



COMMUNITY BROADBAND PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

Precertification Checklist

A community must answer each of these items, in the format below, to be certified for the planning grant process. A "no" answer is perfectly acceptable; this is stakeholder and information gathering process. Once certified, a community will be eligible to participate in the competitive process to receive funds from the ConnectME Authority.

The Town of Rockport is well into the latter stages of broadband planning. See *Rockland, Rockport and Owl's Head Broadband Plan and Network Designs* issued on September 29, 2015 by Tilson Technology Management of Portland, ME (the "[Tilson report](#)"). We have already lighted a small network serving a few anchor institutions and have completed all five requirements for broadband planning per Title [35-A§ 9217\(1\)](#).

As discussed with ConnectME staff, we understand that we are not a good match for the description as "unserved" or "underserved" although residents in some corners of Rockport may well qualify. We submit this application in hopes of furthering a frank discussion on policy rationales that should, we believe, put some more populated areas on equal footing with the more remote jurisdictions now favored for funding assistance.

We hope to be considered for either a planning or infrastructure grant in the maximum amount of \$100,000.

1. Create a Community Broadband Team

The Town of Rockport Select Board created the Technology Task Force (TTF) on October 13, 2015 and finalized its informal [charge of duties](#) and membership roster after several discussions in recent months. This group now also serves as the Community Broadband Team for purposes of partnership with ConnectME Authority.

- Provide list of members, including name and title:

John Viehman, Chair

John Viehman is President of *JVA-Marketing That Works!* He has helped numerous large and small business clients optimize their marketing and sales efforts by fully leveraging their internet and social media platforms. John spent the bulk of his 30-year career in publishing at Rodale Inc. in the pre-dawn hours of the internet, when the world was primarily analog and relying on ink-on-paper for the lion's share of its communication. While building some of the most profitable media brands within the Rodale magazine family, he pioneered the first content management system for a media brand (before we knew it as CMS, CMA, CDA, CCMS, et al) and successfully

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bridged the divide between broadcast and the internet with the first nationally broadcast series on PBS to leverage convergence technology.

Stephen Hand, Vice Chair

Steve Hand is the President of Critical Biz - a consulting firm based in Rockport, Maine that provides Business Strategy, Project Management and Technology Guidance for organizations throughout Maine and New England. Steve has been a significant figure in the Maine technology community for the past 20 years, having grown and sold one of the leading tech providers – Know Technology – and serving on various boards including Maine Technology Institute, TechMaine, MTUG and the ConnectME Advisory Panel.

Debra J. Hall

Debra Hall is a licensed attorney with 25 years of experience in the financial industries sector. The past 7 years she has been focused on a full-time basis as the co-founder of a start-up software company. She recently led a successful effort in Naples, FL to bring FTTH to 541 residences.

Ari Meil

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Gus Natale

Owner of Gusco Consulting, Inc., a local IT support firm. He's the kind of person who had completely dismantled the guts of a computer by the age of 12 to see how it worked. He admits it's not normal, but he actually enjoys the type of troubleshooting that makes other people pull their hair out. Currently servicing over 90 clients throughout Maine including the Town of Rockport, Gusco's staff has wide and varied backgrounds in system design, computer databases and languages, technologies, platforms and on-site technical support.

Geoffrey Parker, Select Board liaison

Geoff Parker is a professional story teller – not his own, but others' stories. Starting as a still photographer, he progressed to producing Multi-Image shows (multiple slide projector creations, in his case, up to 64 projectors) and thence to Video. Serving audiences from 50 to 5,000 he has captured content on five continents and staged

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In his spare time he insists on trying to improve the communication abilities of the various public boards on which he serves.

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Mr. Sternowski has also owned and operated several small retail businesses throughout his career.

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- Must designate single point person for communications with ConnectME for certification process, provide email address to ConnectME.

Richard C. Bates, Town Manager

townmanager@town.rockport.me.us
101 Main Street
Rockport, ME 04856
236-0806

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2. Hold at least one Community Broadband Meeting

- Send emails to broadband providers currently serving your community and invite them to the community meeting.
- Share results of ConnectME Mapping for this community.

Providers were contacted and debriefed and available service levels were verified and mapped by (“the [Tilson report](#)”).

- Questions for attendees:
 - Which providers are currently serving your community?
 - Which providers attended your meeting?
 - How do the mapping results compare with members' actual experiences?
 - Does existing broadband access meet your needs?
 - If it is inadequate in what ways does it fall short?
 - If you have broadband, how do you use it now?

