

New England Cable & Telecommunications Association--NECTA

**Public Private Partnerships: The Proven
Path to Address New England's Digital
Divide**

ISP's Pandemic Response: Successful Response to Support Families and Individuals Facing Unprecedented Challenges

- ▶ **Public Private Partnerships Getting and Keeping People Connected**
 - **FCC's Keep Americans Connected Pledge**
 - **EducationSuperHighway's Bridge to Broadband**
 - **CT's Everybody Learns Initiative**
 - **RI Cox Communication's Node Splits**
 - **MassHire's Mass Internet Connect**
 - **Comcast's Internet Essentials Partnership Program (IEPP) & Lift Zones**

In total, NECTA Members have donated, forgiven, and waived \$1.5 billion since the Covid-19 outbreak

Broadband Adoption: New England's Main Digital Equity Challenge and A Proven Solution

- ▶ **Create state voucher programs to complement/supplement the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Plan**

Four elements to a comprehensive adoption voucher program for subsidized low-cost broadband, equipment and training:

- 1. Financial support for monthly subscriptions for low-cost broadband plans. Available for wireless or wired services**
- 2. Subsidized computing devices for all family members**
- 3. Free in-home equipment to maximize wireless speeds and coverage. i.e., Wi-Fi extenders**
- 4. Free digital literacy training provided by ISPs and advanced digital workforce skills training provided by other resources**

Broadband Adoption: FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program's New England Impact

▶ EBB's Broadband Adoption Rate by State*:

▪ Connecticut	57,570
▪ Maine	20,907
▪ Massachusetts	76,377
▪ New Hampshire	8,607
▪ Rhode Island	19,199
▪ Vermont	6,909

**The EBB Program's enrollment tracker as of October 18, 2021.*

Broadband Access: New England's Shrinking Equity Challenge

- ▶ New England's access challenges are limited due to past and ongoing investments.
- ▶ The unserved areas are finite locations compared to most states.
- ▶ Proven results of leveraging private dollars through public support for construction to unserved locations

Broadband Access: New England's Shrinking Equity Challenge

Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI)

Since 2016 the public private partnership model through the MBI has delivered sustainable and affordable broadband solutions on a large scale to previously unserved locations in Massachusetts.

MBI's flexible framework maximized \$40 million in state funds by leveraging private investment and allowing for a range of project models that allowed for various technology and operational choices, as long as they met core speed, affordability and sustainability standards. Key principles of this program included:

- ▶ FCC definition of high-speed broadband as the entry point;
- ▶ technology neutral;
- ▶ targeted only unserved areas,
- ▶ competitive and public process so providers of all kinds could participate

53 communities were defined by MBI in 2016 as either completely or partially unserved. Today:

- ▶ 35 towns are now lit and complete;
- ▶ 15 towns are partially lit with customer installation in progress; and
- ▶ The last 3 communities have projects underway and are scheduled to be connected by 2022;
- ▶ In total, this equals 28,000 households and 70,000 citizens now having access to broadband

Through MBI, all 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts have a broadband solution in place.

Broadband Access: New England's Shrinking Equity Challenge

Vermont's Connectivity Initiative

In 2015 Vermont's Connectivity Initiative grants reached hundreds of unserved addresses in rural communities. This program applied the following key principles:

- ▶ FCC definition of high-speed broadband as the entry point;
- ▶ technology neutral;
- ▶ targeted only unserved areas,
- ▶ competitive and public process so providers of all kinds could participate

ConnectMaine

ConnectMaine was created in 2006 providing broadband infrastructure grants for unserved areas. Over the past 12 years the ConnectMaine Authority has:

- ▶ Awarded approximately \$12 million in grants to 144 projects, increasing access to high-speed internet to 39,465 Maine households
- ▶ Leveraged more than \$7 million in federal high speed internet grants over the last 6 years
- ▶ Started issuing planning grants and has issued 14 grants for a total of \$451,000.

NECTA: The New England Cable & Telecommunications Association

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