GETCONNECTED! CALIFORNIA

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CETF CALIFORNIA EMERGING TECHNOLOGY FUND

School 2 Home

INTERNET FOR ALL NOW

**California Emerging Technology Fund**
**Digital Equity Ecosystem to Optimize Impact of Capacity Grant**
**June 2024**

## Overall Goals

It is essential that Overall Goals be set with quantified metrics to close the Digital Divide (Challenge), promote Digital Inclusion (Process), and achieve Digital Equity (Result)—CPR:

- Ubiquitous Deployment: Access to High-Speed Internet Infrastructure
- Universal Adoption: Getting Online All Households with Digital Literacy Proficiency
- Deep Institutionalization: Incorporating Digital Inclusion Into All Public Services

## Adoption Programs Must Address 3 Barriers

Successful Adoption programs must address the 3 Barriers to Adoption (John Horrigan 2013) to get online all low-income households:

1. Cost (including the cost for both Internet service and an appropriate computing device).
2. Relevance (the reason why outreach in-language and in-culture by "trusted messengers"—the original "Digital Navigators"—is essential to explain to low-income unconnected HHs how they will benefit from being connected at home to the Internet).
3. Digital Literacy (no one will subscribe to service and acquire a device if they don't know how to use it to navigate the Internet).

The purpose of a Digital Equity Ecosystem is to provide the most cost-efficient approach to achieving these Overall Goals. A successful Adoption usually involves the following steps in assisting residents in unconnected households to: (a) understand the benefits of being connected online at home; (b) become aware of available affordable Internet service options; (c) acquire an affordable device for connecting to the Internet; (d) learn the foundational skills of digital literacy; and (e) select and sign up for home Internet service. It should be understood that community-based organizations (CBOs) who are the "trusted messengers" doing the outreach, assisting households sign up for home Internet service, and delivering the digital literacy training are what has become termed "Digital Navigator"—and CETF CBO Grantees have been doing the work of Digital Navigators for more than a decade. All programs supporting Digital Navigators must be focused on achieving Adoptions with grants paid pursuant to performance in achieving documented full Adoptions—the most meaningful outcome metric. Grant programs that pay only for inputs to Adoption—such as outreach, information distribution, or digital literacy training unrelated to getting connected to the Internet with affordable service—fall short of increasing adoption rates and are less effective in driving progress to achieve Digital Equity. Further, Digital Navigators, or any other "input" activities to the "outcome" of Adoption, need support and assistance to optimize impact, which is referred to as a "Digital Equity Ecosystem."

**Digital Equity Ecosystem**

The following are the 12 Essential Components of a Digital Equity Ecosystem which CETF operates at scale to achieve the most cost-effective price points with the greatest impact. A Digital Equity Ecosystem ensures optimal benefit from CBOs and Digital Navigators to do outreach and deliver services in-language and in-culture—which is their specialized expertise—and to avoid "reinventing wheels" and minimize operational overhead costs. The 12 Components begin with the highest productive foundational strategies to get the most people online and digitally-proficient with each successive Component building upon and augmenting the previous Component. The sequence of the Components matters to leverage investments and optimize impact.

- Direct Notification to Drive Enrollment in Affordable Internet Service
- Call Center to Enroll Households
- Recruitment and Training of Digital Navigators
- Outreach In-Language and In-Culture by CBO Trusted Messengers
- Digital Literacy Training by CBO Digital Navigators (Synchronous) with Proficiency Assessment
- Online Digital Literacy Resources (Asynchronous) with Proficiency Assessment
- Affordable Computing Devices
- In-Person Enrollment Events
- Public Awareness Advertising
- Tech Support
- Grant Management
- Evaluation

- Direct Notification to Drive Enrollment in Affordable Internet Service: Texting, Emailing, Mailings in multiple languages (with dedicated telephone numbers for "interactive voice response" or IVR) by a "Credible Source" (State Agency, County, School, Utility Company) doing repeated notifications (>5-7 times to achieve 90% engagement), recognizing that about 80% will be able to enroll themselves and up to 20% will need assistance, but only 5% take action on any given notification, which requires a 100:1 ratio to generate a customer contact in need of assistance on a given Direct Notification (DN) distribution. Cost ranges from nothing for texting and emailing up to $1.10 per piece mailed for an "all-in" cost for Direct Mail (a proxy for DN including selection of zip codes, printing, mailing, and management). The State Departments of Health Care Services (DHCS) and Social Services and San Diego County did Direct Notification without any additional cost. DHCS added a message on the first page of an annual mailer to all Medi-Cal recipients so that it was seen and not lost in a mailed packet (bill stuffers generally are not effective). Direct Mail into the San Joaquin Valley in January 2024 cost $75,000 for 95,548 pieces. A new CETF DN collaboration with Alameda County is costing $.80 per piece. Each DN communication includes a unique IVR number that routes through the CETF Get Connected Call Center for households who need assistance. CBO community outreach efforts also can use a local telephone number for their organization, but it is challenging to achieve cost-effective scale with DN volume.

