The Maine Project
Final Evaluation Report

Prepared for the United State Department of Commerce
Telecommunications and Information
Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP)

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Project Overview

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide TIIAP with information describing the operations, methods and management processes employed by the Maine Project staff and project stakeholders during the 12 month life of the Maine Project. Benchmarks identified in the initial Maine Project proposal have been reiterated to establish a baseline from which to determine the degree to which the Maine Project staff achieved the Project's stated objectives. Real-world circumstances encountered during the life of the project have been described to show how the project was adapted to respond to internal (management-related) and external (stakeholder-related) contingencies.

This information offers U.S. Department of Commerce project staff and other interested parties a context to interpret the project findings and recommendations put forth by the Maine Project staff in the reports, **Maine Logs On** (May, 1995) and in the final **TIIAP Maine Project Report** (October, 1995).

Project Background

In May, 1994, the University of Maine System received a planning grant from the United States Department of Commerce Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance program. The stated purposes of the Maine Project were two-fold:

- The Maine Project planned to examine the state of Maine's current public and private telecommunications infrastructure and information services capabilities.

- The Maine Project was intended to help create a vision for a world-class telecommunications system in Maine that would foster the state's economic development and enhance its citizen's quality of life.

The TIAAP grant was matched by contributions from the University of Maine System and Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation. State agencies also supplemented the grant funds with in-kind contributions. Individuals, businesses and organizations contributed their time and effort to the project, ensuring that the broadest range of perspectives were represented in the planning project's final recommendations.

From the beginning, the Maine Project was committed to a "grassroots" approach to the planning process. The primary rationale for taking this approach came from recognizing that, at the time that the TIAAP planning grant was awarded, there were already several public and private telecommunications initiatives that had been or were being implemented in Maine. These included but were not limited to:

- The University of Maine System's Educational Network of Maine, which provides two-way interactive video via a fiber optic ring leased from NYNEX that interactively connects the seven University of Maine System campuses. The network is further augmented by one-way video via microwave and two way audio via telephone.

- The University of Maine's Computing and Data Processing Services (CAPS), which features Saturn, the individual dial-in service that provides Internet access to educators, librarians, government employees and public nonprofit service organizations.

- The University of Maine System's computerized public access library catalog, URSUS. This database contains book holdings, periodicals and state and Federal documents of the University of Maine System. It also contains collections of the Maine State Library, and the Law and Legislative Libraries at the Maine State House.

- A variety of community telecommunications networks (e.g. Maine Free Net, Maine Meeting Place) established to address specific needs and interests of geographic as well as interest-specific "communities".

- Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation, which provides radio and broadcast video programming, including educational and instructional broadcast programming, to the state at large. 99% of Maine's citizens are able to receive MPBC programming.

- Maine's cable television network, which provides community access to cable television programming via CATV satellite broadcasts and coaxial and fiber optic cable to the "set-top".

- NYNEX's local exchange carrier (LEC) and intra-LATA connectivity via twisted pair and fiber optics providing customers with voice and data services.

- Various inter-exchange carrier (IXC) connectivity via twisted pair and fiber optics providing customers with voice and data services.

Further, several Maine organizations and interest groups had already recognized the importance of articulating their vision for telecommunications so that it could be included in a statewide "master plan," should such a plan ever be forthcoming. For example, in April, 1995, the Goals Committee of the Maine Economic Growth Council had published their report, **Goals for Growth,** in which the importance of readily available and affordable information technology resource access was underscored. The **Maine Goals 2000 Technology Task Force Final Report**, published in June, 1995, presented the results of work undertaken by the Technology Task Force during the preceding year. In that report, the authors' belief that ubiquitous, reliable technology resources are essential for student to learn how to compete in the future were clearly articulated:

> "...Maine schools lack the technology resources necessary to ensure an equitable education opportunity to Maine citizens and prepare students for the 21st century. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's SCANS report, the demand for technologically literate workers will increase threefold by the year 2000. When school systems are able to produce effective knowledge workers through the integration of learning technologies, their communities present a promising climate for economic development."

