

## **FUNDING SOURCES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT**

Funds available for investment in telecommunications infrastructure are various and growing, particularly in underserved areas and communities. Some of those included below can be directly applied to infrastructure. Others may provide leverage when the project goals (the use to which the infrastructure will be put) align with the grant program. Still others are funds that may in future assist in the effort.

There are no doubt sources of funds that are not included and it will be particularly important as all funding sources are limited and shrinking, to combine sources and to combine the uses to which towers are put. Thus the marriage of public safety with economic development with homeland security and with cultural preservation could limit the number of towers, serve multiple purposes and draw on a wide variety of funding sources to choose from.

Some of these sources include the following:

### **Federal Universal Services Fund (Federal USF)**

From the FCC web site (<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/usfincrease.html>):

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Congress recognize that telephone service provides a vital link to emergency services, government services, and surrounding communities. To help promote telecommunications service nationwide, the FCC, as directed by Congress, developed the Federal Universal Service Fund.

There are four components to the Federal Universal Service Fund. They are:

- **Low-Income.** This program provides telephone service discounts to consumers with qualifying low-incomes.
- **High-Cost.** This program provides financial support to companies that provide telecommunications services in areas of America where the cost of providing service is high.
- **Schools and Libraries.** This program helps to ensure that the nation's classrooms and libraries receive access to the vast array of educational resources that are accessible through the telecommunications network.
- **Rural Health Care.** This program helps to link health care providers located in rural areas to urban medical centers so that patients living in rural America will have access to the same advanced diagnostic and other medical services that are enjoyed in urban communities.

### **State of Maine Homeland Security Grant Program, First Responder Preparedness.**

Funding provided to the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) by the federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for first responder preparedness to better prepare Maine communities to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks and other disaster events.

The State of Maine received a significantly reduced level of DHS funding in FY2005. MEMA has opted to distribute FY2005 grant funding based on a threat and risk model.

With that model in mind, three separate pools will be established to pass through funding to County and Local governments.

**Statewide Pool:** ALL Counties and communities will be invited to submit applications under a competitive process to be considered by the State Homeland Security Grant Review Committee for potential funding. In order to stretch grant funding as far as possible, regional or multi-jurisdictional applications are **strongly** encouraged.

**Metro Pool:** A second competitive pool will serve the 5 major metropolitan areas identified in the 2003 Statewide Strategy and Assessment process. These jurisdictions will be invited to submit competitive applications for the Metro Pool. The eligible metropolitan areas consist of the Cities of Lewiston and Auburn, the City of Portland, City of South Portland, City of Augusta, and City of Bangor.

**Law Enforcement Pool:** ALL Maine Law Enforcement agencies (County and Local) may submit competitive applications for FY2005 Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP) funding.

#### **Maine Universal Service Charge**

The MUSF collects assessments (1.46% of in state charges that help to keep rural rates affordable) from every telecommunications carrier that has intrastate revenues of more than \$12,500. The fund was implemented by the MPUC to help make phone service affordable and available to all, including consumers with low income. The charge can be found under the Other Charges and Credits section of your bill and is identified as ME UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND. For additional information on this charge, please visit the MPUC website at: <http://www.state.me.us/mpuc/rules/Part%202/ch-288.pdf>

#### **CDBG Public Infrastructure grants**

Gap funding for local infrastructure activities, which are part of a community development strategy leading to future public and private investments  
<http://meocd.informe.org/forms/applications.php>

#### **US Department of Agriculture/Rural Utilities Service Broadband Community Connect Grants**

\$8 million in grants  
<http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/commconnect.htm>

#### **US Department of Agriculture Rural Development's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program (REDLG)**

Will enable USDA to guarantee up to \$3 billion bonds or notes of not-for-profit lenders for up to 20 years, if the proceeds are used for electric and telecommunications loans. The lender, whose notes the Government will guarantee, will be required to pay an annual fee of 30 basis points over the term of the unpaid debt. Most of the 30 basis points will be deposited into the REDLG program.

The program was authorized by Section 6101 of the 2002 Farm Bill. Like other Rural Development programs, local leaders will make the decisions on what projects are needed in their communities. The REDLG program provides zero-interest loans and grants for all types of community and economic development projects. Past projects have included fire trucks, libraries, health facilities and industrial parks.

**National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)**, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is the Executive Branch's principal voice on domestic and international telecommunications and information technology issues. NTIA works to spur innovation, encourage competition, help create jobs and provide consumers with more choices and better quality telecommunications products and services at lower prices.

Two grant programs:

1. **Public Telecommunications Facilities Program (PTFP)** is a competitive grant program to help public broadcasting stations, state and local governments, Indian Tribes, and non profit organizations construct facilities to bring educational and cultural programs to the American public using broadcasting and non-broadcasting telecommunicates technologies.

<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ptfp/>

2. **Technology Opportunities Program formerly known as TIAP**, provides matching grants to improve public access to education, health care, public safety, and other community-based services.

<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/otiahome/top/index.html>

### **The Digital Divide Network**

<http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/content/webresources/index.cfm>

Resources and links to several government, corporate and private funds

Maine **“Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services”**. Established by Public Law 2003, c. 20 § W-2, the fund includes “Cooperative Services Grants to projects that can demonstrate savings in the cost of delivering local and regional governmental services. Types of projects exclude capital expenditures but include development of new or enhancement of existing regionalized system for delivery of governmental services.

### **Managing Information with Rural America**

<http://mira.wkkf.org/>

MIRA Project Scrapbook seeks to draw upon the reservoirs of strength, tenacity, and civic commitment in rural communities to help rural people use technology (electronic communications and information systems) as a tool to meet current and future challenges.

### **US Department of Education - Community Technology Centers grant program**

Funds local community technology centers that demonstrate the educational value of technology in urban, rural and economically distressed communities.

<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/AdultEd/CTC/index.html>

**Rural Community Development Initiative**

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/rcdi/>

**Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**

<http://www.mott.org/programs/p-bi.asp>

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*Coordinate multiple sources of funding and site feasibility analysis to fill gaps in coverage by construction facilities that serve the multiple objectives of economic development, emergency services, homeland security and cultural/scenic protection.*