

*photo by Carolyn Campbell*



# 2023 Annual Performance Report

## Capital Projects Fund



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## Executive Summary

Established in 2021, the Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) is a quasi-governmental agency funded by a combination of federal and state resources. MCA is charged with achieving universal access to affordable high-speed broadband in Maine. MCA works to ensure three goals: that effective, accessible connectivity be universally available in the state; that there be secure, affordable, reliable, competitive, sustainable, and forward-looking infrastructure that can meet future needs; and that all residents, businesses, and institutions in Maine be able to take full advantage of the economic, health, educational and other opportunities available through connectivity services.

The Grant and Program Plans MCA designed for the Capital Projects Funds (CPF) are meant to achieve two high-level objectives:

1. **Optimize last mile connectivity** through multiple approaches building from Maine’s existing foundation of community engagement, data-driven planning, and public-private partnerships and
2. **Enable a more resilient and reliable internet ecosystem** in Maine through a combination of investments in regional capacity, including organizational networks and middle mile infrastructure.

To achieve these objectives, MCA is building a comprehensive, geographically targeted approach to enhance existing regional capacity and partnerships and strategically invest in middle mile infrastructure that directly enables last mile connectivity. Capital Project Funds will be combined with \$21M of Maine Jobs and Recovery Program (MJRP) funds to launch the Maine Connectivity Authority’s [“All-in” Initiative](#) that will deploy \$150M to provide last mile connectivity to over 30,000 homes and businesses in rural and remote areas through projects and partnerships in a targeted geographic approach building from MCA’s Strategy.

Since confirmation of CPF funding in July 2022, MCA has designed, developed, launched, and executed four of the five “All-In” programs and has grounded their deployment in MCA’s parallel work developing a statewide [Digital Equity Plan](#) and [5-Year Broadband Action Plan](#) (both currently in draft format).

In the context of the above strategy, MCA has successfully designed and developed two competitive funding programs deploying \$60 million of Capital Projects Funds, leveraging almost \$34 million of matching funds.

### All In Program Goals

1. Funding for all unconnected locations confirmed by the end of 2024
2. High speed internet must be affordable for all
3. Community-supported solutions at a regional scale ensure sustainable investments
4. Scale and public benefit through public-private partnerships
5. Consistent and clear processes through data-driven decision making

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### Connect the Ready Grant Program

MCA allocated \$40 million of CPF funds to successfully develop and deploy a competitive [Connect the Ready last mile infrastructure grant program](#). MCA designed the program to support community-driven public-private partnerships at a regional scale to design, fund, and build universal broadband infrastructure projects in MCA-designated eligible areas. The application process opened in October 2022, and fourteen projects were approved by the MCA Board in the spring of 2023, leveraging \$20.8 million of external funds. Connect the Ready Grants will reach 18,300 potential subscriber locations across 33 communities in 9 counties. More information is available in the following section.

### Reach Me Line Extension Incentives

As a new approach to achieving last-mile connectivity goals, MCA established the [Reach Me Line Extension Incentives](#) program, allocating \$20 million to optimize broadband deployment by incentivizing internet service providers (ISPs) to complete their existing networks by extending service to unserved locations in their service areas. The application process for Reach Me opened in October 2022, and ten projects were approved by the MCA Board in the spring of 2023, leveraging \$13 million of external funds. Reach Me Line Extensions will reach 6,300 potential subscriber locations across 74 communities in 14 counties. More information is available in the following section.

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### Ongoing Challenges

The most significant challenges experienced thus far are primarily a function of capacity across the sector to absorb and manage the requirements of new funding sources. This includes the staff and legal time to develop new contracts and the ability of communities and ISPs to adapt and have the necessary resources and controls to receive and report as required. MCA has been staffing to meet this demand and providing technical assistance and funding as needed, but the capacity lag remains an ongoing challenge.

Further, when MCA funding was initially allocated, the program's specific requirements were not final, and it took about a year before the updated guidance was provided to the agency. This timing lag and adjustment has proven an ongoing challenge as MCA has aggressively developed, launched and awarded funding to meet our state goals and timelines. Coupled with the introduction and confusion around the new broadband map and the associated fabric IDs, this has resulted in additional delays and more staff and legal time than originally anticipated.