- Call Center to Enroll Households: Dedicated IVR lines for each communication channel transfer interested HHs to CBO Grantees whose staff serve as Digital Navigators for immediate assistance in-language and in-culture to enroll Unconnected, Underconnected, and Unsustainable Connected low-income households in lower-cost offers and refer them to digital literacy training resources.

Performance standards for CBO Grantees receiving referrals from a Call Center coupled with active management and coaching are critical to high-quality service for households receiving Direct Notifications and needing assistance. The CETF Get Connected Call Center direct cost is $260,000 per year: $60,000 for contract vendors and $200,000 FTE (which includes management of CBOs answering lines, auditing of enrollments, and reporting). CETF currently compensates CBOs at $65 per Enrollment of an Unconnected Household and $45 per Enrollment of Underconnected and Unsustainably Connected households.

- Recruitment and Training of Digital Navigators: CETF recruits, trains, and manages CBOs as Grantees and trains their staff to serve as Digital Navigators. CETF also trains personnel of other organizations, such as from Public Agencies (social workers, librarians), healthcare organizations (intake specialists, Promotoras), or higher education institutions (students participating in higher-education specialized courses-programs such as College Corps). CETF has an established curricula for training Digital Navigators with coaching and quarterly Learning Communities for >$10,000 annually per cohort: $6,800 Digital Navigator Trainers-Coaches + <$2,500 for dedicated IVR lines = $9,300 (which was developed at the request of SCAG for Digital Ambassadors). An ideal cohort is 15-25 Digital Navigators. Individual training sessions or series can be supported for a lower cost ranging from $1,000-$5,000.

- Outreach In-Language and In-Culture by Trusted Messengers: Direct Notification by a Credible Source needs to be augmented and reinforced by Outreach in-language and in-culture by CBOs (Digital Navigators) who are "Trusted Messengers" in their communities. A Trusted Messenger is able to address the "Relevance Barrier" to explain the value proposition to a low-income households in subscribing to affordable Internet service so they understand how it will save time and money. Outreach in-language and in-culture at scale needs to be supported with flier templates in multiple languages that can be customized easily with local CBO and/or Public Agency logos. CETF supports the development and management of flier templates in conjunction with maintaining the Internet For All Now (IFAN) website, including updating the Tool Kit available to CBOs, Public Agencies, and the public. The total cost for these combined supports for Outreach is <$150,000 annually.

- Digital Literacy Training by CBO Digital Navigators (Synchronous) with Proficiency Assessment: All households enrolled by CBO Digital Navigators through the Get Connected Call Center are referred to Digital Literacy Training resources: (a) CBO Grantees who deliver Digital Literacy Training for the first 3 Elements of the UNESCO Framework for 6 hours of training (2 hours per Element) in-person or virtually (synchronous); and (b) Online Learning courses and lessons (asynchronous). CETF provides a Base Curricula and Facilitator Guide for each Element along with a standardized Digital Literacy Skills Proficiency Self-Assessment. CBO Grantees are able to rely on the Base Curricula as sufficient or submit their own to be approved by CETF to ensure that the content aligns with the essential skills (5 Skills per Element which have been identified by CBOs and their customers). The standardized Digital Literacy Skills Proficiency Self-Assessment is vital to measuring results qualitatively and comparably among all CBO Grantees and across the state. Online Learning is an option for households not able or willing to participate in synchronous digital literacy training and is an added resource for those who do complete Digital Literacy Training.

CBO Grantees who receive referrals from the Call Center after a household has been enrolled in an affordable Internet service plan are paid $350 per household completing Digital Literacy Training with verified proficiency using the standardized Self-Assessment. If a CBO is doing the full Adoption process to include Outreach, Enrollment, and Digital Literacy Training, then the compensation ranges from $375-$400 per Adoption, depending on the circumstances and funding constraints.

