

**Eastern Maine Development Corporation
&
Town of Bucksport
Community Technology Plan**

Submitted by:

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Community Technology Plan

Executive Summary

Axiom and EMDC worked extensively with the Town of Bucksport to assess their assets and set concrete goals that could be implemented for a Community Technology Plan. Below is a summary of what we found and recommend.

Key Findings:

- ✓ **Build on the appeal of the downtown/waterfront**
- ✓ **Help diversify economy by creating Gigabyte Industrial Park**
- ✓ **Extend fiber into the downtown**
- ✓ **Digital Inclusion- Build on tourism**

Bucksport appeal is evident, and the Broadband Committee wants to build on that attractiveness. It sits at the crossroads of the Three Ring Binder, giving it access to unlimited fiber optic speeds and reliability, has significant internet carrier coverage now and a beautiful downtown and waterfront area to build on. While significantly affected by the shutdown of the Verso Mill that sits at one end of the Main Street, even that economic concern seems to be viewed as an opportunity to create a new identity. By enhancing downtown attraction amenities, visitors should find more reasons to stay in Bucksport. A relatively low-cost plan to line the waterfront with free Wi-Fi access will help enhance Bucksport's revitalization efforts, for relatively low-cost and low-risk. Coupled with an Industrial Park upgrade to fiber optics, and we believe Bucksport will begin to see its efforts to attract both businesses and downtown revitalization realized. In addition, we have provided the cost of extending fiber across the downtown, to give the community additional options to start to helping downtown business attraction and the possibility of expanding into more residential areas, when resources become available. Last, Digital Literacy efforts should focus on trainings for businesses with a focus on tourism and fits well with the economic development efforts of the community.

Bucksport has a robust Broadband Committee that has been fully engaged since the beginning of this planning project and articulated several goals associated with the closing of the Verso Mill and how to move the community forward economically. Let's be clear- Bucksport has a lot going for it and we were immediately struck by the appeal of Main Street and the river walk and marina that sits on the backside of Main Street overlooking Fort Knox and the Penobscot Narrows Bridge. Because this is a scenic area with tourism opportunities, we believe a tourism focused Digital Inclusion Plan would tailor program offerings to enhance this part of the Bucksport economy.

Bucksport's two main broadband carriers are FairPoint Communications and Spectrum. Much of Bucksport has considerable overlap between the two providers but there are some locations where each respective provider is the only coverage option and some limited locations with little to no coverage at all.

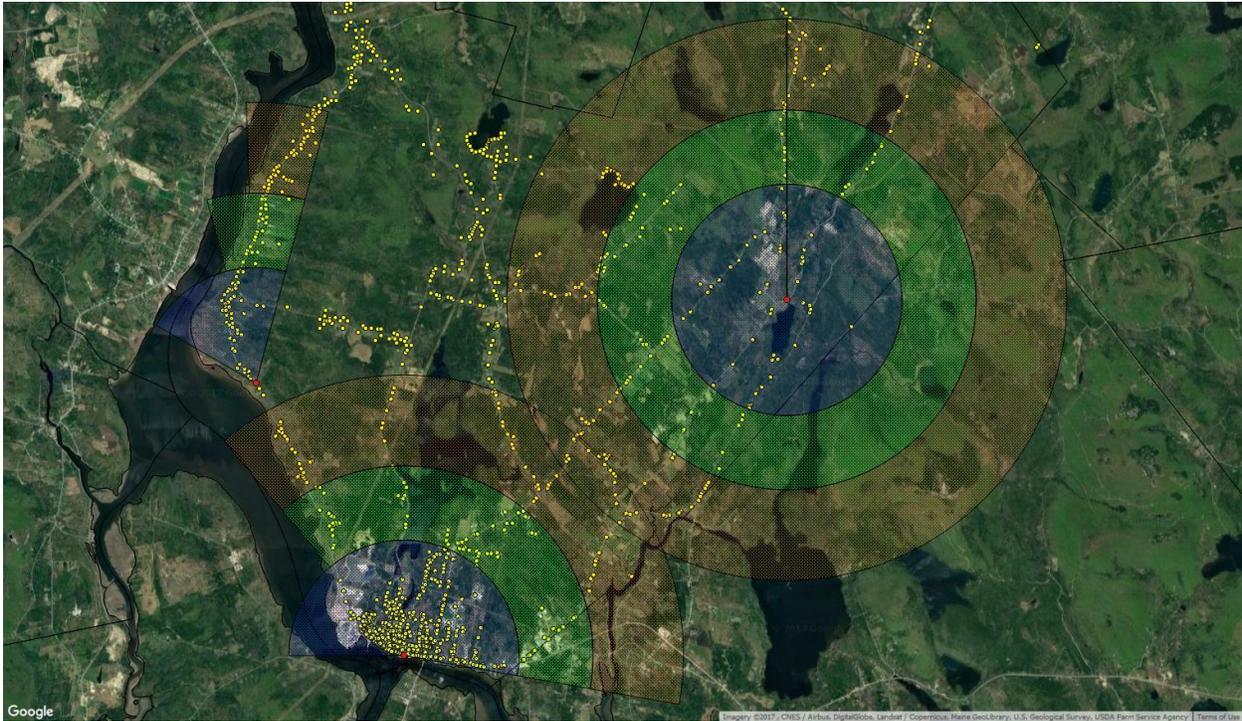
FairPoint Communications operates out of a central office in Bucksport with several remote terminals that extend the DSL service out to some of the furthest locations in town. According to our most recent discussion with FairPoint, nearly all of the terminals either have been upgraded to their latest offering, or are in the process of being upgraded. These upgrades will allow for the maximum bandwidth offering available with the current technology, which is 25Mbps download and 2Mbps upload using bonded DSL. One notable area that was mentioned in meetings with FairPoint was their lack of coverage around the Silver Lake Rd. and the William’s Pond Rd. area. As can be seen from the map on the following page, the above-mentioned area is located between several remote terminals and is effectively outside of FairPoint’s current service area. The Bandwidth rates mentioned above are primarily for residential services, businesses and other organizations can request higher bandwidth packages under their BBE and CES (fiber optic) solutions which would connect off of their fiber network and are typically negotiated on a case by case basis.