The Maine Telecommunications Forum generated a series of recommendations to Maine policy makers and regulators in their report, **Maine's 21st Century Telecommunications Network: A Blueprint for Action** (May, 1995). The lengthy subtitle of this report ("Why We Need to Act Now to Encourage Competition In Telecommunications And To Build An Advanced, Interactive And Affordable Network Connecting Maine To Tomorrow's Global Information Web") clearly reflected the Forum' opinion that telecommunications access and services were a critical component of any vision addressing the state's future economic and social development.

Even as the Maine Project principals and staff began to revisit the goals and purposes of their project as proposed, they realized that technological, economic and national policy changes would rapidly outstrip any attempt to assess or extend the extant physical and structural plan for a telecommunication system in Maine. Given the burgeoning interest in telecommunications access and services found across Maine's educational, business, governmental, medical and community sectors, it became apparent that the development of a partnership among the interested parties would help identify the common concerns dealing with telecommunications access and services. Such a partnership would also provide a "critical mass" of consumers, able to identify concerns of consumer groups and to propose solutions to access and service provision challenges that reflect the needs and interests of consumers.

The collective efforts of ALL groups represented among the membership of the Maine Project's Working Committee (described in the following section of this evaluation report) were perceived as a means of establishing a consumer-oriented framework for influencing the shape and direction of state telecommunications public policy dealing with:

- Access.
- Equity.
- Economic Development.
- Education and Training.
- Freedom and Responsibility.

The Maine Project's findings, where each of these areas of concern were discussed in detail, were organized in the draft version of the Final Report (September 22, 1995) stated in the following organizing principles:

> *Universal Access:* All Maine municipalities and their citizens will have equal, affordable and, when desirable, public- and privately-supported access to information services that meet their social, business, educational, health, civic and quality-of-life needs.
>
> *Challenges to the State:* As technologies change and there is more emphasis on robust competition and minimal regulation, the roles and responsibilities of government will change-not disappear, but change. The great responsibility of government will be to foster the use of telecommunications for the benefit of the society as a whole through public investment, leadership, and attention to the needs of those at risk of being barred from the advantages of technology.
>
> *Building an Open, Supportive Environment*: Principles related to equity and diversity, collaboration and competition, and viewing stakeholders as partners help capture the notions that system planning will incorporate bottom-up participatory planing to ensure the greatest possible degree of participation of all Maine's citizens.
>
> *Multiple Use Community Networks:* Maine will promote broad citizen participation in the development, use and evolution of its telecommunications system, overcoming barriers of distance and isolation, cost and user inhibition.
>
> *Making the Connections:* The interrelationship between the development of telecommunications systems and organizational functioning is very strong. telecommunications cannot be treated as side services unconnected with program decisions, nor can the economic development, education, health services, public safety, transportation or conservation be separated from each other in considering public policies or infrastructure.

Evaluation Overview

The Role of Evaluation

Evaluation provides a mechanism for looking at a project and making judgments about the value of the lessons learned from that project. Regardless of the broad vision and goal statements in this or other funded projects, the "bottom line" for project evaluations in general and this evaluation in particular is that they attempt to answer questions such as:

- "Was this project worth doing?"
- "Did we ask the right questions?"
- "Would we do it again?"
- "If we do it again, what would we do differently?"
- "What did we learn from our efforts?"
- "What can others learn from our successes and failures?"
- "What other stakeholders (and potential funders) can we interest in our efforts as a result of what we have accomplished to date?"

Clearly, questions like these do not have "right" or "wrong" answers. What they do is to present the context in which the project's reported outcomes can be interpreted and generalized. This assists decision-makers in extracting key findings that may be applicable in other contexts by allowing them to consider the project's outcomes within the given project's context. It then becomes possible to consider whether finding from one project can actually be generalized to another project, given the circumstances likely to impact the second project that may not have affected the first project.

