

**Year 2 Coastal Maine Regional Broadband/Regional and Tribal Partnership
Maine Connectivity Authority Grant**

Summary of Project Narrative

During our first year, CMRB concentrated on identifying digital equity barriers and existing resources, growing Digital Equity connections and conversations, and supporting broadband infrastructure solutions. Our region's Digital Equity Plan was developed alongside MCA's drafting of the State's Digital Equity Plan.

In Year 2, CMRB will expand DE partnerships, implement digital inclusion activities, and assist community-supported broadband solutions. Specifically, DI activities will focus on affordable access, digital skill building, device access and technical support, internet safety, and accessible government resources (key goals of Maine's DE Plan).

OVERVIEW of CMRB's Year 2 Work Plan:

- Convene our original coalition to identify additional DE activities and resources to be focused on the covered populations.
- Work with the coalition and others to implement DI strategies that contribute to Maine's DE goals.
- Participate in the monthly Digital Equity Taskforce and other RTBP and MCA meetings.
- Through traditional and social media, create and share stories, posts, videos and other material that expand public awareness and community engagement around digital equity and inclusion.
- Contribute to the statewide Digital Equity Asset Inventory.
- For affordability, CMRB will partner with NDEC, their Digital Navigators and ACP staff and volunteers to promote ACP enrollment. We will participate in local or regional enrollment events and create new events with NDEC (continuing our Year 1 activities). We are prioritizing volunteer stipends for ACP enrollment volunteers.
- For digital skill building, in addition to promoting NDEC classes, we will expand our work with Adult Ed programs, providing stipends to support instruction in a variety of digital skills.
- For devices, CMRB proposes to invest in devices by funding partner agencies to purchase and share devices through their own programs. We will develop MOUs with each and prioritize Sagadahoc and Knox Counties (as a CDBG Public Service grant to NDEC is a Lincoln County-only digital skills assessment and device grant).
- For technical support, several libraries have used their stipends to support their in-house IT staff who assist patrons with tech issues. A proposed agreement with BoomerTECH Adventures is a set of 'train the trainer' workshops to provide tech support at partner agencies or the public. Among the BoomerTECH training topics:
- Accessing local, state and national government services, cybersecurity, and social media.

Broadband Infrastructure Activities:

- The CMRB Team will build on existing relationships (and start new ones) with municipal officials to provide on-going and current information broadband service, existing providers, potential funding sources, and changes in connectivity overall in and adjacent to the region. We'll convene effective meetings of neighboring communities and ISPs for possible collaboration and private-public partnerships. This includes providing tools and resources to communities interested in public ownership.

Additional activities:

- Provide MCA with up-to-date information, data, and perspectives on local and regional broadband issues and conditions.
- Expand our role as a trusted point of contact for local broadband questions and collaborate with MCA and MBC.
- Participate with RTBPs and MCA in the development of MCA's new resource hub.

Additional Details:

- Expanding capacity: CMRB needs to expand on-the-ground capacity and resources to make meaningful progress in DE. There's a good bit of momentum bubbling up in the region – to solidify this into continuing and real progress, re-organizing our core staffing is key. The 3 County Digital Planners will be the primary community/county connector for digital resources, continuing to put details (programming, funding, promotion) into relationships, and initiating in-person/office hours. The CDPs will partner with NDEC and Adult Ed Programs regarding classes (promoting classes and courses, helping to develop more DE-related instruction); and also with NDEC for ACP enrollment. One CDP position will be responsible for public relations (including website, FB posts, etc.) and for coordinating the CMRB team. The Broadband Infrastructure Consultant will have increased hours for broader activity throughout the region with communities and broadband committees, and with MCA's Board, Last-Mile Infrastructure and other MAC Committees.
- The CDPs will become the "asset experts" in their counties, building on Year 1 partnerships, to have DE resources and referrals at their fingertips. The long-term goal is to expand and promote DE resources and build community awareness, to provide general support where needed to help residents use critical online services, improve home connectivity, digital skills or devices, and to create connectivity hubs.
- In Year 2, we will develop partner agreements with other educational partners such as BoomerTECH Adventures. Specialized resources (agencies, knowledge experts, and people with lived experiences) will be brought in to make connections and presentations on telehealth, workforce, re-entry, disability, new Mainers, and other topics.

- CMRB can reach more people and communities by leveraging the work of a variety of DI organizations. One of our major Year 2 goals is to expand partnerships to more broadly engage with state or regional agency staff, such as:
 - 1) build from current Adult Ed DE planning meetings to work with AE staff who serve multiple counties and multiple school districts (e.g., Cassie Robichaux, Career Navigator for MidCoast Adult Education Hub 7, Megan Dichter, Newcastle resident & MDOL Adult Ed Director);
 - 2) while reaching out to local American Legions, we've started conversations with Veterans Services at Togus; we expect to add to our coalition two residents who work for the Maine Bureau of Veterans Services and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
 - 3) Spectrum Generations is one of our original coalition partners. We've started talking about reaching even more older adults by improving digital capabilities and by promotion of ACP enrollment. SG has regional centers in Damariscotta, Camden and Brunswick (which serves Sagadahoc County). We are also meeting with Age-Friendly communities (Bowdoinham and Georgetown) as these local groups have become valuable local resources.
 - 4) With a two-county jail in Wiscasset and our County Administrator working with other Counties on jail administration and funding, we expect to make progress in Year 2 in understanding the needs of incarcerated/formerly incarcerated individuals.

These planned activities demonstrate CMRB's Year 2 goal to expand partnerships to include people and groups serving particular regions or covered population -- an approach which we expect will bring best practices and DI expertise to benefit the region as a whole.