Spectrum operates throughout a large portion of Bucksport with only a small area of the north and northeast not being covered. Spectrum has performed upgrades throughout their Maine network and has significantly upgraded their offerings to two broadband packages, with their lowest residential package offering 60Mbps down and 5Mbps up and their upper end package offering 100Mbps down and 10Mbps up. Consumers who already have their service through Time Warner will remain at their current speeds unless they call and request an upgrade. These rates are for residential and small business. Larger businesses and organizations who might need a higher upload capacity can request fiber service from Spectrum and could potentially get up to a Gigabit of service or more if there is need.



Spectrum Coverage Map

The map provided shows a broad coverage area but in reality, Spectrum will only install to locations within a certain distance from their trunk lines, leaving some in their coverage without an option for Spectrum service.



FairPoint Coverage Map

When looking at the FairPoint coverage map each 'circle' represents a location of where FairPoint's equipment is located. This is important because the equipment location, and the direction of the DSL lines determines what service levels are available. The Central Office (location of most of major equipment, usually in a cement building) or a remote terminal (equipment boxes located roadside, typically 3 miles from the Central Office) are depicted as red dots. The yellow dots are E911 locations of homes and businesses.

- ❖ Blue= Speeds of up to 25 Mbps
- ❖ Green= Speeds up to 15 Mbps
- ❖ Orange= Speeds up to 10 Mbps

Keep in mind that these colored circles are rough approximations of coverage areas and bandwidth speeds and specific location speeds are determined on a case-by-case basis. However, we are confident that this map is a reasonably accurate portrait of FairPoint service in Bucksport.

Carrier Conclusion

FairPoint:

FairPoint has performed many of the upgrades that have been planned for in Bucksport utilizing Federal CAF II funding. These improvements include expanding their trunk fiber to their remote terminals as well as upgrading the electronics in each terminal allowing increased single line DSL speeds of up to 15Mbps as well as bonded DSL speeds up to 25Mbps.

Due to the limitations in how far a DSL signal can be pushed it still leaves a few areas within Bucksport's footprint where some homes and businesses are left with service at 3Mbps or less.

With the merger of FairPoint and Consolidated Communications there is a potential for more upgrades to occur as Consolidated has agreed to invest \$52.2 million into Maine's network and facilities with a focus on "building out their broadband network and upgrading network speeds."

If the town were to consider working closely with FairPoint to expand speed and service offerings, you might consider approaching them with a proposal to help the community's more underserved outskirts see improvements. This might involve adding a RT (remote terminal), which they would quote at approximately \$70,000 to help cover those problem areas much better.

Spectrum:

Spectrum has already performed upgrades to their network, which has increased service speeds to nearly all of the locations that reside along their cable route. In regards to expanding their service areas, Spectrum has stated that they have no current plans to expand service and is focusing primarily on increasing the quantity of the service to areas they are already deployed in.

This in no way indicates that Spectrum will not expand services in an area but will require proper justification and ROI/funding in order to consider an area for new service, typically 20-25 homes per mile.

Both Spectrum and FairPoint have partnered with communities to apply for State of Maine ConnectME infrastructure grant money to expand service. Given the relatively good coverage in Bucksport and the recent upgrades by both companies, a compelling case would need to be made to attract future investments by either of these companies, even with grant funding expected to be available in 2018.