Questions like the ones noted above demand the expansion of one's thinking beyond the neutral objectivity of outcomes measurement. They call for the creation of a framework of systematic subjectivity that is needed to determine value and impact of a technology planning and/or

an implementation project. That is, after all, what evaluations should be designed to do.

Phases of Technology Planning and Implementation

Although the types of questions being asked by the Maine Project must focus upon very specific issues which may not generalize beyond the state of Maine, the *types* of questions being asked are fairly typical examples of questions that tend to be asked about large-scale technology planning and implementation projects. During the compilation of preliminary results of the **Annenberg/CPB New Pathways to a Degree** evaluation (Johnstone and Markwood, 1992), Wagner (1993) observed that distance education projects (in particular) and technology integration efforts (in general) appear go through three evolutionary phases on their way toward institutional and/or community integration. These phases identify developmental checkpoints for asking contextualized questions so that meaningful interpretations of data can occur.

- The first phase, dealing with issues associated with *technological reliability*, tends to be concerned with making sure that technologies being used for the delivery of instruction are operational, available and that they work as expected when needed.

- The second phase, dealing with issues related to *user support,* considers the needs of individuals making use of information technologies and technology-based programs and services. Activities featured in this phase address the means of effectively adapting traditional support structures to assist users in exploiting the power of information technologies in effective ways.

- The third phase encompasses issues which reflect how organizations deal with or adapt to change. Technology plays a catalytic role in bringing about organizational change -- some of which may actually have something to do with the technology itself. Generally speaking, this phase considers the consequences of introducing change into a system. This may include but is not limited to new staffing models, incentive systems, funding formulas, articulation agreements, and public/private partnerships.

These three phases of technology integration do not occur sequentially. Rather, they are both iterative and concurrent. While they can be categorized as separate and distinct arenas of concern for the sake of discussion, they tend to interact with one another within the context of an actual project. For example, new technology may be introduced in response to a specific organizational need. Mechanisms must be put in

place to make sure that the new resources work the way that they are supposed to, and that they are used in ways which address the needs which had originally led to their introduction. Users must then be prepared to use the new innovations and/or to respond to the changes that the new technologies bring about. This, in turn brings about greater interest in adapting existing support structures, which brings about new needs for new technologies, along with an array of new policies and procedures.

What these phases provide is a framework for asking important evaluation questions *at appropriate points in the life of a technology planning and/or implementation project.* A project's data outcomes SHOULD be objective, replicable and, to some degree, absolute. However, the ability to actually use project data for making decisions about a particular type of technology application or about the value of using that application in a specific environment depends on constructing and/or interpreting meaning for those data, given specific situational contingencies that are likely to be encountered at various points in the life of that technology planning or implementation project.

In the Maine Project, much of the planning efforts focused upon addressing issues in Phase 1, the technology reliability/infrastructure phase of project evolution. After all, without connectivity, there is very little reason to worry about what is going to happen after connectivity has been established. Even so, the various members of the Working Group were able to see how many of the issues being addressed in their infrastructure-related arenas of inquiry would eventually need to be addressed in the policy arena (which is an example of the Phase 3 the organizational change Phase.) This is due in large part to the lessons learned when Maine organizations established telecommunications enterprises such as the Educational Network of Maine, URSUS and CAPS. Similarly, the recognition of the importance of training people how to use technology resources reflects concerns arising from Phase 2, user support. Until connectivity issues are resolved, however, it will be relatively pointless to operationalize a training initiative (or other related efforts associated with Phase 2 or Phase 3 activities), since one won't certain how to direct one's efforts to achieve maximum impact.

