

Joint Standing Committee

On

Education and Cultural Affairs

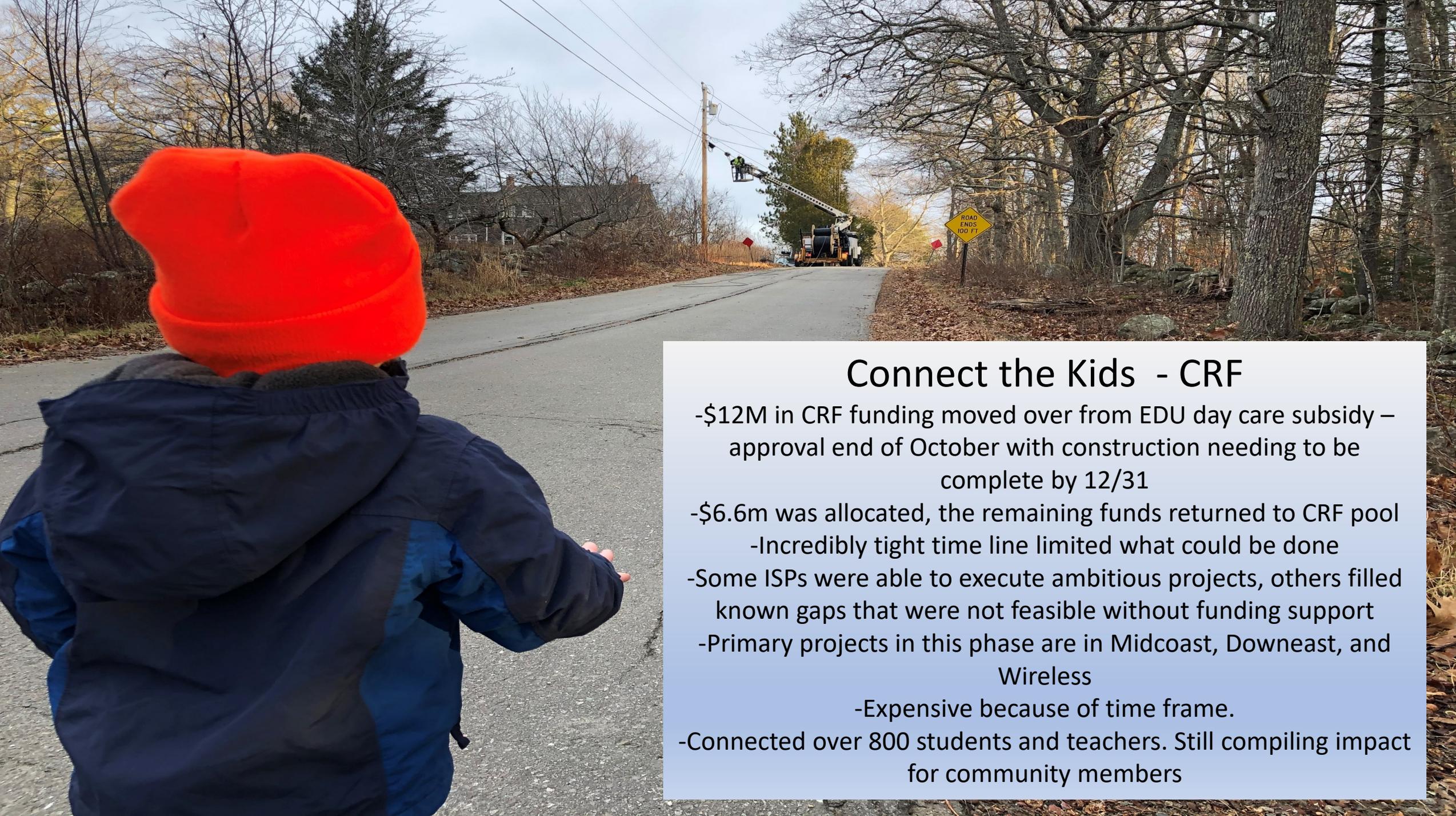
Department of Economic and Community Development

January 25, 2021



Multiple barriers for access

- Infrastructure access – do you have the physical infrastructure to allow for high speed, real time access on a consistent basis.
- Digital literacy – do you have the tools and knowledge to take advantage of modern infrastructure
- Affordability – can you afford to connect



