and assess the possible returns. Waiting to get the cost proposal on additional data tools that will help identify and evaluate various infrastructure projects, including middle-mile, and evaluate the business models for those designs. These feed into the broadband intelligence platform, and ensuring the state's using one mapping platform.

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Review Community Planning Support Program—Peggy

- Debrief development of program concept

This program is based on the lessons learned from partners in the private and nonprofit sectors that have provided planning support over the years. Taking upfront planning activities, like the precertification checklist, from the planning grants program—formally known as Phase I—and moving those activities into this planning support program. The Startup Grants will be a much simpler application process, which will roll out in the next week or so. Completion of these projects will result in precertification for Planning Grants.

- Decide on supporting the Connectivity Boosters

One of the lessons learned is watching how communities get started in broadband planning but then get stuck before implementation. A concept proposal was shared with the board, including 12-16 individuals to serve as connectivity boosters across the state. This will provide consistent planning support and training. The support will wrap around the existing community broadband planning and work that consultants are already doing in preparing plans. This additional support has been provided by various nonprofits across the state, and this proposal scales it statewide. ConnectMaine proposes to sole-source contract with the Maine Broadband Coalition to launch this planning support program, in order to ensure statewide consistent training and deployment. MBC can also attract private investment money; we've been having conversations with other partners in this work, e.g., Maine Community Foundation. ConnectMaine Policies & Procedures allows us to waive requirements to do a sole-source contract.

Board Discussion

- Jeff: We've talked about the need for this type of planning support, and structuring it a little bit better for accountability and constantly improving the program is good.

Fred: We need a creative solution for some time, and this is a great opportunity.

Peggy: We did learn a lot from the Maine West Bootcamp, seeing how Mia was able to help move those communities forward; we aimed to scale programs like that statewide.

- Susan: There'd be a connectivity booster in each county?

Peggy: That would be the goal, yes; these connectivity boosters would augment community broadband planning that's already occurring, e.g., Charlie in Western Maine, and wouldn't replace the work of community volunteers and their consultants. There's value in the connections with planning that is going on and the planning grants available.

Approval of ConnectMaine contracting with the Maine Broadband Coalition to support the Connectivity Boosters: Liz motioned, Jeff 2nd, 5:0, Nick abstained

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Review Grants Awarded—Nick

- Debrief awards declined or left unaccepted

Status of projects shared in meeting binder. Further described in the Director's Report.

Thanks to Melinda at Charter to work through ensuring those declined awards don't prevent the projects from being implemented.

- Discuss response letter on the grants verification & validation process

This new process generated concerns from some industry participations, which were shared in a letter to ConnectMaine. We wrote a response letter, and these conversations are still continuing.

Rulemaking and Grantmaking

Update on Rulemaking & Performance Criteria—Peggy & Nick

- Debrief drafted rule

Spurred by the legislation that expanded the \$0.10 surcharge, rulemaking also aims to refine the grants programs, coming from all the stakeholder engagement since last fall. The way that underserved is designated is changing. Other housekeeping changes as well.

- Decision to post drafted rule to host public hearing in September

If we post the drafted rule this week, we can host a public hearing end of September.

- Discuss recommendations for performance criteria and infrastructure grants process

The rule and the grants program are connected, and the grants committee hasn't yet dived deeply into the rule, performance criteria and the Tilson recommendations shared last meeting. Really the other changes to the rule are straightforward or housekeeping; it's only the changes about grants that need to mesh with the application and review process.

Board Discussion

- Nick: Is additional conversation beneficial, about the technical details of the performance criteria affected by the rule; does the grants committee want to have this conversation this week?

Liz: Having more time to absorb all these changes would make me feel more comfortable.

Jeff: Agreed, I'd be more comfortable moving forward after a review is done.

Approval of the grants committee finalizing the draft rule to be posted for a public hearing in September: Jeff motioned, Susan 2nd, 6:0

Other Business

Maine Connectivity Authority presentation—Peggy & Nick

- Revisit our role in the state

To be proactive or ready for conversations with MCA about our respective statutes. Even though they aren't set up yet, our presentation could include how the two organizations could work together, giving them something to soundboard off of once established.

Action: Liz & Susan volunteered to form committee to work with Peggy on this.

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Digital Inclusion—Susan

- The National Digital Equity Center received additional funds from DECD. These funds will purchase devices for low- to moderate-income individuals, for which there's an application process. NDEC is working directly with get IT. give IT. To learn more or access, visit: <https://digitalequitycenter.org/request-device/>

Next meeting—Stephenie & Nick

- Postpone a week to 9.29

With the extra week in September, this makes sense to do.

Public Comments

Startup Grants

- James Ritter, Denmark: How would the grants program work with multiple towns that could range from three to eight?

Peggy: I forgot to mention that while the Startup Grants are replacing Phase I, the Phase II activities would still occur with Planning Grants. The Denmark area is well beyond Startup activities. Community leaders can call staff to discuss their individual timelines.

Approval of adjournment: Susan motioned, Jeff 2nd, unopposed

CONNECTMAINE

July Meeting Minutes

28 July 2021

10:00 A.M.

Temporary Recording: https://networkmaine.zoom.us/rec/share/DTaxnQINpEh0f3eZ4yE8gVUB7H-3iI0-sMtSmn1v0OjrSxg5kjynn5hpb8Lkb2Qb.Z_4GRwcqq8k1P8au

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Introductions of Members and Staff

Nick Battista, Susan Corbett, Jeff Letourneau, Fred Brittain, Peggy Schaffer, Stephenie MacLagan, Woodline Gedeon

Meeting Kickoff

Senator King quote on passage of middle-mile deployment act—Nick

- Responding quote from Jeff Letourneau

Notes of Last Meeting

Approval of the June minutes: Susan motioned, Fred 2nd, 4:0

Review of Operations

Executive Director's Report—Peggy

- Required data filing and grant tracking reports due 9.21

Please contact staff if providers lost the email request; a reminder will go out mid-August or so. The required data filing applies to all providers. The grant tracking reports are required of past grant recipients. Both are required to be eligible for future grants.

- Future rulemaking from legislation regarding surcharge fee

The 10-cent surcharge will apply to all phone numbers starting January 2022. In addition to reflecting that language in the ConnectMaine rule, we'll take the opportunity to clean up other language that was considered last year as substantive changes, e.g., households versus customers, planning grants, etc.

- Community Planning Support

Working with partners to scale their community broadband planning support programs statewide. The approved budget included substantial funds to support planning services. A concept has been drafted and a proposal could be presented at the next meeting.

Another aspect includes expanding the tool from GEO Partners that communities are using to identify unserved areas to allowing communities to identify funding opportunities.

- Federal funding update

Some federal funding is still in flux and would be based on new FCC mapping, which might not be available until sometime in 2022.

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Board Discussion

- Susan: The philanthropic group meetings about investing in broadband have been going well.

Peggy: Shout out to Maine Community Foundation. Their planning grants application window is open until August 2nd.

Nick: The climate change and economic development groups are also finding out how much capacity it takes for communities to undertake these significant projects.

- Nick: Do we have contracts from all awardees of recent grants?

Stephenie: No, but they are still trickling in, and a reminder is scheduled for next week.

We'll do individual outreach then. Denmark and Ellsworth have started planning, and Greater East Grand Region and Sebago have submitted commencement notices. A little less than half of the infrastructure grant recipients have signed contracts. If any are waiting for changes to the drafted contracts, they should contact staff.

Discussion on Maine Connectivity Authority—Peggy

- Job posted for President

Should be on the state's job webpage, but it is posted on Indeed.

- Update on implementation timeline

The state legislature passed bills to make American Rescue Plan funds available. It looks like federal funds from Treasury won't be available before October. Additional funds won't become available until later in 2022 or so.

First meeting is targeted for mid-August. Public notice for it will be posted on the ConnectMaine webpage for News.

Review of Performance Criteria—Grants Committee (Nick, Susan & Jeff)

- Debrief recommendations for broadband infrastructure grants program

ConnectMaine contractor Tilson was asked to do an after-action review for recommendations on the grants program. One recommendation is adding a preference review step between eligibility and scoring; this would be the way that we can give preference to least served areas, for example. The grants committee had opportunity to consider their recommendations in detail. These continue in the direction we were headed since January. Further consideration is needed on defining service areas or strategy for managing overlapping proposals or excluded potential subscriber locations.

- Review timeline for proposing performance criteria and application process

Next steps include further refining those recommendations. Then policy decisions on the what criteria will be preferred and what criteria will be weighed. This will take time, which led to the suggestion of opening the next window for applications in November, instead of awarding grants in November. This also gives us time to complete the set up of the Broadband Intelligence Platform.

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Board Discussion

- Fred: What does defining a service area mean?

Nick: Currently, we allow potential applicants to draw their own boundaries of proposed project areas. Defining service areas would be the state providing the geographic area for consideration by potential applicants. There'd be a lot of decisions around which geographic basis to use, e.g., census blocks wouldn't make sense in most of Maine.

Peggy: We also need better data on served versus unserved areas. We're continuing to work with our contractor VETRO on this.

- Susan: This seems to be helping to make better decision moving forward.

Action: Grants committee will continue working through this over the next couple of months. Staff will continue developing the broadband intelligence platform, including an online portal for applicants.

NTIA Grant Application—Peggy

- Debrief request for information process

ConnectMaine is working with Tilson to write this application. The NTIA eligibility and preference criteria were used in the request for information that was issued and in evaluating the responses. Many couldn't be moved forward due to the NTIA criteria. Our VETRO contract really made it possible to review these. Of the 22 proposals, we moved forward with proposals that cover five different regions of the state. Of the 8 proposals for Blue Hill Peninsula, one was chosen to move forward.

- Review timeline for grant application

The application will be completed next week, in order to do a self-evaluation before submitting by the 17th. NTIA will hint at success in October, when they reach out with any questions, decisions likely in November.