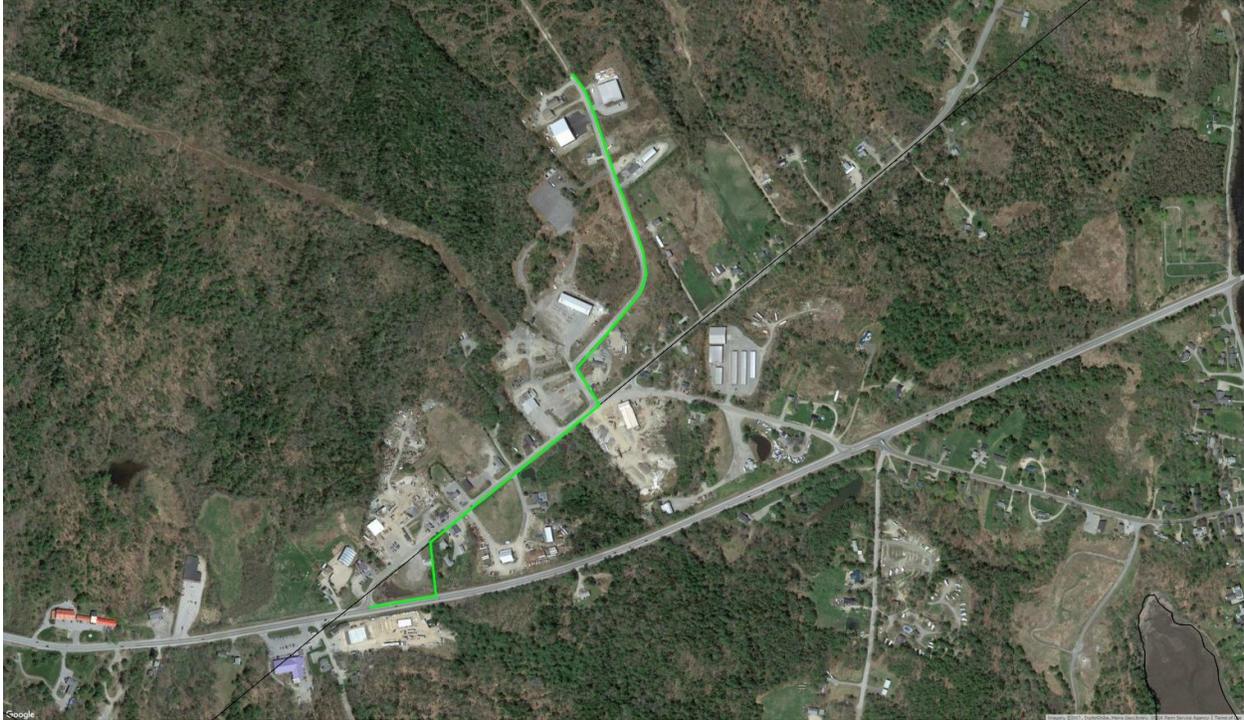
Approach and Plan

We agree that the committee was correct to focus on an economic revival given the closing of the Verso paper mill and the loss of a significant tax and job contributor to the community and the region. Early on in the process, a discussion around the mill redevelopment and the need for fiber optics was discussed. However, the current owner is moving ahead with plans to rehabilitate the site and with fiber located at the entrance to the mill site, it was determined that there was no need to

plan for fiber optics, as it would be at the behest of the current owner to request such service and have it brought into the site as needed.

Three other important projects did emerge from our planning:

- Creating a high capacity industrial park with a level of internet service that attracts tenants
- Extending fiber down Main Street
- Creating a tourism/visitor experience on the waterfront and marina with Wi-Fi HotSpots



