



**MAINE
CONNECTIVITY
AUTHORITY**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The Maine Connectivity Authority is requesting proposals for a:

Broadband Workforce Development Market Analysis

RFP Issued:	Tues, July 19, 2022
Due Date for Questions:	Tues, Aug 9, 2022 @ 11:59 PM EDT
Proposals Due:	Tues, Aug 23, 2022 @ 11:59 PM EDT
Proposal Evaluations:	Aug 24 - 31, 2022
Notice of Award:	By Thurs, Sep 1, 2022
Expected Start Date:	By Tues, Sep 6, 2022

Submit Proposals and any questions via e-mail to:

Maggie Drummond-Bahl
Maine Connectivity Authority
mbahl@maineconnectivity.org

Please email an electronic copy of your final submission to the specified e-mail address.

Proposals must be received prior to the time and date for which they are due.

Any proposal, portion of a proposal, or unrequested proposal revision received by the Maine Connectivity Authority after the time and date specified above **will not** be accepted.

All requests for clarification and/or requests for additional information regarding the RFP must be

submitted in writing via email and directed to the RFP Coordinator listed above.

Such correspondence must reference the RFP and project name in the subject line.

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

THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL IS 9 PAGES (including the title page).

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PART I. General Information

1.1 Introduction

The Maine Connectivity Authority (“**MCA**”) is seeking proposals from qualified, independent consultants, consulting groups, institutions, or research firms (“**Applicants**”) that **can assist the MCA in developing a comprehensive market analysis of the broadband workforce in Maine.**

The specific services that the MCA is requesting assistance with are listed below. Through this RFP, the MCA anticipates executing a contract with at least one successful Applicant to perform these services.

1.2 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 is universally available in the state;
- 2) Ensure that there is 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 are able to take full advantage of the economic, health, educational and other opportunities available through connectivity services.

In May 2022, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (“**NTIA**”) released the notices of funding opportunities (“**NOFOs**”) within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“**IJA**”) for broadband expansion, including the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Act (“**BEAD**”), the Digital Equity Act (“**DEA**”), and the Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program (“**MM**”).

The MCA intends to apply for planning grants through BEAD and DEA to develop a statewide Digital Equity Plan, which will be embedded and integrated with a 5-Year Broadband Action Plan for the state. The MCA also intends to apply for the competitive MM funding opportunity.

The MCA wants to proactively understand the state’s broadband labor gap and identify ways to address it. To take full advantage of the federal funding available to Maine for broadband deployment, the MCA must better understand the state’s current broadband workforce, the state’s broadband workforce needs (current and future), 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.

For additional information and background, please see [Creating and Expanding a Diverse Broadband Workforce with Good Jobs and Career Pathways](#) (from America Achieves and Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc.).

PART II. Scope of Work

2.1 Project Scope of Work (“Services”)

To best utilize the federal funding enabled through IIJA, the MCA needs to better understand the needs of the broadband industry partners and the related needs of education and training partners based on the projected scale and pace of broadband deployment.

Consequently, the MCA is seeking third-party consulting services to develop a comprehensive analysis of the broadband industry workforce needs and opportunities for the state of Maine. The selected consultant is expected to be well versed in workforce development and generally familiar with Maine's educational and training partners, institutions, and programs.

The analysis should include:

- Identification of specific jobs and careers within the broadband industry related to fiber optic and wireless deployment—namely construction and project management—including salary ranges and skills, certifications or degrees required to fill these positions
- Inventory of the number and location of *existing* employees currently employed in Maine in these positions and the number and locations of *open positions* that have not yet been filled. (Related: it will be important to know if these current positions are with contractors or providers.)
- Projection of the number of additional positions that will need to be added in the next five to eight years, based on MCA estimates of fiber and wireless deployment
- Inventory and description of the industry-accepted credentials that are being applied nationwide and in Maine, if applicable
- Inventory and scale of existing broadband-related training programs in Maine and elsewhere, whether employer-provided, provided through educational institutions, or through institutions with industry partners
- Evaluation of regional, multi-state partnerships as it pertains to shared education, training and employment opportunities.
- Description of selected best practices and models from other communities, regions, or states that might inform Maine’s approach, and recommendations on which ones the state of Maine should adopt
- Recommendations to develop necessary training, apprenticeship, and educational programs in Maine or through regional collaboration to meet the state’s ambitious broadband deployment goals
- Recommendations to engage underrepresented workers such as women, people of color, people with disabilities, English-language learners, older adults, veterans, and others in these workforce opportunities

The MCA is also hiring a staff member who will oversee workforce development. The selected consultant is expected to collaborate closely with this new position and other MCA staff to convene industry partners and streamline communication to gather data needed for this analysis. This coordination will also extend to educational and training partners and relevant state agencies.