Input from providers, analysis of mapping and results of an extensive survey of residents and business owners are all included in the [Tilson report](#). Both as an indication of probable “take rate” and indicator of public support the survey results were very good.

- Provide documentation showing meeting dates, notes, agenda and number of attendees, emails to providers and responses to the questions above.

See [agenda](#) and [Livestream](#) from the Community Broadband Team meeting of March 30, 2016. The Town’s progress has garnered significant [press coverage](#) over the last few years.

3. Identify Key Documents/Existing Efforts

- Does the municipality use broadband to deliver municipal services? Describe the services, and how broadband is used to deliver these services. (e.g., town office has a broadband connection it uses to submit information to state government, police department uses broadband to communicate with state or federal databases or assessors' office make access to property records and maps available to the general public)

Working with Tilson, the Town designed and constructed an FTTP network in 2013 serving 70 premises in the downtown Village area. Rockport’s creative economy has been demonstratively bolstered by this infrastructure investment, including data-hungry sole proprietors and other individuals working out of their home offices. “[Work where you live](#)” describes an important segment of the community in Rockport, as Community Broadband Team member Debra Hall related from personal experience at the March 30 meeting.

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Beyond the profile of the individual working from home, the year round residents as well as Rockport's many summer residents and visitors benefit from broadband service to several key Town facilities. These include the Public Library; the Opera House, where many community meetings take place and are recorded to enhance public participation; the Harbor; the Town Office; and the Police and Fire Station. Two critically important arts institutions are also served by the Village network: Maine Media Workshops & College and the Bay Chamber Concerts & Music School.

- Is there local or regional economic development plans in which broadband could play a role? If so, provide a list of these documents.

No – although guidance from the Eastern Maine Development Corporation is applicable:

EMDC sees the region as transitioning from an extraction based economy to one of “tourism and value-added knowledge-based processes.” In order to make this transition and attract high paying jobs and to import tourism revenue, EMDC states that the region must:

1. retain and attract human capital;
2. preserve and “brand” the uniqueness of place;
3. focus on the needs of a knowledge based economy.

- Does the town have a cable franchise agreement?

Yes

- Are there any on-going community projects focusing on the digital divide or information technology (public access through schools or libraries, training, improving access to broadband, etc.)?

As noted in the Tilson report, the Town is studying the feasibility of expanding its FTTP network town-wide. The Select Board has proposed to raise and appropriate \$300,000 to help cover the costs of final, “shovel-ready” design. The cost of this engineering work, assuming the worst case scenario in make ready challenges, etc., has been very roughly estimated at \$475,000 by Tilson.

- Is there a TIFF or other economic development grant for all or part of the area to be served?

Yes – pending program changes to existing Downtown and Route 1 TIF districts.

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- Does the town have a municipal electric company? If not, what electric utilities serve the area?

No – Central Maine Power

4. Identify potential Community Anchor Institutions

- Provide a list of potential community anchor institutions. Community anchor institutions are entities such as schools, libraries, hospitals and other medical providers, public safety entities, institutions of higher education. Anchor institutions can also be community support organizations that facilitate greater use of broadband by vulnerable populations, including low-income, the unemployed, and the aged.

Penobscot Bay Medical Center – the hospital is Rockport’s largest employer and draws patients from an unusually large service area. Town Manager and key staff meet quarterly with hospital executives to discuss operational and planning issues. We are aware of the hospital’s interest in developing stronger in-home monitoring capabilities by facilitating greater use of broadband. [See attached letter of support](#) from Chief Operating Officer Erik A. Frederick. Our region is considered Maine’s oldest, demographically speaking, and Town officials are certainly mindful that medical issues are at the center of many residents’ daily lives.

Schools – Maine School Administrative District 28, Five-Town Community School District, Community and Technical Colleges. The public high school and elementary school are both located in Rockport, along with a few, well-established private grade and high schools. The public middle school is located in Camden. Students at all these institutions would benefit from enhanced online learning applications.

Experiential Lifelong Learning – As noted above, Maine Media Workshops (MMW) and Bay Chamber Concerts (BCC) have already taken advantage of the existing, small FTTP network in the downtown Village area. After expansion of the network, the same could be true of the Center for Furniture Craftmanship located on Route 90. MMW and BCC stand out as “data hogs” in particular who rely on stable, extremely fast internet traffic to upload and download large files of music and video.

