



**MAINE
CONNECTIVITY
AUTHORITY**

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Maine Connectivity Authority is requesting information from:

**Middle Mile Service Providers,
Internet Service Providers, and Communities in relation to the
IIJA NTIA Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program**

Responses can be submitted until

Monday, Aug 15, 2022 @ 11:59 PM EDT

Submit RFI documents and any questions via e-mail to:

Maine Connectivity Authority
info@maineconnectivity.org

NOTE: This is not a request for proposals.

All requests for clarification and/or requests for additional information regarding the RFI must be **submitted in writing via email and directed to the RFI coordinator listed above.**

Such correspondence must reference the RFI in the subject line.

**The Maine Connectivity Authority reserves the right to answer
or not to answer any question received.**

If a determination is made that a clarification or change to the RFI document is required,
a written addendum will be posted on the appropriate section of the website.

Respondents are responsible for obtaining all RFI updates.

THIS REQUEST FOR INFORMATION IS 6 PAGES (including the title page).

RFI TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I	General Information
PART II	Objectives of the RFI
PART III	Requested Information
PART IV	Confidentiality of Respondent Information

PART I. General Information

Introduction

Through the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), effective November 15, 2021, the federal government has dedicated \$1 billion for the development of middle mile infrastructure throughout the United States. The funding will be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (“**NTIA**”) under the NTIA Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program (“**Program**”).

The Maine Connectivity Authority (“**MCA**”) posts this Request for Information (“**RFI**”) to collect data, gather ideas from providers of broadband internet services and affected communities regarding the NTIA Program in order to best address the state’s current and ongoing middle mile connectivity needs.

Note: The MCA welcomes responses to this RFI from **ALL** relevant parties. The purpose of this RFI is to solicit interest, information, and ideas, and should not be interpreted as an invitation for bids or request for proposals. For the purposes of this RFI, the terms “respondents” and “providers” refer to entities submitting written responses to this RFI.

Project Background

The MCA was established in 2021 as a quasi-governmental agency charged with achieving the universal access of affordable high-speed broadband in Maine. In particular, the MCA is working to achieve three goals:

- 1) Ensure that effective, accessible connectivity be universally available in the state;
- 2) Ensure that there be secure, affordable, reliable, competitive, sustainable, and forward-looking infrastructure that can meet future needs; and
- 3) Ensure 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 MCA is advancing digital equity for all Mainers by focusing on projects, places, and people. The MCA’s strategic summary can be found [here](#).

The Middle Mile initiative is one of many steps that the MCA is taking to help unserved and underserved areas and is meant to complement other programs focused on internet connectivity and digital equity.

The MCA and its partners are developing a Middle Mile Initiative to facilitate and invest in strategic elements of shared internet infrastructure (including, but not limited to, owned or leased dark fiber, conduit, points of presence/community anchor institutions, data centers, and internet exchange points). These investments will provide long term public benefit by increasing competition, lowering costs to internet service providers and end users, and creating a more resilient internet ecosystem.

The MCA believes that this NTIA Program presents a great opportunity to fund a portion of the state’s middle mile needs. To date, the MCA has talked to multiple stakeholders to understand their current needs and problems. Through the RFI, the MCA wants to provide a formal opportunity to solicit data, ideas, and interest in partnering.

PART II. Objectives of the RFI

The objectives of this RFI are to:

- collect information from various stakeholders in Maine as part of the MCA's Middle Mile Initiative, including, but not limited to, middle mile providers, internet service providers, and communities
- serve as an opportunity for potential applicants to the NTIA Program to coordinate with the MCA

The MCA will evaluate the information gathered through this RFI process and determine how to proceed as it pertains to the competitive funding opportunity through the NTIA Program.

Any amendment or addendum to this RFI is valid only if issued in writing by the MCA. Any changes in the process or updates will be posted on the MCA website.

