

Why Broadband?

Connecting and sustaining Maine's island and remote coastal communities

Broadband is high-speed internet access.

Do you have internet? Great! Are you able to upload and download videos, pictures and webpages with ease? If you live in rural Maine, then probably not.

While a convenience to most of us, broadband is a necessity for businesses, community services and individuals who work from home.

Slow broadband puts communities on the wrong side of the digital divide and out of contact with customers, clients and visitors.

Broadband is important to communities.

Attract and keep year-round families!

High-speed internet, or broadband, can help keep and attract new families, by greatly increasing career opportunities in the community. Employment opportunities on an island greatly increase when it is possible to work from home. In rural areas where career opportunities are often limited to seasonal work, broadband allows families to support

themselves year-round and provides career paths for those who can't find reliable work within the community. We often hear from young people who want to move to islands, but can't do so without access to high-speed internet for work. Broadband makes it possible to work where one chooses to live, not live where one happens to work.

Support fishermen and other businesses!

Broadband helps improve economic stability and prosperity. Accessing suppliers or consumer markets is difficult when your business is located in hard-to-reach areas along the coast. Instead of having to travel to meetings in Portland and beyond, imagine being able to access potential customers and clients via video conference. With broadband, you can sell your lobsters, pottery or other

goods across the world. With the ability to quickly upload photos and videos onto webpages, and receive orders and target advertising throughout the web, your markets can be expanded instantly. Expanding your audience beyond your community and its tourists means that you can gain income in the off-season and access greater numbers of potential buyers.

Extend the shoulder season!

We all know that summer is the best season for island and coastal businesses. Broadband can allow visitors and summer residents to work from home and stay around longer, all

the while supporting the local economy. With broadband, there is no rush to get off the island to connect with family, friends and entertainment.

Lack of broadband is a problem.

- Most of Maine's year-round islands are considered *underserved* by the state ConnectME Authority, which puts these communities behind most of the country in terms of broadband.
- Accessing large files, streaming video, downloading information, and even emailing is difficult, especially during peak hours or summer.
- Uploading information is often impossible.
- The lack of broadband services negatively affects everyone: businesses, fishermen, schools, municipal services, residents and visitors.

Bring broadband to your community!

Knowing is half the battle.

- Large telecom companies have not made significant investments in the infrastructure of rural areas with small populations; as a result, many rural areas have taken control of their own futures and began funding community-driven solutions.
- Maine communities are commissioning studies to learn what internet access and speed currently exists, and what infrastructure investments might ensure their communities are well-connected.
- The Island Institute funded a study for most of the year-round islands that assessed existing infrastructure and proposed possible broadband solutions with a range of costs.

Consider the options.

- Different broadband solutions may vary in coverage of the community, the quality of internet speed and the cost of construction, maintenance and operation.
- Funding structures could vary in the amount of municipal involvement.
- Operation and infrastructure ownership could vary between existing commercial providers, and municipal or new community-based entities.

Communicate and promote the way forward.

Community leaders may need to make the case for high-speed internet to local governments and other community members:

Broadband attracts and retains young families. It supports schools and stores. It can provide second incomes, which contributes to the local economy and municipal services. It supports growth and prosperity of businesses and fishermen, which helps sustain island and coastal communities. Residents not directly impacted by broadband will still be impacted indirectly.

Broadband solutions that entail municipal involvement require political will and leadership.

How can the Island Institute help?

We are working with interested island and coastal community leaders and municipal officials, to help pursue broadband solutions.

We can provide the following:

- Consulting on community planning efforts to move broadband initiatives forward
- Convening meetings between internet service providers and communities to help negotiate for infrastructure projects
- Connecting communities with the resources necessary to complete broadband projects
- Sharing information relating to broadband with communities in Maine and beyond

Additional resources:

ConnectME Authority, www.maine.gov/connectme

Maine Broadband Coalition, <http://mainebroadbandcoalition.org>

Axiom Technologies, <http://connectwithaxiom.com/broadband>

Tilson, www.tilsontech.com/services/telecom

NTIA, www.ntia.doc.gov/category/broadband

What Works Solutions, including Broadband Feasibility Study for Islands www.islandinstitute.org/what-works/planning-better-internet



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