

The State of Connectivity In Maine

EDCM Forum

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We can get everywhere from here!



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Context – 2020

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Fragmented Market

- Service concentrated in denser areas
- **19%** under- or un-served
- **89%** affected by digital divide

Barriers

- Remote areas commercially *unviable*
- Large & rocky geography
- Pole connection process
- Workforce
- Financing

“You can’t get there from here!”



2020 Bond
75% support

GLOBAL TRENDS

Undeniable Need for Connectivity

- Health & Human Services
- Education
- Workforce & Economy
- Transportation
- Safety
- Data & Analytics
- AI

Accelerated by COVID-19
Pandemic



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Strategy D: Build Connections

No One Size Fits All

- Community centric
- Geography > technology
- Place-based, multi-use investments in Connectivity Hubs



Reduce Barriers

- Training program with MCCC
- Utility pole attachment action
- Connectivity in Multi-Dwelling Units (MDUs)



Drive Demand & Sustainability

- Digital skills, devices, internet safety education, and tech support for 50,000 Maine people
- Needed to sustain technical infrastructure & realize benefits

Reinforce Partnerships

- Regional & Wabanaki Broadband Partners
- Local needs, local capacity

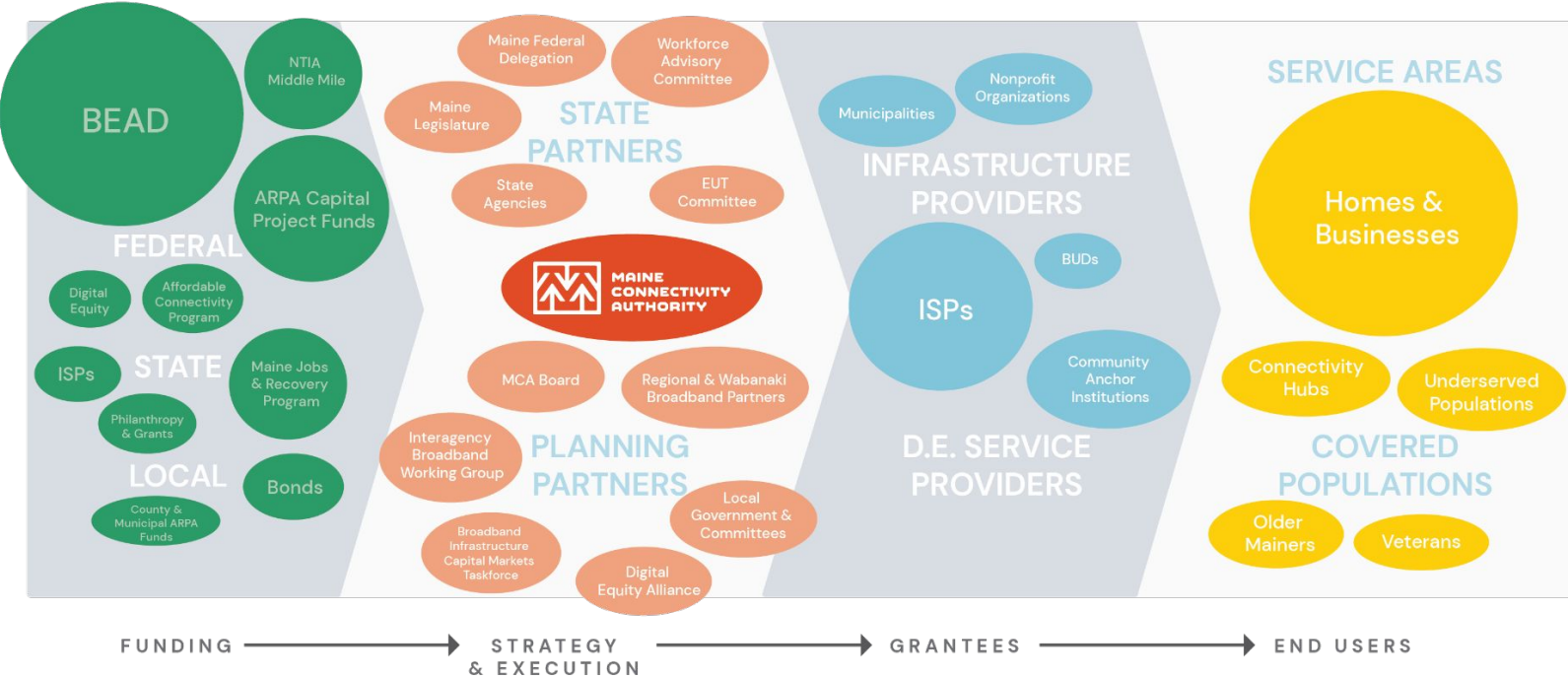


Resiliency & Redundancy

- MOOSE Net
- Review cellular service expansion
- State economic and development goals



Action D1: Foster Collaboration

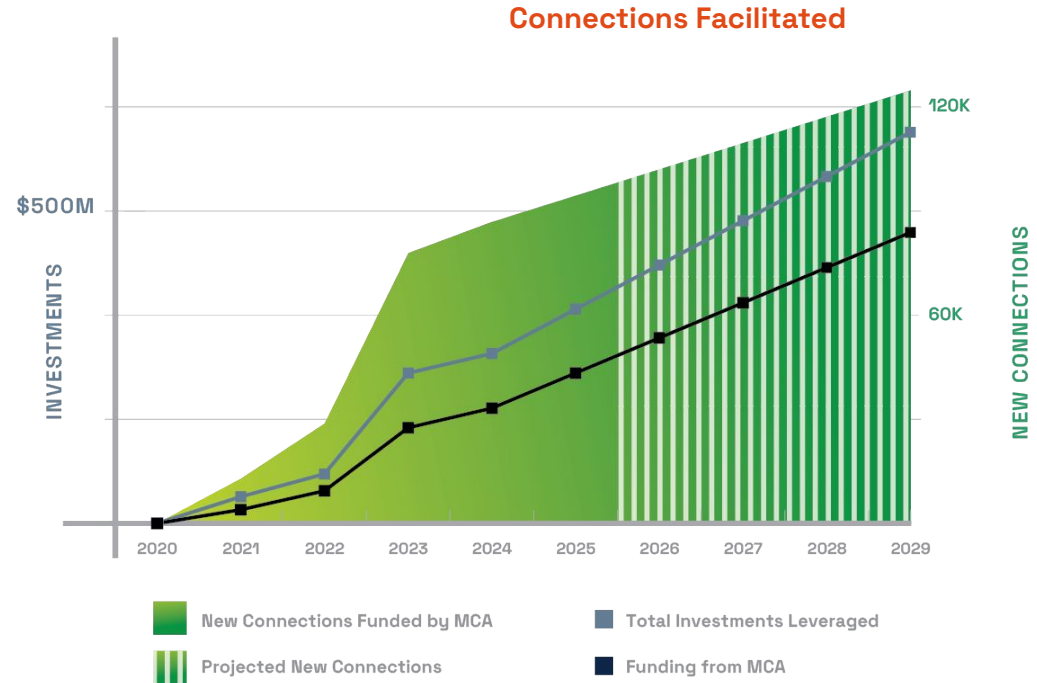


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Action D2: Deploy Diverse Technologies

MCA is leading 100+ infrastructure projects in over 200 communities through 8 distinct programs. In 2025:

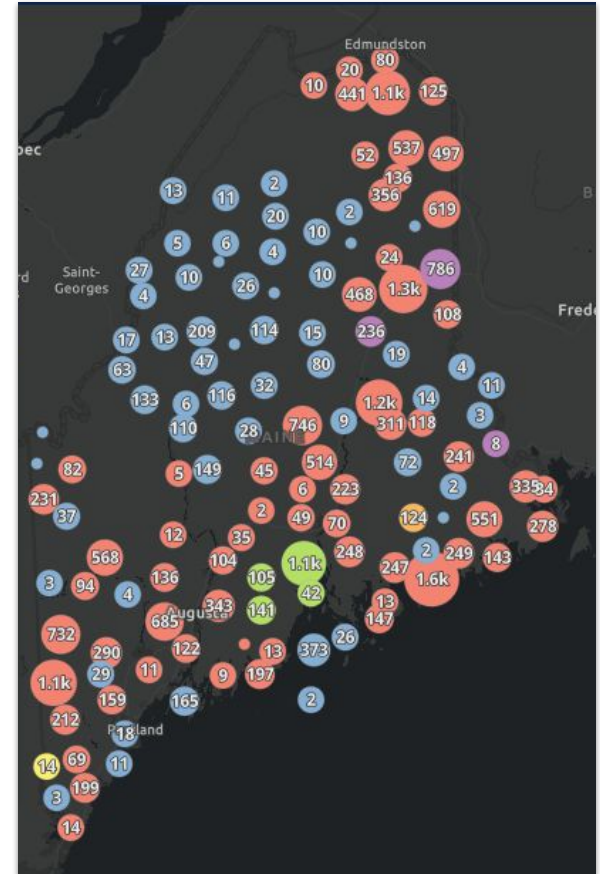
- MCA closed out the \$28 million NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program award in Maine which successfully **connected 15,000 homes and businesses from Isle au Haut to Farmington**.
- 15 of the 35 projects funded through the Capital Projects Fund are operational, **servicing over 21,000 homes and businesses**. Nine more projects have completed construction and are under review, with all CPF-funded projects expected to be complete in 2026.
- MCA implemented Working Internet ASAP, the **first state in the country to offer Low Earth Orbit satellite as a solution**.



BEAD Program

Maine was allocated **\$272 million to connect every unserved location (<100/20 Mbps) and Community Anchor Institution.**

- In November 2025, Maine's BEAD Final Proposal was approved which outlines the plan to serve the remaining **21,000 locations** and **2,500 CAIs** with no internet connection or slow and unreliable internet service.
- Outcomes included in Maine's BEAD Final Proposal:
 - **100% coverage for all locations**
 - \$2,080 average subsidy per location
 - \$48.4 Million in BEAD deployment funding provisionally awarded
 - \$109 Million in matching funding from applicants
 - 25 Projects with 6 ISP Partners
 - Diverse technologies, including 85% Fiber, 14% Low Earth Orbit Satellite (LEO), and 1% Hybrid Fiber/Coax



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Expanded Cellular & Wireless

- Cellular & Wireless Action Plan under development with the **Interim Demand Report now available.**
- Expanded mobile connectivity supports:
 - Leveraging expanded middle mile
 - Connecting complementary technologies
 - Addressing deficiencies
 - Advancing economic development, public safety, and other priorities

“If you’re out recreationally and there is a medical emergency, it is critical to have reliable cell coverage. We rely on people coming to visit Maine, to go to our restaurants, to stay in our lodges, and if people can’t get cell phone service they won’t necessarily come.”

—Liz Caruso, Maine State Representative



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**Together, we
can strengthen
Maine’s cell
service.**

To make this plan a reality, we need your input. Your feedback will directly shape how we improve cell service across Maine.

Share your experience by taking the survey at www.maineconnectivity.org/cellular-plan



Beyond Technology

Connecting Maine is only the first step — ensuring people and communities can fully participate in the digital economy is our ultimate goal.



2,730 digital skills trainings have been provided to 4,639 Maine people impacted by the digital divide.



Community leaders gathered to see the completion of 8 years of broadband organizing by Isle au Haut



Veterans at the House in Woods in Lee celebrated high speed internet availability in their area



Washington, ME celebrated broadband coming to the community with a Broadband Festival



GPCOG adopts local affordability offerings to service areas around Sebago



150 partners gathered at the second annual Digital Equity Workshop



MCA partners with the Maine Community College System at the Fiber Optic Technician Program.



St. George Connectivity Hub will have a classroom, shop spaces, a makerspace, areas for online courses and workforce training, and private spaces for telehealth.

