

Request for Proposals

17 March 2021

Grants Broadband Intelligence Platform

Authority Members

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The ConnectMaine Authority is seeking proposals for a web-based broadband intelligence platform, contributing to the accountability, transparency and visualization of its grants programs. All submissions must be received by 5:00 p.m. on April 15 with any supporting documentation via email to Connect.ME@maine.gov

ConnectMaine is the state authority charged with expanding broadband service to unserved and underserved parts of the state. ConnectMaine has two primary programs, planning grants for communities and infrastructure grants to expand service. ConnectMaine is a public instrumentality, with a separate board, designated by statute or appointed by the Governor. ConnectMaine staff is provided by the Office of Broadband within the Department of Economic and Community Development.

ConnectMaine is seeking proposals to assist in creating the state's broadband intelligence platform of record, where all relevant local, state and federal data will reside, that enables ConnectMaine to incorporate state- and federally-funded projects, to create accountability, transparency and a highly visual project status.

This broadband intelligence platform is intended to support more efficient and effective communication among ConnectMaine and key stakeholders. As the state's broadband authority, ConnectMaine is approaching an inflection point in terms of the ability to exert leadership in this space. For ConnectMaine to lead in the broadband space and use its limited resources wisely, we need to be able to quickly and proactively assess, identify, and match projects to funding sources. The broadband intelligence platform is the cornerstone of this work and the tool that enables us to leverage significantly more funds than we can currently contemplate.

ConnectMaine needs the right data-analytic tools and contracted, technical assistance to leverage staff resources and the state's role in this work, to accomplish the following goals:

- Support shift from ConnectMaine being a passive participant in broadband conversations to an active participant in determining where funds are needed.
- Allow ConnectMaine to operate at a highly granular level of data and minimize the reliance on proxy datasets.
- Enable ConnectMaine to identify opportunities to leverage existing or contemplated private investments to achieve the state's broadband goals, and to participate and influence the development of these discussions.
- Encourage an influx of private capital into Maine.
- Maximize the use of federal subsidies for RDOF and other federal programs.
- Enable ConnectMaine to lead the development of projects that meet the state's interests in conjunction with private and other partners.
- Project the state's interests, and support the wise use of funds, by providing an independent validation that the state is getting value money funding infrastructure grants.

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Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the bidder of the conditions contained in this request for proposals (“RFP”). There is no expressed or implied obligation for ConnectMaine to reimburse bidders for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this RFP. Nor shall any costs related to the preparation of the proposal for the RFP, or to the negotiation of the contract with ConnectMaine, be included in the proposal. All information contained in a bidder's submission must be factual and accurate. Misrepresentation of facts may be grounds for dismissal from consideration.

I. Terms of Engagement

Services are contemplated for the support through the current two rounds of the ConnectMaine infrastructure grants program, funded with the \$15 million state bond, and through the development of the next ConnectMaine triennial plan, which will be finished in January 2022. This engagement is subject to recommendation of ConnectMaine staff and satisfactory negotiation of terms. This will be a two-year contract with a possible two-year extension. ConnectMaine will reserve the right to terminate the contract during any engagement period for cause or for convenience if the termination is in the best interest of ConnectMaine. The award contract will be required to sign a ConnectMaine Contract. The contract may be extended or amended if additional funds are provided to ConnectMaine to administer. We anticipate the contract for this work will start before the end of April of 2021. Any data elements or map construct that are created from ConnectMaine data as a part of this project will belong to ConnectMaine at the end of the contract.

II. Nature of Services

In support of ConnectMaine activities, the broadband intelligence platform and services much have the ability to:

- Support the development of a statewide plan to expand broadband, reflecting state priorities
- Support advanced planning, identifying potential options for state funded projects
- Predict costs of potential solutions to optimize grant dollars
- Track network construction and coverage improvements overtime
- Provide the technical service to assist ConnectMaine in the use of any platform

III. Description of Services

Specific, core deliverables include:

1. Deployment of both a public-facing and internal mapping interface, exposing several layers of features and attributes (some internal only, some public) and consolidating data and maps to include and visualize layers necessary to identify possible geographic areas, road segments and individual premise locations including areas that might be either eligible or ineligible for federal or state funds
2. ConnectMaine Grant-Funded Projects toggle for status visualization and tracking of network assets, funds and return on investments, and data from ConnectMaine grant reporting
3. Grant program workflow integration that will
 - a. Help identify constraints in the current data gaps for ConnectMaine grant program
 - b. Provide eligibility through searchable mapping to help visualize unserved areas for ConnectMaine grants programs
 - c. Integrate geospatial data with application process to quickly and efficiently map applicants' proposed coverage, so ConnectMaine can overlay proposed areas with other map layers (e.g., unserved areas) to view and assess the geographic and numeric impact of each proposal