However the creative economy is also a more general local and regional phenomenon that can only be amplified by greater access to broadband. Rockport’s beautiful setting and vital creative economy bring people together who commit their lives, their summers or maybe just a week of hard earned vacation time to the arts. For these creatives, and for the “work where you live” self-employed types who are relocating or remote desk-topping from their homes in Rockport, pursuing the buildout of our FTTP network is about a vision of a place [where art and technology meet](#).

Retirement/Assisted Living facilities – communities like the Quarry Hill retirement Community are well placed to benefit from an expansion of Rockport’s broadband network. The current generation of older retirees is not only likely to pioneer the telemedicine field but also will also generate a greater and greater share of internet traffic of the usual types – including 4k video which will become widely available.

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The Town of Rockport – The Rockport Public Library is at the forefront of the trend for expanded functionality, including assisting job seekers in their search and preparation for employment. The Opera House is a beacon for public participation thanks to extensive livestreaming. Transient boaters, bus tours and other visits to Rockport are made much easier by the wireless repeater transmitting Wi-Fi to the Harbor and Marine Park. The Police and Fire Departments make good use of webcams. All of the above could be expanded with a town-wide network to enhance public safety and quality of life.

- Provide a list of commercial institutions that could benefit from lower cost, higher bandwidth, and/or improved reliability of broadband.

It is difficult to think of any business that would not benefit from lower cost, higher bandwidth, more reliable broadband access. Here is a short list of tech-oriented firms: [Business Services](#).

5. Create a Vision Statement

- A Vision Statement is created by Community Broadband Team with input from public at the Community Broadband Meeting, with the goal to take a first step toward being able to set a direction for the community's future broadband efforts.

Our vision is to provide high speed fiber access to every resident and business in the community and further, to be a leader and resource for other communities contemplating similar initiatives. The adoption of this vision statement is a process that will mean more after the Town Meeting vote, this coming June, on the Select Board and Budget Committee proposal to raise and appropriate the bulk of the funding required to complete a shovel-ready design for the FTTP network buildout. Sources of funds, including the funding assistance the Town is hereby requesting from the ConnectME Authority, will go a long way toward defining broadband's role in the community.

- The statement should describe the role broadband would play in this community's future, using input from the other steps in the precertification process.

At least among the elected and appointed officials involved, and based on the survey results, Rockport's vision is to complement and support "where the arts and technology meet" with as broad-based a plan as possible for extending affordable access to a Town-owned fiber optic network to residents who may never set foot on campus at any of the Town's arts and crafts-oriented institutions and who do not frequent the high-end, gourmet restaurants in the Harbor or "downtown" Village area. We may well have achieved broad awareness in the community that Rockport cannot be successful without leveraging the creative economy. As a community, however, we are also very well aware that the creative economy needs low and moderate income families present and accounted for to function and remain vital.

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For all the artists and for all the boat builders, cabinet makers, fishermen and tradesmen who do not practice their traditional crafts as a hobby, viable workforce housing, relatively low taxes and an otherwise inclusive sense of community must be maintained as Rockport grows. Here in Rockport, many of us actually do live where we work and always will (not the other way around), just the same as in many of Maine's more remote jurisdictions. These practitioners of traditional crafts will need access to broadband just as sure as other professions eventually. Many craftsmen today serve an international clientele and will increasingly need reliable internet service to do so.

To be successful any vision for Rockport's future – and any plan for investment in critical infrastructure to support our homes and businesses – must be geared toward keeping traditional ways of life intact as a counterbalance to the creative economy.

- Identify specific priority areas (e.g., connecting community anchor institutions, ensuring older citizens can age in place, closing the "homework gap", providing affordable high speed connections to a business park).

For this very reason Town officials have not started out with the assumption that specific priority areas for broadband service should be carved out of the whole. Rather, as often discussed by the Select Board and touched on at the March 30 Community Broadband Team Meeting, "future proofing" all Rockport residents is the goal. We are looking ahead (and not so far ahead, we think) to a day when affordable access to the internet, television, public services and, for an ever-increasing number of residents, simply making a living, will be dependent on availability of an affordable fiber optic network.

- Explain how this effort conforms to other planning documents/published visioning efforts on other issues in your community.

Rockport's 2004 Comprehensive Plan is notable for the emphasis placed on continued support for all five historic Village centers: Glen Cove, the Harbor or "downtown" Village, Rockville, Simonton's Corner and West Rockport. This is reflected in the Select Board's goal of expanding the FTTP network to serve everyone town-wide and, if it is later determined that prioritization is necessary, for funding and/or phasing of the complete buildout, maintaining this focus on the Village centers would be one way to go about it to help ensure broad support in the community.

