



Memorandum

TO: Amy Tong, California Chief Information Officer
Director, California Department of Technology
Chair, California Broadband Council

FROM: California Emerging Technology Fund
Sunne Wright McPeak, President and CEO

DATE: May 19, 2021

RE: Progress Report on Implementation of Broadband For All Executive Order
and Action Plan

The purpose of this Memorandum is to report to the California Department of Technology and the California Broadband Council on the progress to date in implementing the Governor's Broadband For All Executive Order (August 14, 2020) and the Broadband For All Action Plan (December 30, 2020) by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF). In both documents CETF is assigned responsibilities for promoting broadband adoption by distributing information about available Affordable Home Internet Offers from Internet Service Providers (ISPs), with a particular focus on students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). See below the relevant excerpts.

CETF pursued outreach channels through the California Department of Education (CDE), County Offices of Education (COEs), and larger School Districts because most of the available ISP Affordable Home Internet Offers have NSLP as one of the eligibility criteria. CDE put a link on its home page ([How to Acquire Discounted Devices & Internet Service](#)) with pertinent information, including a link to the [CETF page for educators](#) and the CETF call center telephone number for parents. CDE and CETF sent visitors who wanted affordable offers to www.everyoneon.org/cetf which has had 23,784 unique page views since July 2020.

Overall, a total of 976,537 families with school children eligible for NLSP are planned to receive information about available Affordable Home Internet Offers by end of 2021.

Each of the outreach approaches yielded results, which are aggregated in the table below. Since July 2020, 168 Districts were contacted and 65% expressed interest. Of the interested Districts, 22% have completed a distribution of information about ISP Affordable Home Internet Offers to low-income families. The results to date show 24 Districts have completed distributing flyers to more than 173,000 families eligible for free-or-reduced lunch. Additionally 39 Districts (more than 362,000 families) are in the process of distributing information, and 47 Districts (more than 440,000 families) are currently developing a plan for distribution of information.

CETF Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Outreach to School Districts

Status of Distribution of Information Affordable Home Internet Offers	School Districts	# Families with a Child Eligible for NSLP*	Percent of Interested Districts
Information Distribution Completed	24	173,512	22%
Planning Distribution in 2021	39	362,381	35%
Interested: Agreed to Distribution Program	47	440,644	43%
Sub Total	110	976,537	100%
No Response to CETF Outreach	58	340,909	
Total Districts In CETF FY20-21 Outreach	168	1,317,446	

Data source for NSLP <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/files/sp.asp>

Note: Once a District says it wants to share the information with students and parents, it takes 4-6 months before the District completes and implements the requisite agreements and actually distributes flyers. Further, recently Districts have decided to delay distribution to focus on return to classrooms and testing.

CETF employed 3 primary strategies to engage parents.

1. Engaged Former California Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) Tom Torlakson to encourage Superintendents of County Offices of Education and School Districts with high percentages of NSLP students to implement an outreach program to parents with materials developed by CETF and customized for each attendance area.
2. Collaborated with the California State PTA to distribute information to eligible parents.
3. Coordinated distribution of 25,000 Chromebooks purchased by Frontier Communications and free to students and parents identified by School Districts (including 10,000 devices to Tribal Nations). As part of the Frontier Chromebook Distribution Project CETF asked School Districts and Tribal Nations to distribute a flyer about the affordable offers to all families. Only the NSLP participants were counted in the statistics below.

Experience indicates that the most effective way to share information with parents about Internet Service Providers (ISPs) available affordable home Internet offers is to provide a standardized flyer and website to which each District can add its logo to give so that parents can rely upon a trusted messenger. The flyer sets forth the eligibility requirements, price of affordable offers, and the ISP telephone numbers within the District. The website is a template from EveryoneOn, a CETF partner, where visitors can use their zip code to retrieve information about affordable offers and requirements specific to each offer. The website provides links to the application and telephone numbers for each ISP. The participating District websites have had more than 20,000 page views since July 2021.

