

Purpose: The purpose of the Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) is to be proactive and strategic in deploying an unprecedented infusion of state and federal broadband funding in support of the following statutory goals:

- **High-speed connectivity should be universally available in the State**, including to all residents, businesses and community anchor institutions;
- There should be secure, affordable, reliable, competitive and sustainable forward-looking **advanced communications technology infrastructure to meet current and future needs**;
- All residents, businesses and institutions in the State should be able to **take full advantage of the economic, health, educational and other opportunities** available through connectivity services; and
- **Existing public and private infrastructure will be used effectively and efficiently** in the public interest to provide communications technology infrastructure in all areas of the State

Vision: High speed internet access is essential to participation in modern society, and has the potential to dramatically improve Mainers' quality of life. Private investment alone is insufficient to ensure that the above goals are met and to enable all Mainers to access these benefits. For these reasons, the Maine Connectivity Authority was conceived, legislated and created to not just light up all dark pockets but to remove barriers and accelerate growth. The MCA is designed to be more proactive in decision making, explore public private partnerships, deploy a range of financial tools, and enable a strategic network of digital infrastructure for Maine's future.

Principles

- Be proactive
- Invest for the long term
- Collaborate to achieve scale and impact
- Make data driven decisions
- Get money working to maximize (and sustain) value and impact

Strategic Objectives: organized into 3 focus areas

1. **Projects:** Optimize broadband deployment
2. **Places:** Reach the last mile
3. **People:** Advance digital equity for all

Priority Strategies and Activities

To be effective in addressing the State's connectivity needs there needs to be continuous interaction between the **Projects** and mechanisms that enable impact; **Place**-based investments that enable last mile connectivity through a clear and constant process, and an ongoing focus on



how funding, process, and priorities link to and leverage the **People** in most need. As a result the three organizing objectives for the Authority will manifest into activities within three primary focus areas. Within each focus area are issue specific Impact targets relative to health, education, and economic opportunity outcomes.

FOCUS AREA: PROJECTS

Strategic Objective #1: **Optimize broadband deployment** - *Decrease barriers to deliver broadband*

1. Support strategic middle mile investments and partnerships
 - a. Leverage Maine Broadband Intelligence Platform to identify potential routes and facilities for new middle mile broadband infrastructure to maximize service delivery.
 - b. Own or co-invest in assets to secure and maintain public benefit of shared infrastructure
 - i. Own or co-invest in middle mile fiber infrastructure to support planned last mile deployments in Strategic Objective #2
 - ii. Explore investment in state-owned Internet Exchange Points and similar peering infrastructure, extending NNENIX model
2. Convene stakeholders to develop solutions to reduce costs, delays, and obstacles to broadband deployment to ensure access and affordability of services and risk mitigation.
 - a. Advocate to support reductions in the cost and expense of the pole attachment process and other obstacles to increase pass through affordability to service subscribers.
 - b. Convene relevant stakeholders to identify broadband workforce needs and identify and support initiatives to reduce or eliminate any identified gaps.
 - c. Convene ISPs and other stakeholders to identify barriers such as cost-effective peering
3. Aggregate data, demand and resources to guide and direct collaboration and investment by communities, regions and private sector partners.
 - a. Facilitate an updated Broadband Master Plan for the state through **regional** partnerships to collect data and prioritize projects through a standardized approach.
 - b. Use the Broadband Intelligence Platform developed by ConnectME to identify and communicate locations that are eligible for support and identify and scope potential deployments.
4. Develop and deploy financing mechanisms to extend the Authority's financial resources and leverage public & private sector capital to support broadband investment.
 - a. Establish investment policy and partnerships
 - b. Craft lending program
 - c. Evaluate bonding strategy and approach
5. Facilitate and manage partnerships and collaborations to maximize impact.
 - a. Identify other state entities, municipalities and the private sector for potential collaboration and standardize mechanisms for collaboration to share resources and coordinate efforts.
 - b. Establish an innovation advisory committee to outline priorities for research, development and experimentation.