Board Discussion

- Fred: How many proposals were moved forward to cover the five regions?

Peggy: I think about 7. We also went back to respondents to ask about other areas. Thinking in census block world is tough.

- Fred: Are we unique compared to what other states are doing?

Peggy: No. While the states that are getting hundreds of millions of dollars for broadband aren't bothering to apply to NTIA, Washington state and others are doing exactly like us.

Other Business

Review of Financials—Stephenie & Peggy

- Monthly financial statements will come in by middle of August

Everyone's excited to see the impact of awarding so much over the last six or more months, but with the fiscal year turning, staff doesn't see financial statements until mid-August, so we'll review where we stand with regard to the budget approved last month at the next meeting. Getting the cash to flow from the NBRC grant and bond has been agonizingly slow, but we should get what we need and be ok.

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- Monthly assessments

The ConnectME Fund assessment revenue has continued on the downward trend; we're now regularly seeing less than \$390,000 per quarter. Expanding the surcharge to mobile phones instead of only landline numbers should help stabilize our revenue. The lack of substantial, stable revenue means that we don't have a cushion to pay out invoices while we wait for grant or bond funds to flow back in.

Board Discussion

- Nick: What's the status on the audit?

Stephanie: As far as we know, all's going smoothly. We should see drafted pieces in September. While we're pushing to be able to approve the audit in September, we might end up needing the waiver to approve later in the fall.

Reschedule August Meeting—Nick

- Postpone due to vacations

Trying to flag this need and let stakeholders know the meeting won't likely occur then.

Action: Staff will check timelines, e.g., rulemaking & grants, to ensure no meeting is required in August.

Public Comments

Grants Program Recommendations

- Brian Lippold: The high-level recommendations seem to be going in the right direction.

Nick: Yes, we revisited recommendations from the last 6-8 months and saw where there's now opportunity to incorporate them into the grants program.

Maine Connectivity Authority

- Sarah Strickland: Will there be more information about the relationship between ConnectMaine and the new Authority?

Peggy: Yes, but we don't yet know when or where.

Nick: And we're trying to take the approach of ensuring a strong relationship, moving things forward that are already in motion to keep moving forward.

Approval of adjournment: Fred motioned, unopposed

CONNECTMAINE

Executive Director's Report

1 September 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

Of the 19 infrastructure grants awarded with bond funds, only two internet service providers declined four awards, but at least three of those projects will still be undertaken by the partners in those projects; only two commencement notices are still incoming. Declined funds will remain available for the next round of grants.

Of the 17 active planning projects awarded grants, all have commenced. In addition to the usual requests for planning assistance, resources around regional partnerships and business models are increasingly requested.

Local and regional planning support

One of the agenda items includes decisions around the community broadband planning support program, review of the Connectivity Boosters concept. This is a proposal that staff worked on with our partners: Maine Broadband Coalition, Island Institute, Northern Forest Center, Maine Community Foundation. It is designed over the next several months to put in place up to 16 Connectivity Boosters – one per county. The intent is to help communities engaged in a planning process – whether it is funded by us, MCF, or on their own. These Boosters would work with towns on everything from scheduling to mapping and would bring what communities have been asking for – which is assistance to figure out what to do first, second and third. With federal funding starting to flow, it is important to keep communities moving, engaging providers in productive conversations and determining what it is they want for their area.

We are also changing the “phase 1” planning grant to a “startup” grant. This is a simple application to get the community moving in developing a committee and an agenda. We are hoping that making this easier and simpler, combined with the Connectivity Boosters, will begin to not only have more of these community engagements across the state but to get them moving forward more quickly and effectively.

Staff and program management

Staff received training on the Salesforce portion of the ConnectMaine Broadband Intelligence Platform. This portion would provide an online portal for future applications to the broadband infrastructure grants program. Staff continues to work with IT to integrate more components of the grants process. The platform would hopefully be completed by interfacing Salesforce with VEIRO FiberMap eventually.

A reminder to internet service providers, required data filing and grant tracking reports are due September 21. Please contact staff if you have questions.

State legislative activities

Rulemaking from legislation regarding surcharge fee has been an opportunity to review the rule with regard to other housekeeping, especially around grants programs. Rulemaking will begin after the board meeting with a positive nod from the board. More information can be found on the ConnectMaine website.

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Federal funding update

ConnectMaine submitted an application for \$28 million to serve almost 15,000 locations, to the **NTIA public private partnership broadband grant program**. This was a significant lift for the three internet service providers who partnered, to gather all the data required for the grant. During the application process, the proposed project areas were refined based on NTIA eligibility and preference criteria, to include portions of the following communities: Rangeley lakes area, greater area of Farmington, Jefferson, Somerville, Washington, 11 towns on the Blue Hill Peninsula and Isle au Haut. The application includes three municipal projects where ConnectMaine provided the 10% match needed. Tilson and VETRO were excellent partners in this process, and in the end we submitted what should be very competitive grant, at the cost of less than \$2,000 per pass, serving many communities that have been engaged in the community planning process for a while. NTIA will outreach with questions in October, and decisions are likely in November.

Staff contacted Four Directions much earlier in the summer with an offer to help them write a grant for the **NTIA tribal program**. We heard back from them 10 days before the deadline, and were able to contract with Tilson; this broadband access grant for Pleasant Point Reservation will bulk buy cable service for many years and include funds for devices, but uncertainty still exists if the deadline will be met.

Towns continue to try to work with their county administrators on **American Rescue Plan funds** for broadband projects. Waldo County is allocating only \$20K per community for broadband. Given the rural unserved nature of most of the county, that funding will not go far. Penobscot and Aroostook have been approached, as has Knox, Lincoln and Oxford. While largely quiet about any plans, there's widespread lack of enthusiasm for broadband, and many counties have indicated they are looking heavily at existing county infrastructure improvements for jails and e-911.

Federal partnership activities

Peggy presented at the Eastern Region of the Council of State Governments, from her Starlink connection. Other presenters included the FCC and Connected Nation. The presentation was on what states need for mapping to do the work we are all trying to do. All got a great visual of what a Starlink zoom meeting can do. Good news is that it never actually dumped me.

The FCC also presented to the State Broadband Leaders Network on their new data collection efforts, which will drive most of the funds from the infrastructure bill that won't be ready until at least next summer.

Many states are looking for additional staff as they ramp up their activities to include ARP, COVID and infrastructure funds, including many states adding additional state funds. Several states are looking to update their definitions of unserved and served. WA probably has the most aggressive in the country with a goal of 100% of the population having 150/150 by 2028. They are part of the GEO Partners mapping cohort with Maine and several other states.

ConnectMaine Authority Financials

Includes ConnectME Fund and State Account

FY22 Administrative Combined

Rev. 08.18.21

FINANCIALS	DETAIL	PROPOSED	OBLIGATED	ENCUMBERED	Q1	Q2	ACTUAL	REMAIN	
REVENUE	Carryforward, includes Assessment Withdrawal	\$886,455.65	\$1,927,088.14	\$1,927,088.14	\$1,927,088.14		\$0.00	\$1,927,088.14	\$783,222.92
Fund	Assessment Fees, etc.	\$3,050,000.00	\$1,250,000.00	\$460,736.65	\$288,904.77		\$0.00	\$288,904.77	\$2,761,370.32
State	Refunds, excludes Assessment Withdrawal	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
SUBTOTAL		\$3,936,455.65	\$3,177,088.14	\$2,387,824.79	\$2,215,992.91		\$0.00	\$2,215,992.91	\$3,544,593.24
EXPENSES									
Financial	DAFS, Solix, audit, bank charges	\$81,600.00	\$76,600.00	\$7,900.00	\$5,074.00		\$0.00	\$5,074.00	\$71,526.00
Website	InforME, OIT & Sewall	\$79,275.00	\$79,275.00	\$2,375.00	\$356.52		\$0.00	\$356.52	\$78,918.48
Administration	Salaries, etc.	\$263,563.00	\$263,563.00	\$263,153.87	\$20,280.59		\$0.00	\$20,280.59	\$242,873.28
Cellphones		\$1,080.00	\$1,080.00	\$90.00	\$82.16		\$0.00	\$82.16	\$997.84
Travel	Central Fleet, etc.	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Operational Services	subscriptions, conferences	\$21,300.00	\$700.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$20,600.00
Support Services	excluding technical and intelligence	\$376,500.00	\$58,822.70	\$23,112.70	\$13,408.95		\$0.00	\$13,408.95	\$286,591.05
Technical Services	grants verification & validation	\$177,775.00	\$146,318.75	\$52,618.75	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$146,318.75
Broadband Intelligence	data collection, analysis & mapping	\$900,000.00	\$902,365.00	\$477,280.90	\$500.00		\$0.00	\$500.00	\$901,865.00
Research Services	business models & ROI evaluations	\$250,000.00	\$140,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$250,000.00
Planning Grants		\$246,125.00	\$86,625.00	\$27,750.00	\$9,000.00		\$0.00	\$9,000.00	\$234,625.00
Planning Services	including community mapping services	\$200,000.00	\$9,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$200,000.00
Digital Inclusion		\$100,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Grant Matches		\$750,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Infrastructure Fund	separate from restricted grants	\$225,312.50	\$75,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$225,312.50
Miscellaneous	covers likely deviations	\$50,000.00	\$42.00	\$44.18	\$44.18		\$0.00	\$44.18	\$19,955.82
TOTAL		\$3,725,530.50	\$1,842,891.45	\$854,325.40	\$48,746.40		\$0.00	\$48,746.40	\$2,679,583.72
BALANCE		\$210,925.15			\$2,167,246.51		\$0.00	\$2,167,246.51	\$865,009.52

