



## **Jumpstart Connectivity**

The MCA is launching a pilot program to trial and evaluate where and how non-wired (wireless) technologies and service models can help jump-start connectivity in remote and rural locations. This initiative dubbed “Jumpstart Connectivity” is launching in May 2022 with the intent to select 3-4 projects that utilize a variety of technologies and models such as fixed wireless, community broadband radio service (cbrs), low earth orbit satellite (leo), and hybrid services.

MCA intends to fund these efforts with support from the Maine Jobs and Recovery Program both to provide accelerated connectivity to places where there aren't other viable solutions and to evaluate overall effectiveness of different technologies and service models. The goal is to trial technologies that will be rapidly deployed in priority areas and that will potentially scale as a component of the State's overall connectivity strategy.

## **Context**

The Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) was created to **proactively provide all Mainers access to affordable and reliable high speed internet as soon as possible.**

The organization is building out a comprehensive strategy to make the most of Federal and State funding to **address immediate needs as well as address the long term opportunity** enabled by an infusion of an unprecedented capital infusion enabled through federal recovery and infrastructure funding. To achieve this mandate the MCA will:

1. **Ensure rural areas have access** to connectivity through a diversity of technologies.
2. Decrease the costs and barriers to **provide affordable and reliable last mile connectivity.**
3. Ensure every place is **ready for investment to benefit everyone.**

The Jumpstart Concept advances the MCA's [Strategic Summary](#) to “Reach the last mile” through efforts to: *Evaluate “alternatives” strategy to provide connectivity for targeted locations; Establish methodology for identifying and evaluating interventions to support “remote and rural locations and; Identify projects and partnerships to evaluate lifetime costs, deployment time*

## **Problem**

Providing broadband service in remote, rural locations can be challenging as distance and low population density make for a difficult business case for any for-profit internet service provider. (Costs increase due to distance and potential revenue is constrained due to fewer people.)



While Fiber optic cable represents the gold-standard for enabling access to long lasting, affordable broadband - there are locations in Maine where access to fiber will be limited due to distance, available material, community demand and existing service providers. As a result speed-to market deployment of new advancements in satellite and fixed wireless in newly available licensed spectrums need to be evaluated.

## **Guiding Principles**

Ensuring internet connectivity in rural locations through wireless solutions can enable internet access for hard to reach areas and serve as a catalyst for building out long term and strategic infrastructure. The Maine Connectivity Authority has an opportunity to trial innovative partnerships and projects to address this balance and will be guided by the following principles:

1. Speed to Market: MCA needs to ensure all Mainers - especially in rural areas can get connectivity as soon as possible
2. Scale matters. A diversity of technology solutions need to be embraced and evaluated
3. Innovation and iteration. Trial and evaluation of various technologies ensures a robust and comprehensive strategy.
4. Technology evolves. Deployment of non-wired services should not prevent future connectivity investments

In order to provide accelerated low-cost broadband access to the least served areas of the state the MCA will target areas where service level is estimated to be at or below 25/3 mbps and where wired deployments are currently impractical. Preference will be paid towards areas with equity challenges and towards areas where commercial broadband investments may not otherwise be made. Priority Target Areas are identified in the [MAP](#).

The MCA intends to provide funding for between 1 and 4 pilot projects with a total budget of up to \$2M. All funded projects will provide internet service to households using wireless technology for middle and/or last mile access. Projects will be limited to a maximum contribution of \$500,000 from MCA. Applicants will be required to provide at least a 25% match.

Funded projects will be asked to reliably provide symmetrical upload and download speeds of at least 100 Mbps. In situations where that is not practicable, projects shall provide download speeds of at least 100 Mbps and upload speeds of at least 20 Mbps, with the ability to scale to 100/100. Technologies below these thresholds can be proposed, and they will be reviewed, but the applicant must explain why the standards can not be met.



## **Request for Applications**

The Maine Connectivity Authority is requesting applications from Internet Service Providers, Municipalities, and Non-profits for projects to be funded by the Jumpstart Connectivity initiative. Provided in the following sections are Initiative timelines, application instructions, and evaluation criteria. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until **June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 11:59 PM**. Applicants wishing to propose more than one project may request all projects on one application if all questions are answered for all projects. Applicants may alternatively elect to submit more than one application. Please contact Maine Public or MaineIT with any questions about leveraging existing tower locations. The State of Maine is not intending to own or operate any infrastructure resulting from the funding of these projects.

MCA will offer awards to a diverse selection of projects that provide service in distinct areas with differing technologies. Priority will be given to projects that are scalable, quick to market, and that include the use of unlicensed spectrum or satellite communications.

### **Initiative Timeline**

MCA will hold an Information Session on **June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 at 3 PM**. Potentially interested applicants can register for the session [HERE](#)

Applications will be accepted until **June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 11:59 PM**. No communication with MCA will be permitted regarding this initiative while the Request for Applications is open prior to application submission.

MCA will hold discussions with project applicants until **July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022** to determine final scopes, costs, and requirements. Meetings can be requested prior to the application deadline if the application has been submitted. MCA will provide 30-minute time slots that can be signed up for by applicants.