- c. Engage the Maine Telehealth / Telemonitoring Advisory Group to collaborate towards development of a Digital Health Strategy including
 - i. Evaluate cost sharing for health systems telehealth initiatives
 - ii. Evaluate cost reduction of telehealth services
 - iii. Develop a digital healthcare workforce needs assessment and gap analysis

FOCUS AREA: PLACES

Strategic Objective #2: **Reach the last mile** - Make quality broadband available to all

1. Streamline, standardize and scale support for last mile project planning, development and deployment to un- and underserved locations
 - a. Allocate FY2022 ARP funding to expand the most recent iteration of CME grant programs in support of a pipeline of projects for Spring 2022.
 - i. Refine auditing approach to match anticipated federal requirements
 - b. Prioritize funding to maximize impact and co-benefits especially in rural unserved areas
 - c. Serve as a centralized source for public funding and financing to enable community-driven solutions at a regional scale
 - i. Enter into MOU to leverage ConnectMaine expertise, capacity and process
 - ii. Assemble a menu of financing options to support projects, partnerships and deals
 - iii. Leverage ConnectMaine support for community broadband planning processes
 - d. Evaluate dedicated funding streams to support public ownership and open access models.
 - e. Develop and implement program to support line extensions in areas adjacent to existing service territories
2. Keep communities, providers, and the public at large informed of the Authority's work and opportunities for funding or collaboration
 - a. Establish central hub of information sharing through online portal (integrate with Salesforce and platform)
 - i. Ramp up Speedtesting campaign
 - b. Establish, maintain and communicate verification and audit expectations and results
 - c. Refine and adopt shared staging / pipeline of projects with ConnectMaine.
3. Evaluate "alternatives" strategy to provide connectivity for targeted locations
 - a. Establish methodology for identifying "extremely remote"
 - b. Identify projects and partnerships to evaluate lifetime costs, deployment time
4. Establish a resource bank of providers of technical assistance and shared services to advance community efforts
 - a. Services include general technical assistance (data analysis, network design, legal and financial consulting, grant procurement and management.)
 - b. Engage and equip local partners and support technical assistance through a Community of Practice and network of Connectivity Boosters effort via Maine Broadband Coalition

FOCUS AREA: PEOPLE

Strategic Objective #3: **Advance digital equity for all** - *ensure that all Mainers, especially the most disadvantaged, have access to and are able to use information and communications technologies*

1. Facilitate development of Maine Digital Equity Plan.
 - a. Establish a multi-criteria decision making framework to prioritize geographic areas for investment, partnerships and resource deployment including an affordability standard.
 - b. Leverage support for development of digital equity plans in the INVEST Act
 - c. Work with partners to support publicly owned networks and infrastructure and open access operating models to maximize affordability and access in strategic locations.
2. Enable maximum participation and utilization of available affordability programs such as Emergency Broadband Benefit / Affordable Connectivity Program / Lifeline Program
 - a. Use data for eligibility to inform and prioritize places for investments and partnerships.
 - b. Evaluate shared service offerings to streamline access to subsidies to ensure subscriber affordability.
3. Engage disadvantaged and marginalized communities, issue experts, and existing cross-sector networks to integrate broadband planning and deployment into other strategies to meet these communities' needs (i.e., Affordable housing, priority development zones, new Mainers)
4. Establish Inclusive Innovation / Research & Development fund to maximize use of broadband infrastructure in communities that are already served or anticipated to be served.
5. Prioritize Impact Targets for healthcare, education and economic development
 - a. Identify specific, sector-focused benchmarks to measure impact of expanded access and digital equity measures
 - b. Establish a device and equipment lending partnership with sector based partners
 - c. **Facilitate place-based analysis to identify priority community facilities to serve as connectivity hubs.**

Summary of Public Comments [here](#).