ConnectMaine Authority Financials

NECEC Broadband Fund

Revised Budget

Rev. 08.18.21

FINANCIALS	DETAIL	PROPOSED	OBLIGATED	ENCUMBERED	Q1	Q2	Q3	ACTUAL	REMAIN
REVENUE	Carryforward	\$1,000,533.46			\$1,000,533.46			\$1,000,533.46	\$1,000,533.46
NECEC		\$0.00						\$0.00	\$0.00
Interest					\$240.62			\$240.62	
SUBTOTAL		\$1,000,533.46	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000,774.08	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000,774.08	\$1,000,533.46
EXPENSES									
Withdrawals	Maine Connectivity Authority	\$1,000,533.46	\$1,000,533.46					\$0.00	\$1,000,533.46
Planning Assistance		\$0.00						\$0.00	\$0.00
Digital Inclusion	affordability program	\$0.00						\$0.00	\$0.00
Infrastructure Grants	matches or direct allocations	\$0.00						\$0.00	\$0.00
Infrastructure Loans		\$0.00						\$0.00	\$0.00
Miscellaneous	covers likely deviations	\$0.00						\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL		\$1,000,533.46	\$1,000,533.46	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000,533.46
BALANCE		\$0.00			\$1,000,774.08	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000,774.08	\$0.00

ConnectMaine Authority

Status of Awards

As of 08.25.21

Grants	Signatory	Status	Action	Date	Report	Award	Obligated	Allotment
PLANNING								
Waldo Community Broadband Plan	Town of Waldo	Incoming	send notice	9/1/2021	commencement	\$1,800.00	\$900.00	
BOND								
Alexander Community-Driven Broadband Project	Town of Alexander	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$147,000.00	\$36,750.00	\$1,963,250.00
Appleton & Hope Community-Driven Broadband Project	LCI	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$705,752.00	\$176,000.00	\$1,787,250.00
Somerset County Community-Driven Broadband Project	Premium Choice Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$1,824,660.00	\$450,000.00	\$1,337,250.00
Bristol Community-Driven Broadband Project	LCI	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$141,150.00	\$35,000.00	\$1,302,250.00
Dedham Area Provider Expansion Project	Premium Choice Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$1,200,737.00	\$300,000.00	\$1,002,250.00
Dover-Foxcroft Area Provider Expansion Project	Premium Choice Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$154,143.00	\$38,500.00	\$963,750.00
Eastbrook Community-Driven Broadband Project	Consolidated Communications	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$410,000.00	\$102,500.00	\$861,250.00
Georgetown Community-Driven Broadband Project	Georgetown Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$858,365.00	\$214,590.00	\$646,660.00
Greenville Provider Expansion Project	Premium Choice Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$313,248.00	\$78,000.00	\$568,660.00
Indian Township Community-Driven Broadband Project	Pioneer Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$105,056.00	\$26,264.00	\$542,396.00
Long Island FTTP Community-Driven Broadband Project	Consolidated Communications	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$388,800.00	\$97,200.00	\$445,196.00
Minot Provider Expansion Project	FirstLight Fiber	Declined				\$100,866.31	\$0.00	\$445,196.00
Monson Provider Expansion Project	Premium Choice Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$577,243.00	\$144,000.00	\$301,196.00
Northport Provider Expansion Projects	GWI	Incoming	send reminder	9/1/2021	contract & commencement	\$655,409.00	\$163,852.25	\$137,343.75
Orland & Surry Provider Expansion Project	Premium Choice Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$506,610.00	\$125,000.00	\$12,343.75
Burlock Road Presque Isle Provider Expansion Project	Pioneer Broadband	Started	send reminder	11/1/2021	progress	\$161,322.85	\$40,330.71	(\$27,986.96)
Saint George Provider Expansion Project	Charter Communications	Declined				\$104,271.00	\$0.00	(\$27,986.96)
Aroostook Townships Provider Expansion Project	Charter Communications	Declined				\$91,148.00	\$0.00	(\$27,986.96)
Westport Island Provider Expansion Project	Charter Communications	Declined				\$225,542.00	\$0.00	(\$27,986.96)



CONNECTMAINE

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

August 18, 2021

Dear Telecommunications Association of Maine and other represented companies,

This letter is in response to the August 10, 2021, letter from Ben Sanborn speaking on behalf of some industry participants. First, the members of the ConnectMaine Authority thank you for expressing your concerns about the accountability requirements of implementing our grants program. It is important that all stakeholders have the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions regarding how ConnectMaine conducts the important business of funding the deployment of broadband in the unserved and underserved areas of Maine.

The ConnectMaine members take their responsibility of ensuring the best use of taxpayer funded projects very seriously, which is why the Authority has spent more than a year talking about, and budgeting for, increased accountability for grant spending. We recognize this is a significant shift from previous grant rounds, which up until 2019 did not even require a contract. However, given both the source and the amount of funding, this shift is necessary and appropriate.

The information ConnectMaine seeks is for the purpose of verifying grant expenditures. We consider ourselves partners in these grants, along with the providers and the communities where they will be building. These grants are for specific projects that include a variety of sources of funds to complete. As such, we are looking at how the money from the ConnectMaine grant is spent, as well as the funds from the providers or other sources, as set forth in the applications for grants. Our interest is not only to ensure the number of customers can receive service at the speed identified in the grant applications, but also that the networks being built meet the technical specifications that were part of scoring the applications, including that that network has the capacity to continue to deliver that service for years to come.

As you note in your letter, the application provides:

“Applicants who were awarded and receive funds must submit grant reports, including infrastructure and grant tracking for five years, which may include mapping, cost and speed level data; address availability of actual speeds; and verification of performance criteria by submitting as-built drawings and or notification of speed testing.”

Additionally section 6(D)(5)(a)(ii) of the ConnectMaine rules provide:

“Within one year of receipt of funds from the Authority or within 180 days of all licenses and permits or governmental approvals necessary to complete the project, whichever later occurs, the recipient must submit a report demonstrating completion, or in the case of a project that has been granted an extension of the one-year time period for completion, a report of progress. Such report must include an itemization of costs for which the Authority’s funding was used as well a description of the service that has been created through the use of funds.”

The Rule and application form both call for applicants to detail both the grant amount and the provider's financial commitment to the project. All funding sources are used in scoring. Requiring an itemization of expense helps reviewers identify whether or not an awardee has met its proposed financial commitment through expenditures on the project awarded.

The parties represented in the letter also take issue with the request for specific information as to where the providers have purchased their supplies as well as the margins for these expenditures. The information on actual cost is necessary because these funds are based on reimbursement for actual expenses. Bond funds from the State of Maine is cost-based reimbursement only. Therefore, the audit form asks where the supplies are obtained in order to help ascertain and ensure ConnectMaine is reimbursing for actual costs. This information allows ConnectMaine to, if needed, verify cost information with a vendor or ask for additional supporting documentation.

The requirement of manufacturer's specification information for all substantive equipment purchased for the project is not a particularly difficult or onerous requirement. Manufacturers technical data sheets for vendors equipment lines are in common circulation in technical staff in the industry. Providing this information supports a review of a project by describing more fully the items in a list of expenses in the as-built drawings. This helps confirm that the network has the technical capacity proposed in the grant application and that it matches the equipment found in service during the field audits.

Finally, with respect to the complaints in the letter regarding the use of Tilson Technology Management, Inc., to perform the audit work: The issue of potential conflicts was discussed at the time that the company was selected to perform an advisory capacity for ConnectMaine. The letter, and parties represented by it, presents no evidence that having the information that is produced in a post-award audit would provide a competitive advantage. Nevertheless, ConnectMaine is open to creating a process for the protection of any information that a provider properly identifies as being financially sensitive or proprietary in nature. In particular, ConnectMaine has made multiple offers to have interested parties sign non-disclosure agreements to address these issues, and we are open to additional discussions about this issue.

Thank you for raising these concerns, and allowing us to review and address our process that helps ensure ConnectMaine and its grants program can account for the expenditures of these funds. Maine taxpayers expect nothing less.



Peggy Schaffer, on behalf of the ConnectMaine Authority Members
ConnectMaine Executive Director

SUMMARY: This Chapter describes the operation of the ConnectMaine Authority.

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§ 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Chapter is to implement the provisions of the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act contained in 35-A M.R.S., Chapter 93. This Chapter describes the operation of the ConnectMaine Authority.

As stated in 35-A M.R.S. §9204-A, duties of the Authority include:

1. Establish criteria defining unserved and underserved areas;
2. Promote use of broadband service;
3. Support local and regional broadband planning;
4. Support broadband investment;
5. Facilitate state support of deployment of broadband infrastructure;
6. Collect and disseminate information; and
7. Administer funds.

§ 2 DEFINITIONS

As used in this Chapter, the following terms have the following meanings.