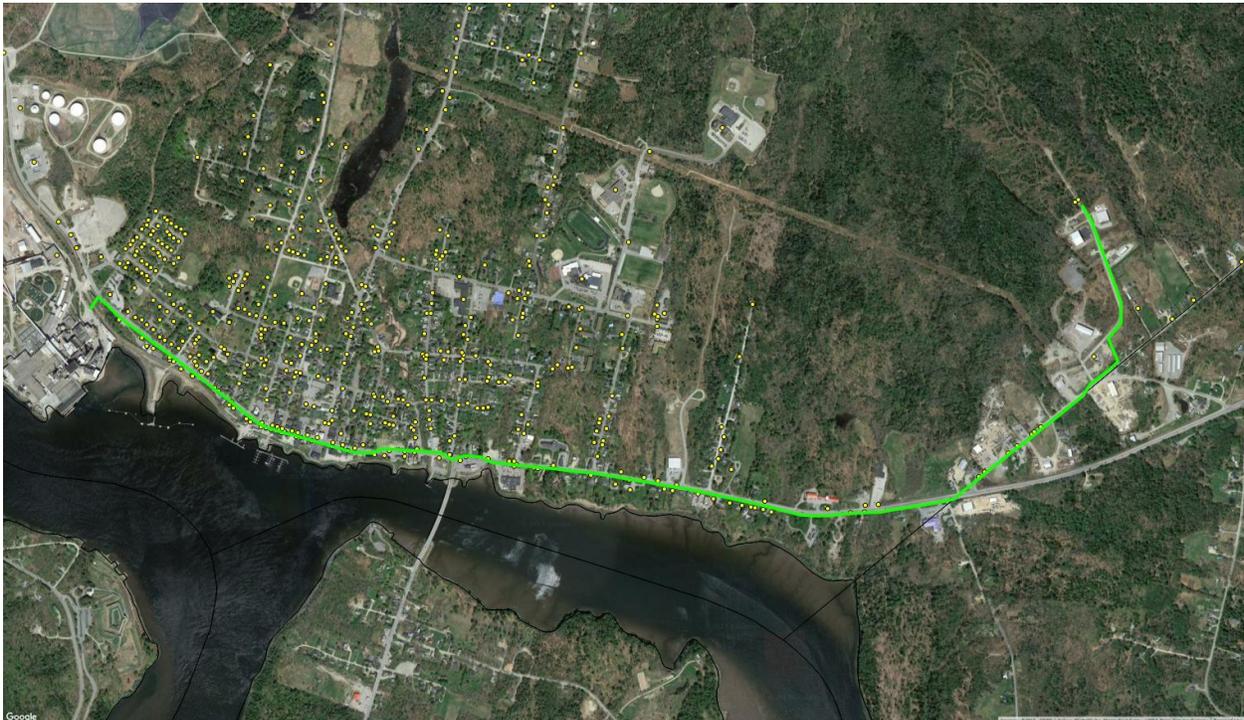
Gigabyte Industrial Park

The industrial park along Heritage Park Rd. has not seen the type of interest that should be expected for this location and currently is home to only a handful of businesses. A fiber line installed could increase the attractiveness and make it more desirable for new businesses- especially those that need unlimited bandwidth, which this project could make available giving the town the ability to market Gigabyte connections to prospective tenants.

The approximate cost to install fiber along the route shown above would be in the range of \$20,000. Cost for installation could vary depending on “make ready” cost. That is the cost of acquiring pole attachment rights to allow a company, on behalf of the town, to run fiber through the park. Depending on where those funds come from, we would recommend that the town own the fiber and that they lease it to an operator, who would then deliver the service to the current or future businesses that would locate there. Because the number of businesses and therefore opportunities to provide service would be limited, it would be most likely that the town would enter into a no cost lease with a carrier.

Once the fiber is in place, it would need to be “lit”, meaning it would need to have a provider provision internet service to deliver service to existing or prospective tenants of the park. Depending on the level of service required, this could be a significant cost to the carrier that would need to be recouped through fees for service or other means.

One of the interesting advantages of this approach is that it starts to help the community understand the benefits of fiber connectivity, for relatively little cost, and gives the town an asset that can be expanded into the downtown and other residential areas as funds are identified.



Main Street Fiber Extension

While this was not a specific ask of the committee, we believe this creates a conversation about a town owned fiber infrastructure that would provide the foundation to begin a Fiber to the Home project in the future. This recommendation is only intended to help the community understand the costs and considerations of such an infrastructure program. This type of investment gives the community the most leverage to build and serve the community over time, with world-class connectivity. It also involves more risk. Currently, both of your providers can provide fiber service to individual businesses, along this proposed route. However, this type of investment allows you to consider three things:

- Aggregate demand to lower cost to all businesses along the route
- Expand into residential areas over time, which are currently not served by fiber
- Differentiate Bucksport for business and family attraction

This fiber network would start at the industrial park on the eastern side of the town and extend through Main St. in Bucksport and ending in front of the Mill on the Western side of town measuring approximately 3 miles in total length and utilizing a little over 100 utility poles.

This fiber would be built as a dark fiber network that would be open for local businesses to use in order to assist them in getting the bandwidth that they need for their business to operate efficiently. This build out is similar to what the Maine Fiber Company did across the State but on a much smaller scale.

Some considerations will need to be taken if such a project is deployed particularly in managing the fiber strand allocations, including who would market and manage it and who would be responsible for maintenance. These questions typically get answered once you engage various providers to propose service.

This project also has a complication in that it extends through the heart of the town and many of the utility poles are already full with other providers. This would potentially entail new, larger poles being installed at a significant increase to cost that is not included in the figure provided below. Pole licensing, that allows additional wiring to be strung on the poles is managed by FairPoint and a relatively lengthy evaluation of the current pole infrastructure and what is called in the industry, "make ready cost" would need to take place to determine exactly the cost of using the existing pole structure. This could make our estimates, if poles need to be replaced or other extensive work would be necessary on the current pole structure. Please take the estimate below as a starting point.