The greatest value that may be derived from this 3-Phase model of technology project evolution is that it may help people to anchor both their concerns and related activities at (appropriate) points along a design/development continuum. In this way attention to those details will be likely to have relatively more impact, given what it known about how telecommunications projects generally appear to evolve. In the Maine Project, for example, project staff and members of the Working Committee speculated about principles, policies and the like across all three phases of the technology model. Even so, activities dealing with connectivity and infrastructure development tended to serve as precursors to activities dealing with user training or even with policy

generation. It may be more likely that testing the validity of principles dealing with infrastructure development and management strategies may need to precede principles focused on user training or organizational restructuring.

Evaluation Approach Used with the Maine Project

The external evaluation of the Maine Project was designed to:

- Ascertain the degree to which the Maine Project achieved its proposed purposes and objectives as stated in the original proposal.

- Note variations from the original proposal as reflected in operational and management practices and procedures, and provide a rationale for those variations.

- Provide commentary on the Maine Project's categories of findings to provide readers with context for interpreting those findings.

The evaluation for the Maine Project was contracted approximately 6 months after the project's scheduled start date. Consequently, it is based in large part upon a *post facto* examination of extant project documentation.

Documents reviewed as part of the evaluation process include:

- The original proposal for The Maine Project that had been submitted to the U.S. Department of Commerce TIIAP,

- **Maine Logs On**

- Occasional minutes from the first half of the project (June-December, 1994) from Working Committee meetings.

- Occasional minutes from Infrastructure Subcommittee meetings.

- Results from the Applications Subcommittee's Applications Survey from April 1995.

- Electronic brochures describing CAPS services (including Saturn, CAP's dial-up service).

- **Maine Goals 2000 Statewide Education Technology Plan Final Report** (June, 1995)

- Maine Telecommunications Forum's Report, **Maine's 21st Century Telecommunications Network: A Blueprint for Action, Goals for Growth**.

- A **Report of the Goals Committee to the Maine Economic Growth Council**.

- **Proceedings of the Maine Telecommunications Policy Forum**, (June 14, 1995), sponsored by the Maine Rural Development Council.

Interviews were conducted with project staff and with selected members of the Working Committee and Steering Committee in June, 1995. Names of those individuals interviewed for the evaluation have been included in Appendix 1. The external evaluator attended one Working Committee meeting that was held in June, 1995. Attendees participating in that meeting have been noted in Appendix 2. The evaluator also attended a Final Report writing sub-committee meeting and the subsequent Working Committee meeting where the draft of the Final Report was submitted to the Working Group for review and feedback. Based on the results of review and feedback offered to the Writing Subcommittee, the final draft report was scheduled for significant re-writing at a meeting to be scheduled for October 13, 1995.

Project Description

Purposes and Objectives

As stated in the proposal submitted to the TIIAP, the purpose of the Maine Project was to develop the capacity to address the state's telecommunications and information infrastructure needs comprehensively and for the long term.

Stated objectives for the Maine Project included:

- Engaging public and private stakeholders in a collaborative strategic telecommunications plan that is action oriented and specific to needs.
- Stimulating bottom-up community involvement and encourage input from both urban and rural areas through a comprehensive public information program.
- Guaranteeing equity, ease of access to and privacy of social, governmental and information services.
- Guaranteeing connectivity, interoperability and interactivity of technology.
- Assessing the capacity of exiting networks and systems in the state and build in flexibility for incorporating new technologies and services (i.e. scalability).
- Developing public and private partnerships to create, sustain and upgrade such capacity and encourage innovation in its use.
- Crafting an evaluation process to monitor the plan's effectiveness.
- Disseminating the results statewide and nationally.

Project Partners

The Maine Project Proposal was submitted to the TIIAP by the University of Maine System. Dr. George Connick, President of the Educational Network of Maine, was identified as the Maine Project's Principal Investigator/Point of Contact. The Educational Network of Maine was

identified as the Maine Project's fiduciary agent. The University of Maine system contributed matching funds to the Maine Project, as did Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation, which contributed $50,000 in matching funds.