Interconnected Statutory Objectives



Connect Every Home & Business in Maine

- \$300 million in public investment, \$200 million in private match
- 135,000 broadband connections facilitated
- By end of 2024, every Mainer can have a connection



Support Digital Skills & Affordability

- Needed to sustain technical infrastructure & realize benefits
- In 2025, MCA will invest \$20 million
- Digital skills, devices, internet safety education, and tech support for 50,000 Maine people



Future-Proof our Network

- The need for digital connectivity will only grow
- Increase our state's capacity and resilience
- 563-mile backbone network
- Plan for Maine's future cellular needs



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How it all comes together: Caribou



Reach Me Line Extension award (CPF 1A funding)

- **600 locations** being connected through an award to Charter in Caribou and Presque Isle
- **\$1,757,160 in grant funding** and **\$1,237,650 in private investment** for these communities

Connectivity Hub (CPF 1C funding)

- **Caribou Public Library Digital Commons**, a state-of-the-art Connectivity Hub, including private **telehealth** rooms, improved **digital literacy skills training**, and promotion of **workforce initiatives**
- **\$1,847,528 in grant funding currently contracted**, and the project is underway but less than 25% complete.

BEAD deployment (NTIA funding)

- **1,690 BEAD-eligible locations** in a 10-mile radius of Caribou
- Representing an estimated **\$7,557,036 in BEAD subsidy**, and an estimated **\$2,838,731.08 in private investment**

Regional Partner (SLFRF funding)

- Northern Maine Development Corporation is slated to receive \$200K in funding for 2025, and additional funding in 2026-2029



The Problem - The Work - The Goal

Digital Divide

The gap between those who have affordable access, skills and support and those who don't.

Digital Inclusion

Activities to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access technologies.

Digital Equity

All individuals and communities have full participation in our digital society, democracy, and economy.

Digital Opportunity enables access to basic needs and resources, economic opportunity, education, the workforce, and more.

Digital Opportunity Values

Connectivity is more than infrastructure—it's readiness that makes opportunity real. To bridge the digital divide in Maine, digital opportunity work is guided by four values:

- **Put Maine People First** – Design, fund, and tell the story of digital opportunity based on the real lives and lived experiences of Maine people—especially those most impacted by the digital divide.
- **Lead With Those Most Impacted** – Direct resources, partnerships, and visibility toward the people and communities facing the greatest barriers to full digital participation.
- **Build Digital Readiness for Life Online** – Advance digital opportunity by supporting safe, confident, and meaningful participation in a digital society—not access alone.
- **Create Statewide Impact Together** – Align and amplify local and regional efforts to turn individual progress into measurable, statewide impact.



Action D3: Support Digital Inclusion

Key to success for overall connectivity strategy

- Local / regional capacity to engage, plan, educate, and share
- Places to go for public access, tools, and learning
- Affordable options for service
- Affordable devices
- Technical assistance
- Cross-sector coordination
- Diverse funding



Terminated:

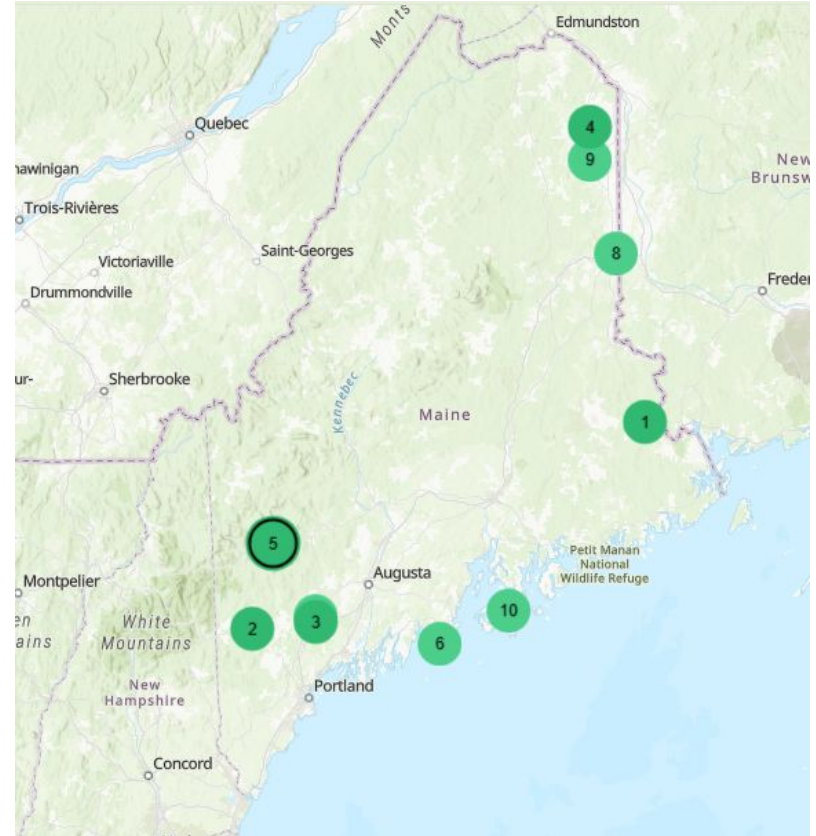
- \$10M in State Digital Equity Capacity Funding
- \$25M of competitive grants to 17 entities

Connectivity Hubs

MCA's Connectivity Hubs Program funds community anchor institutions – such as libraries, community centers, municipal and tribal buildings – to provide workforce training, education and telehealth services in areas most impacted by a lack of access to high-speed internet.

Projects:

- Aroostook Agency on Aging | Presque Isle - \$400,989
- Caribou Public Library | Caribou - \$1,847,528
- Hope Association | Rumford - \$279,112
- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians | Houlton - \$1,247,639
- Indian Township Tribal Government | Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk - \$545,612
- St. George Municipal School Unit | Tenants Harbor - \$684,715
- Seniors Plus | Lewiston - \$900,000
- Town of Stonington | Stonington - \$1,753,420
- YWCA Central Maine | Lewiston - \$651,928



GRACE Innovation Center, St. George

The GRACE Innovation Center partners with educational institutions, medical providers, local government, nonprofits, and businesses to create a network of interconnected services including online workforce training and hands-on skills application; telehealth and community paramedicine; and digital literacy and data analytics courses.

The Connectivity Hub includes the addition of a new building with a classroom, makerspace, shop, welding room, and workbenches, all tailored to support traditional coastal Maine trades while adapting to the changing climate and evolving workforce skills.

“As I watched elementary and middle level students building, creating, and learning in “the GRACE” (as the new building has come to be called), I was overcome with a sense of gratitude. I’m thankful for the educators, tradespeople, and volunteers who are working together to ensure that ALL students, PreK-12, have access to hands-on/minds-on, technical learning connected to career & community.”

—Mike Felton, Executive Director



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Regional + Wabanaki Broadband Partners

A statewide network of trusted regional and Wabanaki partners advancing digital opportunity through local leadership and collaboration. The RWBP is foundational to how Maine turns connectivity into real impact.

SINCE 2023, REGIONAL & WABANAKI BROADBAND PARTNERS HAVE:



DISTRIBUTED
1,200+
DEVICES

Free or low-cost laptops, tablets, and devices supporting internet adoption.



FORGED
1,500+
PARTNERSHIPS

Libraries, adult education programs, municipal offices, social services, and more.



DELIVERED
245,000 HOURS
OF TECH SUPPORT

Delivered by Digital Navigators statewide (average of 2,355 hours per week).



TRAINED
18,000+
PEOPLE

Internet safety, fraud prevention, device troubleshooting, and digital skills.



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Affordable Housing & MDUs

Now Open!

HOUSING CONDITIONS SURVEY



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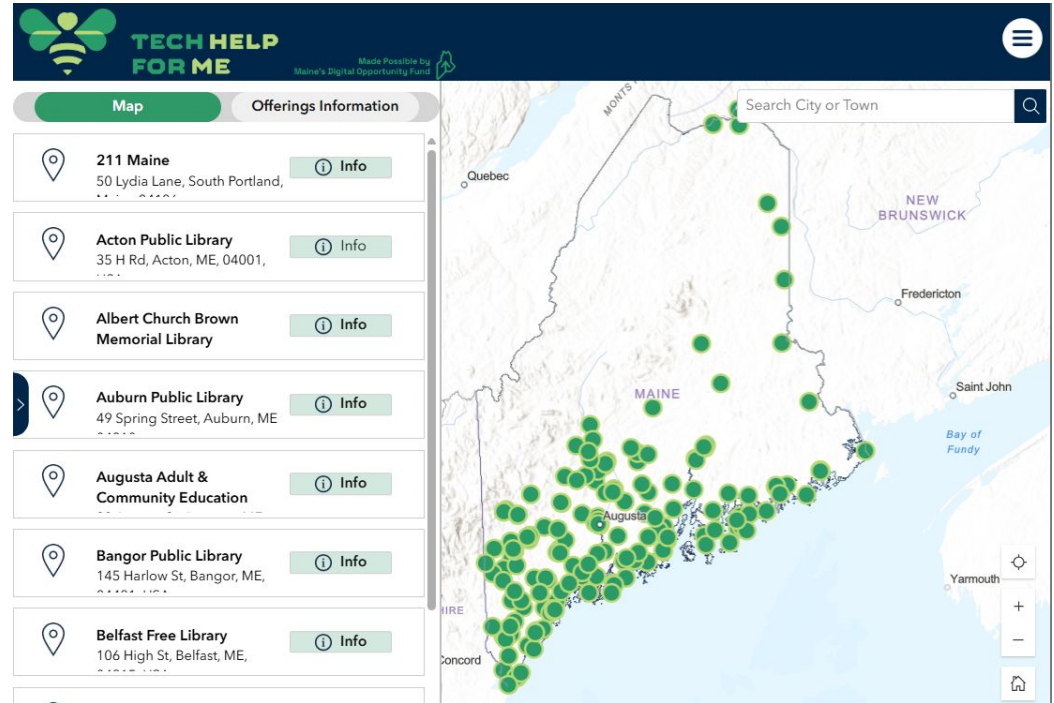
Action D4: Pathways for Digital Education

Tech Help for ME is a public directory that helps people in Maine bridge the digital divide and find resources close to them such as:

- Public Wifi
- Public Devices
- Low-cost Devices
- Tech Classes
- Tech Help
- Video Call Rooms
- And more

Accessibility elements:

- Webpage designed for mobile and desktop use
- Accessible with a screen reader
- Resources searchable by language
- Layman terminology
- How-to resources



Action D5: Increase Device Availability



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SHARE TECH. SPARK CHANGE.

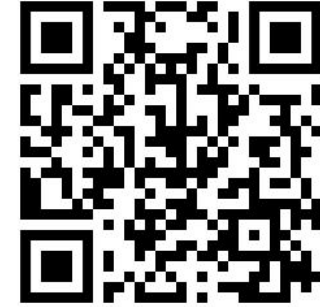
Maine Tech Share is asking Maine businesses to safely recycle underutilized devices to be refurbished and distributed to families and individuals providing the technology need for participation in digital society.

Key Elements

- In partnership with **give IT. get IT.**, Maine's non-profit refurbisher
- Using best practice data security practices
- Reducing the environmental impact of e-waste
- Building on an existing statewide effort to close the digital divide

Goal

- Generating 25,000 devices that contribute toward digital opportunity and economic development for Maine



give IT. get IT.®



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Action D6: Highlight Stories

“

We're making it easier for people to live, work, and do business everywhere in Maine. People like Rob and Alice, a couple who wanted to move to a small town in Maine, but they needed high-speed internet for work. Thanks to our investments in broadband, that's exactly what they did.

—Governor Mills,
State of
the State
Address

Seven years ago, **Rob and Alice chose to move to Bremen, Maine because they had the option for fast, reliable internet.** Now, Alice and Rob are deeply involved in their community, and just this past fall they welcomed a baby boy to their family.

MCA is creating opportunities across Maine by enabling high-speed internet access and digital readiness. Our work is made possible through public investment, state leaders, regional partners, and local champions.



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Action D7: Strengthen Our Infrastructure

- The **Maine Online Optical Statewide Enabling Network (MOOSE Net)** is a new **\$53 million initiative** bolstered by a **\$30 million competitive grant** from NTIA
- Partnership with MDOT, University of Maine, Maine OIT, and Maine Municipal Bond Bank
- **~500 miles, 131 communities** reaching more than **200 community anchor institutions**, including schools, hospitals, libraries, local government buildings, and civic centers.
- Owned by MCA and used to: expand wireless and cellular communications; support grid modernization; support State and local facilities; and **sustain connectivity efforts for public benefit.**



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Action D8: Reduce Barriers

- In 2025, the Utility Pole Data & Performance Working Group began convening, following recommendations submitted to the Maine Public Utilities Commission. **This group works to overcome barriers to efficient pole attachments.**
- **Connectivity Headquarters for Analysis, Research and Transparency (CHART)** is a centralized, public-facing platform where everyone can see transparent data and information regarding connectivity in Maine.
- MCA submitted recommendations to the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee **for improving tenant access to broadband services** in multi-dwelling units (MDUs), including choice for tenants in their internet provider and support for property owners.



Broadband Serviceable Locations

641,370

Served Locations
FCC Designation

595,126

Grant-Funded Locations
Federal & State

147,356

Service Availability

MCA Policy Page

Maine Connectivity Authority works actively with local, state, and federal policy-makers to ensure that we can accomplish our mission of ensuring everyone in Maine has a reliable, affordable internet connection by effectively deploying funding, broadband infrastructure and ensuring digital equity for all Mainers.



Broadband Service Levels by Boundary

Explore Service Classification Levels Across Maine.

[View Map](#)



Townships Service Levels

Service Levels by Township.

[View Map](#)



County Service Levels

Service Levels by County.

[View Map](#)



ME Senate Districts

Service Levels by Senate District.

[View Map](#)



ME House Districts

Service Levels by House District.

[View Map](#)



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**MAINE'S
DIGITAL
OPPORTUNITY
FUND**

Maine's Digital Opportunity Fund turns shared purpose into shared progress - proving that when Maine invests together, everyone moves forward.



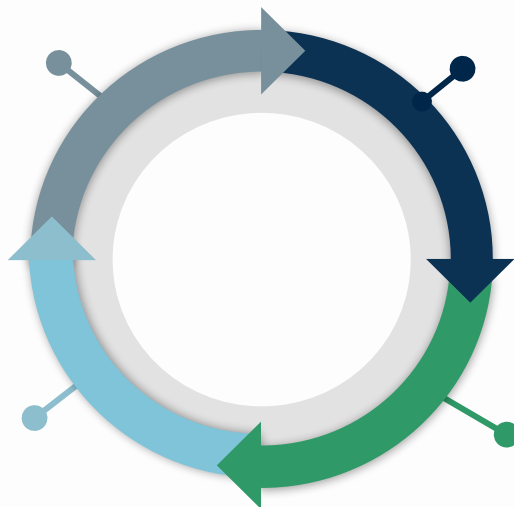
Why the Digital Opportunity Fund is needed

Disparity

Mainers' connectivity needs significantly outweigh Maine's available funding, especially when the hardest to connect require the most resources.

Data

Building measurement into the implementation of digital opportunity ensures we know what works best for Maine and Mainers.



Federal Funding

Federal funding involves uncertainty and rigidity that complicates meeting Maine's digital opportunity needs.

Digital Opportunity Ecosystem

Connectivity needs will continue to evolve with technology and our ecosystem needs to evolve with those needs.



What's Next for Connectivity in Maine?

- **2030 Strategic Planning + Engagement Events**
 - Driving Connections 2.0!
 - Regional Partner Events!
 - Digital Inclusion Week, October 7-10!
- **Digital Opportunity Fund Platform + Campaign**
- **Connecting all Mainers with reliable broadband**
 - BEAD!
 - MOOSENet!

Question + Answer

Kendra Jo Grindle
Chief Program Officer

Laura van der Lugt
Chief Engagement Officer



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Thank you

info@maineconnectivity.org
www.maineconnectivity.org/

We can get everywhere from here!



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