Lastly, a significant component of MCA's Program Plan focused on expanding Maine's middle mile infrastructure. The specific design of that programming was largely on hold throughout the last year as MCA submitted a grant proposal for NTIA's competitive Enabling Middle Mile Grant Program. In June 2023, MCA was notified of a [successful NTIA grant application](#) that will directly impact how CPF middle mile funds are incorporated to achieve regional-scale solutions to maximize last-mile connectivity.

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At the time of this reporting, those program designs are still in development, but the NTIA award will positively impact how we can leverage both pieces of funding to meet MCA's overarching CPF objectives.

The challenges of braiding funds through a common strategy to achieve impact remains a fundamental challenge that all States and Federal agencies must continue to address through frequent and coordinated collaboration. In particular, the more often US Treasury representatives can join the State Broadband Leaders Network to coordinate rules and requirements with NTIA, the more effectively we can accomplish our collective goal of providing high-quality, affordable broadband to everyone.

## Uses of Funds

### Previous Reporting Period (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023)

During the previous reporting period, MCA deployed CPF funding to the projects listed below. MCA will continue to monitor the progress of each of the projects through ongoing quarterly reporting and the Sub-Recipient Monitoring Policy that applies to all MCA programs. MCA will also reflect and integrate these program outcomes in our organizational progress monitoring framework as we track how engagement translates to reach and, ultimately, impact.

#### Connect the Ready Grant Program (\$40 million)

MCA allocated \$40 million of CPF funds to successfully develop and deploy a competitive [Connect the Ready](#) last mile infrastructure grant program. This program builds from Maine's prior experience incentivizing community-driven public-private partnerships at a regional scale to design, fund, and build broadband infrastructure projects in MCA-designated eligible areas. The program was designed to optimize broadband deployment to unserved locations and encourage projects to expand universal broadband service throughout communities.

The application process for Connect the Ready Cohort One opened in October 2022. Fourteen projects were approved by the MCA Board in the spring of 2023, leveraging \$20.8 million of external funds. Connect the Ready Grants will reach 18,300 potential subscriber locations. Of these locations, approximately 30% currently have no internet connection (<25/3 Mbps), and 82% lack service faster than 100/20 Mbps.

As of June 30, 2023, one project, The Swans Island Connect the Ready Project, has a fully executed grant agreement. \$424,499.25 of project funds for that project have been administered. Grant contracts for the remaining thirteen approved projects are in various stages of development and are expected to be executed by the end of September 2023.

#### Reach Me Line Extension Incentives (\$20 million)

As a new approach to achieving last-mile connectivity goals, MCA established the [Reach Me Line Extension Incentives](#) program, allocating \$20 million to optimize broadband deployment by incentivizing internet service providers (ISPs) to complete their existing networks by extending service to unserved locations in their service areas. Reach Me incentives fund line extensions to locations that the MCA has determined are most likely to be cost-effectively served by the expansion of existing networks by incumbent ISPs.

The application process for Reach Me opened in October 2022, and ten projects were approved by the MCA Board in the spring of 2023, leveraging \$13 million of external funds. Reach Me Line Extensions will reach 6,300 potential subscriber locations across 74 communities in 14 counties. More information is available in the following section. Grant contracts for all Reach Me projects are expected to be executed by the end of September 2023.

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### ConnectMaine State Bond Program (\$6.5 million)

MCA allocated \$6.5 million of CPF funding to augment three State Bond-funded projects previously administered by the [ConnectMaine Authority](#), now contractually located within MCA's project portfolio. These three projects have complementary design goals. During the last year:

- The Sumner Broadband Infrastructure Project incurred \$1,238,491.50 in expenses. The Grantee, GWI, an ISP located in Maine, is working to make broadband service available to 508 potential locations with offerings at or above 100/100 Mbps.
- The Princeton Broadband Infrastructure Project incurred \$58,287 in expenses during the reporting period. This project is being built by Pioneer Broadband and will be owned by the Town of Princeton. Broadband service will be available to 204 potential customers with offerings at or above 100/100 Mbps.
- The Cooper Broadband Infrastructure Project did not incur costs during this reporting period. This project is being built by Pioneer Broadband and will be owned by the Town of Cooper. Broadband service will be available to 126 potential customers with offerings at or above 100/100 Mbps. Make-ready work is underway, with construction slated to begin in the first quarter of FY24.