- A. **Advanced Communications Technology Infrastructure.** “Advanced communications technology infrastructure” means any communications technology infrastructure or infrastructure improvement that expands the deployment of or improves the quality of broadband service or fixed wireless service coverage and can perform common applications and network service.
- B. **Authority.** "Authority" means the ConnectMaine Authority established in 35-A M.R.S. §9203.
- C. **Broadband Service.** “Broadband service” means a two-way, always-on, communications service that provides access to public data networks and the Internet, without usage limits and meets certain performance criteria determined annually by the Authority pursuant to §5 of this Chapter to be necessary to use common applications and network services.
- D. **Common Applications and Network Service.** “Common Applications and Network Service” means the ability to deliver commonly used applications for consumer use over the network.
Including:
 1. Real-time, synchronous voice and video communication, including video conferencing used in remote learning, telehealth, and remote working;
 2. Audio and video streaming;
 3. Network and cloud-based applications; including office productivity tools, e-commerce, and government services;
 4. Network file and data storage, sharing, retrieval, visualization, and search;

5. E-Sports, interactive gaming, and other recreational use;
 6. Home and business automation, security, and telemetry; and
 7. Any other application or network service that facilitates communication, and information exchange for the purposes of education, business use, telemedicine and other economic purposes.
- E. **Communications Service.** “Communications service” means any wireline voice, satellite, data, fixed wireless data or video retail service.
- F. **Communications Service Provider.** “Communications service provider” means:
1. Any entity offering communications service to customers in the State; or
 2. Any facilities-based provider of mobile wireless voice or data retail service that voluntarily chooses to be assessed by the Authority under 35-A M.R.S. §9211 sub 2.
- G. **Fund Administrator.** The “Fund Administrator” is an independent fiscal agent that is not a state entity, and that is selected by the Commission through a state-approved Request For Proposals procedure, and that contracts with the Commission to provide all services necessary to administer and manage the ConnectMaine Fund.
- G. **Household.** ~~“Household” means a house and its occupants, regarded as a unit.~~
- H. **Infrastructure.** “Infrastructure” means a physical component or collection of physical components that provide the basic support for distributing advanced communication technology services.
- I. **Interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol Service (Interconnected VoIP).** “Interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol Service” or “interconnected VoIP” means a service that enables real-time, two-way voice communications; requires a broadband connection from the user’s location; requires internet protocol-compatible customer premises equipment (CPE); and permits users generally to receive calls that originate on the public switched telephone network and to terminate calls to the public switched telephone network.
- J. **Line.** A "line" is any wired or wireless connection capable of real-time concurrent inbound or outbound voice communication calls that are made or received to or from the public switched telephone network. For the purposes of this Chapter, private branch exchange (PBX) lines and Centrex lines are considered to be lines. For the purposes of this Chapter, the number of lines a service provider provides to a subscriber shall be deemed to equal the number of inbound or outbound calls the subscriber can maintain at the same time using the service provider’s service.
- K. **Subscriber Location.** A “subscriber location” means any location at which there could be one or more subscribers of communications service, including but not limited to a house, apartment, apartment complex, condo complex, other dwelling unit, a business, business complex, medical facility, community building, government facility, or other facility.

- ~~JL~~. **Mobile Communications Service Provider.** “Mobile communications service provider” means any facilities-based provider of retail mobile wireless voice or data service that voluntarily contributes to the ConnectMaine Fund.
- M. **Voice Network Service Provider.** “Voice Network Service Provider” means a voice service provider that offers its subscribers the means to initiate or receive voice communications using the public switched telephone network.
- ~~KN~~. **Underserved Area.** “Underserved Area” means any geographic area where broadband service exists, but where the Authority has determined that the service is inadequate pursuant to criteria set forth in section 5(C) of this Chapter.
- LO. **Unserved Area.** “Unserved Area” means any geographic area that the Authority has determined is without broadband service pursuant to criteria set forth in section 5(B) of this Chapter.

§ 3 REQUIRED FILING OF DATA

In order to achieve the purpose, set forth in §1, the following is required:

- A. **Communications Service Provider.** The authority shall collect data annually from communications service providers and any wireless provider providers that own or operate advanced communications technology infrastructure in the State data concerning infrastructure deployment for the purpose of developing mapping information to assist the authority in implementing the provisions of section 9202-A: pricing data for advertised retail pricing for broadband services offered in the State and revenue data for the purpose of assessing communications service providers subject to section 9211. The authority shall permit providers that have provided data to the authority at a level of detail that the authority has determined acceptable to continue to provide the data in the same format. For mapping data, the authority, whenever possible, shall use data formats consistent with data formats used for mapping at the federal level.
1. Pricing data for advertised retail pricing for broadband services offered in the State:
 - a. Narrative description of any affordability option and the relevant qualifying criteria and the number of subscribers who have taken advantage of this provision within the prior year;
 - b. Narrative description of range of pricing and service options available in the State;
 - c. The cost and speeds of the most subscribed to standalone internet offering;
 - d. The cost, speeds, and other components of the most subscribed to bundle or package that includes internet service;
 - e. Cost range for 100mbps/100mpbs or faster service; and
 - f. Revenue data for the purpose of assessing communications service providers subject to §7.
 2. Data to help the authority determine extent of broadband service in Maine:

- a. Address level data that includes the technology and maximum speeds available; or
 - b. A map that depicts points showing the extent of broadband service provided by the provider and delineates the availability of different service speeds, including areas where 25mbps/3mbps is available; where 50mbps download and 10mbps upload is available; where 100 mbps download and 20 mbps upload is available; and anywhere where 100mbps/100mbps or faster is available; or
 - c. Other information that ~~shows~~depicts points showing the extent of service ~~lines~~availability, the type of broadband service provided and actual delivered maximum service speeds and latency.
3. If a communications service provider does not provide ConnectMaine with data set forth in §3 within three months of the annual request in the format ConnectMaine requested, that provider will not be eligible for ConnectMaine funding for the following round of grants, or until the data is provided, whichever comes first, absent an affirmative vote by the board prior to opening a grant round that a provider is eligible.
 4. Reports containing data set forth in §3 for the previous year are due within one month of filing the required Federal Communications 477 data or its successor. Filings shall be made via a secure electronic transmission.
 5. **Additional Information.** The Authority may request and communications service providers may voluntarily provide additional information to determine availability of broadband service in specific geographic locations to assist in evaluating or developing infrastructure grant proposals. Any information collected pursuant to this subsection shall be held as confidential by the Authority and may be used for only the purposes set forth in this subsection.

§ 4 PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

- A. **Protected Information.** Pursuant 35-A M.R.S. §9207, all data concerning infrastructure deployment, pricing and revenue data included but not limited to service area and types of service data provided to the Authority is confidential and therefore not a public record under Title 1, section 402, subsection 3. An entity submitting information protected under this section will mark the top of each page in large, conspicuous typeface “CONFIDENTIAL.”
- B. **Removal of Confidential Designation.** The removal of the confidential designation for data provided pursuant to §3 of this chapter can only occur upon a determination made by the Authority that extenuating circumstances warrant this action; that the removal of confidential designation is as narrow as possible under the circumstances; and that any party who has provided confidential data has both actual notice of the Authority’s intent and has an opportunity to comment on the removal. In making this determination, the Authority will consider:
 1. **Standard.** The Authority will protect from public disclosure information concerning any communication service infrastructure that could facilitate the

intentional, illegal interference with a communications service or mobile communications service.

2. **Criteria.** In determining what information is to be removed from information protected as critical infrastructure, the Authority will consider:
 - a. The extent to which the information could facilitate the disruption of critical emergency or other government communication services such as E911;
 - b. The extent to which the information could facilitate the disruption of public communication services;
 - c. The ease or difficulty with which a person could acquire or duplicate the information from other sources; and
 - d. The degree to which third parties have placed the information in the public domain or rendered the information “readily ascertainable.”
- C. **Exception to Public Record Law.** Information designated as confidential by the Authority is not a public record under Title 1, section 402, subsection 3, per the authority granted in 35-A M.R.S. §9207.

§ 5 DESIGNATION OF BROADBAND SERVICE AND ELIGIBLE AREAS

- A. **Broadband Service.** At least annually, and subject to a thirty (30) day comment period, the Authority must determine the minimum performance criteria for broadband service, for the purposes of this Chapter. The Authority must base its criteria on the state of the market as well as the performance necessary to meet the current broadband needs of common applications and network services in use in the State.
1. **Criteria Governing Performance.** To determine minimum performance criteria, the Authority may consider:
 - a. Minimum sustained bandwidth for both upstream and downstream transmission in Common Applications and Network Service;
 - b. Maximum monthly throughput on a flat rate service offering; and
 - c. Any other performance criteria necessary for the use of common broadband applications and network services.
- B. **Unserved Areas.** At least annually, and subject to thirty (30) day comment period, the Authority shall designate all geographic areas that are unserved. In making such a designation, the Authority shall consider data collected pursuant to §3 of this Chapter as well as other data sources that the Authority deems credible and appropriate to help make this determination.
1. **Broadband Unserved Areas.** In designating an unserved area, the Authority must find the following criteria:

- a. Broadband service is not offered at any ~~household-subscriber location~~ within the geographic area pursuant to the most recent data submitted under §3 or other credible data sources utilized by the Authority;
 - b. Broadband service is not offered to any other potential subscriber within the geographic area pursuant to the most recent data submitted under §3 or other credible data sources utilized by the Authority.
 - c. The extent to which the broadband service meets the criteria governing Common Applications and Network Service.
- C. **Underserved Areas.** The Authority, subject to a thirty (30) day comment period, shall designate any geographic area as an underserved area and, therefore, eligible for a grant, when the Authority finds that credible evidence has been presented to confirm all of the following:
1. ~~Credible evidence has been presented that less than 20% of the households within~~ the geographic area is not designated as an unserved area pursuant to §5(B);
 2. broadband service as defined by the Authority pursuant to §5(A) is not offered at any subscriber location or to any other potential subscriber in the geographic area; and
 3. subscriber locations within the geographic area have access to broadband communications service from only one communications service provider.
- ~~The use of grant funds is limited to only the unserved portions of the area.~~
- D. **Opportunity to Review Proposed Designation of Unserved and Underserved Areas**
1. Annually, based on the data provided by ~~communication~~communications service providers, the Authority shall post ~~a list of any geographic areas identified in an infrastructure grant application as unserved or underserved pursuant to the most recent data submitted under §3 or other credible data sources utilized by the Authority for the purpose of confirming the availability of broadband service within that geographic area.~~
 2. The Authority shall allow 30 days for ~~the requesting entity~~ data from any existing provider or other credible data sources utilized by the Authority to confirm the availability, or lack thereof, of broadband service prior to designating any geographic area ~~an~~ unserved or underserved area.