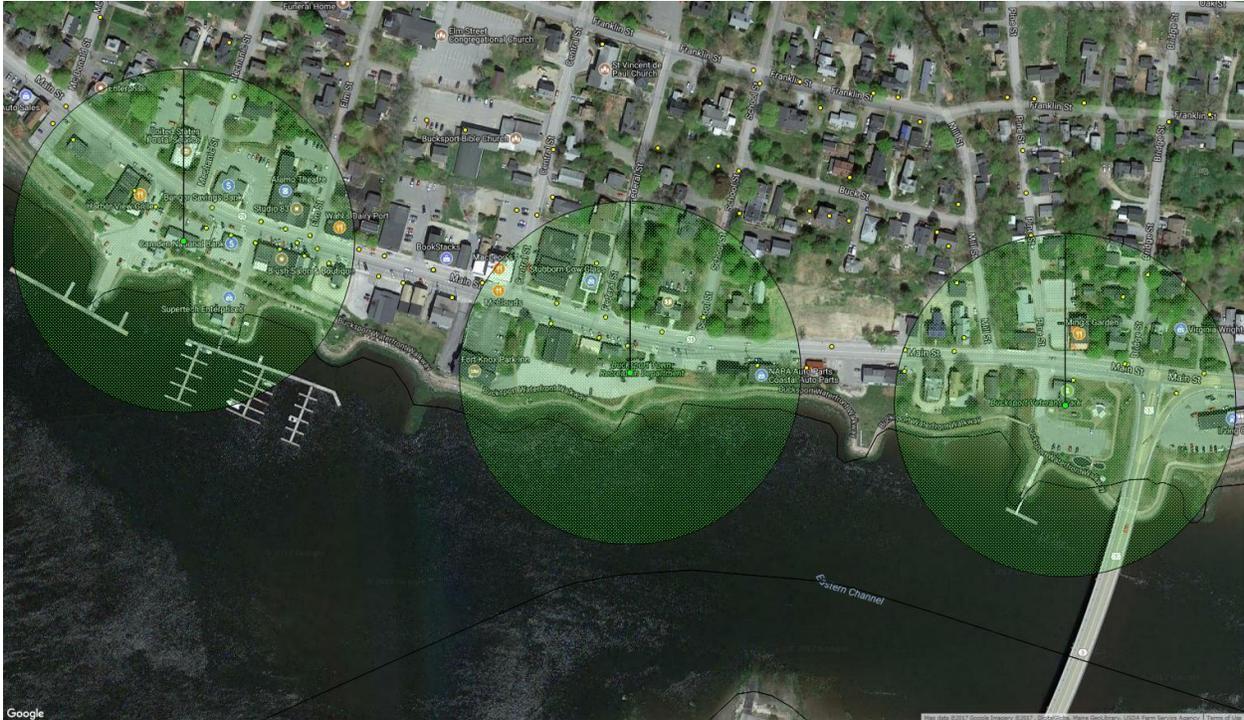
The approximate cost to deploy this dark fiber network would be:

Fiber Materials: \$140,000

Install Labor: \$150,000

Total: \$290,000

*The total above includes an average cost to attach to the utility poles, but does not include the annual cost to maintain it. This would be approximately \$1000 annually.



Waterfront HotSpot proposal

Community HotSpots are open access networks that allow citizens visiting your downtown and river front free or low cost access to the internet. There are several advantages to consider:

- Allows people to access email and other smartphone tools in a faster, more efficient manner, *without* using cellular data
- Allows town or other business “sponsor” to advertise through the portal created by the HotSpot
- Can advertise town amenities
 - Public restrooms
 - Restaurant offerings
 - Tourism related activities, parks or boat launch and marina
 - Pharmacy or other emergency services

Downtown HotSpots offer several advantages to traditional cellular networks. First, a HotSpot tends to allow for faster downloads, on any device- a laptop, tablet or phone. Because you can use any device, it makes it easier for those who want to work and use a device other than their phone. Second, the HotSpots allow the community to create a landing page, which can direct people to community assets and amenities. Last, it allows the town to work with a local sponsor to help cover or defray the cost of equipment and installation. These advantages make community hotspots a low-cost, smart first step bringing new interest into the downtown and riverfront walk and marina.

Hotspots deployed along the downtown waterfront would provide a much-desired service to both residents and visitors, especially in this digital age where email, social networking and video blogging are in demand.

The proposal offered here utilizes three hotspots spaced out from the bridge to just prior to the large plant facility to provide a near ubiquitous wireless signal along the waterfront and parts of Main St. The HotSpots can be customized to offer free or paid service, and can limit the amount of time someone can use the service or how much of the internet speed an individual user might be allowed. In addition, it was already mentioned that a customer portal page and restrictions on the types of sites people could visit are all achievable.

The cost of installing and configuring the hotspot solution described above would be \$10,000 with an annual maintenance fee of \$2000. These figures however do not include the monthly costs required for a broadband provider. These costs can run anywhere from \$60/mo. to \$200/mo.

Action items

- ✓ Explore funding sources for downtown HotSpot project to be completed by summer of 2018
- ✓ Work with town officials to find local funding for fiber expansion into the industrial park area
- ✓ Do more downtown business work to look at fiber connectivity and business needs related to expanding tourism

Digital Inclusion Plan

Surveys, Interviews and Meeting Results

Axiom interviewed businesses, community and municipal leaders, as well as residents to discuss Computer Skills/Digital Literacy Training and Workforce Development Skills Training.

