**Newcastle-Damariscotta Broadband Committee**

**Request for Information**

Dear Internet Service Providers and other interested firms,

The Towns of Newcastle and Damariscotta are pursuing broadband infrastructure to provide high-quality internet service in these Lincoln County communities. Below is a Request for Information that will begin the process of finding internet service providers who wish to complete a broadband network to all premises of the towns.

To retain current businesses, attract new ones, and further incentivize tourism, all while improving the daily life of our year-round population, Damariscotta and Newcastle have identified the need for reliable and consistent high-speed connections to our community. Damariscotta and Newcastle, as the economic, educational, cultural, and health care hub for much of Lincoln County and a major retail, employment, and educational center within the region, and as such will need a high level of internet speed and quality to remain viable.

Damariscotta and Newcastle seek expansion of existing broadband network(s) as a possible solution to this issue and hope to provide the connections to all premises in the towns. Therefore, the Towns need information to determine if a public-private partnership with an existing internet service provider is a viable solution.

For implementation of a broadband project, we continue to investigate sources of funding at the private, local, county, state and federal levels. With a strong downtown providing residents and visitors with an authentic Maine experience and real access to retail and service businesses, we are well poised to achieve our goal of sustaining a year-round community for a long time to come. Information of how your organization may assist in that endeavor is a consideration on what option is best to achieve the Towns' goal of universal broadband access.

The committee has a deadline for receiving responses of 5:00 PM on December 20, 2021, and having a preliminary engineering design that would satisfy Connect Maine completed by two weeks after committee selection.

Please direct your questions about the project to:

Evan C. Goodkowsky
2075635168
egoodkowsky@gmail.com

**Newcastle/Damariscotta Broadband Committee**

**Request for Information**

**Build out of Broadband Network**

# 1 Introduction

The Newcastle/Damariscotta Broadband Committee, hereafter referred to as "the Committee", is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) to obtain information about providing an engineered design for broadband infrastructure to serve these two communities located in Lincoln County.

The Towns seek information in order to help determine the interest of internet service providers (ISP) or other firms, hereinafter also referred to as "respondents," to design infrastructure for finishing  bringing broadband to the community. This objective is further described in Section 3 of this RFI. The ultimate goal is to pursue a solution that provides broadband to all premises in the communities, which will enable telecommuting, provide educational opportunities, support telehealth services, and provide municipal services including the ability to video conference or stream meetings. It will also provide a stable platform for streaming internet video for households. The vision is greater economic and social opportunities, to attract and retain young families. Improving internet service helps achieve this vision.

This RFI further describes the communities and the objective for which information is requested, in Section 3. A business model is proposed in Section 4. Responses should address all information requested in Section 5. The process and timeline for responding to this RFI is outlined in Section 2.

# 2 Response Process

The following RFI schedule is anticipated:

| | |
|---|---|
| November 8, 2021 | RFI Issued |
| November 22, 2021 | Questions from Respondents Due |
| December 6, 2021 | Answers to Respondents Posted |
| December 20, 2021 | Deadline for Responses to be Received |

Responses must be received no later than 5:00 P.M. on December 20, 2021. Please submit responses as a pdf emailed to egoodkowsky@gmail.com, or in a sealed envelope marked to: Town of Newcastle: 4 Pump St, Newcastle, Maine 04553

All responses will be carefully considered and respondents will be notified shortly of next steps. The target date for a decision is January 7, 2022. The right to discontinue these efforts, based on the responses to this RFI or other changes in circumstances, is reserved. We encourage potential respondents to join an optional conference call for questions and answers with the Committee. This call will take place at 3:00PM on December 6, 2021. Please indicate interest by emailing the address above.

Respondents interested in designing a broadband network should provide the information requested in Section 5. Responses will not be considered final or binding; however, respondents are strongly encouraged to submit information that could be used as a basis for negotiating an agreement. By seeking an engineered design from an ISP, we are able to entertain the possibility of said ISP partnering with us to construct and operate the network, for delivery of broadband service to this community. Other firms are welcome to respond, and are encouraged to provide information about partnering with ISP(s). Responses to this RFI will help the Town determine its next steps, which may involve either a bid process or the selection of a respondent for meetings where the potential for a public-private partnership will be explored.

## 3 Background and Broadband Goals

Our vision is a more stable year-round community, with great economic and social opportunities, to attract and retain families, seasonal residents, by enabling telecommuting and improving other economic opportunities; and providing educational opportunities, telehealth services, and municipal services. These uses are extremely limited or even impossible with the current lack of broadband.

The network must have the capacity for the uploading needs associated with typical municipal and telehealth facilities including, but not limited to, video conferencing, streaming meetings, and secure database sharing. The broadband network must reach all premises with consistent and reliable speeds regardless of location in the towns. Given the increased needs of video conferencing in homes during the last 2 years, the need for high speed broadband is only increasing.

### 3.1 Community Background

The 2020 census shows a population for Newcastle of 1,848, an increase since the 2010 census. Damariscotta's population increased from 2,218 in 2010 to 2,297 in 2020.

Damariscotta/Newcastle is an economic service center for the area. Businesses that provide services for the 2 communities include:

- US Post Office
- Numerous Retail establishments
- Numerous service businesses
- Public Library
- YMCA
- Town Halls
- Miles Hospital and associated medical office facilities, intermediate and long term care.

The communities are currently served by

1. Tidewater Telecom which provides telephone and DSL service as well as fiber optic network in a portion of both towns.
2. Spectrum/Charter which provides cable tv and internet service to a portion of both communities.