§ 6 CONNECTMAINE AUTHORITY SUPPORT

In order to achieve the purpose set forth in §1., the Authority shall determine:

- A. **Priority**~~Prioritization of infrastructure projects.~~ The Authority shall give preference among eligible infrastructure grant applications to projects in unserved areas that provide the greatest relative improvement to existing Internet service in unserved areas. When prioritizing among infrastructure grant applications, the Authority shall establish eligibility and evaluation criteria, including the cost-benefit and project scope. The Authority may divide infrastructure grant applications by project area or by type of

eligible applicant and then prioritize proposals within each group. Evaluation criteria may be the same or different for different groups.

1. **Eligibility Criteria.** The Authority shall establish eligibility criteria, which may include criteria related to proposed broadband service performance; technical, managerial and financial capacity, and experience to operate the network of the applicant or partner; completion of required outreach to providers; the status of good standing of the applicant and communications service provider; proposed project timeline; and level of financial commitment. The Authority may establish eligibility criteria related to project areas, which may include identifying, proposing or considering unserved and underserved areas eligible for grants, and the percentage of unserved and underserved subscriber locations to be served.
2. **Preference Criteria.** The Authority may establish one or more criteria and prioritize funding of all eligible infrastructure grant applications meeting the criteria over those that do not. The Authority shall give preference among eligible infrastructure grant applications to projects in the least served areas areas that provide the greatest relative improvement to existing internet service. In determining what constitutes relative improvement, the Authority will consider the following criteria:
 - ~~1a.~~ The number of potential subscribers, subscriber locations in unserved areas to be served by the project, and the capital cost per potential subscriber to extend the level of existing internet service available to those locations, the level of broadband service proposed, the advanced communications technology infrastructure infrastructure to potential subscribers, subscriber locations, and the improvement in the speeds and latency of service from the project;
 - ~~2.~~ Whether Authority support for the project will inhibit or impede private investment in the area;
 - ~~3.~~ Whether Authority support for the project will diminish the value of prior investment in advanced communications technology infrastructure used to provide broadband service or mobile communications service within the area; and
 - ~~4b.~~ whether without the Authority's support for the project, the installation of adequate advanced communications technology infrastructure as defined in §5(A) and equivalent to the proposed project would not otherwise occur within the same period.
 - ~~5.~~ The increase in download and upload speeds.
3. **Evaluation of Applications for Infrastructure Grants.** The application evaluation process will allow the Authority to evaluate all applications submitted during a particular application period that has been set by the Authority. In addition to eligibility and any preference criteria, the application will be judged using the following categories:

-
- a. **Cost-Benefit.** The cost-benefit category is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the amount of funding requested from the Authority per subscriber location in unserved areas to be served by the project, with lower funding requested per subscriber location being equivalent to more favorable cost-benefit. An application may include subscriber locations in underserved and served areas, but such subscriber locations will not be considered in the calculation of cost-benefit.
 - b. **Project Scope.** The project scope category may be used to weight cost-benefit. The weight of project scope is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the number of potential subscriber locations to be served by the project, the density of those potential subscriber locations per road mile, the applicant's financial commitment to the project, and other factors that may increase the cost or difficulty in expanding broadband service to potential subscriber locations in unserved and underserved areas.
 - c. **Project Value.** The project value category may be used to weight cost-benefit. The weight of project value is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the estimated retail price per potential subscriber location to receive service, any affordability offering proposed, the expected subscription rate estimated for the proposed project, and other factors that may increase the value of the proposed project to potential subscribers in the project area.
- B. **Eligible Applicants.** Applicants eligible to receive Authority support may include the following:
1. **For Community Planning Grants**
 - a. General-purpose local governments (municipalities, groups of municipalities and counties);
 - b. Groups or regional partnership of general-purpose local governments;
 - c. Local government authorities, and joint or multi-county development authorities; and
 - d. Non-profit local or regional community organizations that are providing local or regional economic development programs.
 2. **For Infrastructure Grants**
 - a. Communications service providers;
 - b. Units of local government including broadband utility districts; and
 - c. Any other responsible entity or group determined by the Authority to be capable of installing, using, and managing advanced communications technology infrastructure in the area.

- C. **Eligible Activities.** Eligible uses of funds provided under the ConnectMaine Fund include activities, facilities, and services described in 35-A M.R.S., Chapter 93, including the provision of public infrastructure, services, facilities and improvements needed to implement new broadband services, enhance existing broadband services, implement new mobile communications service, or enhance existing mobile communications service or the provision of technical and financial assistance to support local and regional broadband planning activities, to unserved areas. Funds may also be used for matching requirements, “gap” financing, and grants, that may assist projects in qualifying for other sources of funding, as well as any other activities that are integral and necessary for the development, installation and use of a broadband or mobile communications system.
- D. **Application Process.** The Authority will initiate a round of grant-making through public announcement. Applicants will be provided information on how to apply for a grant and a copy of ~~a grant scoring guide~~ the evaluation process at the time of the announcement of the grant round. The application process is subject to change, depending on funds available for granting, but will include, at a minimum the following provisions:
1. **Infrastructure Grant Application.** The application for a grant to build infrastructure will include, at a minimum, the following:
 - a. identification of proposed project area, which must meet the eligibility criteria established by the Authority pursuant to §6(A)(1), by including a description and GIS enabled map and with sufficient information to establish that it meets which areas meet the Authority’s definition of an unserved or underserved area, as set forth in section 5 of this Chapter;
 - b. a description of the proposed project, including: public-private partnerships that have been established; evidence that the partners in the project are eligible to receive funding from the Authority; the type of service to be provided and, in the case of broadband service, the upstream and downstream speeds of the service to be provided; an estimate of the time required to complete the proposed project; the percentage distribution of ~~households and businesses~~ potential subscriber locations within the area to be served by the project; and the estimated price per ~~customer~~ subscriber of the service to be provided by the proposed project;
 - c. a description of the financials of the proposed project, including: the total amount of funding requested from the Authority; the amount and sources of the applicant’s financial commitment to the project in addition to the funding requested from the Authority, and the maximum project cost broken down by major cost categories; and
 - de. the estimated number of ~~customers~~ potential subscriber locations in the proposed project area ~~who that~~ will directly benefit from the project, of those the estimated number in unserved and underserved areas, who are currently unserved or underserved and the number of locations that will be left in unserved areas in of the affected community;

- ~~fe.~~ ~~evidence of community support for the proposed project, which may include letters or signatures of residents or businesses located within the area of the proposed project~~ a high-level network design, including: a description identifying the network of the broadband infrastructure proposed, about which the Authority may request additional information for projects costing \$1,500,000 or more;
- ~~gf.~~ certification that the applicant has contacted the incumbent service provider(s) in the project area regarding current or impending plans for broadband infrastructure expansion and a description of such contact;
- ~~hg.~~ Timeline a timeline for completion of the proposed project; and
- ~~ih.~~ All infrastructure grantees must agree in writing to provide certification of net neutral services in the provision of broadband internet access service across advanced communications technology infrastructure constructed with the use of the state funds-, in that Net Neutral Services must be provided for all subscriber locations that were funded in full or in part with any State funds.-For, and for the purposes of this section Net Neutral Services shall have the same meaning as MRSA 5 Section 1541 B.

~~2. Evaluation of Applications for Infrastructure Grants.~~ The application evaluation process will allow the Authority to evaluate all applications submitted during a particular application period that has been set by the Authority. In addition to evaluation of the greatest relative improvement offered by the project, the application will be judged using the following scoring categories:

- ~~a. Cost Benefit.~~ The cost benefit scoring is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the amount of funding requested from the Authority per customer eligible location to be served by the project, with lower funding per customer receiving a higher cost benefit score. Subscriber locations in underserved areas will not be scored; and
- ~~b. Community Support.~~ The community support score is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, evidence of community support for the project and the percentage of households within the project area that will be served by the proposed project;
- ~~c. Project Scope.~~ The project scope score is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the number of customers to be served by the project, the type and, when relevant, the speed of service to be offered by the project and the applicant's financial commitment to the project; and
- ~~d. Project Value.~~ The project value score is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the estimated price per customer to receive service from the proposed project and any other details of the project that may benefit customers in the area proposed to be served by the proposed project.

32. **Planning Grant Applications.** The Authority may request the following information in an application for a planning grant, which may also be required as a report upon completion of a planning grant.~~An applicant for a community broadband planning grant shall may address the following information:~~
- ~~a. a description of the area proposed to be the subject of the study and plan for broadband expansion;~~
 - ~~b. a description of the applicant, including any public-private partnerships that have been established to seek the planning grant;~~
 - ~~c. a description of any institutions or entities within the community that would qualify as an “anchor institution” that are supportive of broadband expansion;~~
 - ~~d. the amount requested from the Authority to support the planning project;~~
 - ~~e. the applicant’s financial commitment to the study and planning for broadband expansion in the community;~~
 - ~~f. the applicant’s in-kind contribution to the study and planning for broadband expansion, including commitment of labor (paid or volunteer) and community resources;~~
 - ~~g. an attestation that funds provided by the applicant for purposes of funding the planning project do not consist of in-kind contributions from the applicant or a vendor or private business that proposes to build, operate or provide retail services using broadband infrastructure constructed pursuant to the planning grant, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. §9217(4);~~
 - ~~h. a description of community support for broadband expansion in the form of letters or testimonials;~~
 - ~~i. the estimated number of customers who currently have access to broadband service within the proposed project area;~~
 - ~~j. the estimated number of unserved customers who could be served by expanded broadband infrastructure;~~
 - ~~k. a description of the contact that the applicant has had with any incumbent service provider(s) in the community regarding current or impending plans for broadband infrastructure expansion; and~~
 - ~~l. a description of any prior applications by the communities within the area of the grant application, either jointly or individually, for community planning grants.~~
 - a. a description of local broadband needs and goals;

- b. an inventory of existing broadband infrastructure assets within the municipality, municipalities or region;
- c. a gap analysis defining the additional broadband infrastructure necessary to meet identified needs and goals;
- d. one or more potential network designs, cost estimates, operating models and potential business models based on input from broadband providers operating within the municipality, municipalities or region and any other parties that submit a network design solution in the course of developing the plan to address any broadband gaps identified in paragraph c; and
- e. an assessment of all municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances that have the effect of delaying or increasing the cost of broadband infrastructure deployment.