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### Upcoming Reporting Period (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

In the next reporting period, MCA will focus on continuing the progress of the "All-In" initiative as we build a bridge toward the upcoming BEAD funding expected to arrive in early 2025. A top priority for the first quarter of FY24 is finalizing contracting for the Connect the Ready and Reach ME projects described above. Key programs that will deploy CPF funding in the coming year include the following:

### Connect the Ready: Cohort 2 (\$20 million)

MCA is continuing to iterate on the success of the first cohort of [Connect the Ready](#) awards and is launching a second round of funding in August through a refined program structure that will deploy an additional \$20 million in CPF funds. During the Spring and Summer of 2023, with the feedback of previous applicants, partners, and contributors around the state, MCA updated the program design to streamline the application and review process while ensuring that MCA can prioritize funding for the projects and areas of greatest need. Public engagement has occurred throughout the spring and summer, with final program guidance released on June 30, 2023. Applications will open in August and close in September. Initial awards will be made in November 2023. A complete timeline and links to application materials and guidance documents are available [on the MCA website](#).

### Connectivity Hubs (\$11.8 million)

An initial program plan utilizing the final \$11.8 million of Maine’s CPF funding was approved in July 2023. The program design, including criteria and priorities, is underway through the end of 2023, and the program will launch in January 2024. This grant program will identify and invest in new and existing community anchor institutions (“Connectivity Hubs”) providing access to workforce, education and health monitoring in unserved and underserved communities and for those people and communities most impacted by the digital divide. Connectivity Hubs funded under this program will also provide access to affordable devices for public access and lending programs and may pilot other strategies to address barriers to adoption that maximize the impact of the Hub itself, such as employing digital navigators on-site or utilizing other staff to support Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment for eligible Mainers. MCA intends to fund approximately half of the projects in year one, with the second half in year two. It will be a proactive, partner-based grant process, not an open competitive process.

### Partnerships for Enabling Middle Mile (\$23 million)

The specific design of MCA’s CPF middle mile programming was largely on hold throughout the last year as MCA submitted a grant proposal for NTIA’s competitive Enabling Middle Mile Grant Program. In June 2023, MCA was notified of a successful grant application that will directly impact how CPF middle mile funds are incorporated to achieve regional-scale solutions to maximize last mile connectivity. At the time of this reporting, these program designs are still in development but will positively impact leveraging CPF funds towards MCA’s overarching CPF objectives.

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## Impact & Progress Monitoring

To avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the reporting and compliance recommended time allocations of 100 hours, MCA will generate a series of impact stories and narratives associated with CPF funds throughout the year. Given the challenges and timing in confirmation of necessary sub-recipient reporting requirements and MCA contract finalization, those stories and narratives won’t be available to share until Q4 2023. As MCA generates stories, narratives and communication collateral, we will share them with US Treasury staff to add to and complement annual reporting requirements.

MCA will continue to monitor the progress of each of the projects through ongoing quarterly reporting and the Sub-Recipient Monitoring Policy that applies to all MCA programs. MCA will also reflect and integrate these program outcomes in our organizational progress monitoring framework as we track how engagement translates to reach and, ultimately, impact. Specific details of MCA’s methods for collecting and measuring success can be found in the template agreement used for CPF-funded projects. [Exhibit F \(Project Reporting Requirements\)](#) starts on page 48 of this agreement from a Connect the Ready Project.



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### Ancillary Costs & Challenges

As noted above, the most significant challenges experienced thus far are primarily a function of capacity across the sector to absorb and manage the requirements of new funding sources. Please see the final section of the Executive Summary for a more complete explanation of these challenges.

The timing associated with program deployment, evolving CPF guidance, and MCA contracting have represented a cost driver as we have developed, adapted and implemented an appropriate subrecipient contract. Thirteen versions of the template contract were created to reflect updated guidance. This is partly due to MCA's aggressive approach to program deployment and the lag in developing internal administrative and reporting processes, and was enhanced by changed program guidance and requirements.