2.2 Deliverables

The selected consultant will perform the actions below related to the Scope of Work identified above.

1. Hold a kick-off team meeting with the MCA where roles, responsibilities, schedules, goals, and project communication strategies will be agreed upon, and arrange bi-weekly meetings as needed.
2. Conduct meetings with relevant stakeholders or partners, including:
 - a. Maine's state agency partners: including and not limited to the Department of Education, Department of Labor, and the workforce development board;
 - b. Broadband industry partners: including telecommunications providers, electric utilities, and telecommunications services contractors;
 - c. Educational institutions: including high schools, technical schools, community colleges and universities;
 - d. Unions and workers' organizations;
 - e. Community organizations;
 - f. Other parties to be agreed upon between the selected consultant and the MCA.
3. Work with MCA to host a stakeholder feedback session on preliminary conclusions and recommendations;
4. Prepare a final report on the topics set forth above in section 2.1 (scope of work); the report should be easily translated into content for the website or other digital formats;;
5. Provide executive-level presentations of its findings to the MCA staff and Board with copies of such presentations shared with the MCA.

To the extent possible, the MCA will make introductions, provide contact lists, and share information that may assist the selected consultant in the report and its analysis. The selected consultant shall perform all Services to the sole satisfaction of the MCA.

2.3 Timeline

The anticipated contract term shall be until **December 6, 2022**, commencing upon full execution of the contract. The timeline is subject to negotiation with the selected consultant or consultants.

The MCA reserves the right to modify the initial contract term at its sole discretion and award additional phases of the project when it is in the best interest of the MCA.

PART III. Applicant Requirements

3.1 Eligibility

- The MCA is seeking a consultant with at least five (5) years of experience in (1) research and analysis and (2) working with state and/or local governments, community organizations and other stakeholders.
- The selected consultant will be expected to:
 - a. Have experience doing workforce market analysis of this size and scope,
 - b. Have or retain staff that can be easily available for both in-person and virtual consultations with appropriate notice,
 - c. Communicate effectively with involved parties, such as stakeholders, state agencies, and industry partners. Communications may be with or on behalf of the MCA, and
 - d. Applicants must be able to confirm that they have no existing conflicts. Other projects or business dealings shall not interfere with the ability of the selected consultant to work with or provide this information.
- The selected consultant ideally will also:
 - a. Have experience/familiarity with doing business in the State of Maine,
 - b. Have familiarity with the workforce development, education, and training programs and resources in Maine.

3.2 Proposal

- Please share the following information in your proposal to this RFP ("**Proposal**"):
 - a. Resumes of key personnel and experience with similar types of projects or projects in Maine in the past five (5) years
 - b. Project approach/strategy
 - c. Details of cost and timing to complete the Services, including a specific itemization of costs
 - d. List of subconsultants, if any, that are expected to be used to complete the Services
 - e. Debarment certification (Section 4.8)
- The Applicant shall bear all costs incurred in connection with responding to this RFP.

3.3 Clarifications and Amendments

- It will be the Applicant's responsibility to check the referenced website for any clarifications and/or any new amendments to the RFP (note, the Applicant must include reference to all amendments, to the extent they exist, in their response to the RFP).

PART IV. Proposal Evaluation

4.1 Selection Criteria

The selection criteria and the associated points are shown below. The award will be made to the responsible Applicant whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to the MCA based on the evaluation criteria listed in this section.