43. **Planning Grant Evaluation process.** The Authority shall provide grants for planning projects to municipalities, groups of municipalities or nonprofit local or regional community economic development organizations to develop plans to expand the availability of broadband service in accordance with the following provisions:

- a. The authority shall score each application using the following scoring categories:
 - i. **Community Support.** The community support score is based on relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the scope of participation by residents of each affected community in the ~~application~~ planning process and the amount of economic support to be provided by ~~members of~~ each affected community.
 - ii. **Project Focus.** The project focus score is based on the degree to which the application proposes a project that is likely to ~~produce the required results set forth in 35-A M.R.S.A. §9217(1).~~ lead to the expansion of the availability of broadband service in unserved and underserved areas.
 - iii. ~~**Project Preparation.** The degree of completeness with which the applicant has provided the required information set forth in subsection 3.~~
 - iv. **Financial Commitment.** The amount of financial support to be provided by ~~members of~~ each affected community. The financial commitment of a municipality for planning grants under this section may not consist of in-kind contributions from the municipality or funds provided by a vendor or private business that proposes to build, operate or provide retail services using broadband infrastructure constructed pursuant to the planning grant.

The Authority must ensure that community broadband planning grants are equitably distributed throughout unserved and underserved areas of the state and that the grants encourage collaboration between multiple communities.

The Authority shall make all plans developed using grant funds available on the Authority's website.

The authority ~~shall~~ may fund up to 25% of the total award amount upon the granting of an award, subject to recapture by the Authority in the event of failure to successfully complete the grant. Full payment shall be awarded upon successful completion of the grant as set forth in subsection ~~54~~.

~~The Authority shall make all plans developed using grant funds available on the Authority's website.~~

5E. **Project Completion and Evaluation.** A project will be considered successfully completed and eligible for final payment only if it complies with the following provisions.

a1. **Infrastructure Grants**

- ia. Projects of less than \$1,500,0000, that have received grant approval must be completed within one year of receipt of funds from the Authority or within 180 days of all licenses and permits or governmental approvals necessary to complete the project, whichever later occurs, unless a waiver is granted by the Authority due to unforeseen circumstances. Projects that are over \$1,500,000 will have a contractually agreed to completion date; and
- ib. Within one year of receipt of funds from the Authority or within 180 days of all licenses and permits or governmental approvals necessary to complete the project, whichever later occurs, the recipient must submit a report demonstrating completion, or in the case of a project that has been granted an extension of the one-year time period for completion, a report of progress. Such report must include an itemization of costs for which the Authority's funding was used including as well a description of the service that has been created through use of the funds.

b2. **Planning Grants**

- ia. Planning projects that have received grant approval must be completed within one year of funding unless a waiver is granted by the Authority due to unforeseen circumstances; and
- ib. Upon the date of completion, the recipient must submit a report with sufficient detail to allow the authority to determine whether the Plan generated by the project will lead to the expansion of the availability of broadband service in unserved and underserved areas, which may comply with 35-A MRSA §9217(1) to include the following information: ~~as follows:~~

- 4i. Define local broadband needs and goals;
- 2ii. Inventory existing broadband infrastructure assets within the community or region;
- 3iii. Include a gap analysis defining the additional broadband infrastructure necessary to meet identified needs and goals;
- 4iv. Include one or more potential network designs, cost estimates, operating models and potential business models based on input from broadband providers operating within the community or region; and
- 5v. Include an assessment of all municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances that have the effect of delaying or increasing the cost of broadband infrastructure deployment.

~~The authority will provide final funding for only plans that comply with the provisions of 35-A MRSA §9217(1)~~

- 63. Project Completion and Evaluation.** Projects with a total cost of less than \$1,500,000 and that have received grant approval, including planning projects, must be completed within one year of receipt of funds from the Authority or within 180 days of all pole licenses and permits or governmental approvals necessary to complete the project, whichever later occurs, unless a waiver is granted by the Authority due to unforeseen circumstances. Projects where the total cost exceeds \$1,500,000 will have a contractually agreed to completion schedule. Within one year of receipt of funds from the Authority or of all licenses and permits or governmental approvals necessary to complete the project, whichever later occurs, the recipient must submit a report demonstrating completion, or in the case of a project that has been granted an extension of the one-year time period for completion, a report-of progress. ~~Such report must include an itemization of costs for which the Authority's funding was used as well as description of the service or the planning study that has been created through use of the funds.~~
- a. When a completion or progress report is submitted for disbursement of grant funds, it shall include a description of the service or the planning study that has been created through use of the funds, an itemization of project costs, documentation supporting costs, and any other elements of the relevant report that is required by the Authority.
 - b. For any grants awarded by the Authority for infrastructure deployment project, the Authority shall perform an audit of the project. The grant awardee shall provide information requested by the Authority for the purposes of this audit, and the grant awardee shall provide access for inspection to plant and equipment funded by the grant award. The audit shall evaluate consistency of the constructed project with subscriber locations identified in the grant process and with project expenditures reported. The audit will also evaluate suitability of the project as constructed to provide the type of services and performance identified in

the grant process, and to ensure conformance with generally-accepted industry standards.

6F. Infrastructure Grant Tracking. For any grants awarded by the Authority for infrastructure deployment project, the grant awardee shall upon completion of the grant, annually for 5-2 years from the date of the grant award project completion, provide the Authority data on the infrastructure deployment project that includes:

- a1. The number of households potential subscriber locations within the project area ~~that did not have access to broadband service;~~
- b2. The percentage number of households potential subscriber locations in the project area that subscribe to broadband service ~~from the grant awardee that is below the effective broadband service level set by the Authority;~~
- e3. The percentage number of households potential subscriber locations within the project area that are anticipated to subscribe to broadband service from the grant awardee that is at or above the effective broadband service level set by the Authority; and
- d. ~~The broadband option from the grant awardee subscribed to by the largest number of customers in the project area;~~
- e4. The price and speeds for the following services:
 - ia. The broadband offering with the lowest ~~annual cost~~ monthly price;
 - iib. The broadband offering with the highest upload and download speeds; and
 - iiic. The broadband offering taken by the greatest number of ~~subscribers~~ subscriber locations within the project area;
- f. ~~The number of businesses that take service from the grant awardee in the project area; and~~
- g. ~~The total number of businesses in the project area.~~

Information collected under ~~this subsection~~ §6(E) and (F) shall be considered confidential pursuant to 35-A MRSA §9207. The Authority shall aggregate the data on an annual basis and include aggregated information as deemed appropriate by the Authority in its annual report.

§ 7 ConnectME FUND

- A. **Assessment.** The statutory assessment is imposed on the value of the following:
 1. All retail revenues received or collected from communications services provided in Maine.
 2. All retail revenues received or collected from mobile communications service providers that voluntarily agree to be assessed by the Authority.

3. Beginning January 1, 2020, a surcharge of 10¢ per line or number per month is assessed and collected on a monthly basis. If the communications service provider recovers the amount from its customers, it shall identify this surcharge on each customer bill as "ConnectME— Statewide Broadband" and indicate that the funds are collected for use in the ConnectME fund."Starting January 1, 2022 each of the following voice network service providers who provide service to end-user retail customers in Maine shall report the number of their Lines or Working Telephone Numbers in Maine and shall contribute to the ConnectMaine Fund under the provisions contained this Section: local exchange carriers, interconnected voice over Internet protocol service providers, and mobile communications service providers. If the voice network service providers who provide service to end-user retail customers recovers the amount from its customers, it shall identify this surcharge on each customer bill as "statewide broadband access fund" surcharge on the customer's bill.

B. Reporting and Remittance

1. **Local Exchange Carriers.** Subject to the limitation provided by Subsection B (4) of this Section, within thirty days after the end of each calendar quarter, each local exchange carrier shall report to the Fund Administrator on forms provided by the Fund Administrator the number of its Lines, including Centrex and PBX lines, or Working Telephone Numbers that are providing voice telephone service in Maine at the end of each month of the preceding quarter.
2. **Providers of Interconnected VoIP Service.** Subject to the limitation provided by Subsection B (4) of this Section, within thirty days after the end of each calendar quarter, each provider of interconnected VoIP service shall report to the Fund Administrator on forms provided by the Fund Administrator the number, at the end of each month of the preceding calendar quarter, of its active interconnected VoIP Lines or Working Telephone Numbers that have a registered location within Maine. Providers of interconnected VoIP service must adhere to the requirements of 47 CFR §9.5(d).
3. **Providers of Mobile Telecommunications Services.** Subject to the limitation provided by Subsection B (4) of this Section, within thirty days after the end of each calendar quarter, each provider of mobile telecommunications services, except for prepaid wireless providers, shall report to the Fund Administrator on forms provided by the Fund Administrator for the end of each month of the preceding quarter the number of its mobile telecommunications services Lines or Working Telephone Numbers whose place of primary use is in Maine.
4. **Limitation on Reporting by Billing Account Number.** For the purposes of Subsections B (1), (2), and (3) of this Section, the reporting service provider shall not report more than twenty-five Lines or Working Telephone Numbers per active Billing Account Number.
5. **Contribution Calculation and Remittance.** Each service provider that must report its lines or customers to the Fund Administrator under the provisions of Subsections B (1), (2), or (3) of this Section, subject to the limitation provided by Subsection B (4), of this Section shall calculate its required contribution to the ConnectMaine

Fund by multiplying the number of Lines or Working Telephone Numbers reported for each month by 10 cents. The service provider must remit its required contribution to the Fund Administrator under procedures established by the Fund Administrator at the time its files its required report for each quarter.