Further costs associated with braiding funding to achieve the necessary capacity and support for communities, regional and tribal partners have been essential. This ensures that CPF funds link to and leverage prior State bond funds and the State and Fiscal Recovery Funds and helps ensure all stakeholders are prepared to maximize BEAD and digital equity funding.

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### Additional State & Federal Funding

In addition to CPF funding, MCA is a recipient of several other federal and state awards. Some of these and their planned uses are noted below.

#### Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan (SLFRF)

- [Get Ready: Community Support Program](#) - Supporting accelerated community broadband planning at a regional scale through tailored technical assistance and coordinating multiple professional service providers to support participants. Key goals include making planning more efficient for all public and private partners while building a pipeline of private-public partnerships ready to leverage and accelerate future state funding deployment.
- [Regional & Tribal Broadband Partners Program](#) - Designed to increase capacity at a regional level to help deploy, sustain and maximize the benefits of broadband infrastructure investment in all state regions. Each partner will build and lead digital inclusion efforts in each region and tribe while also providing support for community and regional-scale broadband infrastructure solutions and investments.
- [Jumpstart Connectivity Initiative](#) - Providing accelerated low-cost internet access to the least served areas of the state by trialing the deployment of wireless technology deployments. The program targets communities across five counties with a high concentration of unserved homes and businesses and where wired deployments are currently impractical.

### Digital Equity Planning (IIJA)

In November 2022, MCA received \$542,000 in Digital Equity planning funds from NTIA. These funds have supported the development of Maine's first-ever [Digital Equity Plan](#) (in draft format), designed in coordination with the state's BEAD 5-Year Broadband Action Plan. To address these barriers and build from our strengths, the digital equity plan for Maine strives to ensure that every person in our state, regardless of their background, resources, circumstances, identity, or community, will have equitable access to the digital world, including affordable, reliable internet connectivity; an affordable device that meets their needs; the opportunity to develop digital skills and access technical support; tools and information to protect themselves and their families online; and online state resources that are inclusive and accessible for all. Maine's Digital Equity Plan will be submitted to NTIA in early September 2023.

### BEAD Planning (IIJA)

In November 2022, MCA received \$5 million in BEAD Planning Funds from NTIA. In coordination with stakeholders around the state, MCA is facilitating the development of a [Broadband Action Plan](#) (in draft format) rooted in digital equity. This plan will identify priorities for investment in broadband and digital equity, and will serve as the state's five-year roadmap to bring the economic, health, educational, and social benefits of high-speed internet to all Mainers. Following an extensive engagement period, MCA will take the month of June to reflect on all that we have heard from individuals, communities and partners and revise the draft Broadband Action Plan before submitting it to the Federal Government in early August 2023.

### Middle Mile (IIJA)

MCA was recently awarded over \$30 million for the [Maine Online Optical Enabling Network](#) (MOOSE Net). MOOSE Net is a proposed approximately 530-mile open access, fiber-optic network to extend connectivity to some of Maine's most rural and un(der)-served areas. MCA joined with key partners to prepare this proposal. This project will cover 131 communities, representing over 11,000 unserved local businesses and residents, passing through areas including Somerset, Franklin, Piscataquis, Aroostook, and Washington Counties, which today lacks strong middle mile broadband infrastructure. It will also reach more than 200 community anchor institutions, including schools, hospitals, libraries, local government buildings, and civic centers. This funding will directly impact how CPF middle mile funds are incorporated to achieve regional-scale solutions to maximize last mile connectivity.

## Promoting Equitable Outcomes

### Approach & Integration

Maine Connectivity Authority is committed to advancing digital equity for all: ensuring that all Mainers, especially those that are most impacted by the digital divide, have access to and can use information and communications technologies so they can fully realize all of the civic, economic, health, educational, social and other benefits that they provide.

MCA takes a holistic approach to integrating programs resulting from varying funding sources and is working to closely align the goals and outcomes of CPF-funded programs with those that will be funded through BEAD and other programs. While not directly impacting our existing CPF programs, Maine’s [Digital Equity](#) and [Broadband Action Plans](#) (both in draft format) provide insight into MCA’s strategies moving forward.

