

Broadband Access, Equity, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program is funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and will provide Maine with a \$272 million grant that will bring critical resources to fund broadband infrastructure and digital equity for the entire state. Maine will submit a 5-Year Broadband Action Plan (BAP) that will allow the state to unlock this BEAD funding. The BAP also outlines the strategies that Maine Connectivity Program will employ to deploy this grant funding equitably and thoughtfully as we deliver sustainable internet to un- and underserved locations in Maine.

Planning

The Broadband Action Plan (BAP) is Maine's 5-year statewide plan identifying priorities for broadband deployment and digital equity. It will serve as the state's road map to bring the economic, health, educational, and social benefits of high-speed internet to all Mainers. It has been developed in coordination with stakeholders around the state through public meetings, focus groups, the Maine Broadband Survey, and engagement with community-based and industry partners.

Based on NTIA definitions for this program, locations with less than 25/3 Mbps are considered "Unserved" and will be prioritized first. Locations with less than 100/20 Mbps are considered "Underserved" and will be prioritized second.

Digital Equity

The Digital Equity Act provides an additional \$2.75 billion nationwide to promote digital equity and inclusion. While Maine's allocation has yet to be announced, MCA opted to combine our digital equity and infrastructure planning so that digital equity would be woven throughout the BAP, and also result in a standalone Digital Equity Plan for the first time. Therefore, Maine's BEAD funds will be deployed in alignment with the state's Digital Equity Plan.

MCA's BEAD Strategic Goals and Objectives

Prioritize funding to maximize impact, balancing urgency, universality, and equity.

We will seek to stretch funds to optimize the impact of investments, focusing on balancing the dynamic tension of designing solutions for everyone while prioritizing those who are most disadvantaged.

Proactively drive investments as a comprehensive portfolio.

Develop and implement a revamped deployment system to enable rolling funding applications and a managed flow of project development and technical assistance to allow for an increased alignment of resources.

Optimize Broadband Deployment

Decrease barriers to delivering broadband at scale and speed, braiding funding and leveraging resources. By identifying data and policy challenges to address these barriers, improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Expand and Enhance the Foundation for Digital Equity

Ensure that all Mainers, especially the most disadvantaged, have access to and can use information and communications technologies by sustaining and growing that digital equity foundation.

Focus on Affordability

Improve the affordability of internet service so the high cost of reliable internet is no longer a significant barrier, ensuring that more Mainers are aware of initiatives like the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Raise Awareness and Strengthen Feedback Loops

Collaborate with partners to design and launch statewide educational campaigns promoting workforce and training opportunities, internet safety, device refurbishment, and general awareness.

What's Next?

In the coming year, Maine Connectivity Authority will submit three separate proposals to the NTIA outlining how the BEAD funding will be distributed, engage in a state-led challenge process to ensure data accuracy, and develop an integrated application and evaluation strategy to identify the most effective and impactful way to distribute funds.

Maine's BEAD Implementation Timeline

*This implementation timeline has been set by NTIA
and following it will allow Maine to gain access to BEAD funding.*