6. **Confidentiality.** For the purposes of this Chapter, the counts of Lines or Working Telephone Numbers that must be reported to the Fund Administrator pursuant to the provisions of Subsections B (1), (2), or (3) of this Section will be considered Confidential Business Information, pursuant to the provisions of 35-A M.R.S. §9207-sub 1 & 2.

BC. **Additional Funds.** Any additional funds the Authority collects pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. Chapter 93 shall be paid into the ConnectME Fund to be used for the purposes authorized by statute and in accordance with this Chapter.

CD. **Fund Administrator.** The Authority will contract with an appropriate independent fiscal agent to serve as the Fund Administrator. The administrator will establish the time and procedures for payment after consultation with the Authority.

§ 8 WAIVER OF PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER

Upon the request of any person subject to the provisions of this Chapter or upon its own motion, the Authority may, for good cause, waive any of the requirements of this Chapter that are not required by statute. The waiver may not be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter or 35-A M.R.S. Chapter 93.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 23 M.R.S. §3360-A; 35-A M.R.S. §§ 9201-9218.

History

EFFECTIVE DATE: This chapter, a major substantive Final Adoption (filing 2007-228), was approved as to form and legality by the Attorney General on May 30, 2007. It was filed with the Secretary of State on May 30, 2007 and becomes effective on June 29, 2007.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This chapter, a major substantive Final Adoption (filing 2019-091), was approved as to form and legality by the Attorney General on May 31, 2019. It was filed with the Secretary of State on May 31, 2019 and became effective on June 30, 2019.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This chapter, a routine technical adoption (filing 2019-215), was approved as to form and legality by the Attorney General on November 26, 2019. It was filed with the Secretary of State on November 27, 2019 and became effective on December 2, 2019.



CONNECTMAINE

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

DATE

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 2020, Maine voters approved a state bond of \$15 million toward expanding the availability of broadband service in the state. Just over half of the bond funds were awarded the following June. 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 the remainder of the bond funds at this time.

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 applications to the infrastructure grants program. Projects proposed should generate significant public benefit. Broadband service enables civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning and access to essential services.

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.

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, which involve expanding infrastructure that ensures broadband service is universally available, affordable and reliable, to meet the current and future needs of the community. While applications will be scored based on cost-benefit, preference will be based on least served areas and the community support involved.¹

[This application window is February 25 through April 29. Please submit your application materials by emailing Connect.ME@maine.gov with the subject heading Grant Application.

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

The current window for provider outreach is February 25 to March 27, with the response window effectively being March 11 to April 10.

Commented [MS1]: Revise to new timeline and process

Instructions

Please don't include addendums or references; insert information and documentation in the order requested. Except for the requested map, mapping data, and specified files, please don't submit separate files. Any information that may be deemed confidential must be submitted as separate files to remain confidential². Please note that applications submitted are made publicly available. Some details of projects funded with grants are posted on the ConnectMaine website.

The submitted application must be complete. Please contact ConnectMaine staff for any assistance. The ConnectMaine Authority reserves the right to determine whether or not to request additional information necessary to evaluate applications for infrastructure grants.

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.

¹ Evaluation of applications is conducted in accordance with the ConnectMaine rule:

<https://www.maine.gov/connectme/about/statutes-rulemaking>

² Confidentiality is maintained in accordance with the ConnectMaine statute, 35-A MRSA §9207:

<https://www.maine.gov/connectme/about/statutes-rulemaking>

CONNECTMAINE

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:

CONNECTMAINE

F. Applicant Eligibility

Briefly describe the history and nature of the public-private partnership, if this application is being submitted by entities working in a public-private partnership, for purposes such as but not limited to separate construction, ownership or operation of the proposed network.

Any communications service provider (ISP) that is an applicant, or partner to this application, and any entity awarded grants previously must be in good standing with ConnectMaine.³ List the date of the most recent “required filing of data” for each ISP involved in this application. As applicable, list the dates of all grants awarded in the last five years to any of the entities involved in this application, whether received or declined, and list the associated dates of the “infrastructure grant tracking” reports associated with those grants received.

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:

Either the applicant or its partner, if applicable, 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. List the entity(ies) that will build, own and operate the network, and if necessary, any prior experience in designing, installing, operating and managing infrastructure.

Commented [MS2]: Revise to rulemaking if it goes through before application window opens

³ 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.⁴ Indicate which of the following three sources identified the project area as unserved or underserved:

- The ConnectMaine Broadband Availability Map:
<https://maps.sewall.com/connectme/public/>
- Community Broadband Plans posted on the ConnectMaine website, if geographic areas are delineated based on a service level of at least 50/10mbps being unavailable:
www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/planning-grants/awards
- The 2021 Reviewed Areas, if these weren't awarded infrastructure grants since:
www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping

If the project area wasn't identified as unserved in the above sources, indicate the date and entity that submitted a request to ConnectMaine during the most recent opportunity to review areas.⁵

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. Within 30 days of the application window being opened, the applicant must have sent an email, which must have been copied to Connect.ME@maine.gov, to existing ISPs to confirm that "no plans exist to provide service meeting or exceeding the minimum build standard for broadband⁶ within the following 12 months" in the project area; any responses from ISPs must have been copied to Connect.ME@maine.gov, within 14 days of receiving the applicant's email. Indicate the date of when provider outreach occurred.

Commented [MS3]: Revise to rulemaking if it goes through before application window opens

Commented [MS4]: Revise to rulemaking if it goes through before application window opens

⁴ 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 50mbps/10mbps, and areas are designated as underserved where less than 20% of the households have access to internet service of at least 50mbps/10mbps.

⁵ Details about this process for identifying unserved areas is posted on the ConnectMaine website:
<https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping>

⁶ Either annually or through its strategic planning process, ConnectMaine sets a build standard for broadband, which currently is offering a service level of at least 100/100mpbs.

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II. Executive Summary

Briefly describe how the proposed project aligns with the ConnectMaine objectives and framework for the broadband infrastructure grants program.⁷ While all complete applications for eligible projects will be scored, ConnectMaine will give preference to proposed projects that demonstrate the following are true statements.

Preference Criteria	True	False
Project area could be least served based on speeds of existing service		
The project involved wide community engagement, refer to Section IV		
Universal broadband service is proposed throughout affected communities		
Broadband service proposed exceeds minimum performance criteria		
Regional &/or local governments financial commitments are included, e.g., ARP		
Financial commitments exceed the minimum amount required		
Financial commitments don't involve contingencies, i.e., secured		

III. Cost-Benefit

The cost-benefit category is the basis of scoring applications and is calculated as the grant amount requested divided by the number of potential subscriber locations in unserved areas that will be served by the project. For example, a \$1.4 million grant amount divided by 700 locations is a cost-benefit of \$2,000. This base cost-benefit is further reduced by weighing other scoring categories.

A. Subscriber Locations

For the entirety of affected communities, indicate the total number of potential subscriber locations; of those, the number currently unserved; and of those currently unserved, the number to be served by the proposed project.

Potential subscriber locations	Currently unserved	To be served

B. Grant Funds

Indicate the total grant amount requested.

⁷ Details about the objectives and framework set to help achieve the state's broadband goals is posted on the ConnectMaine website: <https://www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/engagement>

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IV. Community Support

The preference criteria include the community support category: whether or not the proposed project will result in universal broadband and had involved community engagement.

A. Project Focus

For the entirety of affected communities, indicate the total number of potential subscriber locations; of those, the number for which connection costs are included up to network interface points.

Potential subscriber locations	To be served

B. Active Community

Briefly describe how widespread community engagement has been, including any participation in broadband planning programs or technical assistance received.

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V. Project Scope

In total the weight of the project scope category is 50% and the preference criteria include the greatest relative improvement in service.

A. Existing Service

Based on mapped data of broadband service availability, indicate the speeds of existing service available to the potential subscriber locations in currently unserved areas that will be served by the proposed project.

Service levels	Subscriber locations
25/3mbps to less than 50/10mbps	
10/1mbps to less than 25/3mbps	
Less than 10/1mbps	

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 the GIS data behind the map as separate SHP (preferred) or annotated KMZ files.

B. Proposed Service

Indicate the speeds of proposed broadband service for all potential subscriber locations to be served by the proposed project.

Service levels	Subscriber locations
1/1gbps or greater	
Greater than 100/100mbps but less than 1/1gbps	
At least 100/100mbps	

Specify the network technology proposed to support those levels of broadband service. Indicate how the technology is upgradeable. If wireless technology is involved, document the propagation predictions for independent verification.

As a separate file, submit a map of the proposed broadband infrastructure, including any fiber routes and the interconnection with existing networks, at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data. Also submit the GIS data behind the map as separate SHP (preferred) or annotated KMZ files.

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C. Road Miles

ConnectMaine collects data on the density of potential subscriber locations per road mile. State funds are intended to support expansion of broadband availability in places where the private sector alone can't justify the investment, where density is very low. A weight of 25% will be applied for proposed projects in areas with a density of 17 locations per mile or lower. In the affected communities, indicate the number of potential subscriber locations and the total miles of roads.

Subscribers	Miles

D. 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.

E. Financial Commitment

Grant are intended to support expansion of broadband availability in places where the private sector alone can't justify the investment. A minimum financial commitment of \$800 per potential subscriber location in the project area is required. A weight of 25% will be applied for proposed projects with committed dollars totaling more than \$1,000 per potential subscriber location in the project area. Indicate the maximum project cost, the total financial commitments from the applicant, its partner and other sources, and the grant amount requested.

Project Cost	Committed	Grant

List the sources of financial commitments. Preference criteria includes proposed projects with financial commitments from regional or local governments, e.g., American Rescue Plan funds, and proposed projects with secured financial commitments. Indicate whether financial commitments are secured or that the sources are contingent.