A planning meeting was held in Augusta on April 20, 1994 to provide interested parties in the state of Maine an opportunity to participate in developing the Maine Project proposal. Individuals attending that planning meeting represented a broad array of public and private agencies, including:

- Maine Department of Mental Health
- Maine Leadership Consortium
- Public Cable Company
- Maine Free-Net/Colby College
- State of Maine Regional Court
- Northern Maine Educational Partnership
- Maine Public Utilities Commission
- State of Maine Telecommunications Division
- University of Maine System Computing
- Maine School Management Association
- Maine Rural Development Council
- AARP
- OSRAM-Sylvania
- Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation
- NYNEX
- University of Maine URSUS
- Maine Meeting Place Network
- Center for Creative Imaging
- DMHMR/Maine Free-Net
- State of Maine Secretary of State's Office

Approximately 200 individuals from these organizations and a number of others would eventually be involved in the voluntary work of the Maine Project. These 200 individuals composed the Working Group of the Maine Project were given the charge to:

- Assess the current information infrastructure.
- Develop the principles, goals, strategies and objectives around which Maine's telecommunications system should be developed in the years to come.

Members of the Working Committee included representatives from the following sectors:

- Telecommunications and information technology service providers and users, including telephone companies (LEC and IXC carriers), cable television companies, power companies and Internet providers.

- Representative of State government, including executive, legislative and judicial agencies.

- Municipalities.

- Academic, library, school and administrative networks.

- Independent community networks.

- Hospitals and community health clinics.

- Private businesses.

The benefits of having a large, highly representative Working Committee clearly off-set the disadvantages of managing the efforts of such a large diverse group. Even so, the project staff recognized that the Maine Project's goals would be attained more readily by focusing the group's efforts in several arenas of activity. To that end, several committees and subcommittees were created to accomplish an array of information gathering and disseminating tasks. These committees included:

The *Environmental Assessment Committees*, including the Infrastructure Subcommittee (chaired by Reginald Palmer), the Applications Subcommittee (chaired by Jim McCarthy) and the End Users Subcommittee (chaired by Terry Shehata). These three groups were charged with gathering information and developing data and descriptive materials on existing information technology and telecommunications systems, service applications, and user demands.

The *Goals and Benchmarking Committee* (chaired by Robert Ho) was responsible for developing statements of vision, principles goals, strategies, objectives and benchmarks. Among this committee's charges was the development, production and revision of the document, **Maine Logs On**.

The *Public Awareness Committee* (chaired by Suzanne Goucher) was charged with developing and implementing a plan to encourage public participation in the Maine Project. This was to include outreach to programs sponsored by other Maine organizations involved in telecommunications planning (e.g. the Maine Rural Development

Council). It also included focus group meetings at various locations in the state of Maine, as well as using the Educational Network of Maine's interactive television facilities to provide Maine citizens' with a means of providing public input that did not require traveling long distances to participate in face-to-face meetings.

Governance and Management

The Maine Project was governed by a Steering Committee composed of four individuals, including:

- The Maine Commissioner of Administrative and Financial Services, Janet Waldron. Commissioner Waldron served as Chair of the Steering Committee.

- The President of the State Cable Company (who also serves as the President of the Maine Cable Television Association), Michael Angelakis. Mr. Angelakis served as the Steering Committee's Vice Chair.

- The President of the University of Maine Systems' Educational Network of Maine, George Connick.

- The President of Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation, Robert Gardiner.

Don Nicoll, President of D & H Nicoll Associates, served as the Maine Project's Director. Mr. Nicoll was hired on a contractual basis to provide the Maine Project with part-time professional oversight.

The Maine Project staff included two staff assistants who both managed and supported the work of the Project Director, the Steering Committee and the regular standing committees. One administrative assistant was loaned from the Educational Network of Maine to provide the Project with part-time logistical support.

Timeline

The Project's original timeline had called for tasks to be accomplished according to the following schedule:

Phase 1: Project Initiation (Month 1) was originally scheduled to take place in October, 1994.

Phase 2: Public Awareness (Months 1 through 6) was originally scheduled to take place from October, 1994 to March, 1995.