Maine faces a perfect storm of challenges in achieving digital equity. Our remote and rugged terrain makes our state one of the most complex and expensive to reach with digital infrastructure. As the oldest state in the nation, we have a significant population that didn’t grow up with all of the technology available today. Maine’s median household and per capita income lag behind most other states. Almost all of us live in small, rural communities with limited resources.

These forces combine to shape the contours of the digital divide in Maine. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) estimates that 89% of Mainers identify as at least one population likely to be most impacted by the digital divide, referred to as “covered populations” in the [Digital Equity Act](#). These important audiences include: older adults, low-income households, people living in rural areas, veterans, individuals with a disability, individuals with a language barrier, individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and people who are (or have been) incarcerated.

During the Spring of 2023, MCA facilitated an integrated digital equity and broadband action planning process that involved a statewide survey, focus groups, community meetings, online webinars, and more. More than 4,000 points of engagement were received during the process and have been integrated into the plans above. This data and the related insights will also directly inform the development and assessment of upcoming CPF-funded programs through integration into our underlying data systems (see below).

One thing has been clear and consistent throughout the planning process: Maine people recognize that digital connectivity is essential to our daily lives. As one focus group participant said, “You can *survive* without internet access, but you can’t really *live* or function.” Our goal through this digital equity strategy and plan is not just to enable covered populations to *survive* in bridging the digital divide - but to *thrive*.

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### Data Collection & Analysis

MCA will apply a digital equity lens to infrastructure projects and other programs to prioritize investment impact through an enhanced broadband mapping and analysis platform known as the Connectivity Headquarters for Analysis Research and Transparency (CHART), including a multi-criteria decision-making framework.

CHART will serve as a decision-making framework for expanding the criteria informing funding, priority areas, and partnerships. The framework will be operationalized to guide infrastructure and digital equity investments, partnerships, and program priorities, with a tool that can help prioritize infrastructure deployment based on different population, demographic, and other geospatial datasets. Examples include identifying areas with high percentages of covered populations, homes without a device, or layering in other digital equity factors such as income, educational attainment, and/or gaps in programs and resources identified in the digital equity asset inventory as part of the evaluation for infrastructure investments.

Integrating these socioeconomic, racial, health disparity, and other digital equity data sets into CHART is a central element of the BEAD Five Year Action Plan and will also enable the prioritization of CPF-funded infrastructure deployment based upon digital equity or other priority lenses. Public CHART interfaces will help community planning efforts factor in a diverse data set to augment their planning processes and provide increased clarity and transparency to MCA's decision-making processes.

One of the datasets that will power CHART is the Maine Digital Equity Asset Inventory. In early 2023, MCA partnered with the University of Maine Center on Aging to undertake the development of a [comprehensive inventory](#) of digital equity and inclusion assets in the state of Maine. This data will be used to build an interactive online tool available to the public. The underlying dataset will also inform application evaluations for upcoming CPF-funded programs like Connectivity Hubs.

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### Capacity Building & Regional Support

As part of the outreach and engagement process to create a statewide digital equity plan, MCA launched the Regional and Tribal Broadband Partners program to identify organizational partners in every state region to support community planning for infrastructure solutions and digital equity planning for each region and Tribe.

Thanks to the work of these partners, there are now 13 distinct regional and tribal digital equity coalitions with 180 partners engaged so far. MCA has also convened more than 40 [Digital Equity Taskforce](#) partners in a statewide coalition. At both the regional and state level, the partners are organizations that represent, serve, or support the covered populations.

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### Awareness

All infrastructure programs designed to deploy Capital Projects Funds were promoted widely on MCA's website, through bi-weekly email newsletters, social media platforms, and private and public partners in the Maine broadband space. Additional paid event, radio and social media advertising was also conducted as part of targeted program promotion. Further information about these awareness and communication efforts is available in the Community Engagement section below.

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### Outcomes

As MCA continues to implement the strategies and programs listed in this document and elsewhere, we will also begin monitoring our progress toward success. MCA will integrate the following key metrics into our existing progress monitoring framework and share the results annually. Additional surveys and focus groups will be conducted as program funds are deployed, focusing on more in-depth analyses undertaken in mid-2027 and finally in 2030.

