

State of Maine – Applications for BIP, BTOP, and BIP/BTOP
Multi-State Applications
Applicants and/or Projects Not Specific to Maine
Broadband Strategy Council and ConnectME Authority
Recommendation and Assessment

October 8, 2009

Included with this document is a spreadsheet summarizing the proposed projects not specific to the State of Maine. A separate recommendation and assessment will be provided for Maine-specific projects. Maine ranks and prioritizes the projects with the following categories: **Recommended for Funding** (meets the State's goals and fills unmet needs); **Projects of Interest** (has merit but needs more information or questions answered); and **Not Recommended for Funding**. The vast majority of the projects on the attached spreadsheet appear to have very little impact on Maine with no indication of allocated service or grant/loan amount to Maine. We worry that many expansive, over-broad proposed projects might deflect money that could be used more directly in Maine. Many are not well described or do not indicate how they address the requirements of the NOFA. For those that do include an executive summary, some are so heavily redacted that they make any analysis impossible, especially regarding any benefit to Maine.

Last Mile (BTOP Only)

Maine believes that the two Hughes applications should be **Not Recommended for Funding** not only for Maine, but nationally. The satellite solutions proposed do not address the needs of the nation, much less the needs of Maine. Satellite service in Maine is spotty, erratic, costly, and inadequate in providing access to the latest internet applications. The ConnectME Authority does not include any satellite service in its modest definition of broadband for grant funding due to the latency and jitter attributes prevalent with satellite. Satellite internet service does not work well in Maine, especially above 45 degrees latitude which encompasses a very large percentage of Maine's most rural regions. The Aircell application also receives a red-light from Maine and should not be funded nationally. Unserved "airspace" is not even remotely a goal of the NTIA NOFA.

Last Mile Non-Remote Area

Maine believes, as stated above, that both satellite service applications (EchoStar Broadband and EchoBlue Rural Broadband) should be **Not Recommended for Funding** for Maine and nationally. Overlap with other satellite service providers and poor service quality in Maine make both of these applications problematic. Most Maine households and businesses, especially those in the more rural, unserved areas in the northern part of the state have a very poor view of the southern sky which is required for quality service.

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Last Mile Remote Area

Two more BIP applications (Hughes and Agristar) from satellite service providers that should be **Not Recommended for Funding** from Maine and nationally.

Middle Mile

The two Webpass applications should be **Not Recommended for Funding** from Maine and also at the national level. A grant to fund engineering costs does not solve immediate broadband access problems and should rightly be a function of any company's R & D expenses. The executive summaries state, "The proposed project does not address a specific geographic area, rather we are proposing a solution that will make it easier for network operators to purchase and finance high capacity networks." Those network operators should apply for their own grants and loans to finance high capacity networks.

The Upper Shore Regional Council (Maryland) is obviously miss-identified for providing service to Maine or any other state, but Maryland.

Public Computer Center

The application from the American Library Association may have merit, but the executive summary is heavily redacted, making a fair analysis difficult. It is not clear that it is a public computer center project, instead of project to develop resources to be used by other libraries. Maine would **Not Recommend for Funding** for this application.

The application from Broadband Census Data, LLC, also would be **Not Recommended for Funding** from Maine. It is not a public computer center as it does not expand computer center capacity, but appears to be a project to develop resources that could be used by computer centers. Since no executive summary was available, it was difficult to determine what the project contained.

The applications from the Louisiana Community and Technical College System and the Littleton Housing Authority are more state-specific projects obviously miss-identified for providing service to Maine or any other state, but their own.

Sustainable Broadband Adoption

Sustainable broadband adoption projects are very important to increasing the take-rate or penetration of broadband service subscription. The higher the take rate, the more economic is build out of broadband infrastructure, because costs are spread over a larger customer base. The NOFA Fact Sheet says, it "will fund innovative projects that promote broadband demand, such as projects focused on broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, or support, particularly among vulnerable populations." While we won't comment on each one, Maine looked at the thirty-six non-Maine specific applications with the previous statements in mind. We will note the one

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that might have an impact on Maine consumers. All others are **Not Recommended for Funding** by Maine. These include satellite providers, applicants for R&D funding or for devices to “enhance” connectivity. Many have a tenuous connection to sustainable adoption concepts. While many do have very interesting ideas and projects, they do not appear to fit the NOFA’s requirements and have very little connection to consumers in Maine.

The application from Broadband for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing below does have significant merit. Recognizing that low income level is a substantial deterrent to subscribing to broadband, or even owning a computer, this application makes the point that deaf and hard of hearing individuals are disproportionately low income. It proposes to fund broadband access for two years to target low income households that include a deaf or hard of hearing person. Two issues that Maine questions are how many Mainers will this affect and how is two years “sustainable adoption?” Maine would categorize this application as a **Project of Interest** with the understanding that more information is needed.

Applicant	Broadband for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Washington, DC
Contact	Robert Davila 301-865-1343 drrdavila@aol.com
Project title Program	Broadband for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing BTOP
Proposed Project Area	AK, AL, AR, AS, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, GU, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MP, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, PR, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VI, VT, WA, WI, WV, WY
Project type	Sustainable Broadband Adoption
Grant request	\$ 70,000,000
Status	Application Received
Description	This project will address the significant problem of low broadband usage in the deaf community by providing broadband access to low-income deaf Americans for a period of two years. Broadband access has the potential to remedy the isolation and marginalization faced by many deaf Americans due to cultural barriers and economic factors.
Executive Summary	Executive Summary (pdf)