### 3.2 Broadband Goals

For the purposes of this RFI, "broadband" means internet service that meets or exceeds the Connect Maine state definition of 100/100 symmetrical service, and infrastructure that can support greater capacity and speeds (i.e., 1000/1000). We anticipate weighing the cost of broadband solutions with the longevity expected, and will entertain proposals that provide much higher speeds now or in the future. The network must have the capacity to ensure internet service is consistent and reliable.

### 3.3 Project Timeline

The goal is to complete broadband to the communities as follows.

1. Select the Broadband provider by December 30, 2021
2. Complete Engineering of the system with associated costs by two weeks after committee selection.
3. Apply for ConnectME funding.
4. When funding is awarded, secure the remaining costs as required and authorize the project to start. Hopefully this can happen within one year of funding being allocated.

## 4. Business Model

For the design phase, provide the way your company will provide an engineered design of a broadband network. It may be advantageous for the cost of the engineered design to be

rolled into the cost of building the broadband network. We would like the chosen respondent to be available after the engineered design completion date for presenting the design in community meetings.

By seeking an engineered design from an ISP or other firm, The Committee expects to obtain a broadband infrastructure design that said respondent or other ISP may use to construct and operate a network, for delivery of broadband service to the communities. Otherwise, The Committee anticipates using the engineered design to pursue the next phase of obtaining broadband services. Provide a description of the process you will use to prepare the design and what your expectations are for the participation of the Committee and the Towns.

The Committee will entertain responses that propose variations on this model. For the eventual buildout, we are investigating sources of funding, at the private, local, county, state and federal levels.

## 5 Information Requested

Please provide information requested in an organized and formatted manner, by following the outline of Section 5, in order to help facilitate the review. Please do not refer to attachments or other materials or resources; instead, please include any additional information you would like to share within the appropriate sections of your response. This additional information may include:

- Any outcomes or conditions you consider to be essential or strongly desired in a potential partnership that you would like to highlight
- Any particular ways that your participation could provide value to the communities
- Any information that you believe we should consider.

The respondent must submit a cover letter signed by an authorized representative of the entity. The cover letter must include a concise summary of the response to the RFI; the legal name of the entity, its headquarters address, its principal place of business, its legal form (i.e. corporation, joint venture, limited partnership, etc.); and the names, addresses, emails, and telephone numbers of the principal contact(s) for all communications pertaining to this RFI.

### 5.1 Company Description

Please describe your company, by providing the following information or experience:

- How long the company has been in operation
- The location of the field office closest to the communities
- Technical, managerial and operational experience of the team, highlighting any key members as appropriate to this project
- How long the company has engineered internet infrastructure networks
- How long the company has constructed broadband networks
- How long the company has provided internet service
- The number of communities you serve
- The number of internet customers you serve and your retention rates
- How the company typically builds, manages, and maintains customer drops
- How customer service and trouble-shooting is handled
- Any contract terminations and the reasons why
- Growth of the company in recent years
- How services are marketed and customers are recruited

- Services offered, including but not limited to, business and residential internet services and features, speeds offered and other measures of internet quality, subscription/take rates for your services, seasonal or bundling services offered, tiers of service and pricing provided, and technologies and equipment used

- The payment options available to customers and how billing and collection is handled

### 5.2 Example Project

Please describe at least one past project where you have engineered designs of broadband networks for a rural area. Preference will be given to an example project which has successfully provided high-quality internet service to a rural area. In your description of past performance, please list:

- The number of premises covered and served
- Description of the physical environment (e.g., density of premises, terrain)
- Description of the network capacity (speeds, reliability, etc.)
- Description of the technology proposed and deployed
- Timeline of engineering and date of completion of the design
- Time period between completion of the design to completion of deployment
- Cost of the engineered design, and whether it was rolled into the cost of building the network
- Cost of the network deployed
- Number of internet customers

· The customer (community/client) contact information (name, title, phone, email, physical address)
· Key lessons learned that would be relevant for this RFI
· Two additional references with contact information

### 5.3 Proposed Project

Please demonstrate understanding of the community background when providing information:
· How the project would meet the broadband goals described in Section 3 above
· The estimated timeline, including a proposed start date and a response to completion date for an engineered design proposed in Section 3 above
· Whether the engineered design(s) would target speeds of 50/10, 100/100, and/or 1000/1000 mbps, or other standard committed information rates
· Whether the cost of said design(s) would vary based on the proposed capacity of the network or speeds supported by the network
· The estimated cost for the engineered design(s)

The respondent is invited to propose service levels that they deem technologically and economically achievable; however, respondents should propose project(s) that at least meet the minimum speeds and other broadband goals described in Section 3.

### 5.4 Design Content

The respondent should prepare a detailed description of what the engineered design(s) would include. This should include details on what would be included for the following components and how these components will be addressed during design work:

· Synthesis of current assets and potential leverage points
· Geographical and topographical network schematics, and an easy to use topo map for community meetings
· Necessary hardware and facilities
· Comparison of pole-attached, in ground, and on ground deployment
· Implementation plan, including any plans for phasing the build-out
· The potential service levels (speeds and reliability) offered by the designed network
· Financial Plan: One-time cost of infrastructure & implementation, minimum annual revenue required for operation, and expected annual operational and maintenance costs

· Quality assurance plan both on the design and potential construction/operation, including comment on providing network reliability, operator service, and responsiveness to system issues
· The capacity of the designed network, including potential for increased service levels after the initial network is built
· Other options for future service or network upgrades

**5.5 Proposed Financial Model**

Please comment on the proposed financial model in Section 4 above, including availability and willingness after the completion date for community presentations. If there are any variations or exceptions that you would require to participate, please identify and explain them. The respondent is invited to state high-level terms for this financial model. Please provide any knowledge or experience of operating this financial model.