

INDEPENDENT AGENCIES - REGULATORY

MAINE CONNECTIVITY AUTHORITY

ANDREW BUTCHER, PRESIDENT
DAVID WEDICK, CFO

Central Office: 100 FORE STREET, PORTLAND, ME 04101

Mail Address: PO BOX 817, PORTLAND, ME 04104

Established: 2021

Reference: Policy Area: 01 Umbrella: 90 Unit: 698 Citation: PL2021 M.R.S.A., Sect.: C483PTR

FAX:

Telephone: (207) 209-3868

PURPOSE:

Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) is a body corporate and politic and a public instrumentality of the State of Maine, established in 2021 by 35-A MRS Chapter 94-A, section 9404 to carry out the powers conferred by Chapter 94-A as an essential governmental function, and to achieve the State connectivity goals set forth in section 9403. Effective July 1, 2022, MCA provided functional oversight of the ConnectMaine Authority (CME).

ORGANIZATION:

In 2021, the Legislature created MCA to be more proactive and flexible in deploying funding and programming to provide universal, affordable, reliable high-speed internet to all underserved locations in the State. Established to be the primary broadband agency responsible to plan, develop, invest, and enable broadband, the agency was operational in early 2022 and functionally integrated with the CME via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in July 2022.

MCA consists of a board with eleven voting members and a president nominated by the Governor and approved by the legislature. A quarter of one percent (0.25%) assessment on all communications, video and internet service bills, and a ten-cent (\$0.10) surcharge on all landline numbers is collected by the ConnectMaine Fund. Through the organizational MOU between MCA and CME, these funds are used to assist MCA's efforts to expand the universal availability of broadband service by administering funds, supporting broadband investment, facilitating state support of the deployment of broadband infrastructure, collecting and disseminating broadband information, and promoting use of broadband service. The majority of operating funds for MCA currently derive from the administration of several federal grants through the American Rescue Plan and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

PROGRAM:

MCA is committed to expanding access to reliable, high-speed and affordable internet service and to maximize digital equity and inclusion needs throughout the State. Led by an experienced staff and board appointed by the Governor, the MCA works to ensure three goals:

1. That effective, accessible connectivity be universally available in the State
2. That there be secure, affordable, reliable, competitive, sustainable and forward-looking infrastructure that can meet future needs and
3. 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.

MCA currently administers funds through grant programs, technical assistance and functional programs structured to optimize the impact of broadband deployment. Infrastructure grants are awarded to reach the last mile in the most rural places, connect communities ready to scale their infrastructure, ensure affordable options for everyone, and invest in partnerships to build a modern broadband infrastructure for Maine. Digital equity, partnership, and planning grants are awarded to accelerate community broadband planning at a regional scale through tailored technical assistance, and to build and support digital inclusion efforts to regions and tribes around the State.

Between January 1st, 2022 and December 31st, 2022, MCA received funding through two American Rescue Plan programs (State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds / Maine Jobs Recovery Plan) and the Capital Projects Fund (CPF), informing the design and development of The All-In programming, which included technical assistance and organizational capacity grants, wireless pilot projects, regional scale public-private infrastructure grants, and a line extension program. The first of

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the awards was made in May 2022.

Additionally, MCA assumed responsibility for the administration and management of CME's 2020 bond funded programs as well as the 2021 Broadband Infrastructure Program through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

PUBLICATIONS:

- 5-Year Broadband Action Plan (2023)
- State Digital Equity Plan (2023)
- Maine Broadband Workforce Analysis & Strategy (2023)
- Capital Projects Fund 2023 Annual Performance Report (2023)

FINANCES, FISCAL YEAR 2023: The expenditure information for this unit was generated from the Budget and Financial Management System (BFMS).

MAINE CONNECTIVITY AUTHORITY	TOTAL FOR ALL FUNDS	GENERAL FUND	SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS	HIGHWAY FUND	FEDERAL FUNDS	MISC FUNDS
EXPENDITURES						
GRANTS, SUBSIDIES, PENSIONS	1,000,000				1,000,000	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,000,000				1,000,000	