Connect the Kids - CRF

- \$12M in CRF funding moved over from EDU day care subsidy – approval end of October with construction needing to be complete by 12/31
- \$6.6m was allocated, the remaining funds returned to CRF pool
 - Incredibly tight time line limited what could be done
- Some ISPs were able to execute ambitious projects, others filled known gaps that were not feasible without funding support
 - Primary projects in this phase are in Midcoast, Downeast, and Wireless
 - Expensive because of time frame.
- Connected over 800 students and teachers. Still compiling impact for community members

Lessons Learned

What worked

- Clear recognition of the challenge and interest to solve
- Providers engaged quickly
- Superintendents willing to work directly with providers
- CMP and Versant were creative on pole attach process for expediting construction
- Funding

Areas for improvement

- Mapping and information sharing on infrastructure gaps
- Need to develop a strategy to attract Federal funds to connect students with manageable lead times allowing better leverage
- Speed to action, process improvement
- Expand impact outside of infrastructure to affordability

Affordability is a challenge in all areas of Maine and is not only a rural challenge.

Numerous studies have shown the principal reason low-income Americans do not subscribe to broadband is [price](#). With a [median](#) monthly price around \$60, internet access falls below food, shelter, heat, and light in household spending priorities.

*[TECHTANK](#) The broadband industry steps up to connect students when the FCC will not, [Tom Wheeler](#) Tuesday, September 15, 2020

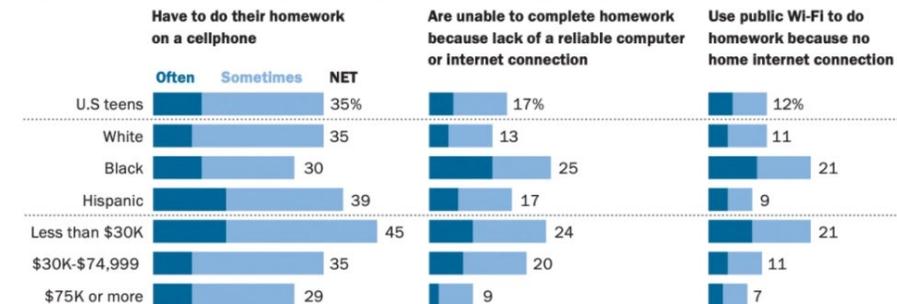
Connectivity isn't just a need in a pandemic

The Homework Gap

The majority of eighth-grade students in the United States rely on the internet at home to get their homework done. Roughly six-in-ten students (58%) say they use the internet at their home to do homework every day or almost every day, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of data from the [2018 National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)](#). Just 6% of students say they never use the internet at home for this purpose.

Black teens and those from lower-income households are especially likely to be affected by the digital 'homework gap'

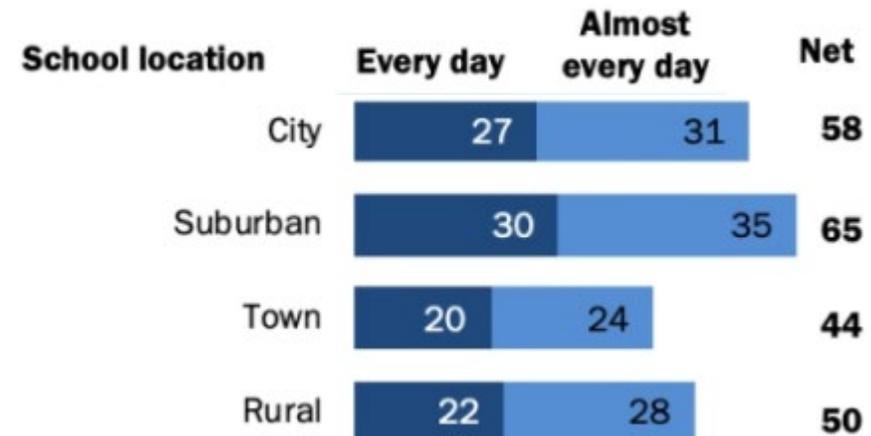
% of U.S. teens, by race and ethnicity or annual family income, who say they often or sometimes ...



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics are of any race. Those who gave other responses or who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Cellular versus Broadband

- We can't have one without the other
- In the near term students need fixed broadband and computer equipment
- Long term, education and other sectors may morph to be more dependent on cellular. Maine will need fiber density to improve cellular connectivity so we can solve short and long term goals with improvement in fiber density