Phase 3 Bottom-up Involvement of User groups (Months 3 - 8) was originally scheduled to occur from December, 1994 to May, 1995.

Phase 4 Assessment of Existing Networks (Months 5 - 10) was originally scheduled to take place from February to July, 1995

Phase 5: Strategic Decision-Making and Action (Months 10 - 12) were scheduled to take place from July - September 1995.

From the onset, the Maine Project staff found themselves adapting this timeline to accommodate a number of factors:

The plans for having the Maine Project managed by a full-time director changed. The Maine Project was eventually run by a part-time director, who supervised the efforts of two part-time project staff and one loaned administrative staff member. Maine Project staff came on board well after the Project's October start date. Even so, the staff was able to quickly develop a plan through which the goals of the project could be met by changing the focus from determining what it would take to establish seamless connectivity among Maine's many community networks, and focused instead upon proposing operating principles to begin shaping the public policy environment in which telecommunications infrastructure developments would occur over time.

The Project's external evaluator was contracted to work with the Maine Project in May, 1995. This meant that evaluation protocols were set up well after the Maine Project was underway.

The assessment of existing networks was altered to enable a greater emphasis upon community based network planning. With so much of Maine's telecommunication infrastructure owned by common carriers like NYNEX, the Maine Project staff found that it was hard to develop reliable maps indicating transmission capacity, since the common carriers resisted sharing capacity information. The surveys distributed by the infrastructure subcommittee were not really able to give as complete a capacity picture as had been hoped. However, in the early months of the project, it appeared as if the collective influence of the planning grant staff might be able to alter common carrier construction plans -- if nothing else, the desires of the Working Committee would provide common carriers with a better idea of the market demand for their services. Therefore, the project shifted its focus away from the infrastructure focus toward a community network focus.

Much of the public awareness work took place from July through September 1995. These activities build upon the work that had been undertaken by the Environmental Assessment Committee which had gathered information describing existing information technology and telecommunications systems, service applications, and user demands. They

also built upon the efforts of the Goals and Benchmarking Committee in that they requested reaction and feedback on **Maine Logs On**. The Public Awareness Committee also continued to maintain a presence by reaching out to programs sponsored by other Maine organizations involved in telecommunications planning.

General Discussion

"Was this project worth doing?"

There appears to be general agreement on all fronts that this planning project brought telecommunications service providers as well as current and prospective telecommunications users together in ways that had not been experienced previously. Great care was taken to involve a maximum number of people in the planning process, to ensure that the broadest possible array of perspectives would be included in any recommendations brought forward through this effort. This can be seen in the composition of the working committees and subcommittees, from the dependence upon group processes such as focus groups and town meetings, and the representation of a wide variety of sectors among the Working Committee's membership. Telecommunications access and service providers found themselves discussing arcane regulatory stipulations with citizens who, under normal circumstances, would never have engaged themselves in regulatory debate. Industry personnel found that certain industry terms having explicit meaning within the highly regulated telecommunications environment tended to be used more broadly among consumer groups. Project staff found that their interest in obtaining information describing current infrastructure from representatives from the telecommunications industry was mitigated by the industry's desire to limit access to that information so as not to compromise their (perceived) competitive advantage. Improving communications among diverse interest groups all looking to maximize telecommunications access and services was seen as an important first step in the planning process, and was valued as an important project outcome.

"Did we ask the right questions?"

The Maine Project's operation ended up being far less structured than had been originally proposed. This was due to a number of circumstances, not the least of which was encountering difficulties in identifying and hiring a full-time project director at the onset of project funding. This delay in implementing the project as proposed resulted in far less emphasis on the "engineering study" that had been envisioned for the planning grant. The original questions relating to the ability of analyzing and extending Maine's telecommunications infrastructure shifted toward a consideration of public policy questions dealing with telecommunications access and affordability of access and services.

