

ConnectME Advisory Council Meeting - Notes  
7/23/12  
9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### **Discussion Topics**

- Strategic Plan
- High cost installs
- Reverse auction
- Pre-app tech survey/engineering study
- Underserved
- Extension policy
- Tracking past grants: households-businesses served
- Statutory Duties of Authority

### **Advisory Council Members present**

1. Fletcher Kittredge, GWI, Chair
2. Ben Sanborn, Telecommunications Association of Maine
3. Linda Lord, Maine State Librarian
4. Jeff Mao, Dept. of Education
5. Joshua Broder, President, Tilson Technology Management
6. Jeff Letourneau, Exec. Director, Network Maine (UMS)
7. Rob Kelley, MIT Technology Board
8. Bruce Ballantyne, FairPoint Vice President of Operations

### **Meeting Notes**

#### **Strategic Plan**

##### Strategic Recommendations/Focus Areas

1. Households
2. Businesses
3. Healthcare industry
4. Educational community
5. Government services
6. Broadband industry

Of the six focus areas and recommendations in the strategic plan, the advisory Council felt that prioritizing numbers 3, 4, and 5 would drive increases in numbers 1, 2, and 6. Numbers 1 and 2 are currently the focus of the Technical Assistance project and the Broadband Capacity Building project respectively. As people begin to understand the “value” through the efforts in numbers 1-5, the broadband industry will see an increased demand, included in number 6. The importance of measuring success, focusing on the specific tactics under each focus area, driving people up the tier levels, and bringing other

college/university entities to the table were discussed and it was agreed that the Advisory Council will look at these areas more closely at future meetings for specific recommendations to the Authority.

### **High Cost Installs**

The Council had concern that a standing high cost installation program might be open to abuse. The Council suggested that providers should do their research and know ahead of time about the amount of cap ex and high cost installation issues such as line conditioning are facing a proposed grant funded project, plan accordingly and include the high cost items in the application. Should a provider realize that the cap ex is greater than expected, they could revisit the Authority and seek an amendment to the project and grant amount.

### **Tracking Grants**

The Council discussed tracking grants long term. In the future the Council will investigate adding language to grant paperwork requiring providers to file ongoing yearly status updates; especially regarding numbers of subscribers and take rate, reserving the right to audit. Currently providers are required to file a completion report at the end of the first year or completion of the funded project, but the subscription number is very low at that time. James Sewall Co. will utilize the mapping capabilities to double check coverage reported. Further research will determine ways to aggregate data to protect that which may be confidential/proprietary in nature.

### **Engineering Study - Reverse Auction**

In recent grant rounds providers and applicants have expressed an interest in the Authority funding engineering studies of proposed project areas. The Council discussed funding engineering studies with the caveat that the Authority would be the repository for the results. The results would be used for reverse auction offerings. When the Authority is no longer receiving applications to provide service to unserved areas of the state, they may elect to fund "x" amount of studies possibly by bid process, to be made immediately available to any provider to apply for a grant for that area. These are initial discussion points which the Council wished to investigate further.

Other discussion topics not addressed at this meeting will be on the next Council agenda. The Council agreed that more regular meetings of the Council would be beneficial to the Authority, possibly of the same timing but a week or so before each Authority meeting.