Broadband, Digital Equity, Entrepreneurship & Ecosystem Building
What’s happening?
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (IIJA)

Broadband Equity Access & Deployment (BEAD):
- $42.5 Billion (Planning & implementation)

Digital Equity Act (DEA):
- $60M Planning
- $1.44B State Capacity Funds
- $1.25B Digital Equity Competitive Funds

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program:
- $3 Billion

Middle Mile:
- $980 Million
Maine received $5 million in BEAD Initial Planning Funds from NTIA in November 2022.
- MCA submitted a 5-year broadband plan as 1st step, followed by Initial Proposal v 1 & 2.
- Maine’s total BEAD Allocation is $272 million.

Digital Equity:
- Maine received $542,000 in Digital Equity Planning Funds from NTIA in November 2022.
- MCA submitted a State Digital Equity Plan Sep 2023 to access digital equity implementation funding, a portion of the total $1.44B allocation (formula TBD).

**BROADBAND ACTION PLAN:**

MCA combined two planning processes, resulting in a comprehensive Broadband Action Plan (BAP) with digital equity at its core AND a stand alone Digital Equity Plan. This ensures seamless integration, maximizes use of our resources, and avoids potential stakeholder fatigue & confusion.
● Bead Initial Proposal (both Volumes 1 & 2) were both submitted December 2023

● Volume 1 - Spatial data and analysis components
  ○ Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs)
  ○ Unserved and underserved locations
  ○ State lead challenge process

● Volume 2 - Everything else
  ○ Subgrantee Selection Process (SSP) - includes methodology for the Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold (EHCPLT)
  ○ Low-cost broadband service option and middle class affordability plan offerings
  ○ Workforce readiness
  ○ Climate assessment
BEAD Timeline

- December 2023 - submit Volumes 1 & 2
- February 2024 - Volume 1 approved by NTIA
- March 2024 - begin state led challenge process
- June 2024 - close state led challenge process
- July 2024 - state led challenge process adjudicated/cured
- August 2024 - subgrantee selection process begins
- December 2024 - subgrantee selection process complete and final proposal submitted to NTIA
- Early 2025 - final proposal approved, funding released
- BEAD infrastructure implementation will take place between 2025-2029
Digital Equity Act: Who & What

Who covered populations

- Low Income Households
- Older Adults
- Incarcerated, formerly incarcerated
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with language barriers
- Individuals who are members of racial & ethnic minority groups
- People who primarily reside in rural area

What elements of digital equity

- Affordable Access
- Digital Skills
- Affordable Devices & Technical Support
- Accessible, Inclusive Public Resources & Services
- Internet Safety
The Digital Equity Act

- Fall 2023: Notice of Funding Opportuning (NOFO) Expected State Capacity Funds
- Dec 2023: Early Implementation Begins with Existing Partners and Funding Sources
- Spring 2024: State Applies for Capacity Funds; Competitive Grant Program NOFO Expected
- Fall 2024: State Implementation Programs Launched
DIGITAL EQUITY IN MAINE
Service Availability Data (Dec 2023)

**Unserved**
- Est. 6.3% of locations. May have connection, but slow and unreliable. To address through community-driven, regional scale Public Private Partnerships.
- Deployments underway currently via ARPA funding.
*The % may be increasing*

**Underserved**
- Average Service
- 55.4%

**Served**
- Broadband Service
- 32.7%

**Most Critical / No Connection**
- Est. 5.6% of locations.
- Updated data to target and prioritize in grants and special deployments as needed including wireless.
- Decisions and deployment by end of 2024.

**Inadequately Served**
- Est. 55.4% of locations.
- May have connection but affordability and speed issues remain. BEAD funding limited. Will need to leverage private funds.
## What is the Scale of the Problem?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Definition</th>
<th>Working / Colloquial Definition</th>
<th>BEAD Definition</th>
<th>Number of Locations</th>
<th>% of Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Connection</td>
<td>&lt; 25/3 Mbps</td>
<td>BEAD Priority Eligible</td>
<td>35,575</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unserved</td>
<td>25/3 to 100/20 Mbps</td>
<td>BEAD Secondary Ineligible, until all eligible are served</td>
<td>39,578</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unreliable &amp; Slow Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underserved</td>
<td>100/20 to 100/100 Mbps</td>
<td>Average Service</td>
<td>349,814</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BEAD Ineligible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served</td>
<td>&gt;100/100 Mbps</td>
<td>Reliable &amp; Fast Service</td>
<td>206,981</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Affordability is a challenge for everyone and a significant challenge for covered populations