Award winners will be notified on or before **July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022**. At this point, winners will be requested to prepare marketing material for the projects.

Communication will be embargoed between award recipient notification and public announcement of awards.

Projects will be announced publicly on **July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022**.



## **Application Instructions**

Applicants must address the prompts in this section and submit a complete application to [Info@maineconnectivity.org](mailto:Info@maineconnectivity.org) with the subject line **[GROUP- Jumpstart Application]**. The application must be a PDF signed by the applicant. The application shall be organized according to the outline below, either as a narrative or slidedeck. Applicants may add any extra information that they believe to be appropriate for initial review.

Required map data shall be submitted alongside the application as one or more zipped shapefiles (preferred) or KMZ files (per feature type, annotated).

**Submissions will be acknowledged via a reply email. Please follow up if you do not receive acknowledgement within 12 hours.**

The following is the Application Outline:

### Introduction

- List the project name, applying company/group, and point of contact. Provide contact information for the point of contact. List the internet service provider if not the applicant.
- Provide a bio for all involved parties. (bios can be linked to websites and/or included as an attachment).
- Briefly (under 1000 characters) summarize the proposed project/projects and requested funding. (This will be used as a public summary should the project be approved.)

### Technical Proposal

- Identify and describe the technology that you are proposing to deploy. Include information about the applicant's experience with technology and the technology's readiness. Confirm that the proposing organization or partnering company has certification (from the vendor) for the solution proposed.
- Identify the spectrum that the technology will operate in and specify whether the spectrum use will be licensed or unlicensed.
- Explain the ownership of the proposed wireless infrastructure. Please describe if the private co-applicant will own or lease the radio mast, tower, or other vertical structure onto which the wireless infrastructure will be installed.
- Identify the useful life of the proposed technology.
- Provide a proposed network system diagram from the primary internet point to the main user.
- Briefly discuss the scalability of the technology and/or network system being proposed.



## MAINE CONNECTIVITY AUTHORITY

- Identify the project readiness (i.e. planning, preliminary engineering, identifying easements/permits, and final design) and a proposed timeline that aims to complete the project before the end of the year.
- Identify if the project will provide any additional benefit for mobile users, institutional subscribers, or middle-mile capacity or improvements.
- Briefly describe the risks associated with this deployment. Include information about climate, geography, topography, and foliage in this description.

### Deployment/Adoption

- Propose user service costs for this deployment and proposed download and upload speeds. Identify if the speeds are shared or individual. Identify any risks of network saturation or variation in peak performance times.
- Describe if any areas near the project have received funding from federal grant programs, including but not limited to Connect America Funds II (CAF II), ACAM, ReConnect, Community Connect, and Rural Digital Opportunity Funds (RDOF). If there have been federal funds awarded near the project area(s), verify that the proposed project area does not conflict with these areas. Do not include areas awarded to satellite broadband providers unless you are providing satellite services.
- Describe the potential impact of the proposed project on the community(ies) involved and what, if any, research has been completed regarding potential adoption. Describe anticipated take rates or timeline of adoption, and the assumptions behind those estimates. Preference will be given to projects with proposals for increasing adoption in the area.
- Identify the number of potential subscriber locations in the proposed project area.
- Identify if and how the proposed project or technology could integrate with or compliment future wired infrastructure investments.

### Financial

- Include a budget with an estimated project cost, and the applicant's financial commitment or match to the funding being requested. Identify material (in aggregate), services, installation, and ongoing maintenance costs. Provide a total cost of ownership over a 5 year period.
- Provide Most recent audited financials or most recent 990.

*Please note that successful grant recipients will be required to provide MCA with all necessary information to allow MCA to meet its federal compliance and reporting requirements under SLFRF guidance. Required information will include, but not be restricted to, usage of funds, expense reports, staffing numbers, staffing locations and staffing salaries. Grant recipients shall also be required to meet all SLFRF requirements re: eligible expenditures and usage of funds. Further information can be found [HERE](#)*



## **MAINE CONNECTIVITY AUTHORITY**

### Maps

- Identify the proposed deployment area(s) on a map with Received Signal Strength Indicator (RSSI) estimates. Provide a proposed network system design from the primary internet point to the main user.

### Submission Certification

- Sign the application and certify that all information provided in the application is accurate to the extent knowable by the involved parties.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Project area, impact on service level, service price and equity
- Project design, including technology type, performance, scalability, practicality, and proven success
- Ability to complete the project before the end of the year, project cost and cost-sharing
- Ability to ensure consumer connections and adoption, and additional project benefits
- Additional project benefits

The most competitive projects (not applicants) will be deemed to be finalists from which MCA will make a diverse selection of projects that provide service in distinct areas with differing technologies. Priority will be given to projects that are scalable, quick to market, and that include the use of unlicensed spectrum or satellite communications. Evaluations will continue based on discussions, negotiations, and the collection of more project information to determine final scopes, costs, and requirements, for up to 4 projects to be awarded.