You can find more detailed metrics associated with these measurable objectives in [Section 2.3 of Maine's Digital Equity Plan](#), and they are also outlined briefly here:

#### Increase Broadband Access

- Every Mainer who wants an internet connection can get one by prioritizing investment in infrastructure, reaching approximately 42,000 homes and businesses with no connection (25/3 Mbps or less).
- In addition, Maine will work to improve service to approximately 52,000 locations with unreliable & slow service below 100/20 Mbps.

#### Improve Affordability of Internet Service

- Increase enrollment in the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) by 64,000 households by 2029.
- Expand free or low-cost connectivity (wired or wifi) for residents of affordable housing units ensuring service to approximately 41,000 households in subsidized rentals.

#### Ensure Access to Affordable Devices & Technical Support

- Distribute 50,000 free or low-cost computer devices that meet the user's needs to covered populations by 2029.
- Secure 25,000 donated devices from businesses, institutions, and agencies to refurbish.
- Improve access to and awareness of technical support.

### **Improve Mainers' Digital Skills**

- Provide 50,000 people with a personal digital skills assessment or digital skills training.
- Improve the digital skills confidence of covered populations across all digital skill categories.

### **Help Mainers Stay Safe Online**

- Reach at least 50,000 Mainers with internet safety outreach and education programming.
- Improve Mainers' ability to stay safe online and protect their personal privacy and data.

### **Make it Easier to Access Government Resources & Programs Online**

- Complete a user-focused accessibility audit on critical state programs used most by covered populations.
- Improve Mainers' confidence and experience accessing state and local government and other services online.

### **Sustain and Grow Maine's Digital Equity Investment**

- Raise \$15 million for a Maine Digital Equity Fund from private sector partners, philanthropic partners and others.

### Labor

MCA continues to engage with local workforce and labor partners through our statewide [Workforce Initiative](#) to analyze the state's current and future broadband workforce needs, explore the education and training landscape necessary to fulfill those needs and identify opportunities to build a stronger pipeline of qualified workers to support broadband deployment.

MCA will ensure that all sub-recipients will have demonstrated records of and will be in compliance with federal labor and employment laws. These workforce plans are required of the applicant under CPF funding and partners or subcontractors for the construction activities of the proposed project, either at the time of application, or as part of the application or as a condition of award acceptance.

Specifically, MCA programs require applicants to upload workforce and labor plans and policies that will be used to ensure availability, continuity, high safety, and training standards for the skilled workforce required to construct the project, including project labor agreements, if any.

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## Community Engagement

### Background

Maine has a long and successful history of building broadband projects on a foundation of community-driven public-private partnerships. Through the deployment of CPF funds, communities continue to be active partners and participants in Maine’s infrastructure programming. Within each private-public partnership, a strong community-driven broadband process occurs over the course of 1-3+ years to identify both the need and the ISP partnership that will bring universal connectivity to all unserved homes and businesses. Within the planning process, we generally expect several community informational sessions, presentations to municipal officials, and survey outreach to gain data to inform the decision-making process.

The MCA team (particularly our Community & Regional Partnerships Senior Manager Kendra Jo Grindle) regularly engages in direct community outreach to broadband committees and municipal officials (such as selectboard, city council, and county commissioners). Additionally, MCA takes the opportunity to engage with community partners in attendance at the Maine Broadband Coalition’s weekly Let’s Talk Broadband virtual calls to share programming information, highlight Capital Projects Funding and encourage feedback.

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### Program-Specific Engagement

During the first and second Connect the Ready applications cohorts, MCA held draft guidance review sessions and invited feedback from private and public partners over four weeks. Several pieces of feedback were included in our final guidance. Cohort 1 applicants were supported through the process with multiple workshops, group and individual grants portal trainings, and direct support throughout the application window.

Looking ahead to the Connect the Ready: Cohort 2 application window, we have planned two applicant webinars and staff and consultants are available for technical assistance throughout the application process. MCA staff appeared on 12 “Let’s Talk Broadband” calls for the recent Connect the Ready application window, with three sessions dedicated primarily to questions and feedback.