2. Covered populations had less confidence in digital skills across virtually every category

3. Covered populations found devices unaffordable and tended to cite device as a barrier & not have enough devices for household

4. Limited resources for digital skills training and technical support; even more limited awareness of resources

5. Significant concern about internet safety and lack of confidence & awareness of tools to stay safe online

6. Across the board difficulty navigating government resources online and finding resources in multiple languages
We have assets!

1. Core digital inclusion partners
2. “Networks of opportunity”
3. Building on the Laptop Initiative & “Connect the Kids” history
4. Maine School & Library Network
5. History of community driven broadband and public private partnerships
   a. Digital Equity Taskforce, Regional & Tribal Partners

Tech Help for ME
WHAT’S IN THE PLAN
Digital Equity Strategies

1. Build a Base to Support Digital Equity in Maine
2. Leverage Partnerships to Reach Places & People
3. Focus on Affordability
4. Launch Statewide Education & Information Campaigns
5. Sustain & Grow Our Investment in Digital Equity
Digital Equity Goals

- Reach 50,000 underserved Mainers with affordable devices, digital skills, internet safety education and tools
- 100% of devices provided come with technical support
- Enroll an additional 84,000 eligible households/individuals in the Affordable Connectivity Program
- Explore & expand connectivity (wifi & wired) of 41,000 subsidized affordable housing units
- Generate 25,000 donated devices for refurbishment
- User-centered audit on top ten state resources/programs used by covered populations
- Raise $15M Digital Equity Fund (to complement federal funding)
WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW
Early Implementation in 2024

- Connectivity Hub Grants
- Regional & Tribal Partners (Year Two)
- Online Digital Equity Asset Inventory Tool
- Capacity Investments to boost Digital Skills & Device Refurbishment
- Affordable Housing Pilot Program
- Digital Equity Workshop
- Start Summit w/ Roux Institute and AARP

Connectivity Hub Grants
Regional & Tribal Partners (Year Two)
Online Digital Equity Asset Inventory Tool
Capacity Investments to boost Digital Skills & Device Refurbishment
Affordable Housing Pilot Program
Digital Equity Workshop
Start Summit w/ Roux Institute and AARP
Why should rural ecosystem builders care?
Digital Equity helps entrepreneurs thrive & innovate, and build connected ecosystems

Fast internet speeds provided by FTTH allow entrepreneurs to explore new ideas, conduct extensive research, and innovate at a rapid pace. This empowers startups to develop cutting-edge products and services, driving overall economic growth and igniting a spirit of innovation within the community.

It allows for easy communication with other entrepreneurs around the world. This enables young people to share ideas, ask questions when they need help, and even form partnerships with other individuals who have complementary skillsets or experiences in order to grow their businesses further.

What is possible when high-speed broadband comes to town

CORI - January 12, 2024
Digital Equity in practice

- We have access to service
- We can afford it
- We have a device that meets our needs (and tech support when it doesn’t work!)
- We have the digital skills and confidence to use technology
- Online resources are accessible and inclusive
- We have the ability and tools to keep ourselves safe online
Underserved Entrepreneurs

The most underserved entrepreneurs are also covered populations under the Digital Equity Act.

- Low income - less access to capital
- Individuals who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups
- Older Adults
- Individuals with disabilities
- Veterans
- People in remote and rural communities
- Individuals with language barriers or low literacy
- Incarcerated, reentry, long-term recovery
Opportunities
Linking Innovation, Digital Infrastructure & Digital Inclusion
Maine’s 10-Year Goals

**Grow Wages by 10%**
- Benefit workers of all ages and income levels

**Increase Value of What We Sell by 10%**
- per worker
- technology in key sectors

**Add 75,000 people to our workforce**
- Talent attraction
- Engagement
Precision Agriculture: increasing efficiency & productivity

“Ruggedized” Terminals: infrastructure to power these innovations in the field

Check out the entire Tech at Work series here: https://bit.ly/2WULyFS

Learn more about John Deere's precision farming technology: http://bit.ly/2lrQ5bl
Unique Opportunity

Maximizing Digital Infrastructure for Economic Growth

- SEA Maine
- FORE Maine
- Rural Healthcare Solutions
- Outdoor Recreation Road Map
- Agriculture
- Space!
- Education, Remote Work, Talent Attraction
Our first charge: Understanding the current status of innovation-driven industry support efforts
Economic Development Action Plan

2. Combining industry support efforts with connectivity assessment - current and future needs
   a. What connectivity infrastructure is needed to support the industry’s strategic plan or initiatives?
   b. How can MCA fund or leverage funds to build this infrastructure?