As a separate file, submit the financial form where all project costs are itemized, including service drops and other costs of connection up to network interface points. All cost categories must be described, and ineligible costs include: administrative and fundraising activities; computers and other office equipment; vehicles and other operating expenses; and equipment owned or leased by the subscriber, including routers, modems and any other costs beyond the network interface points.

Commented [MS5]: These \$/pass amounts may change based on an analysis by VETRO/CostQuest

Commented [MS6]: Revise the spending report into this form

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VI. Project Value

In total the weight of the project value category is 50%.

A. Service Prices

ConnectMaine collects data on service levels and prices per customer for various offerings provided in the state. The estimated retail price per subscriber location to receive service is a factor considered in the project value category. A weight of 20% will be applied for proposed projects with a price of no more than \$50 per location for a service level that includes at least 100mpbs upload. List all the service levels to be offered and the retail price per subscriber location to receive service, which must be equal to or less than the price per subscriber location offered elsewhere in the state.

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

Affordability offerings help address affordability barriers to the adoption or use of internet service and contributes project value. A weight of 20% will be applied for proposed projects with an affordability offering. Submit as a separate file, any affordability plan.

B. Subscription Rate

Ensuring project value includes addressing the adoption or use of internet service available. A weight of 10% will be applied for proposed projects where the expected subscription rate is estimated to be at least 75%. Of potential subscriber locations, state the estimated subscription rate expected in the project area. Also as a separate file, submit evidence for this subscription rate estimate, such as documentation of subscription rates in similar communities, presubscriptions for these affected communities or similar evidence.

Commented [MS7]: This % may change based on analysis by Tilson of any grant tracking reports received



CONNECTMAINE

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

DATE

Press Release

BROADBAND GRANTS ANNOUNCEMENT

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

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 which help achieve the state's broadband vision by leveraging and expanding existing broadband networks, such as addressing coverage gaps, providing line extensions or filling dark pockets within or between communities. While applications will be scored based on cost-benefit, preference will be given to least served areas and the project scope proposed.¹

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CONNECTMAINE

I. Applicant Information

Applicant Signature:

Date Submitted:

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Entity Name:

B. Grant Request

Amount:

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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:

CONNECTMAINE

F. Applicant Eligibility

Briefly describe the history and nature of the public-private partnership, if this application is being submitted by entities working in a public-private partnership, for purposes such as but not limited to separate construction, ownership or operation of the proposed network.

Any communications service provider (ISP) that is an applicant, or partner to this application, and any entity awarded grants previously must be in good standing with ConnectMaine.³ List the date of the most recent “required filing of data” for each ISP involved in this application. As applicable, list the dates of all grants awarded in the last five years to any of the entities involved in this application, whether received or declined, and list the associated dates of the “infrastructure grant tracking” reports associated with those grants received.

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:

Either the applicant or its partner, if applicable, 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. List the entity(ies) that will build, own and operate the network, and if necessary, any prior experience in designing, installing, operating and managing infrastructure.

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³ 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.⁴ Indicate which of the following three sources identified the project area as unserved or underserved:

- The ConnectMaine Broadband Availability Map:
<https://maps.sewall.com/connectme/public/>
- Community Broadband Plans posted on the ConnectMaine website, if geographic areas are delineated based on a service level of at least 50/10mbps being unavailable:
www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/planning-grants/awards
- The 2021 Reviewed Areas, if these weren't awarded infrastructure grants since:
www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping

If the project area wasn't identified as unserved in the above sources, indicate the date and entity that submitted a request to ConnectMaine during the most recent opportunity to review areas.⁵

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. Within 30 days of the application window being opened, the applicant must have sent an email, which must have been copied to Connect.ME@maine.gov, to existing ISPs to confirm that "no plans exist to provide service meeting or exceeding the minimum build standard for broadband⁶ within the following 12 months" in the project area; any responses from ISPs must have been copied to Connect.ME@maine.gov, within 14 days of receiving the applicant's email. Indicate the date of when provider outreach occurred.

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⁴ 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 50mbps/10mbps, and areas are designated as underserved where less than 20% of the households have access to internet service of at least 50mbps/10mbps.

⁵ Details about this process for identifying unserved areas is posted on the ConnectMaine website:
<https://www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping>

⁶ Either annually or through its strategic planning process, ConnectMaine sets a build standard for broadband, which currently is offering a service level of at least 100/100mpbs.

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II. Executive Summary

Briefly describe how the proposed project aligns with the ConnectMaine objectives and framework for the broadband infrastructure grants program.⁷ While all complete applications for eligible projects will be scored, ConnectMaine will give preference to proposed projects that demonstrate the following are true statements.

Preference Criteria	True	False
Project area could be least served based on speeds of existing service		
Project area doesn't create orphan/outlier locations		
Percent of locations for which connection costs are included equals or exceeds the estimated subscription rate expected, refer to Section IV		
Broadband service proposed exceeds minimum performance criteria		
Project includes upgradeable technology, i.e., forward-looking infrastructure		
Financial commitments exceed the minimum amount required		
Financial commitments don't involve contingencies, i.e., secured		

III. Cost-Benefit

The cost-benefit category is the basis of scoring applications and is calculated as the grant amount requested divided by the number of potential subscriber locations in unserved areas that will be served by the project. For example, a \$150,000 grant amount divided by 75 locations is a cost-benefit of \$2,000. This base cost-benefit is further reduced by weighing other scoring categories.

A. Subscriber Locations

For the entirety of the project area, indicate the total number of potential subscriber locations; of those, the number currently unserved; and of those currently unserved, the number for which connection costs are included up to network interface points.

Potential subscriber locations	Currently unserved	To be served

B. Grant Funds

Indicate the total grant amount requested.

⁷ Details about the objectives and framework set to help achieve the state's broadband goals is posted on the ConnectMaine website: <https://www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/engagement>

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IV. Community Support

The preference criteria include the community support category: the percent of locations for which costs of connection up to network interface points are included equals or exceeds the estimated subscription rate expected.

A. Project Focus

For the entirety of the project area, indicate the total number of potential subscriber locations; of those, the number for which connection costs are included up to network interface points.

Potential subscriber locations	To be served

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V. Project Scope

In total the weight of the project scope category is 50% and the preference criteria include the greatest relative improvement in service.

A. Existing Service

Based on mapped data of broadband service availability, indicate the speeds of existing service available to the most potential subscriber locations in currently unserved areas that will be served by the proposed project.

Service levels	Subscriber locations
25/3mbps to less than 50/10mbps	
10/1mbps to less than 25/3mbps	
Less than 10/1mbps	

As a separate file, submit a map of the extent of broadband service in the project area, including location point data to show whether or not the project area creates orphan/outlier locations, that is at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data. Also submit the GIS data behind the map as separate SHP (preferred) or annotated KMZ files.

B. Proposed Service

Indicate the speeds of proposed broadband service for all potential subscriber locations to be served by the proposed project.

Service levels	Subscriber locations
1/1gbps or greater	
Greater than 100/100mpbs but less than 1/1gbps	
At least 100/100mpbs	

Specify the network technology proposed to support those levels of broadband service. Preference criteria includes forward-looking infrastructure. Indicate how the technology is upgradeable. If wireless technology is involved, document the propagation predictions for independent verification.

As a separate file, submit a map of the proposed broadband infrastructure, including any fiber routes and the interconnection with existing networks, at a fine enough scale to identify street-level data. Also submit the GIS data behind the map as separate SHP (preferred) or annotated KMZ files.

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C. Road Miles

ConnectMaine collects data on the density of potential subscriber locations per road mile. State funds are intended to support expansion of broadband availability in places where the private sector alone can't justify the investment, where density is very low. A weight of 25% will be applied for proposed projects in areas with a density of 17 locations per mile or lower. In the affected communities, indicate the number of potential subscriber locations and the total miles of roads.

Subscribers	Miles

D. 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.

E. Financial Commitment

Grant are intended to support expansion of broadband availability in places where the private sector alone can't justify the investment. A minimum financial commitment of \$800 per potential subscriber location in the project area is required. A weight of 25% will be applied for proposed projects with committed dollars totaling more than \$1,000 per potential subscriber location in the project area. Indicate the maximum project cost, the total financial commitments from the applicant, its partner and other sources, and the grant amount requested.

Project Cost	Committed	Grant

List the sources of financial commitments. Preference criteria includes proposed projects with secured financial commitments. Indicate whether financial commitments are secured or that the sources are contingent.

As a separate file, submit the financial form where all project costs are itemized, including service drops and other costs of connection up to network interface points. All cost categories must be described, and ineligible costs include: administrative and fundraising activities; computers and other office equipment; vehicles and other operating expenses; and equipment owned or leased by the subscriber, including routers, modems and any other costs beyond the network interface points.

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VI. Project Value

In total the weight of the project value category is 50%.

A. Service Prices

ConnectMaine collects data on service levels and prices per customer for various offerings provided in the state. The estimated retail price per subscriber location to receive service is a factor considered in the project value category. A weight of 20% will be applied for proposed projects with a price of no more than \$50 per location for a service level that includes at least 100mpbs upload. List all the service levels to be offered and the retail price per subscriber location to receive service, which must be equal to or less than the price per subscriber location offered elsewhere in the state.

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

Affordability offerings help address affordability barriers to the adoption or use of internet service and contributes project value. A weight of 20% will be applied for proposed projects with an affordability offering. Submit as a separate file, any affordability plan.

B. Subscription Rate

Ensuring project value includes addressing the adoption or use of internet service available. A weight of 10% will be applied for proposed projects where the expected subscription rate is estimated to be at least 75%. Of potential subscriber locations, state the estimated subscription rate expected in the project area. Also as a separate file, submit evidence for this subscription rate estimate, such as documentation of subscription rates in similar communities, presubscriptions for these affected communities or similar evidence.

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