Grant Application

Applications are scored on the narrative provided for following criteria.

1. Project Plan – 25 points

1.1. Provide documentation of project management plan.

The Rockland, Rockport and Owl’s Head Broadband Plan and Network Designs by Tilson Technology Management dated September, 29 2015 is [hyperlinked here](#) as well as in our Precertification Checklist.

1.2. Provide the timeline to complete the proposed community plan deliverable.

June 15, 2016 – Annual Town Meeting vote on proposal to raise and appropriate funds.
from July 1, 2016 – Financial modeling, fiber engineering, pole surveys, pole applications.
to June 30, 2017 – Solicit multiple ISP’s to participate in open access “dark fiber” network.
Spring 2017 – Network operations RFP, make-ready challenges, construction RFP.
starting July 1, 2017 – Construction of next phase of town-wide network.

2. Plan Deliverables – 20 points

2.1. Provide narrative addressing how the items A. – F. below will be addressed in the final plan delivered to the community.

A. Define local broadband needs and goals.

To provide fiberoptic connectivity to every home and business in Rockport. If it proves necessary to scale back to other technology at some locations, the Select Board will consider this. Some options are already fleshed out in the Tilson report along with associated financial modeling.

B. Inventory existing broadband infrastructure assets within the municipality, municipalities or regions.

Announced on August 11, 2013 the first Town-owned fiber optic network in Maine was lighted by GWI to serve 70 premises in Rockport’s downtown Village area including anchor institutions Maine Media Workshop, Bay Chamber Concerts, Public Library, Town Office, Police and Fire Departments.

C. Include a gap analysis defining the additional broadband infrastructure necessary to meet identified needs and goals.

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We understand that State policy currently leans towards lowering the bar relative to national standards – but our goal is to deliver much faster service than 10 mbps “up” and “down.” Therefore the gap we are seeking to fill is more or less town-wide, beyond the current downtown Village network. A broadband inventory appears in table form at p. 5 of the Tilson report. For gap analysis, see p. 26, including the apt observation by Tilson that, for the participating municipalities at least, identifying a gap is not the same as making an inventory of assets.

- D. Include one or more potential network designs, cost estimates, operating models and potential business models based on input from broadband providers operating within the municipality, municipalities or region and any other parties that submit a network design solution in the course of developing the plan to address any broadband gaps identified in paragraph C.

See p. 27 of the Tilson report for Fiber Design and Capital Cost Estimate.

- E. Include an assessment of all municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances that have the effect of delaying or increasing the cost of broadband infrastructure deployment.

We do not believe we are limited by policies or procedures at the municipal level.

- F. Digital Inclusion
 - 1. Affordable Internet – describe how the community will address providing affordable internet options.

Ideally, the community will fund the complete buildout of a town-wide Fiber to the Premise network and allow multiple ISP’s to compete to serve a new, compact customer base in a highly efficient manner, bring costs down for all concerned.

- 2. Affordable Equipment – describe how the community will expand the availability of affordable equipment to low-income residents.

Including service drops and possibly some electronics at the home are options the Town is considering, as illustrated in the Models and Financial Pro-formas at pp. 38-40 of the Tilson report.

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3. Digital Literacy Training – describe how the community will teach people to use technology.

The ongoing work of the Rockport Public Library in this area would be greatly enhanced by an expanded network.

4. Public Computer Access – describe how the community will increase public computer access.

Public access is currently offered at the Town Office and Public Library.

3. Value Added Collaborations – 20 points

- 3.1. Describe how the broadband community planning grant may generate improvements to community strength through collaborating in such areas as economic development, education, employment, governmental services, health care, public safety or other regional community oriented activities.

Through collaboration with several anchor institutions, much has already been achieved to strengthen our community through access to broadband.

Penobscot Bay Medical Center – the hospital is Rockport’s largest employer and draws patients from an unusually large service area. Town Manager and key staff meet quarterly with hospital executives to discuss operational and planning issues. We are aware of the hospital’s interest in developing stronger in-home monitoring capabilities by facilitating greater use of broadband. See attached letter of support from Erik Frederick. Our region is considered Maine’s oldest, demographically speaking and Town officials are certainly mindful that medical issues are at the center of many residents’ daily lives.