Important Takeaway: Tourism

Bucksport, with a population of 4,924 residents, has a median age of 43, per the 2010 American Census Survey.

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

Bucksport should consider exploring technology tools by offering classes and workshops that will assist businesses and residents in promoting tourism. Bucksport is a gateway to popular destinations on the Blue Hill peninsula, Acadia National Park and the Downeast and coastal region. Bucksport boasts a beautiful redeveloped downtown waterfront, as well as a stunning harbor with many amenities for cruise ships and the boating population. Visitors can stroll along a mile-long waterfront walkway, and bicyclers can take advantage of bicycle friendly lodging. The town's old railroad station houses the Historical Society and the Penobscot Narrows Bridge & Observatory, a 420-foot observation tower, and the Historic Fort Knox, are popular tourist destinations.

Axiom Education & Training Center's "National Digital Equity Center" (NDEC) can provide training to Bucksport's businesses and to interested community members to leverage available technologies to increase and promote the town's tourism industry. NDEC can provide the community with trained educators to hold classes. Businesses and community members can learn firsthand how to create and update websites, learn the power of social media, as well as utilize available apps for walking tours and points of interest.

Collaborating partners to consider are:

- Bucksport Bay Area Chamber of Commerce www.bucksportbaychamber.com
- Downeast Acadia <http://downeastacadia.com>
- Maine Woods Consortium <http://www.mainewoodconsortium.org/mwtti/welcome-me>
- Maine Office of Tourism <https://visitmaine.com>
- Maine Invites You www.mainetourism.com

Business Surveys:

The Town of Bucksport identified key businesses to target during this process. Online surveys and interviews were administered. Axiom contacted 23 businesses via email or phone calls, and the town sent out the business survey link. A total of 15 businesses responded to the survey and/or interviews. (See Addendum 1 – Bucksport Business & Workforce Needs Survey Results)

Business Survey Results:

- 65% of businesses state that broadband is extremely important for their business
- 54% of businesses state that they could work and sell more efficiently online
- 21% of businesses are sole entrepreneurs, 64% have 5 employees or less

- 79% of businesses have a website
- 21% of businesses do not use a domain email address
- 50% of businesses do not use VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone service
- 36% of businesses use the internet for online sales
- 71% of businesses use the internet for social media
- **29% of businesses state that internet speeds have not kept up with business needs over the past few years**
- 52% of businesses state improved broadband will be critically important to their business in the next 1-2 years
- 54% of businesses do not offer telecommuting
33% of businesses that do offer telecommuting report that employees struggle with it
- **57% of businesses see a need for computer skills training**

Takeaways: 21% of businesses do not have a website, and 21% do not use a domain email address. Developing website classes may be a valuable resource for businesses in Bucksport, specially targeting small businesses and sole entrepreneurs. 57% of businesses state that they see a need for computer skills training. A combined total of businesses that are sole entrepreneurs and have 5 employees are less total 75%.

Residential Surveys:

As with business, community and municipal leaders, the residential community was invited to participate in a Community Broadband Survey by the Town of Bucksport's Broadband Team. It was the goal of the survey for residents to become engaged in providing better broadband to Bucksport. A low number of responses were collected; five residents completed the survey. (See Addendum 2 - Bucksport Community Internet Survey Results)

Community Survey results:

- 100% of homes have internet
- 40% of homes use the internet for home and business
- **60% of homes state they are not happy with their current internet service**
- 20% state that they would pay more for faster speeds and better reliability and 80% are not interested in paying more for internet service
- 50% state that they would like internet television; 50% for VoIP
- **20% state they have children that use the internet for homework – 100% are children**
- **20% of residents are interested in computer class training**
- **60% would support adding WiFi to the waterfront**

Takeaways: 60% of homes state that they are not happy with their current service; 100% state that they have children that use the internet for homework. Bucksport should be mindful of homes with school-age children and further evaluate whether homes with children do not subscribe to the internet because of cost. Bucksport ~could~ consider a Technology Fund to assist homes that cannot afford broadband, specifically in homes with school-age children to address the Homework Gap, as well as letting their residents know of the low-cost broadband options offered by providers.

Out of the five Community responses, 20% of Bucksport’s residents expressed a need for training on using the Internet. This indicates that residents (40% home-based businesses) would like to increase their technical proficiency. Bucksport and EMDC could seek funding to offer a Digital Literacy program to its residents and businesses.