As Project staff and committee members reviewed the existing telecommunications systems to determine statewide transmission capacity,

it appeared that information would not be forthcoming from commercial service providers (e.g. NYNEX) for competitive reasons. However, as it became clear that obtaining details about the current and planned commercial telecommunications infrastructure would be difficult, it also became clear that consumer interests could potentially be marshaled to organize and shape infrastructure development. That is, it appeared as if more articulated demand for telecommunications services might actually result in having telecommunication providers meet those demands. Over time, the Working Committee's efforts eventually stayed away from a highly technical planning document, and instead increasingly oriented its efforts toward articulating principles that would shape the public policy environment. Instead, the committees looked to determine the types of demands for telecommunications services that existed in the state of Maine's various sectors. It was within this context that the principles dealing with access, universal service, equity, economic development, education and training, as well as freedom and responsibility were delineated.

"Would we do it again?"

There appears to be general consensus on the part of the Project Staff and members of the Working Committee that the planning project was a success. Rather than losing momentum as the project neared its completion, the Maine Project continually "picked up steam", involving more and more interested parties over time. Members of the Working Committee found that this planning project provided the broadest range of perspectives among the telecommunications initiatives underway in Maine.

"If we do it again, what would we do differently?"

It is always easier to restructure a project in with the advantage of hindsight. Even so, it appears that it is the details of that would be changed, rather than the overall direction, vision, objectives of strategies of the project. Several specific issues are worth noting.

Participative Processes: The highly open, participative process enabled a higher degree of public comment and participation than would have been possible in a more tightly managed project. Nevertheless, this approach also necessitated "starting from square one" throughout the life of the project to bring new group participants up to speed on issues that may have, in fact, already been discussed at great length. Several members of the Project staff, the Steering Committee and the Working committee commented that while the value of a participatively managed project brought numerous benefits to the Project, it was not a particularly efficient process.

Consensus: As the Maine Project summarized and interpreted the results of their user needs assessment, the infrastructure assessment and the public forum/publicity campaigns, the summaries tended to take the form of operating principles and policy recommendations. Within these summary discussions, the notion of consensus eventually meant simply being able to "live with" -- or not to oppose -- recommendations made by and/or approved by the majority. Consensus did not necessarily imply agreement. Given the diversity of perspectives represented among the Project committees and subcommittees, it is impressive that the Maine Project resulted in a clearly articulated vision, operating principles, goals and strategies. Even so, there continued to be several individuals and groups who wanted the Project's recommendations to be even more inclusive, or to focus on funding structures to pay for the "universal access" that was discussed at length in the Final Report. Interestingly, the people or groups that tended to be most unhappy with recommendations of the project, or felt that the interest of their group had not been presented well, were those who did not fully avail themselves of the participative process throughout the life of the project.

"What did we learn from our efforts?"

Several key observations were made by project participants as the Maine Project came to a close:

- Interest in creating accessible, affordable mechanisms to access telecommunications resources is and will continue to be an important element of life in the future, regardless of the sector when one may work, or the geographic region where one may live. From a public policy perspective, this continually increasing awareness of the benefits of telecommunications and demands that the public be allowed to realize those benefits provides the impetus for making the kind of regulatory changes needed for make ubiquitous telecommunications access and services a reality.

- Grassroots efforts take on a life their own. When a project is designed to function as an "open" environment, group composition will continue to change over time as people "drop in" and "drop out". Grassroots projects require flexible, highly participative, consensus-based management to ensure that the momentum of the group's efforts continue to move forward. Among other things, this means securing the services of a project director who possess a highly participative management style, someone who will tend to facilitate rather than lead. It also means accepting the fact that it will take longer to get things done than if the management effort was centralized.

- No one party or parties own the products of grassroots efforts. While this has advantages in creating a broad sense of community participation, it has the potential of reducing the overall sense of ownership that participants may feel toward the final recommendations or proposed "next steps" arising from the planning project's recommendations.