Schools – Maine School Administrative District 28, Five-Town Community School District, Community and Technical Colleges. The public high school and elementary school are both located in Rockport, along with a few, well-established private grade and high schools. The public middle school is located in Camden. Students at all these institutions would benefit from enhanced online learning applications.

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The Police and Fire Departments make good use of webcams. All of the above could be expanded with a town-wide network to enhance public safety and quality of life.

4. Budget – 15 points

4.1. Submit budget aligned to significant Project Plan milestones, costs and tasks.

Tilson Technology Management has provided a very rough, worst-case scenario cost to complete a shovel-ready design at \$475,000.

from July 1, 2016 – Financial modeling, fiber engineering, pole surveys, pole applications.
to June 30, 2017 – Solicit multiple ISP's to participate in open access "dark fiber" network.
Spring 2017 – Network operations RFP, make-ready challenges, construction RFP.

5. Overall Financial Feasibility – 15 points

5.1. Describe the applicant's experience relevant to proposed project.

Working with Tilson Technology Management and Great Works Internet the Town constructed and lighted the first municipally-owned fiber optic network in Maine. The downtown Village network officially went live on August 11, 2013.

5.2. Provide a description of financial viability by submitting pro-forma financial statements for the project and applicant financial statements. Confidential financial information may be submitted and should be so marked and submitted in a separate file.

As discussed with ConnectME staff, the Town has not selected a partner for the engineering work, as the amount estimated by Tilson is well above our threshold for requiring competitive bidding. Moreover we do not believe the residents would be best served by committing to a single ISP. Therefore we are not in a position to provide financial statements for these as-yet undetermined partners. For Financial Pro-formas see pp. 38-40 of the Tilson report.

5.3. Provide a description of team member's background and roles.

5.3.1. Principal point of contact.

Richard C. Bates, Town Manager

townmanager@town.rockport.me.us
101 Main Street
Rockport, ME 04856
236-0806

Town of Rockport – Community Broadband Planning Grant Application

5.3.2. Team member bios and role in planning project.

Members of the Town's Technology Task Force were appointed by the Select Board starting October 2015. This group also serves as the Community Broadband Team as noted on the Precertification Checklist.

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5.3.3. Provide proof of support and endorsement from the participating local municipalities.

The following warrant article will be decided by the voters at Annual Town Meeting on June 15, 2016:

Article 15. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for engineering and design of a municipally owned Fiber to the Premise Network (FTTP) to serve all Rockport residents and businesses for the 2016/2017 fiscal year:

A. Design & Engineering..... \$300,000

Total..... \$300,000

Budget Committee Votes to recommend: 9 For; 0 Against; 0 Abstain.

Select Board Votes: *SB vote will take place on April 19, 2016*

5.3.4. Provide the names of local officials and community representatives that will be directly involved as members of the team.

William Chapman, Select Board Chair
Geoffrey C. Parker, Select Board Liaison
Richard C. Bates, Town Manager
James P. Francomano, Planning Director

6. Past Performance – 5 points

6.1. Provide documentation demonstrating past performance in executing grant funded programs.

In the past three years, the Town completed extensive infrastructure projects, with successful administration and closeout by the Planning Office, including: Route 1 Sewer Extension of approximately 1,900 feet with CDBG funding assistance in the amount of \$270,000; and design and installation of new outdoor lighting, new power pedestals for transient boaters and improvements to parking at the Harbormaster’s Office with MDOT funding assistance in the amount of \$99,975.

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6.2. Provide three client references.

Fletcher Kittredge, Chief Executive Officer
Great Works Internet
8 Pomerleau Street
Biddeford, ME 04005
602-1134

fkittred@staff.gwi.net

Sue Inches, Senior Consultant
Tilson Technology Management
245 Commercial Street, Suite 203
Portland, ME 04101
591-6427

sinches@tilsontech.com

Meg Weston, President
Maine Media Workshops & College
70 Camden Street
Rockport, ME 04856
236-8581

mweston@mainemedia.edu



COMMUNITY BROADBAND PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

Round One Community Planning Grant Application

Due Date: April 15, 2016

- 1. Date:** April 15, 2016
- 2. Submitting Community:** Town of Rockport
- 3. Grant Amount Requested:** \$100,000
- 4. Community Project Point of Contact:** **Richard C. Bates, Town Manager**
townmanager@town.rockport.me.us
101 Main Street Rockport ME 04856
236-0806
- 5. Party Who Prepared Application:** **James P. Francomano, Planning Director**
planner@town.rockport.me.us
101 Main Street Rockport ME 04856
236-0989
- 6. Executive Summary of the Project:** The Town of Rockport is very far along in its broadband planning and seeks the maximum \$100,000 award to assist in the engineering and design work to expand broadband access beyond its small, existing town-owned network.