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4. Specific data or map layers to be included, aggregating and curating basic demographic and other data communities to use, as a one-stop shop for datasets that are relevant to broadband processes but that are currently scattered through state and federal agencies' programs and maps:
 - Demographic data, including available census data
 - Jurisdictional boundaries – town and census block
 - Broadband specific datasets, including:
 - RDOF awards
 - CAFII awards,
 - ACAM funds
 - USDA RUS data
 - Maine USP funds
 - Maine School & Library Network funds per location
 - Maine Broadband Coalition speed testing data
 - Broadband specific eligibility layers, including:
 - Federal grant eligibility, e.g., USDA RUS programs, FCC RDOF funds
 - A static view of ConnectMaine funded-projects by roads, updated upon completion of each grant round
5. Broadband planning, design level, that will provide ConnectMaine the ability to:
 - a. Review current ConnectMaine maps and data, identifying assets and gaps, as well as opportunities for improvement or additions, to meet its goals and priorities
 - b. Automate high-level fiber-to-the-premise network designs for community projects
6. Cost out an hourly rate for ad hoc development and GIS technical assistance services of the following types:
 - a. Ongoing support to integrate maps with evolving grants program workflows
 - b. Widget creation to simplify the submission and download of spatial data by applicants and other stakeholders
 - c. Creation of analytics reporting console/dashboard
 - d. Consulting and program management services
 - e. Provide the option to be able to promote a tool as potential to ConnectMaine-supported communities to quickly understand cost and revenue assumptions

IV. Proposed Calendar

Bidders may engage as follows:

1. Session to answer questions from bidders on March 29 at 11:00 a.m.
2. Responses to this RFP must be received by 5:00 p.m. on April 15 with any supporting documentation via email to Connect.ME@maine.gov
3. Estimated notification date of April 28
4. Estimated start date of May 3

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V. Proposal Submission Requirements

Bidders must set forth required elements of the RFP in up to 10 pages. Bidders may include additional information as addendums to proposals, which will not be included in page total.

- State the size of the bidder's firm and describe the firm's history and relevant experience, including the primary professional staff to be employed in this engagement, by role.
 - Identify the primary contact who would be assigned to the engagement. Provide information on each primary staff person's qualifications and relevant experience.
 - Please include proposed use of partners, alliances, affiliations and/or subcontractors for any of the services in the scope of work, if any. Include the company names and describe how they would be utilized.
- Describe bidder's technology platform and how it meets the required elements that ConnectMaine is seeking.
- Identify the upfront customization for this project and costs, versus datasets and licenses that are used by this platform, understanding that ConnectMaine anticipates that this will be a semicustom subscription service.
- Describe your firm's relative experience working with state and local governments and communities on broadband planning.
- Provide details regarding the fees for services.
 - Any licensing fees for any software that is required.
 - Price for the core package of elements 1-4.
 - Additional pricing for deliverable 5 and ad hoc cost options in 6.
 - The bidder's rate structure, including how many hours are included in the base bid and if there is a rate structure above that bid.
- Provide details of the bidder's project management process, and the type of hands-on support the firm is proposing to support the work of ConnectMaine in using this platform as part of this bid.
- Provide three references that closely align to bidder's work with state and local government entities who can attest to bidder's capabilities.
- Explain how the bidder will address any conflicts of interest the bidder's firm may have in reviewing the potential applications, including but not limited to previous work with past ConnectMaine grant recipients, to the extent known.
- Provide documentation showing how the proposed solution meets the following accessibility policies:
 - Federal policy - Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - Industry standard Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0
 - And whether or not the bidder can provide a VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template)
- Provide any other information, suggestions and supporting materials that you believe will be relevant and should be considered in assessing the bidder's qualifications and technology platform.

VI. Evaluation Procedure

Responses submitted will be evaluated by the Executive Director with assistance of ConnectMaine staff and board.

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A. Review of Responses

ConnectMaine reserves the right to:

- Ask for additional information from any one or more bidders;
- Select more than one bidder or select no bidder;
- Accept a proposal that does not offer the lowest cost if it is in the best interest of ConnectMaine;
- Confirm all references and contact further references obtained from other sources as deemed necessary or desirable;
- Include additional publicly available information, or information known to ConnectMaine or its board in the evaluation process;
- Waive or not waive any informalities or deficiencies in any response; and
- Answer or not answer any questions that may be asked by any bidder and to use its own judgment with regard to whether or not to provide additional information, clarification or extension of time to any bidder or potential bidder.

B. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Quality and completeness of response: 20%
- Ability of service offerings and capabilities to meet ConnectMaine's needs through the technology platform, experience, expertise, talents and skills of bidder's staff as shown through and the proposal, which may include a demonstration of scenarios and how the platform can inform ConnectMaine decisions: 50%
- Fees and anticipated total costs: 30%

C. Oral Presentations and Product Demonstrations

During the evaluation process, ConnectMaine may request any one or all bidders to make presentations to discuss their capabilities. Such presentations will provide bidders with an opportunity to answer any questions ConnectMaine may have regarding a proposal. Not all bidders may be asked to participate in such presentations. ConnectMaine may request none, one or more of the bidders to meet with representatives of ConnectMaine. All costs incurred in connection with responding to this RFP shall be borne by the bidder.

VII. Right to Reject Proposals

ConnectMaine reserves the right without prejudice to reject any or all proposals, and reissue an RFP, or move to a sole source contract.

This RFP does not commit ConnectMaine to contract with any bidder or to contract with any one or more bidder(s) for any particular period of time or scope of services or to contact any bidder following submission of information to confirm receipt or notify of any decision or for any other reason.

VIII. Confidentiality

ConnectMaine is required to comply with the Maine Freedom of Access laws, 1 MRSA § 401 et seq. If a bidder believes any information submitted to be confidential, such information should be clearly marked as such and accompanied by a request for confidential treatment and the basis for such claim. Proposals will not be made public prior to a decision.