- One of the great challenges of coordinating the efforts of a highly diverse enterprise such as the Maine Project is to create a shared vision, to articulate common values, to develop a shared vocabulary and to stake out "common ground" from which to generate strategies and tactics for taking action. Without consensus, collaboration is clearly compromised. However, as noted earlier, consensus can't mean universal agreement, or nothing will be accomplished. Within the context of the planning grant it was possible to generate vision statements and operating principles that represented the views of the Working Committee at large. It is also likely that attempting to implement the visions and principles generated by the planning grant's Working Committee will result in greater divergence than what was encountered in the planning grant. With the award of a 1995 TIIAP Implementation grant, the "Maine Project II" staff will have a unique opportunity to test the validity and reliability of the planning principles in applied in real-world practice.

"What can others learn from our successes?"

As an exploratory effort, the Maine Project created a collective consciousness related to telecommunications access and services. From this perspective, the Maine Project was a very successful venture:

- It demonstrated progress in increasing awareness of the value of ubiquitous telecommunications services on a statewide basis.
- It helped to determine directions for future public policy development.
- It ensured that the debate regarding appropriate subsidization of telecommunications services to enable universal access to essential services would continue to ensue.

The Maine Project was also clearly a project that took place in the right place at the right time. Given the telecommunications initiatives that had been underway in Maine for the past number of years, the Maine Project was able to capture much of the momentum that had been created through these previous and simultaneous efforts. While the groups involved in the Maine Project did have to get "up to speed" on a whole array of telecommunications issues, the education processes associated with the Maine Project were able to build upon the collective wisdom garnered through earlier efforts such as the Educational Network of Maine, CAPS and URSUS. In a less savvy environment, the loosely

structured grassroots approach to planning might not have worked as successfully as this one did.

One thing that outside observers may learn from the Maine Project experience is that state-wide planning projects built upon the foundation of already successful community-based telecommunication projects are likely to be more successful than those projects that disregard the lessons learned by their predecessors.

As the Maine Project came to an end, it appeared as if people involved in the project realized that the process of planning and implementing a world-class telecommunications network would continue to evolve over time. To paraphrase the words of Gene Hall, planning a statewide telecommunication system is a process, not an event. The Maine Project has provided the citizens of Maine with a foundation upon which to test the validity of principles generated through this effort.

Appendix 1:

Individuals Interviewed by Ellen Wagner Maine Project External Evaluator June 22, 1995.

Don Nicoll, Maine Project Director

William Lowell, Maine Project Working Committee member, Mars Hill School District, ME.

Penney Guisinger, Maine Project staff.

Mark Tibbetts, Maine Project staff.

Frederick Hurst, Maine Project Working Group member, Educational Network of Maine.

Janet Waldron, Chair, Maine Project Steering Committee, and Commissioner, State of Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services.

George Connick, Member, Maine Project Steering Committee and President, Educational Network of Maine.

Terry Shehata, Working Committee member and Vice President/Director, Maine Science and Technology Foundation.

Appendix 2:

List of Attendees
June 23, 1995 Working Committee Meeting
(affiliations noted where available)

Barbara Alexander, PUC
Michael Angelakis, State Cable Company
Henry Bourgeois
Tim Bolton
Alan Caron, Caron Communications
Richard Curry, former VP, UNUM Life Insurance Company
Audrey Daigle
Jeff Darrell
Carla Dickstein, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
Tom Eldridge
Penney Guisinger, Maine Project
Darwin Hatheway
Jim Henderson
Mark Hews, Threshold to Maine
Robert Ho, Maine Rural Development
Fred Hurst, Educational Network of Maine
Jay Johnson, CAPS
John Kortecamp, Alliance Foundation
Linda Lord, Maine Department of Education
William Lowell, Mars School District
Jim McCarthy, NYNEX
Don Nicoll, Maine Project
Reg Palmer, West Penobscot Independent Telephone Company
Jeanne Pernice, Mount View Senior High School
Bonnie Post
Richard Rhames
Michael Roy
Mark Tibbetts, Maine Project