3. What skills, support, or other resources are needed in addition to connectivity infrastructure to support advancement of these key industries?
   a. What tech support, training, and other solutions are needed to assist businesses and the workforce?
Connectivity Hubs
Start Summit
Skowhegan Main Street

Main St Ecosystem Building Pilot did an assessment of web presence and digital skills training needed by their Main Street businesses and entrepreneurs. Part of their ecosystem assessment.
A Regional Broadband Partner is combining their work under the State’s economic resilience hub programming with digital equity work funded by MCA - resulting in specific targeted loans and assistance to minority owned businesses combined with digital skills assessments/training for entrepreneurs themselves and outreach to employees for Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment support.
1. Read your state’s BEAD and Digital Equity Plans and provide input about how these plans can support entrepreneurs & ecosystem builders - ensure that your goals are integrated.

2. Consider participating in the State Led Challenge Process - get familiar with process in your state.

3. Provide Data: Consider doing a digital equity survey within your ecosystem to identify barriers and specific needs.

4. Integrate digital inclusion: Assess & support digital skill building, training, & internet safety education for entrepreneurs & ecosystem builders

5. Maximize impact of Hubs: Identify Community Anchor Institutions that support entrepreneurs & ecosystem builders and ensure they get served
1. Accessibility: Ensure your online and digital ecosystem resources are accessible & inclusive to all entrepreneurs.

1. Awareness: Help entrepreneurs and small businesses understand why digital equity matters to them - customers, markets, workforce, etc.

1. Be prepared for state distribution of the digital equity capacity funds. *(National Digital Inclusion Alliance has some great guidance on their website!)*

1. Consult with partners to consider digital equity Competitive Grant Program.
Opportunities

- Fiber deployment
- Device Refurbishment capacity & distribution platforms
- Online digital equity asset inventories
- Affordable housing connectivity solutions
- Connectivity solutions for incarcerated
- Rural telehealth solutions
- Tracking progress & evaluating impact
THANK YOU!
HOW WE CREATED THE PLAN
Strength in Partners

- Interagency Broadband Working Group
- Workforce Advisory Committee
- Broadband Infrastructure Capital Markets Taskforce
- Digital Equity Task Force
- Regional & Tribal Broadband Partners
- Tribal Nations Consultation Process

COMBINED DIGITAL EQUITY & BEAD PLAN
Outreach & Engagement

- **Maine Digital Equity Survey**
  - 13 Languages
  - Hard copy & online

- **Focus Groups**

- **Community Meetings**

- **Regional & Tribal Plans**
  - Interviews with individuals
  - Coalitions

- **Stakeholder & Partner Outreach**
  - Industry partners interviews & roundtables
  - Agency partners

- **Collecting existing data, policy, and plans**

- **Print & radio advertising**
  - Targeted demographics
  - Geographies
  - Multiple languages

- **Tribal Consultations**

- **Digital Equity Asset Inventory**

- **Digital Equity Workshop**
Regional, Tribal Organizing

13 Regional and Tribal Plans
- Vision for digital equity
- Barriers & assets
- Recommendations
- Areas to explore

180 Partners
- Regional and tribal coalitions formed for the first time

651 Interviews with Individuals & Organizations
- Lived experience
- Organizations closest to the challenges and opportunities
Essential Challenge Facing States

- Urgency
- ACP!
- Relatively Limited Resources (for Maine)
- Significant unknown factors (timeline)
- Long term need to maintain focus on digital inclusion as technology changes

Goals:
- Maximize the impact of infrastructure investment
- Demonstrate impact of digital inclusion
- Ensure broad understanding and integration of digital equity & inclusion
- Build a healthy digital equity ecosystem that can sustain itself