PART III. Requested Information

For Middle Mile Service Providers:

- Current network
 - KMZ / SHP file of current owned and leased / IRU-ed network
 - KMZ / SHP file of points of presence and other facilities
 - Willingness to provide spare capacity to the MCA
- Proposed / anticipated network expansion
 - KMZ / SHP file of proposed routes that the service provider anticipates building
- Suggestions for how the MCA should prioritize building new middle mile infrastructure. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Addressing un- and under-served areas
 - Resolving issues of redundancy and resiliency
 - Providing more connectivity to transport data into and out of the state
 - Providing more exchange points
 - Connecting community anchor institutions
- Suggestions for how the MCA should prioritize leasing / making available middle mile infrastructure. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Construction methods (slack planning, enclosure placement, crossings - roads, bridge, and rail, and microtrenching)
 - Preference for fiber cable architecture: ribbon, loose tube, or hybrid (spider ribbon - AFL, rollable ribbon - OFS)
 - Standardizations for fiber allocation off of middle mile (i.e., 25% of cable is for IRUs, 25% is for access networks, 25% for long haul, 25% reserved for maintenance and mixed use)
 - What are your contingency plans for supply chain issues?

- Service Offerings
 - Lit Services
 - What types of service packages, for backhaul, are requested by network operators? Please speak to capacity, contract terms, etc.
 - Thoughts on equipment diversity and site diversity?
 - Thoughts on the market for 800 Gig backhaul in the next few years?
- Any other information / data that you believe would be relevant to the MCA's analysis
- If you are interested in participating in MCA's application to the NTIA Program, please provide a description of any proposed middle mile routes (including maps and unserved communities and potential last mile networks the proposed middle mile network will help enable), and /or related activities.

**** Any and all applications to the NTIA Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program require coordination and consultation with the state broadband office, which is the Maine Connectivity Authority. ****

For Internet Service Providers:

- Transport / Backhaul
 - Providers that the ISP currently uses for backhaul / transport of end user data
 - Alternative transport options within coverage area that the ISP elected not to utilize
 - Type of transport used (e.g., procure lit service, lease/purchase dark fiber, etc.)
- Pricing information
 - Cost to transport data (and any evidence of changes in pricing over time)
 - Evidence of pricing that has made last mile projects cost prohibitive (either due to capital expenditures to build beyond the end user connection or due to operating expenditures to purchase transit on a long-term basis)

For Communities:

- Views on whether lack of middle mile networks are preventing (or increasing the cost of) last mile projects
- List of available middle mile service providers in area
- Locations of community anchor institutions
 - "a school, library, medical or healthcare provider, community college or other institution of higher education, or other community support organization or entity"

Note: If you have previously shared information with the MCA in the past three months in regards to the above information, it will be considered information that has been submitted in connection with this RFI.

PART IV. Confidentiality of Respondent Information

Interested parties are advised that under Maine's Freedom of Access Act, Title 1 M.R.S.A. Chapter 13 §402 (3), et seq., "Public Records" (as that term is defined in Title 1 M.R.S.A. Chapter 13 §402(3)) are available for public inspection and copying once an award notification has been made.

For each page where a respondent believes that parts of its response fall within one or more of the exceptions to the definition of "Public Records" set forth in Title 1 M.R.S.A. Chapter 13 §402(3) or Title 35-A M.R.S.A. Chapter 93 §9207, **a respondent should mark the top of that page in large, conspicuous typeface marked "CONFIDENTIAL" in a separate file marked "Confidential"**.

Included in the file must be a non-confidential statement of the basis for an Applicant's claim that those parts of its Proposal fall within one or more of the exceptions to the definition of "Public records". **Exceptions to the definition of "Public records" include, but are not limited to, communications service providers that provide the following information (per Title 35-A M.R.S.A. Chapter 93 §9207) at the request of the ConnectMaine Authority and the MCA as part of its annual data collection efforts:**

- **Data concerning infrastructure deployment;**
- **Pricing data; and**
- **Revenue data**

Note, designating part of a Proposal "Confidential" does not by itself ensure that those parts of the Proposal will remain confidential.

In the event that the MCA receives a request to inspect or copy those parts of the Applicant's Proposal marked confidential, the MCA will notify the Applicant that such a request has been received. Any Applicant claiming documents are confidential shall, within 14 days of receiving the MCA's notice, send the MCA a list identifying each document that it claims is confidential. If the MCA agrees that the documents so identified fall within one of the exceptions to the definition of "Public Records", the MCA will notify the party requesting disclosure that the documents will be withheld.

If the party seeking disclosure files a legal action to gain access to the confidential information, then the Applicant must retain counsel and file for a protective order. Applicant's failure to join the action and secure a protective order shall constitute a waiver of its claim that the information is confidential. The MCA will comply with the order issued by the reviewing court.

Responses to this RFI become the exclusive property of the MCA. This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a solicitation. No material submitted in response to this RFI will be returned. Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI.