CONNECTMAINE

ConnectMaine Authority Members: Nick Battista, Jasmine Bishop, Fred Britain, Susan Corbett, Heather Johnson, Jeff Letourneau, Liz Wyman

28 April 2021

Press Release

BROADBAND GRANTS ANNOUNCEMENT

The ConnectMaine Authority seeks Community Broadband Planning Grant applications from groups interested in expanding broadband service to their communities.

Broadband service enables civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning and access to essential services. These grants are funded through assessments or surcharges on certain communications, video and internet service bills. Along with other sources of funds, ConnectMaine anticipates awarding about $130,000 in this round.

Planning grants are awarded to develop plans for expanding the availability of broadband service, and to produce strategies for digital equity and inclusion. Municipalities, groups of municipalities, counties, or community organizations that provide local or regional economic development programs, are eligible to apply.

The planning grants program incentivizes collaboration among multiple communities, in part because the community planning process is a significant undertaking. Collaboration can bring additional resources, volunteers and community support to the planning effort, and it also improves the viability of eventual expansion of broadband networks in the area.

Communities that go through a community-driven broadband planning process are situated well to apply for future infrastructure grants. Significant federal and state funds are anticipated for broadband later this summer and fall, at both the state and local levels. Communities should take this opportunity and timeline into consideration as they outline their plans.

The planning grants program is designed to get communities ready to respond to these opportunities, by committing to firm milestones to expand broadband in a way that reflects the community's vision and goals. Community-Driven Broadband Projects seek to widely expand infrastructure for equitable access to affordable and reliable internet service that meet the current and future broadband needs of Mainers.

More information and applications can be found on the ConnectMaine website: www.maine.gov\connectme. Please direct any questions to ConnectMaine staff. The mission of ConnectMaine is to facilitate the universal availability of broadband to all Maine households and businesses, and to promote the valuable role it can play in enriching their lives and helping their communities thrive.

CONNECTMAINE

Planning Grants Application

Authority Members
Nick Battista, Chair
Jasmine Bishop
Fred Brittain
Susan Corbett
Heather Johnson
Jeff Letourneau
Liz Wyman

Contact Staff
Connect.ME@maine.gov
207.624.9894

This application binder is for community broadband planning projects, which involve developing plans for expanding the availability of broadband service. Phase I projects are intended to begin the process of building community-wide support for expanding broadband service; Phase II projects are intended to take the community to the next step in planning for expanded broadband service. Other projects may be considered based on progress to-date, specific challenges, and the need and capability to overcome those challenges. Successful grant applications outline processes for producing the broadband plan or feasibility study proposed, and that will likely lead to expanding the availability of broadband.[1]

This application window is April 28 through May 27. Please submit your application materials by emailing Connect.ME@maine.gov with the subject heading Grant Application.

Instructions

Please don't include attachments or reference attachments; please insert evidence in the order requested. Any information that may be deemed confidential must be submitted as separate files to remain confidential. Please note that applications submitted are made publicly available; please submit confidential information as separate files. Some details of projects funded with grants, including the plans and studies produced, are posted on the ConnectMaine website.

If any elements of the application can't be completed, then in those locations demonstrate how those elements will be developed as part of the proposed project. The ConnectMaine Authority reserves the right to request additional information necessary to evaluate applications for planning grants. Precertification is an eligibility requirement, and this application contains the elements of precertification in case prior submission and approval haven't been obtained.

Please contact ConnectMaine staff for any assistance. Please note that the score of an application is only one factor considered by ConnectMaine in awarding grants, among many other factors required or allowed to be reviewed in accordance with the statute and rule, including that planning grants are equitably distributed throughout unserved and underserved areas of the state; additionally, ConnectMaine considers its statutory goals and policies, including that infrastructure be forward-looking to meet future broadband needs.

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[1] Evaluation of applications is conducted in accordance with the ConnectMaine rule:
https://www.maine.gov/connectme/about/statutes-rulemaking

CONNECTMAINE

I. Applicant Information

Applicant Signature: Wayne Smith

Date Submitted: 5-26-21

A. Fiscal Agent

Entity Name: Sunrise County Economic Council

B. Grant Requested

Amount: $15,000

C. Affected Communities

List each affected municipality, local government or local government authority, or a local nonprofit providing economic development programs, as applicable to the proposed project.

Point of Contact for each Affected Community and any community broadband committees:

Community	Name	Title or Role	Email or Phone
Amity	Melissa Sherman	Town Clerk	townofamity@pioneerwireless.net
Orient	Walt Zakupowsky	Resident	tek@mfx.net
Bancroft	Ryan Pelletier	UT Administrator	ryan@aroostook.me.us
Haynesville	Carol Randall	Town Clerk	tchaynesville@yahoo.com
Glenwood Plt	Mary MacDonald	Resident	207-456-7500
Reed Plt	Diane Hines	Town Manager	reedplantation@gmail.com
	Mitch Lansky	Resident	lanskymitch@gmail.com
Drew Plt	Kim Lee	Resident	klee@machiassavings.com
Weston	Dwayne Young	Town Clerk	townofweston@pioneerwireless.net
	Michael Cheetham	Town Select Board	mdcheetham55@yahoo.com
Danforth	Ardis Brown	Town Manager	townofdanforth@gmail.com
	Barry Gillis	Town Select Board	barrygillis56@gmail.com
Brookton, Forest, Forest City	Dean Preston	UT Administrator	ut@washingtoncountymaine.com
	Susan Hatton	Program Mgr, SCEC	shatton@sunrisecounty.org
	Aly Cropley	Resident	alycropley@gmail.com
	Julie White	Resident	juliebwhite1@gmail.com
East Grand Chamber	Denise Smith	President	denise.wayne.smith@gmail.com
East Grand School	Peggy White	Superintendent	mwhite@eastgrandschool.org
	Jennifer Fronczak	Teacher	jfronczak@eastgrandschool.org
East Grand Health Ctr	Jessica Potter	Administrator	jpotter.ma@eastgrand.org
ME Family Resource Ctr	Carolyn Fickett	Dir., Special Projects	cfickett@mefamily.org
Baskahegan Company	Kyle Burdick	Forestry Manager	kyle@baskahegan.com

D. Applicant or Agent

Name: Wayne Smith
Title or Role: Board President, Greater East Grand Economic Council
Mailing Address: PO Box 465, Danforth, ME 04424
Phone Number: 207-448-3000
Email Address: denise.wayne.smith@gmail.com

E. Partner, if any, excluding any consultants hired

Company Name:
Point of Contact Name:
Title:
Phone Number:
Email Address:

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F. Applicant Eligibility

The applicant may be any general-purpose local government, including a municipality or county; groups or regional partnership of general-purpose local governments, including multiple municipalities, local government authorities, counties, and joint or multi-county development authorities; any broadband utility district or corporation, wholly or partially owned by local government(s); or any nonprofit local or regional community organizations that are providing local or regional economic development programs. State the legal entity of this applicant, or partner if applicable.

Name and type of entity: **Greater East Grand Economic Council**
Recently incorporated economic development non-profit

If any, list the most recent planning grants awarded by ConnectMaine to any of the entities of this application.

Date of last award	Entity receiving funds
June 2020 Phase 1 Planning Grant	Greater East Grand Economic Initiative/SCEC as fiscal sponsor

II.   Executive Summary

Provide a five-sentence executive summary that identifies the applicant; which phase of activities will be conducted; where in Maine; whether a broadband plan or feasibility will be produced, or what challenge will be overcome by this project; and when completion is anticipated. This serves the purpose of quickly identifying the proposed project among applications and past projects. This summary will also be used when announcing awards of successful applications.

The Greater East Grand Economic Council (GEGEC) is applying for a Phase 2 Feasibility Planning Grant in order to complete the engineering studies, RFPs and cost analyses in 2021 to determine a cost effective and future-forward model to expand high-speed broadband in the region. The GEGEC represents 8 towns in the remote parts of Washington, Aroostook and Penobscot counties, and 4 villages in the unorganized territories. Community need is documented, municipal interest is growing, preliminary high-level engineering designs through the VetroCare program are available, and preliminary provider meetings are completed. To date, financial commitments from Weston, Danforth and Reed Plantation for this planning phase are secured or are anticipated following warrant meetings in June. GEGEC's 2021 goal is to present a preferred business model and phased regional design to municipal and UT decision-makers in order to apply for and secure infrastructure funding in a timely manner.

III.   Community Support

In total the community support scoring category accounts for 20 points. Five of these points are available in the scoring of precertification elements, requested in Section V below.

Describe participation by affected residents in the application process and the amount of economic support to be provided by the community.

A. Petitions or Letters

The strong desire of residents and businesses to subscribe to broadband, a community support factor, is demonstrated through lists of those interested in supporting the community's efforts to expand broadband or in subscribing to broadband service that becomes available. For Phase I projects only, insert any petitions or insert other similar material to serve as evidence of broad community engagement. For Phase II projects only, insert any letters from businesses, or similar material, as evidence of economic support. For projects other than Phase I or II, demonstrate how community support is building.

Broad community engagement and economic-sector support help ensure successful projects and help demonstrate sufficient community support; 10 points, if evidence is submitted, or 0 points.

Community support is growing and will continue to over the summer. A first class mailing (attached) to 1000+ households/businesses across the region promoting the Speed Test was completed early in 2021 and the number of responses has continued to grow. The task force plans to retain a local summer college intern to continue the groundwork in each community. In addition to promoting the Speed Test to all households and businesses, the intern will also work to provide basic broadband information and collect data in each community. A database will be established to store all the project information and ensure easy access by town leaders and the task force.

Town Meetings

Two Covid-safe regional meetings were held in 2021 and attended by at least 1 representative from 6 of the 12 communities. These meetings were educational and included a preliminary request for financial support for feasibility planning (attached). Materials from these meetings were sent to all 12 communities with a formal warrant request.

Looking ahead, two strategies will be used to continue conversations at the town level. (1) Schedule two region-wide education meetings to review engineering studies, RFP guiding principles, and financing models; and (2) attend/present updates at each town council meeting to have more in-depth conversations about the town's participation in the next development phase.

Reaching out to the UT households

Aroostook UT for Bancroft:
- Letters requesting input to UT office sent to 80+ permanent and seasonal households the week of May 15th. To date, 15 (19%) letters supporting the initiative have been received.

- Coordination planning meeting with Aroostook County initiative pending.

<u>Washington UT for Brookton, Forest, Forest City:</u>
- Neighbor to neighbor petition being circulated in mid-May in Brookton. To date, 21 signatures have been obtained.
- A first class letter will be sent to all permanent and seasonal households in June.
- Meeting to request financial support for Feasibility Planning scheduled for June.

Employers and Businesses
The summer intern will work with the East Grand Chamber of Commerce and the GEGEC to help inform and solicit interest from local employers and businesses as the project moves forward into infrastructure design and financing options.

Greater East Grand Lake Area Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 153
Danforth, Maine 04424

May 24, 2021

Connect Maine Authority

RE: Greater East Grand Region Broadband Project

To Sir or Madam:

The Greater East Grand Area Chamber of Commerce fully supports the effort to improve and extend broadband to our entire region. Our membership is situated in all reaches of this region and requires broadband access to sustain, and increase their activities. Additionally, the success of this initiative will have a direct impact on the ability to attract new business to our widespread community.

While we are not able to make a financial commitment to the feasibility study at this time, we are committed to educating and inviting support from our members in 2021.

Our community is making progress in the revitalization of not only our business base, but also improving the quality of life for our residents and seasonal guests and this initiative is an important key to our ability to move forward.

Sincerely,

Denise Smith, President
Greater East Grand Lake Area Chamber of Commerce

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What is Your Internet Speed?

We need your help
to bring high-speed internet service to your community. Here is what you can do today.

1. **Take the Speed Test** for your home address in Maine. Use the link below. Follow the instructions. **www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org**

2. **Don't have internet at your home? Take the speed test** anyway. We need to know where there is NOT ANY service.

3. **Email or call your town council** and tell them you want faster internet service. They need to know that this is a priority for town residents.

The Greater East Grand Region Broadband Task Force is working on a plan for the towns in the region. For more information please contact Dwayne Young at **dwayneyoung267@hotmail.com** or Jennifer Fronczak at **jfronczak@eastgrandschool.org**

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<table>
<tr><td>The GEGR Community Broadband Planning
Next Steps & Timeline
2-24-21</td></tr>
</table>

Moving Forward

As the regional task force moves into Phase 2 Feasibility Planning, each community will need to make a decision if they want to participate. The Feasibility phase is when engineering studies and cost analyses are completed to determine what the best options are to expand high-speed internet service in a community. The task force believes that there are economies of scale by working together on this. There is a $4000 contribution and a commitment of in-kind time to participate in Phase 2. These commitments help cover part of the cost to complete the Phase 2 studies, and are used by funders as criteria to score the grant applications – demonstrating the level of commitment by local communities in the process.

There is no expectation about any town's participation on the part of the task force – each community needs to make its own decision based on its circumstances. However, if a town decides not to be included at this stage of planning, then that community will not be included in the engineering and cost analysis studies that are part of the Feasibility Planning phase. This also means that infrastructure models developed from the engineering studies would not include the town either. Each town needs to decide if being a part of the regional planning effort is a cost-effective approach for them, or not.

Regional Task Force Objectives - 2021

1. Provide information and resources to towns and villages so they can begin local conversations about community broadband priorities and Phase 2 Feasibility planning.
2. Promote participation in the Internet Speed Test project across the region to document where there are underserved areas.
3. Determine which towns and villages want to join the regional task force to seek funding for and complete a Phase 2 Feasibility Planning Project.

Regional Task Force Work Plan – 2021

- Continue to promote the Internet Speed Test project across the region.
- Support each town with added information about what a Phase 2 Feasibility Planning project will include.
- Meet with the County Commissioners about broadband priorities in the UTs.
- Complete Vendor meetings with Mission Broadband and learn more about each vendor's respective build-out plans.
- Work with the VetroCare program to improve current broadband service maps and prepare required information for the Feasibility Planning grant.
- Prepare application materials and submit a Phase 2 Feasibility Project grant to funders.

Town Leaders Work Plan – March to June 2021

1. Meet with community members and leaders to discuss what your future needs are for high-speed broadband services.
2. Decide if your town wants to participate in the Phase 2 Feasibility Planning process. A contribution of $4000 per town is needed.
3. Select a town representative to serve on the GEGR Broadband Task Force.

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Greater East Grand Economic Council (GEGEC)*
PO Box 465
Danforth, ME 04424

Dear Bancroft Residents:

Over the past ten months, the GEGEC Broadband Task Force has been working on building local awareness and support to increase the availability of high-speed internet services across the region. Bancroft is one of the twelve communities included in this early planning phase and as you know, Bancroft is part of the Aroostook County Unorganized Territories.

Bancroft is categorized as an unserved and underserved area for internet service. This means that the provider you may have today cannot provide your home with reliable, cost-effective, high-speed internet services to meet your family's and business needs today, or in the future. This is because the infrastructure is not available in remote, rural Maine.

The task force is beginning Phase 2 Feasibility planning which includes engineering studies and cost analyses to determine the best approach to build improved infrastructure that can deliver 100/100 high-speed service across the region, including Bancroft.

Funding for the first planning phase came from Maine Community Foundation, ConnectMaine Authority, and the Washington County UT Commissioners. For Phase 2 Feasibility Planning, we would like to approach Aroostook County UT and other County funders to help support this next phase.

By signing this letter and mailing it to the Aroostook County UT Commission, you are letting the Commissioners know that high-speed internet is a critical priority for Bancroft, your family, and the region's economic well-being, and that contributing to the necessary planning should be a priority.

Thank you for your help to bring high-speed internet to your community!
Dwayne Young and Jennifer Fronczak
The GEGEC Broadband Task Force Co-Chairs
For added information please contact Dwayne Young at: dwayneyoung267@hotmail.com

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Dear Aroostook County Commissioners:
High-speed internet is critical to meet our household and business needs today and in the future. I support the work of the GEGEC Broadband Task Force and ask you to commit funds to continue its work on behalf of Bancroft.

Your Name _____

#, Street, Town, Zip _____

Email/Phone _____

Please mail this signed document to either:

Paul Bernier	**Ryan Pelletier**	**Dwayne Young**
Community Services Director	Aroostook County Administrator	GEGEC Broadband Task Force
144 Sweden St, Suite 1	144 Sweden St, Suite 1	5 Church St
Caribou, ME 04736	Caribou, ME 04736	Weston, ME 04424

The Greater East Grand Economic Council's mission is to improve the economic well-being of residents and businesses in collaboration with the communities of Amity, Orient, Weston, Bancroft, Glenwood Plt, Haynesville, Reed Plt/Wytopitlock, Bancroft, Danforth, Brookton, Forest and Forest City.

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Dear Brookton Residents:

Over the past ten months, the GEGEC Broadband Task Force has been working on building local support to improve the availability of high-speed internet services across the region. Brookton is one of the ten communities included in this early planning phase.

Brookton is categorized as an unserved and underserved area for internet service. This means that the provider you have today cannot provide your home with reliable, cost-effective, high-speed internet services to meet your family's needs today, or in the future. This is because the infrastructure is not available.

Funding for the first planning phase came from Maine Community Foundation, ConnectMaine Authority, and the Washington County UT Commissioners. The task force will be seeking another round of funds to complete engineering studies and cost analyses to determine the best approach to build improved infrastructure that can deliver 100/100 high-speed service across the region, including Brookton.

By signing this letter, you are letting the funders know that high-speed internet is a critical priority for Brookton, your family, and the region's economic well-being overall.

Thank you for your support!

Dwayne Young and Jennifer Fronczak
The GEGEC Broadband Task Force Co-Chairs

Name _____

#, Street, Town, Zip _____

Name _____

#, Street, Town, Zip _____

Name _____

#, Street, Town, Zip _____

Name _____

#, Street, Town, Zip _____

The Greater East Grand Economic Council's mission is to improve the economic well-being of residents and businesses in collaboration with the communities of Amity, Orient, Weston, Bancroft, Glenwood Plt, Haynesville, Reed Plt/Wytopitlock, Bancroft, Danforth, Brookton, Forest and Forest City.

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B. Surveys or Votes

For Phase I projects, list any relevant survey question(s) with response rate(s) and the resulting percent of respondents in support of expanding broadband.

For Phase II projects, list any warrant article(s) with voter turnout(s) and the voting results(s) in favor of supporting broadband expansion. For other projects, demonstrate how financial support for broadband expansion is building.

Positive willingness-to-pay survey results or positive votes to support proposed projects help ensure successful projects and help demonstrate sufficient community support; 5 points, if there were positive outcomes, or 0 points.

Warrant Meetings as of 5-26-2021

5-13-21   Reed Plantation/Wytopitlock
$4000 contribution approved for Feasibility Planning - 13 to 0

Pending Warrant Meetings

Danforth: $4000 request approved to include in warrant on June 12th.
Weston: $4000 request approved to include in warrant on June 5th.
Drew Plt: $4000 request pending approval in warrant.

Town Meetings being scheduled to determine interest and financial support

Amity   Continued discussion to consider using ARP funds as contribution
Haynesville   Continued discussion to consider using ARP funds as contribution
Orient   Town council in transition.
Glenwood Plt   Town clerk attended region-wide meetings. Next meeting pending.

UT Commissions for Bancroft, Brookton, Forest, Forest City
Timing for warrant contributions from the UTs is challenging. Typically these warrant decisions are made very early in the calendar year. As a result, the opportunity was missed to secure financial support in 2021 for Bancroft. However, there may be opportunities to secure a contribution through the ARP funds and this will be pursued. Washington County UT commissioners have access to TIF funds for projects like this and was provided for Phase 1 planning. This opportunity is being pursued again to provide incremental support for this next planning phase.

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REED PLANTATION

P. O. BOX 10

WYTOPITLOCK, MAINE 04497

207-456-7546

reedplantation@gmail.com

To whom it may concern:

The Town of Reed Plantation held its annual town meeting on May 13, 2021and voted on supporting the Greater East Grand Region Broadband Feasibility planning phase at a cost of four thousand dollars ($4,000.00) by a vote of 13 yes and 0 no. This was a unanimous vote.

Sincerely,

Diane Hines

Town Manager

Reed Plantation

May 24, 2021

TOWN OF WESTON

5 Church Lane
Weston, Maine 04424
Phone (207) 448-2316 Fax (207) 448-2747
townofweston@pioneerwireless.net   www.townofweston.net

May 11, 2021

ConnectME Authority

To whom it may concern,

The Board of Selectpersons voted to include an article in their annual town warrant to raise $4,000 for the support of a feasibility study as part of the Greater East Grand Region Economic Council's Broadband project.

The warrant has been approved, signed and posted. Our annual meeting is scheduled for June 5 at 9:00am.

The Board of Selectpersons feel this is a necessary step to securing the economic viability of the town and the region. The potential for increased connectability and the positive outcomes from it are worth the commitment of funds.

Cordially,

Dwayne Young
Admin. Asst. to the Selectboard

"The Little Town with the big view"
Selectpersons
Michael Cheetham, Karen Cummings, John Ribe

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Town of Danforth
PO Box 117
Danforth, Maine 04424
(207) 448-2321

May 21, 2021

ConnectME Authority
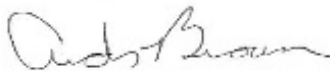59 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0059

Dear Sirs:

The Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee have voted to include an article in their annual Town meeting warrant to raise and appropriate $4,000 to conduct a feasibility study as part of the Greater East Grand Economic Council's broadband project.

The annual town meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2021. I have confidence that this proposal, being already supported by the Selectmen and the Budget committee, will be supported by the Danforth voters as part of the 2021-2022 budget.

The Town recognizes the importance of broadband in all facets of our everyday lives.
Covid-19 has made it clear that the need for good broadband has become a necessary utility.
Therefore, the success of the region is contingent upon having that infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Ardis Brown
Town Manager

IV.   Project Focus

In total the project focus scoring category accounts for 30 points.

Describe the focus of the proposed project. How will proposed Phase I activities develop a community broadband plan; how will Phase II activities develop a broadband feasibility study; or how will other activities following Phase II address a specific challenge to broadband expansion? How will proposed activities lead to expanding the availability of broadband?

The focus of this proposed project is to complete all Phase II activities and initiate the vendor RFP process this summer in order to be ready to pursue federal and state funds as they become available for infrastructure expansion. Participation in the VetroCare program has accelerated the necessary mapping and produced a high-level design/cost estimate needed to help inform an RFP. Preliminary vendor meetings have helped inform task force members about what will be needed to attract vendor interest in serving the region. The continued emphasis on education and promotion this summer with permanent and seasonal residents, coupled with town leader participation in the task force process, should result in the region's readiness to move forward into final infrastructure planning and financing deliberations. What is needed next is:

(1) additional engineering support to fill in the gaps of the VetroCare modeling in order to release a regional RFP that vendors can design to;

(2) expert technical assistance at the town level so that leaders can make informed decisions about the vendor proposals; emerging regional/municipal designs and financing options; and

(3) continued community education and promotion so that taxpayers can also make informed decisions about recommended options that their town leaders and the GEGEC bring forward.

In the best case scenario, the region will be in a position to release its RFP early in the summer and apply for infrastructure funds in the fall or early winter. If local town processes and decisions require more time, then the task force will adjust its timeframe and move forward as the process allows.

A chart detailing What the proposed activities are and How they will be accomplished for Phase II Feasibility Plan deliverables is on the next page.

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Section IV Phase II Deliverables	How Deliverables will be Achieved	How Engagement will be Achieved
The community's broadband needs and goals identified in Phase I activities or similar community broadband planning process	• Continue meetings with 8 towns and 2 UT administrators to review current taxpayer needs and interest.	• Direct mail to selected towns and UTs • Meetings with town councils • Meetings with UTs
The inventory and gap analysis of broadband infrastructure conducted during Phase I or similar process	• Continue to promote Speed Test across region. • Review existing VetroCares mapping information with towns. • Review vendor coverage details with towns based on vendor meetings. • Review RDOF overlap and vendor plans with towns.	• Broadband Task Force meetings. • Follow-up questions about under and unserved areas to towns and vendors. • Meetings with RDOF vendors.
The assessment of relevant municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances conducted during Phase I or similar process	• Initial assessment completed in Phase 1. • Final confirmation will take place before RFP is released.	• 1:1 conversations with town manager/clerk or selectperson in each town
One or more network designs and cost estimates based on input from broadband service providers	• Complete preliminary mapping work with VetroCare. • Complete additional engineering support to fill in the gaps of the VetroCare modeling in order to release a regional RFP that vendors can design to.	• Draft and initiate RFP process to vendors. • Complete cost analyses on returned vendor proposals.
Operating and business models based on input from broadband service providers	• Complete financial analyses on proposed vendor models. • Provide expert technical assistance at the town level so that leaders can make informed decisions about the vendor proposals; emerging regional/municipal designs and financing options. • Continued community education and promotion so that taxpayers can also make informed decisions about recommended models/options that their town leaders and the GEGEC bring forward	• 2-3 region wide meetings for town leaders to learn about municipal broadband operating and business models. • 1:1 conversations with town leaders and UT managers. • A series of local town forums to engage and inform taxpayer decision-making.
Information from any other parties that submitted a network design solution during the project.	• This information will be part of the RFP process and financial analysis.	

Applicants may apply to fund proposed activities that must be completed within one year:
- Phase I activities;
- a project that combines Phase I and Phase II activities, and any grant funds for Phase II activities will be contingent upon completion of Phase I activities;
- only Phase II activities, if the application demonstrates that Phase I elements have been completed; or
- other activities beyond Phase II to continue the community broadband planning process, if the application demonstrates that Phase I and Phase II elements have been completed.

Elements of Community Broadband Plans produced by Phase I activities:
- a description of local broadband needs and goals;
- an inventory of the existing infrastructure assets;
- a gap analysis defining the additional broadband infrastructure necessary to meet identified needs and goals;
- an assessment of relevant municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances that have the effect of delaying or increasing the cost of broadband infrastructure deployment; and
- a strategy to promote digital inclusion that addresses affordable internet service and equipment, digital literacy and public computer access.

Elements of Broadband Feasibility Studies produced by Phase II activities:
- the community's broadband needs and goals identified in Phase I activities or similar community broadband planning process;
- the inventory and gap analysis of broadband infrastructure conducted during Phase I or similar process;
- the assessment of relevant municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances conducted during Phase I or similar process;
- one or more network designs and cost estimates based on input from broadband service providers;
- operating and business models based on input from broadband service providers; and
- information from any other parties that submitted a network design solution during the project.

Following Phase I and Phase II activities, the result of continuing the community broadband planning process may include but isn't limited to any of the following:
- producing other elements toward a request for proposals to expand broadband,
- building community support toward financial commitments to expand broadband,
- increasing potential subscriptions or take rate, and
- completing elements of applications for other grants.

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Applicants are held accountable for funded projects producing compliant plans or studies.[2] Contracts for awarded grants hold applicants accountable for producing required elements or results of their proposed projects. The degree to which the application proposes a project that is likely to lead to broadband expansion is a factor considered in the project focus scoring category, up to 15 points.

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[2] ConnectMaine statute, 35-A M.R.S.A. Ch. 93, §9217, lists the elements required.
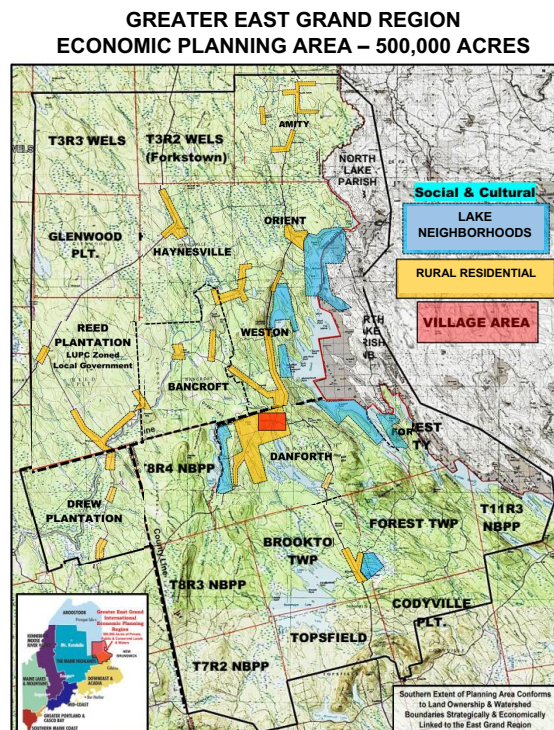
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A. Project Area

Describe the areas covered by the proposed project or included in the proposed activities. Are these areas unserved or underserved?[3] What areas are proposed to be included in eventual broadband expansion?

Areas designated as unserved may be identified in any or all of the following sources:

- The ConnectMaine Broadband Availability Map:
  https://maps.sewall.com/connectme/public/
- The ConnectMaine Unserved Reports: www.maine.gov/connectme/communities-resources/Broadbandmapping
- Community Broadband Plans posted on the ConnectMaine website:
  www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/planning-grants/awards

The Greater East Grand Region includes the following communities. In most cases all, or a portion, of each community is unserved or underserved. Each community was profiled using the above data in the Phase 1 report submitted in November 2020 based on a 25/3 definition. At the present time, all of these communities continue to be a part of this Feasibility Planning grant application. Several maps are also included below the table to orient the reader. The most current Speed Test results for the region are also included.

GREATER EAST GRAND REGION
ECONOMIC PLANNING AREA – 500,000 ACRES

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[3] At least annually, and subject to 30-day comment period, ConnectMaine designates geographic areas that are unserved. Currently areas are designated as unserved where internet service is less than 25mbps/3mbps, and areas are designated as underserved where less than 20% of the households have access to internet service of at least 25mbps/3mbps.

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County	Community	# of Occupied Households *2020 Zip Code data*	# of Unserved 25/3 *ConnectMaine Unserved Reports*	% Unserved
Aroostook	Amity		24	
Aroostook UT	Bancroft		53	
Aroostook	Glenwood Plt		3	
Aroostook	Haynesville		70	
Aroostook	Orient		27	
Aroostook	Reed Plantation		66	
Aroostook	Weston		134	
Penobscot	Drew Plt		15	
Washington	Danforth		154	
Washington UT	Brookton		43	
Washington UT	Forest		13	
Washington UT	Forest City		26	
	Totals	**900**	**628**	**70%**
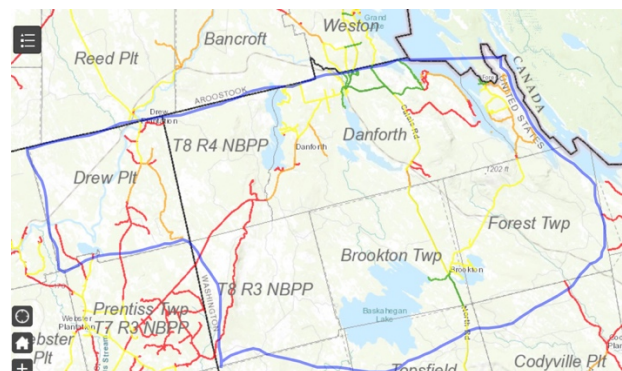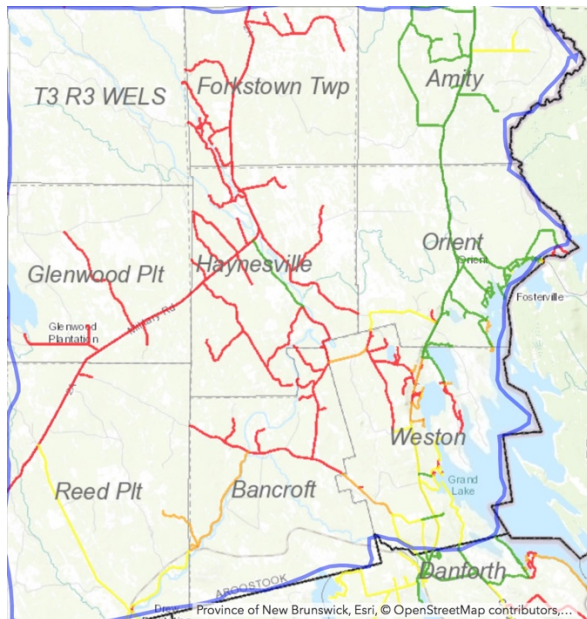
Speed Test results as of 5-22-21 show that:

- 53 households across the region have conducted the test;
- 30 or 57% registered as Black or Red.
- 17 or 32% registered as Yellow.
- 6 or 11% registered Green.
- Within Danforth that does have some access to Pioneer Fiber, only 3 out of 18 registered as Green, the remainder were Yellow or Red.
- The Speed Test will continue to be promoted aggressively this summer.

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B. Project Collaboration

Describe any collaborations or partnerships for broadband among communities, local or regional nonprofits providing economic development programs, or private-sector stakeholders.

Indicate the number affected communities (including municipalities, local governments or local government authorities, and local nonprofits providing economic development programs) as applicable to this project.

The number of communities collaborating on the proposed project is a factor considered in the project focus scoring category, with greater collaboration scoring higher, up to 15 points.

Number of Communities	Points
>5	15
3-5	10
>1	5

Greater East Grand Region Communities
Broadband Initiative

County	Community
Aroostook	Amity
Aroostook UT	Bancroft
Aroostook	Glenwood Plt
Aroostook	Haynesville
Aroostook	Orient
Aroostook	Reed Plantation
Aroostook	Weston
Penobscot	Drew Plt
Washington	Danforth
Washington UT	Brookton
Washington UT	Forest
Washington UT	Forest City

The Greater East Grand Economic Council and its Broadband Task Force currently are talking with 12 communities in the region and are also reaching out to key organizations working on county-based economic development priorities like broadband. These include:

 East Grand Chamber of Commerce and its members
 Sunrise County Economic Council
 Washington County UT Commission
 Aroostook County UT Commission
 Eastern Maine Development Corporation
 Southern Aroostook Development Corporation

As feasibility planning continues and a business model emerges, coordination with adjacent community broadband planning committees and other county-based economic development agencies will be a priority to ensure that each community is best served with a model and plan based on cost, digital inclusion, economies of scale, and taxpayer preferences. This may result in the number of communities in the GEGR plan increasing or decreasing. It may also mean that the partnerships and collaborations expand to include other opportunities. For example:
(1) to the south of Brookton as projects for the Route 1 corridor north from Baileyville/Calais become clearer;
(2) to the west if there is a better option for Drew Plt to pursue; and
(3) to the north if there is a better option for Bancroft through Aroostook County plans.

The GEGR Broadband Task Force is committed to being a catalyst for these discussions in an effort to best serve the region going forward. The engineering studies and cost analysis completed in Phase II for GEGR will include all twelve communities. This will provide each community the necessary information from which to evaluate different options as they emerge.

C. Project Engagement
Describe how local leaders, residents and businesses of affected communities will be educated and engaged in the proposed project.

Regional meetings in 2020 and 2021 provided important lessons on how to inform and engage local residents and leaders. These sessions were the foundation for the 2021 warrant meetings. Going forward, the Task Force will continue to meet as a region, and also with each community to ensure that their decision to opt-in or opt-out of a regional infrastructure plan is based on the best possible information. Topics will include:
- Electricity development timeline compared to internet development per Jim Troutman.
- The role of Guiding Principles to determine network design features
- Vendor preliminary meeting results connected back to Guiding Principles
- Speed Test participation updates to demonstrate ongoing need
- VetroCares high-level engineering maps by town to begin to understand regional design options, technology options, and costs
- Introduction to municipal ownership and other models currently being used or considered by other towns in Maine.

Each town will be asked to officially appoint a representative to the Broadband Task Force for the next planning phase, the RFP process, and the business model/financing options that will emerge.

D. Timeline and Milestones
While planning is an on-going process, for the proposed project for which a planning grant is sought, insert a timeline that lists the milestones and anticipated completion date.

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2021 – This timeline will evolve as new information is gathered across the region.

June
- Funding decision by ConnectMaine
- Continue regional speed test and resident interest promotion
- Complete VetroCare high-level engineering mapping
- Additional town decisions on warrants/use of ARP funds to help support planning
- Decisions by UTs on financial support for continued planning

July
- Complete remaining expert engineering/technical input to prepare RFP
- Draft and release Vendor RFP early July
- Ongoing education meetings with town leaders/residents
- Continue regional speed test and resident interest promotion

August
- RFPs returned by early August
- Broadband Task Force meetings to review RFPs, cost analyses
- Hold initial regional education sessions with towns/UT about RFP results/business models
- Vendor approved and notified
- Broadband Task Force research, meetings and decisions on infrastructure funding strategy

September/October
- Broadband Task Force continues decisions on infrastructure funding strategy and timeline.
- Broadband Task Force recommendations finalized
- Presentations for region/towns/UTs on recommendations
- Prepare information to apply for federal and state funds as available

November/December
- Prepare requests for UT budget meetings and Town Warrant meetings as required

2022
- Town/UT meetings/votes on final recommendations and decisions about the business and financing model.
- Infrastructure funding opportunities pursued based on open application calendar for federal and/or state of funds.

V.   Project Preparation

In total the project preparation scoring category accounts for 30 points.

Describe the contact made with existing service providers regarding any current or impending plans for expanding broadband infrastructure in the affected community; describe how internet service providers in the region will be engaged in developing the community broadband plan or broadband feasibility study components, or in overcoming the specific challenge to broadband expansion.

Completeness of precertification and the application is a factor considered in the project preparation scoring category. Narratives outline how the project will involve the affected community and internet service providers in the region; 10 points, if those narratives are completed, or 0 points.

To be eligible for planning grants, precertification must be completed and approved. Precertification is a process of engaging stakeholders and gathering information, and which encourages adoption of best practices for community broadband planning. Either complete Section V, or indicate when precertification was previously submitted and skip to Section VI below.

Pre-certification completion May 7, 2020

Existing Provider Meetings

Six vendor meetings were held in 2021: GWI; Spectrum; Axiom; Pioneer; Tilson; CCI
The purpose of the meetings was to gather information about their current capacity, their future plans, and their interest in the GEGR as a service area and receiving an RFP.
Data from these meetings is available in a separate excel file upon request. Specific information fell into three categories:
- Technology: band width, data caps, bursting, latency, oversubscription, future technology
- Customer Service: central office/POP, last mile; customer premise equipment, avg repair time, avg installation time, time to answer, escalation procedures
- Costs: monthly recurring charge, non-recurring charge, other notes on costs

Future Provider Engagement

All the vendors the Task Force met with are interested in receiving an RFP.

Challenges and Opportunities

In addition to the information above, discussions about the characteristics of the region led to insights about the challenges and opportunities of building and serving the region. Initial takeaways for the task force are:
(1) A regional project is a requirement for vendor interest.
(2) Interest in the project is dependent on the amount of federal/state funds that are secured in order to reduce the vendors investment. A working assumption is that 75-95% of the project's cost will need to be paid for through federal/state funds in order to secure a vendor.
(3) This is a unique regional project ever pursued on behalf of the twelve communities. Finding a business and financing model that minimizes the impact on property taxes and annual

operating costs will be essential to a regional partnership. This could mean that federal and state support will need to be closer to 90-95% to move the project forward.

(4) The remote location of some of the towns from the Route 1 corridor means that the construction of an all-fiber network will be challenging. A mix of technologies may be needed to increase access for the more remote households.

(5) RDOF plans by CCI and SpaceX will be an important part of the design conversation with the vendors and affected towns.

(6) Low density could mean that the per household cost is 30-40% higher to maintain network operations. This means that thinking outside the box is essential for digital inclusion and equity concerns. Ideas are emerging. Example: building an attractive, branded network of reliable, connected, small, open "community development hubs" for each town that provide high-speed internet access to low-income families, remote employees, students, elders and tourists.

A. Community Preparation - <mark>ALREADY COMPLETED IN PRE-CERTIFICATION</mark>

A community-driven broadband process relies on broad engagement and support. These activities aim to generate participation in the planning process, build understanding and eventual adoption of broadband, and spur economic support. A community broadband committee is formed with members from varying backgrounds and who bring to bear diverse expertise or roles for the planning process. The community broadband committee must be committed for the duration of community broadband planning; committees that are committed into and through eventual expansion of broadband further ensure community vision and goals are met. List the community broadband committee members, their backgrounds and the roles contributed.

Relevant backgrounds:

- an official representing the affected community, including a local elected official with political will to support broadband;
- an educator who cares about educational opportunities around broadband;
- someone in economic development, including a local business owner, including someone from an industry that's important to the affected community;
- someone who depends on broadband, including a teleworker, including a student, including a healthcare provider; and
- a key individual to any such project, including someone who's integral to the fabric of the affected community.

Members with these backgrounds then provide expertise or fill roles:

- a deep dive into broadband, including someone with information technology expertise, including someone with policy expertise;
- a finance expert, including someone with banking expertise, including someone with public-private partnership experience;
- a communicator, both within the committee and from the committee;
- an energizer, who diversifies and brings together the group; and
- a visionary, who drives the process forward and keeps it upbeat.

Name	Background	Role

Involving relevant backgrounds and essential roles helps ensure successful projects and helps demonstrate adequate preparation; 5 points toward the community support scoring category, if the list is deemed complete, or 0 points.

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The broadband committee is intended to be active in guiding the planning and the efforts that address broadband availability and adoption. This can begin with convening residents, businesses and providers to inform and involve these stakeholders. List attendees to at least one community meeting that engaged the existing internet service providers.

Name of Attendee	Title or Role	Community or Affiliation

The broadband committee creates a vision statement that describes the role of broadband in the community's future. It is created with input from the affected communities and from meetings with internet service providers and other stakeholders. The vision articulates specific priority areas or purposes of broadband in the affected community. Include the community vision as it currently exists or describe how it will be created.

Communication plans help ensure consistent, transparent and inclusive communication that reaches all stakeholders. Describe the communication plan as it current exists or how it will be developed by the broadband committee.

Making a plan for outreach and communication helps ensure successful projects and helps demonstrate adequate preparation; 5 points, if a plan is developed, or 0 points.

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B. Gaps Identification - <mark>ALREADY COMPLETED IN PRE-CERTIFICATION</mark>

Conversations among communities, providers and experts will help determine the location of gaps in broadband availability in the affected communities. List the local or relevant elected officials of the affected communities, who are being engaged in broadband conversations.

Name of Official	Title or Position	Community or Affiliation

List the institutions (such as but not limited to libraries, healthcare centers, schools, business districts and large employers, and governmental facilities) that support expansion of broadband in the affected communities.

Name of Facility	Type of Facility	Community or Patrons

List local and regional nonprofits providing economic development programs, the electricity providers and private-sector stakeholders, who are being engaged for potential collaboration in broadband efforts.

Name of Contact	Title or Affiliation	Community or Affiliation

Describe the areas of the affected communities where broadband service is and isn't available; include the estimated number of premises that have access to broadband service and the estimated number of premises that could be served by expanded broadband infrastructure.[4]

Understanding the extent of broadband service helps ensure successful projects and helps demonstrate adequate preparation; 5 points, if a lack of broadband service is identified, or 0 points.

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[4] Currently, ConnectMaine promotes use of the Maine Speed Test, accessible here:
https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/

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C. Planning Preparation - <mark>ALREADY COMPLETED IN PRE-CERTIFICATION</mark>

Preparing for broadband planning and expansion involves identifying entities that may be working to address gaps in broadband availability. List the internet service providers who are currently serving customers in the affect communities, and any internet service providers who might be interested in knowing about broadband efforts.

Name of Contact	Title or Affiliation	Community or Affiliation

Meetings among communities and providers can compare service maps with customer experiences, identify future projects to improve service and better understand the broadband needs of customers. List the occurrence of these meetings, which providers attended and any results.

Date of Meetings	Providers Attending	Actions or Conclusions

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D. Financial Preparation - <mark>ALREADY COMPLETED IN PRE-CERTIFICATION</mark>

Financial support may come from any number of public and private sources. Building up to that support involves understanding how the internet is currently being used or valued. List the municipal services that residents and businesses can access online; describe how the municipality depends on the internet for its activities; list any municipal services or activities that would benefit from expanded broadband service.

If the municipality has a franchise agreement with a cable provider, describe any expectations for expanding infrastructure and the expiration date.

Describe any tax increment financing or economic development grant for the affected communities in part or in whole.

Describe how this broadband planning process will align with other visioning or planning activities of the affected communities. List any local or regional economic development plans, comprehensive or capital plans, or other similar plans that may or could identify broadband as valuable to the affected communities.

Describe evidence of project benefits to students, remote workers, telehealth patients and support facilities, and small businesses.

Ensuring successful expansion includes addressing the adoption or use of internet service available through digital inclusion efforts and projects focused on closing the digital divide. Digital inclusion may include affordable broadband service including internet subscription subsidies, affordable equipment, digital literacy or computer-skills training including digital education programs for students or adults, and public computer access. List any digital inclusion efforts, other information technology activities, or other adoption and affordability efforts. List community commitments and strategies to increase the subscription rate and maximize the use of the proposed broadband infrastructure, or describe how these strategies will be developed.

Digital inclusion strategies and efforts help ensure benefits from broadband availability are realized with expansion of infrastructure; 10 points, if efforts are underway, or 0 points.

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VI. <u>Financial Commitment</u>

In total the financial commitment scoring category accounts for 20 points.

Describe whether or not the proposed project would occur without this grant being awarded.

The GEGEC requires support from ConnectMaine to provide the necessary broadband technical expertise to complete Phase II planning. The GEGEC is a new non-profit that is beginning to build its value in the region through this collaborative effort. This project is charting new territory and the processes it uses to forge collaboration and informed decision-making are critical. Without this resource, the regional effort could falter.

A planning grant from ConnectMaine will permit the Task Force to retain an experienced broadband consultant firm to:
- provide additional engineering support on the VetroCare studies;
- provide technical assistance to the towns and task force regarding the RFP process;
- complete the cost analyses from the vendor proposals; and
- prepare business model scenarios to discuss at region/towns/UT meetings.

Anticipated town warrant approvals on June 5th and 11th can support project coordination over the next twelve months for this project. A local college student has been hired as a summer intern to help build community knowledge and support, and to develop a regional broadband project database that will be accessible by each town as feasibility planning, infrastructure design, RFP proposals, and operating and financial models become available in 2021 and 2022.

A. Budget

List all costs of the proposed project and the secured, financial commitments from the applicant and other sources. Itemized costs may be estimated at time of application; applicants who are awarded and receive funds are required to itemize all actual expenses. Include expenses associated with activities proposed to produce the plan or study, or proposed to overcome a specific challenge. Either list the costs covered by the proposed project or list $0 for costs to be covered by in-kind contributions. Committed dollars cannot consist of in-kind contributions. Committed dollars include all <u>secured</u> matching funds and may include other grant funds awarded for the same project.

Phase II Work to be Completed	Responsible	Total ($)	Committed ($)	Grant ($)
• provide additional engineering support on the VetroCare studies; • provide technical assistance to the towns and task force regarding the RFP process; • complete the cost analyses from the vendor proposals; and • prepare business model scenarios to discuss at region/towns/UT meetings.	Mission Broadband	15,000	0	15,000
• Direct mail projects to selected towns and UTs				

Activity	Role			
• Speed Test promotion via local websites, news and social media. • Final ordinance review with town managers • Build regional broadband database	Summer Intern	2000	2000	0
• Continue meetings with 8 towns and 2 UT administrators to review and document current taxpayer needs and interest. • Complete preliminary mapping work with VetroCare. • Draft and initiate RFP process to vendors. • Continued support for local education and promotion so that taxpayers can make informed decisions. • 2-3 region wide meetings for town leaders to learn about municipal operating and business models. • Hold a series of local town forums to engage and inform taxpayer decisions.	GEGEC/Task Force project coordination	2000	2000	0
Totals		**19,000**	**4,000**	**15,000**

While many factors affect costs, ConnectMaine may use these guidelines and others to award the very limited grant funds available:

- Activities that the applicant, broadband committees or affected communities have the capability of conducting should be covered by in-kind contributions or committed dollars;
- Most Phase I activities could and should be conducted by broadband committees and community members;
- Only activities that the applicant, broadband committees or affected communities aren't capable of conducting on their own should result in consultant expenses;
- Grant dollars should be reserved to cover expenses associated with other activities that aren't typical for the applicant, broadband committees or affected communities to conduct on their own, or that can't be covered by in-kind contributions;
- Grant dollars for Phase I projects shouldn't exceed $5,000 for the first community, with added costs but also economies of scale for each additional affected community;
- Phase II projects will likely cost more, and will likely involve consultant expenses, given the engineering designs and business modeling required; however, in-kind contributions for fieldwork, mapping and conducting RFP processes should be explored; and
- Grant dollars for projects following Phase I and Phase II shouldn't exceed $10,000, because activities target a specific challenge to expanding broadband and the applicant has demonstrated a defined need.

B. Grant

Calculate the percentage of total cost covered by the financial commitment, including secured municipally-authorized funds, private funds raised and the financial commitments from any other sources; and the percentage of total cost covered by grant amount requested.

As of 5-27-21	
Committed/Cost	Grant/Cost
21%	79%
4000/19000	15000/19000

Note: We respectfully request to provide the application review team with an updated budget on June 13th, following the June 5[5th] and June 12th Warrant Meetings for Danforth and Weston.

The reality and timing of securing local funds is tied directly to Warrant Meetings that are fixed times in a town's annual calendar. Future application rounds for ConnectMaine broadband grants need to consider this timing reality. If the application period was late June to late July, the majority of warrant meetings would have occurred because of school budget decisions.

For this region, these two warrant decisions have a significant impact on the competitiveness of this application.

Anticipated as of 6-13-21	
Committed/Cost	Grant/Cost
44%	56%
12000/27000	15000/27000

The amount of financial support provided by members of the affected community is a factor in the financial commitment scoring category, with lower proportions of grant funds scoring higher, up to 20 points.

Grant/Cost	Points
<50%	20
50-74%	11-19
75-99%	1-10
100%	0