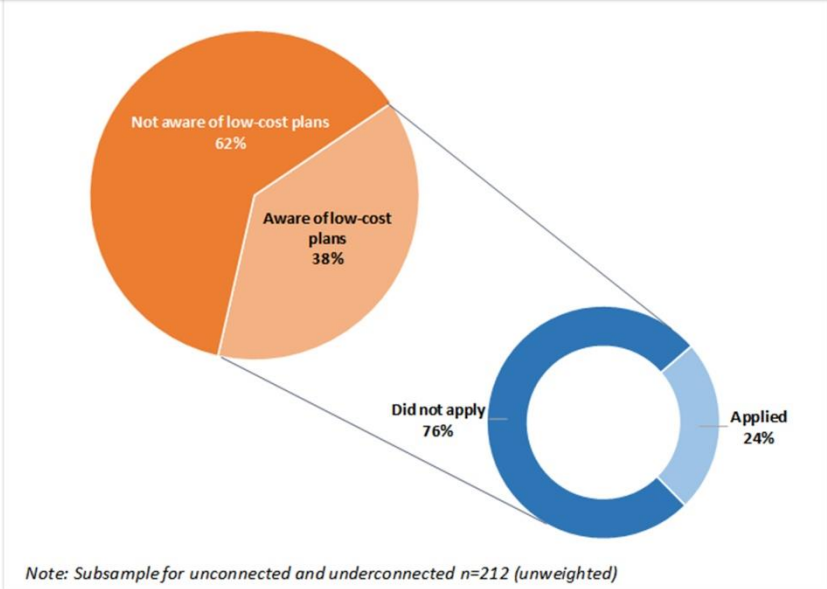
With the launch of the federal \$3.2B Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to provide \$50 per month subsidy (\$75 on Tribal Lands) for home Internet service, CETF has pivoted to mobilize distribution of information to encourage all low-income households to sign up with the FCC (USAC) so that the need and demand can be documented. Once a low-income household has registered with USAC, it then decides the ISP to receive the subsidy as a discount on the selected subscription up the allowed subsidy. CETF will be monitoring EBB implementation to determine if the ISPs secure California's "fair share" which is \$480M given that 15% of all poor people in the U.S. reside in the state.

It also should be noted that EBB is a temporary program until the funds exhausted. Thus, it will be important for both the federal and State governments to determine how to provide for ongoing sustainable Internet affordability for all low-income residents.

Further, the 2021 Statewide Survey on Broadband Adoption sponsored by CETF and conducted by the University of Southern California showed that the almost 91% of all California households are connected to the Internet at home. However, there continues to be a Digital Divide for low-income residents, rural areas, and communities of color. The Survey also showed that the drop in Underconnected households (smartphone only) from 18% in 2017 to 10% in 2019 to 6% in 2021 is due primarily to school-based programs to provide computing devices and hotspots. Thus, there is both a looming challenge and major opportunity to work through School Districts to inform all NSLP households who received hotspots for distance learning during the pandemic are likely eligible for EBB.

Finally, the 2021 Statewide Survey showed that only 38% of low-income households aware of available affordable offers and only 24% of them has signed up—a net mere 9% of digitally-disadvantaged households.

Nearly 2 in 3 unconnected or smartphone-only households are unaware of discount Internet plans, and fewer than 1 in 4 of those aware report having ever applied.



If California is to receive its fair share of EBB funds for low-income residents, the ISPs will need to step up outreach and advertise. This will require focused and coordinated efforts. The California Broadband Council is an appropriate forum to engage in conversations with the ISPs to forge collaboration in the public interest.

Executive Order – August 14, 2020

ADOPTION

13. GO-Biz is directed to coordinate the outreach efforts of existing statewide programs and institutions to inform residents of affordable Internet service offerings, including:

- a. The CPUC is requested to develop tools for low-income individuals and social service organizations to easily identify and subscribe to affordable broadband plans;
- b. The California Emerging Technologies Fund is directed to continue promoting affordable home Internet service offers to recipients of the National School Lunch Program; and
- c. The California State Library, in consultation with local libraries, is directed to promote affordable home Internet services within their communities.

Broadband For All Action Plan – December 30, 2020

Goal 2: All Californians have access to affordable broadband and necessary devices.

Promote affordable broadband services and devices

16. Partner with internet service providers to promote, track, and publicly report the progress of adoption of affordable internet services and devices throughout the state.
 - a. Request providers to develop multi-language marketing materials for distribution to under-adopting communities and support dissemination by leveraging existing public programs and campaigns, such as: CalFresh, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), CalWorks, Covered California, public libraries, public housing, and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), investor-owned utility CARES and Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) programs.
 - b. Develop tools for low-income individuals and service organizations to identify and subscribe to affordable broadband plans easily.
 - c. Continue promoting affordable broadband and device offers to:
 - I. Recipients of the National School Lunch program
 - II. Public library patrons

Key Parties: California Department of Technology, California Public Utilities Commission, California Emerging Technology Fund and California State Library with support from all departments listed above, providers, manufacturers, and local government.