



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

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", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard C. Bates
Town Manager