The Digital Inclusion Program for the Town of Bucksport includes four components:

1. Affordable Internet – Cost continues to be a major barrier to broadband adoption. The Town of Bucksport should consider addressing “ability to pay”. The following providers have been contacted regarding low-cost broadband options:

- **Consolidated Communications (FairPoint Communications):**
 - Eligible low-income FairPoint residential customers can qualify for a discount on qualified internet service at their primary residence under the Lifeline Program. The discount consists of federal monthly support of \$9.25.
 - Eligible FairPoint residential customers residing on tribal lands may qualify for an additional federal discount of up to \$25 per month and installation assistance.
 - Further information, including applications forms, can be found at: www.fairpoint.com/home/residential/phone/lifeline.html
- **Charter Communications (formerly Time Warner Cable):**
 - Charter offers “Spectrum Internet Access”, which is a low-cost broadband offering. www.SpectrumInternetAssist.com
 - Plan includes:
 - \$14.99 for 30/4 Mbps with no data caps
 - Internet Modem Included
 - No Contracts Required
 - Add in-home WiFi for \$5.00 more per month
 - Customers must not have been a Charter Communications subscriber within 60 days of signing up for Spectrum Internet Assist.
 - Eligibility requires participation in one of the following:
 - National School Lunch Program (NSLP); free or reduced cost lunch
 - Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of NSLP
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (>age 65 only)
 - Residents may visit Charter Communication’s website or call 844-525-1574 to determine eligibility
- **Town of Bucksport Technology Fund:**
 - A fund could be established to offer a discount to low-income families to address broadband adoption and take-rate
 - The Town of Bucksport Broadband Committee may opt to explore the feasibility of establishing a fund

2. Affordable Equipment Assessment – Low-cost or free computers are often just as important as having access to low-cost or free Internet options, particularly for people in low-income communities.

- **PC's for Maine** www.pcsformaine.org offers refurbished, used computers that are donated by businesses in Maine and are available to low-income families.
- **PC's for Maine** will consider installing a kiosk at a local business to sell low-cost computers locally. Axiom will work with a local business and facilitate a conversation with PC's for Maine, should the Town of Bucksport decide to move forward.
- **Goodwill's "Good Tech"** program offers refurbished, used computers to low-income residents. <https://goodwillnne.org/stores/goodtech>
- **Lending Library of Devices**, laptops, desktops, iPads, etc., could be established for residents to borrow on an "as-needed" basis. The devices might be donated or the Town of Blue Hill could seek grant funds to purchase equipment. The Buck Memorial Library might be considered as the lending institution.

3. Digital Literacy Training – Computer Skills Training plays a critical role in technology and workforce development training. The following digital literacy options are available for the Town of Bucksport:

- **Axiom Education & Training Center's "National Digital Equity Center"** offers Digital Literacy classes for residents and businesses. We recommend offering the residents of Bucksport digital literacy courses over a 6 to 12-month period, one class per week, ensuring that the program has predictability over some period of time for full residential and business participation. The program can collaborate with Adult & Community Education programs, the region's CareerCenters, and local community programs.
- **The Island Institute** has offered to provide two free Digital Literacy classes to businesses located in Bucksport. There is a short survey that has been emailed to businesses that will help determine what classes will be offered in Fall/Winter 2017. The survey can be accessed at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/bucksportislandinstitute
 - **Class choices include:**
 - QuickBooks: Set Up and Customize (3 hours)
 - QuickBooks: Sales, Transactions & Payables (3 hours)
 - QuickBooks: Advanced Transactions, Payroll & Utilities (3 hours)
 - QuickBooks: Closing Your Books (3 hours)
 - Facebook for Business: Set Up and Use (3 hours)
 - Facebook for Business: Marketing and Analytics (2 or 3 hours)
 - Social Media for Business: Explore Twitter & LinkedIn (2 or 3 hours)
 - Social Media for Business: Manage Your Accounts with Hootsuite (2 hours)
 - LinkedIn for Business: Set Up and Use (2 hours)
 - Online Marketing Directories: Explore Yelp & TripAdvisor (2 hours)
 - WordPress for Business: Create Your Website (3 hours)
 - WordPress for Business: Marketing & Mobile Applications (2 or 3 hours)

- **Maine Department of Labor's CareerCenter**, www.mainecareercenter.gov/locations office is located in Bangor and Rockland. There is a satellite office located at the Eastern Maine Development Corp. office at 248 State St., Ellsworth. The CareerCenter collaborates with the Axiom Education & Training Center, and is committed to assist with workforce development skills efforts.
- **RSU 25 Adult & Community Education** offers digital literacy classes at multiple locations in Bucksport. Their headquarters are located at 102 Broadway, Suite One, Bucksport. The digital literacy classes that are offered are included in their Fall catalog, available online at: http://rsu25.siteturbine.com/uploaded_files/rsu25.maineadulted.org/files/2017_Fall_Catalog.pdf

Recommended Class Locations:

- Buck Memorial Library www.buckmemoriallibrary.50megs.com
- Bucksport Town Office www.bucksportmaine.gov
- Business Locations

Recommended Classes include:

- Introduction to Computer
- Windows 7, 8, 10
- Internet Safety
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Outlook
- Microsoft Publisher
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- QuickBooks
- PhotoShop
- Social Media including FaceBook for Business & Individuals, Twitter, etc.
- WordPress
- Video Streaming
- iPad
- Gmail
- Google Docs, etc.
- Classes designed for Senior Citizen population

Digital Literacy Budget

Digital Literacy is the greatest opportunity to investing in Bucksport's future. As more citizens' livelihoods, ability to obtain new skills, understanding of an emerging digital economy are tied to a broadband connection, those regions with the forethought to face this new reality will outpace other regions in productivity, increased economic activity and sustained family attraction and wealth. Axiom is committed to working with the Town of Bucksport, its regional, state and federal partners to deliver a world-class regional Digital Literacy program- customized to the town's businesses and citizens.