During the Reach Me Line Extension Program, MCA held a community engagement period where high-level information from ISP proposals was shared to ensure no unintentional adverse impact on the community and to potentially align with community broadband planning. This review period lasted for five weeks and resulted in meetings, phone calls, and email outreach to the following 23 communities: Waldoboro, Bridgton, Bristol, Brownville, Denmark, Fryeburg, Harrison, Howland, Newcastle, South Bristol, Union, Bethel, Lowell, Bremen, Damariscotta, Nobleboro, Enfield, Caribou, Lovell, Stockton Springs, Bath, Woolwich, and Mount Vernon. Following awards within the Reach Me program, MCA has supported ongoing conversations with five communities to ensure universal deployment by the chosen ISP, improved data collection, and community updating through newsletters, municipal official meetings, and social media posts.



### Communications & Other Direct Engagement

All infrastructure programs designed to deploy Capital Projects Funds were promoted widely on [MCA's website](#) (~128,000 annual views), through bi-weekly email newsletters (~6,000 subscribers), on social media platforms, and through private and public partners in the Maine broadband space. Additional paid event, radio and social media advertising was also conducted as part of targeted program promotion.

MCA proactively works with community and ISP partners to identify communications and outreach efforts that will help drive local adoption efforts. Connect the Ready applicants were asked to share and upload samples of specific activities, programs, introductory pricing, or other promotions planned for the project area to overcome any barriers to adoption; the metrics for determining the success of the initiatives; and the reasons why the selected strategies will be effective.

In addition to providing individual and group support to program applicants and awardees, MCA also hosts online [FAQ](#) and [Resource](#) pages with information about CPF-funded programs and other external resources. The content of the FAQ page is sourced directly from engagements with the public and is updated regularly.

Communities and broadband utility districts receiving direct presentations ahead of infrastructure programming opportunities resulting from Capital Projects Funds include:

|            |                                      |                             |
|------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bristol    | Harrison                             | Perry                       |
| Brooks     | Leeds                                | Raymond                     |
| Brownville | Lincoln                              | Sebago                      |
| Chelsea    | Lincoln County Commissioner's Office | South Bristol               |
| Denmark    | Lovell                               | Stowe                       |
| Dresden    | Midcoast Development Corp.           | Waldo Broadband Corporation |
| Eastport   | Mount Vernon                         | Wayne                       |
| Ellsworth  | Newburgh                             | Wiscasset                   |
| Greene     | Nobleboro                            | Woolwich                    |

[Regional & Tribal Broadband Partners](#) receiving direct presentations and resources to support communities ahead of programming opportunities resulting from Capital Projects Funds include:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments | Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission        |
| Eastern Maine Development Corporation      | Northern Forest Center                             |
| Four Directions Development Corporation    | Northern Maine Development Commission              |
| Greater Franklin Development Council       | Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission |
| Greater Portland Council of Governments    | Somerset Economic Development                      |
| GrowSmart Maine                            | Sunrise County Economic Council                    |
| Island Institute                           |  |

### Looking Forward

Building on the community engagement conducted through the first year of CPF programs and a statewide broadband ecosystem that continues to evolve, MCA will continue to iterate its community engagement efforts to best align the needs of each community and region with the guidelines of the available funding sources. Maine remains committed to community voice and partnership to ensure not only the deployment of funding for universal broadband expansion but also to elevate the needs and alleviate the barriers to accessing the connections that benefit our communities and the state's economic and social resilience.

As we look ahead to building infrastructure and digital equity programs with the support of our federal partners, we are strategically realigning the value and capacity of private-public partnerships with our statewide universal broadband expansion goals. Community-supported broadband will keep the elements that have enabled Maine to be a strong leader in community broadband deployment while positioning Maine Connectivity Authority to better advocate statewide for the values and goals at the center of local broadband efforts in partnership with the private sector.

We will continue prioritizing local knowledge growth throughout our connectivity landscape by supporting weekly *Let's Talk Broadband* calls, municipal government education and informational sessions, and collaborative decision-making with local leaders to ensure a right-sized solution for all of Maine. We will continue to leverage our Regional & Tribal Broadband Partners to build a three-pathway resource hub for overall broadband educational awareness and planning and implementation support. This resource hub will include a curriculum tailored to municipal officials, community leaders, and private sector partners to create long-lasting resources that support an evolving connectivity sector.