At Annual Town Meeting the voters will decide on a proposal, made by the Select Board and then approved by the Budget Committee, to raise up to \$300,000 in matching funds.



Town of Rockport, Maine

Town Manager's Office
Town Office Building
101 Main Street
Rockport, Maine 04856

Richard C. Bates, Town Manager
Telephone: 207. 236.0806
Fax: 207.230.0112
Email: rbates@town.rockport.me.us



Town of Rockport, Maine

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April 15, 2016

Lisa A. Leahy
Associate Executive Director ConnectME
78 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0078

Re: ConnectME Funding for Broadband Planning and Infrastructure

Dear Lisa,

Attached please find the Town of Rockport's request for a Planning or Infrastructure Grant to assist with the engineering and design of a Town wide Fiber to the Premise network to provide high speed, broadband access to **EVERY** home and business in Rockport.

As you are keenly aware, Rockport has provided the catalyst for the interest in providing high speed broadband to all of Maine. In fact what Rockport did brought national attention to the issue and drove interest in this issue to the forefront of the State's dialogue.

We have been out in front of this issue from the beginning and have had the unanimous support of the Rockport Select Board in their single minded, clear vision of what was best for Rockport. That vision is to provide high speed fiber access to every resident and business in the community and further, to be a leader and resource for other communities contemplating similar initiatives.

Rockport is one of the thirty founding member communities of Next Century Cities (NCC), a growing 132 member national organization, dedicated to providing support to local leaders who are providing fast, reliable, and affordable Internet at globally competitive speeds. Residents, schools, libraries, and businesses, require next-generation connectivity to succeed. This is no longer optional, it is as important as water, sewer, electricity and roads.

Our grant request is to assist in the next step of planning that is necessary to provide high speed broadband. The maximum award of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000) would fund approximately 1/3 of the design and engineering needed to produce a bid-ready, shovel-ready design. We have already accomplished the preliminary work in completing the [Tilson Study](#) that looked at the options, possibilities, cost estimates and business models that analyzed the economic benefits to the community. In doing so we delayed our own progress in order to promote regional collaboration in the study, in the hope that more communities would come aboard. Rockland and Owl's Head were the only takers.

April 15, 2016
Lisa Leahy

This grant request could take the form a planning grant or an infrastructure grant, as we are effectively in both stages of this process. We have completed all five requirements for broadband planning per Title [35-A§ 9217\(1\)](#), but I understand our intentions with respect to ISP's currently do not fit the mold for an infrastructure grant. Our project is somewhat unique in that it is a dark fiber open access model which allows for multiple ISP providers to use the same network, the same as the 3 Ring Binder.

Huntsville, Alabama recently announced that they have teamed up with Google Fiber to build a municipally owned, dark fiber network to serve 180,000 people. Google said, in a recent NCC teleconference conference, they chose Huntsville because they liked the model of multiple ISP's using the same infrastructure, which is much more sustainable than single large ISP providers, who control a monopoly position on internet access. This model is the same as what is referred to as the "Maine Model" after what we did in Rockport. There are numerous [examples of media interest](#) in what we did here in Rockport. These hyperlinks are also included in our submission.

It is my understanding that current policy prioritizes underserved areas of the State and this is an admirable approach. However only helping the underserved will not benefit the entire State and spur the economy. Additionally I would argue that Maine's target of 10/10 is actually slow by most states' standards. To be competitive in the global marketplace, we should not aim at mediocre; we need to aim at exceptional.

Some funding should be allocated to those in the lead who will raise the bar. I maintain that only funding those who are underserved, creates a bottleneck that will not lead to advancement of the goal of better broadband in Maine. ConnectME needs to encourage communities, like Rockport, to continue towards the finish line. If we fumble on the two-yard line, the impact could be devastating not only on Rockport's initiative, but the slow growing momentum in the whole State.

We are going to vote in June on a request to raise funds to do the engineering and design. It would be a big help in getting our warrant article to pass successfully, if there was some support from ConnectME. If we are successful in our ultimate goal of building our network as planned, every home in Rockport will have accessibility to gigabit speed at an affordable price. That will raise the bar in the State and move the initiative to bring better broadband to everyone.

I hope that the review committee will give our grant request a thoughtful review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Bates", written in a cursive style.

Richard C. Bates
Town Manager