Teacher/Instructor (Fringe & Salary)	\$ 20,000
Travel	\$ 2,000
Survey Monkey (includes Annual Fee)	\$ 204
Supplies	\$ 1,000
Academic Services Group (curriculum)	\$ 796
Administration	\$ 8,000
Total Budget	\$ 30,000

- ❖ Budget based on 1-year program, 1 class per week
- Budget based on 10 students per class

Axiom will work with the Town of Bucksport to pursue funding for digital literacy classes for residents and businesses.

4. Public Computer Access – Increasing public access computing allows residents to access technology in places they feel comfortable and supported is essential. If a business or resident cannot afford equipment or an Internet subscription, and if broadband is not available at their location, Public Computer Access is essential.

- **Buck Memorial Library** has two computers available for public use. Wireless internet is also available for residents and businesses with their own equipment to use during library hours.
- **Community HotSpots** are open access networks that allow citizens in a downtown or other public spaces access to the Internet. This is a simple, straightforward way to help the town get more connected. It is an affordable, convenient solution to help visitors and residents easy, seamless connectivity.

In additional to the Buck Memorial Library, WiFi is available at a variety of business locations in the Bucksport region. Community HotSpot(s) for the downtown are recommended for the Town of Bucksport.

Grant Funding Resources

State Grant Funding Resources

The **ConnectME Authority** offers two types of grants - Infrastructure and Community Broadband Planning Grants. For the purposes of this report, the planning grant is not a consideration. We would recommend looking toward Infrastructure grants, details can be found here:

<http://maine.gov/connectme/grants/>

Axiom has extensive knowledge of these grants, and has received over \$1Million in funding.

- Grant proposals must meet the state standard of 10/10Mbps
- Grant limits are suggested, but typically \$100,000, which must be matched 1 to 1 with a combination of cash and in-kind services
- Area targeted must be unserved or severely underserved (service that is less than 1.5Mbps download)

Typically, ConnectME grants open for applications in the March- April timeframe, but is not clear when grants may be available in 2018.

The **Maine Community Foundation** has regional grants that can support initiatives up to \$10,000.

<http://www.mainecef.org/GrantsNonprofits/AvailableGrantsDeadlines/CommunityBuildingGrantProgram.aspx>

- Grants available up to \$10,000
- Local decision makers by county
- Various criteria that needs review
- Deadline February 15th of each new year

Northern Border Regional Commission Grants, <http://www.nbrc.gov>. The Commission accepts grant applications from across the northern border regions of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York.

- Requires at least a 1 to 1 cash match
- Must be tied to quantifiable job creation
- Very competitive

Contact: Andrea Smith at (207) 624-9813 or andrea.smith@maine.gov for information on deadlines and program parameters.

Federal Grant Funding Resources

U.S. Department of Commerce- **Economic Development Administration (EDA)** provides funding for economic development projects across the state of Maine. Maine projects are reviewed and administered by EDA's local representative, Alan Brigham at (215) 316-2965 or abrigham@eda.gov. Programs and eligibility can be found at www.eda.gov

- Various funding programs
- Guidelines encourage regions to incorporate broadband investments in their regional strategies (CEDs)
- Funding requires match

U.S. Department of Commerce- **Broadband USA** is helping communities nationwide ensure they have the broadband infrastructure, digitally literate workforce and engaged citizens to thrive in the Digital Economy. Details can be found here: <https://www2.ntia.doc.gov/>

- Provides direct (one-to-one) assistance to communities
- Resource rich website- no direct grants
- Building a self-assessment tool for communities

U.S. Department of Agriculture- **Rural Development** has a number of grant programs worth investigating. Local office in Bangor, contact Tommy Higgins, Acting State Director, (207) 990-9160. More information on programs in Maine can be found here: www.rd.usda/me

- Rural Broadband Access Loans and Loan Guarantees Program
 - 2017 Program has not been announced
- Several other competitive grant programs to explore eligibility and criteria

U.S. Department of Treasury- **New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)** has recently clarified the eligibility of broadband infrastructure and related activities are eligible for NMTC provided they meet certain criteria located here:

<https://www.cdfifund.gov/Documents/2015%20NMTC%20Application%20QA%20FINAL.pdf>

- Axiom is exploring the potential of NMTC funding
- Eligible census tracts are being reviewed
- It's unclear without investigation if Bucksport or parts of Bucksport may be eligible

Broadband Opportunity Council Funding Report- **U.S. Dept. of Commerce and USDA** released a report in January 2017 listing all federal broadband funding resources - See Addendum 3.