- **Applicant's Ability to Provide Services (30 Points):** Ability to meet the identified scope of work (Section 2.1) and deliverables (Section 2.2) within the identified timeline (Section 2.3).
 - a. **Applicants that present a detailed, feasible plan that addresses the items identified in the scope of work within the specified timeline will be scored higher in this section**
- **Applicant's Cost to Provide Services (30 Points):** Provide a cost proposal to complete the project and an estimated timeline
 - a. Provide a brief outline of methods used to control and monitor client costs and quality
- **Applicant's Project Experience (20 Points):** Identify at least two (2) similar projects that you or your firm has completed with your current staff in the last five (5) years.
 - a. Include points of contact (client's firm name, contact name, e-mail address, and telephone number), a brief description of the project, dates of the project, and results
 - b. Provide any prior experience working in the state of Maine
- **Applicant's Team Experience (15 Points):** Provide the team members that will work on the project
 - a. Identify prior experience and resumes of team leads and identify each member of the project team that will conduct work (with a time allocation proposal for the project team)
 - b. If Applicant plans to use one or multiple sub-consultants, provide the prior experience and resumes of the relevant team members from the sub-consultant(s)
 - Applicants with team members with demonstrated familiarity with or experience in digital equity programs or related work will be scored higher in this section.**
- **Applicant's References (5 Points):** Provide at least three (3) work references, including points of contact (person's name, firm name, e-mail address, and telephone number), a brief description of the project(s) and dates.
 - a. The MCA will verify with applicants which references will be contacted

The total number of points used to score the proposal is 100.

All information contained in an Applicant's Proposal must be factual and accurate. Misrepresentation of facts may be grounds for dismissal from consideration. At its sole discretion, the MCA reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in Proposals.

The MCA reserves the right to ask for additional information from any one or more Applicants.

The MCA reserves the right to accept a proposal that does not offer the lowest cost if it is in the best interest of the MCA.

4.2 Interview

- The MCA reserves the right to interview none, one, or multiple Applicants for further clarification and evaluation of their proposals.

4.3 Award

- The MCA reserves the right to reject any and all submissions without the right of recourse by any Applicant. Submission of a Proposal shall not obligate the MCA to enter into a contract or be responsible for the costs incurred by the Applicant in responding to this request.
- The MCA will notify each Applicant in writing whether it has been selected or not.

4.4 Contract Term, Type, and Payment Method

- The anticipated contract term is until December 6, 2022, commencing upon full execution of the contract. The contract timeline is negotiable with the selected consultant(s).
- The MCA reserves the right to modify the initial contract term at its sole discretion and award additional phases of the project when it is in the best interest of the MCA.
- The contract type and payment method utilized for this project shall be determined by the MCA following MCA's award of the contract.
- If the MCA cannot successfully conclude a contract with the first-ranked Applicant, the MCA reserves the right to award the contract to alternative Applicants.

4.5 Non-Appropriations

The Applicant acknowledges that the MCA is a quasi-governmental agency dependent upon state and federal funding. Although the MCA intends to enter into the proposed contract relying upon certain federal and state funding, the MCA will not be able to proceed with the contract unless such anticipated funding is ultimately received.

Therefore, notwithstanding any other provision of this RFP and any contract resulting therefrom, if at any time the MCA receives insufficient funds to meet the obligations established pursuant to the contract or for any reason is denied legal authority by the Maine Legislature or the Court system to expend funds appropriated for such purposes, then the MCA may terminate any contractual relationship established as a result of this solicitation and shall not be penalized for doing so.

4.6 Confidentiality of Information

Applicant acknowledges that it will be required by the contract to maintain the confidentiality of any confidential information provided by the MCA and to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

4.7 Freedom of Information/Proposal Confidentiality

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.

As a general matter, information submitted in response to this RFP will be considered to be “Public Records” available for public inspection and copying once an award notification has been made. If, however, an Applicant believes that parts of its Proposal 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), that an Applicant may submit those parts of its Proposal, with each page 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.”

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.

4.8 Debarment Certification

Applicant shall be required to submit the following certification as part of the contract:

By submitting to this RFP, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals, and any subcontractors named in this Proposal:

1. Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.
2. Have not within three (3) years of submitting the Proposal for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:
 - i. fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain or performing a federal, state, or local government transaction or contract.
 - ii. violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;
 - iii. are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State, or Local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification; and
 - iv. have not within a three (3) year period preceding this Proposal had one or more federal, state or local government transactions terminated for cause or default.

Failure to provide this certification may result in the disqualification of the Applicant’s Proposal at the discretion of MCA.