- Online Digital Literacy Resources (Asynchronous) with Digital Proficiency: CETF has collaborated with the Public Library Association (PLA) to license its DigtialLearn platform to customize an Online Digital Literacy Program for the convenience of the customer and to augment Digital Literacy Training by CBOs. It is a PLA DigitalLearn sub-website *GetConnected!* with URL getconnected.digitallearn.org. Content currently is in English and Spanish;
  - English: 31 Courses, 132 Lessons
  - Spanish: 25 Courses, 134 Lessons

  Other languages, beginning with Vietnamese, will be added next Fiscal Year. CETF also worked with PLA and Davis Research to establish a separate website to measure the effectiveness using the Digital Literacy Skills Proficiency Self-Assessment. The first 10,000 participants in the Online Digital Literacy Training Self-Assessment will receive a $25 gift card. The URLs for the Self-Assessment website are:
  - myinternetlearning.com
  - aprendamosenlinea.com

  The costs to develop the Online Digital Literacy Program, including CETF personnel and the $250,000 for gift cards, will total about $500,000. However, it is now a resource available to all users. CETF currently has assigned .5 FTE (about $125,00 annually) to manage and maintain the Online Digital Literacy Program, including compilation and analysis of data. The person who currently develops flier templates, other collateral, and maintains the IFAN website also has been helping customize content for getconnected.digitallearn.org.

- Affordable Computing Devices: CBO Grantees provide information to Adopter households about sources for affordable computing devices, which include refurbished devices from reliable non-profit organizations in about 5 regions in California, most of which have been CETF Grantee partners previously. CETF budgets a refurbished laptop at $175-$225 (depending on the device and condition) and a new computing device (Chromebook) with a protective cover ($10) at a total cost of $280. The provision of a computing device for completion of the Digital Literacy Curriculum with verified Digital Skills Proficiency using the Self-Assessment is a powerful incentive and completes a full Adoption. Including a new computing device with a protective cover, the total cost for an Adoption is budged for funders, such as Community Foundations and Financial Institutions, at an "all-in" of $700.

  CETF is developing 3 revenues streams to purchase computing devices with the goal to generate at least $10M to contribute to Adoptions:
  - Donations from "Give the Gift of Connectivity" Annual Drives
  - Statewide Partnership with Revivn (Full-Service Public Benefit Corporation)
  - Financial Institutions to Receive Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Credit

- In-Person Enrollment Events: CBO Grantees who are funded to complete a full Adoption organize and conduct their own In-Person Enrollment Events in their target community, often joining existing community festivals and fairs. However, the Digital Equity Ecosystem also needs to have the capacity to organize In-Person Enrollment Events for those households who cannot be helped by phone. This requires knowledge of CBOs and Public Agencies throughout California with the capacity to organize, mobilize, engage and train local partners, provide collateral and data collection forms, coordinate media, and support multiple simultaneous In-Person Enrollment Events. The Get Connect Call Center also functions as a support resource for In-Person Enrollment Events.

- Public Awareness Advertising: Public Awareness Advertising augments and reinforces Direct Notifications, increasing the receptivity of messages. Public Awareness Advertising can be done by ISPs (for their own affordable offers), Public Agencies, and non-profit organizations. CETF has commissioned more advertising about affordable Internet service offers than any other organization in California and has monitored the results of working through community and ethnic channels. A benchmark for Public Awareness Advertising is the 2020 Total Count Census Campaign for which the State of California appropriated $50M. CETF estimates that a beginning "critical mass" amount is $10M committed by ISPs to place their own ads in non-traditional community and ethnic channels (CETF and partners can provide data about past results--impressions and traffic generated to the Call Center) for their consideration.

- Tech Support: Tech Support is needed as a referral resource for CBO Grantees who often are contacted by the household Adopters that they assisted when there is a problem with the computing device. It is not cost-effective for each CBO to have Tech Support expertise in-house. Tech Support is a logical extension of community services for refurbishers, which also are conducting workforce skills development as part of their operating model. CETF also has trained high-school students as part of their curricula to provide Tech Support to CBOs. This student model also can be adapted by Community Colleges. CETF expects >5% of Adopters to need Tech Support and recommends planning to accommodate <10%

- Grant Management: Grant Management involves recruiting and vetting CBOs (including conducting informational workshops), preparing and processing Grant Agreements, monitoring and coaching Grantees, conducting Learning Communities (Communities of Practice), collecting and auditing Grantee performance (including Adoption Master Rosters), and processing Grant Payments. CETF does Grant Management at a relatively-low cost (less than 10% with decreasing percentages with volume of funds flow-through) because Grants are performance-based and management processes have been established and refined through experience over time to support Grantees in achieving results.

- Evaluation: Evaluation must be integrated into all operations by collecting essential data from the beginning to support "continuous improvement" with tools to make it as easy as possible for Grantees to submit reports and by compiling data as feedback to Grantees. There should be Monthly Summaries and Quarterly Progress Reports to ensure pace of Adoptions is on track to achieve the obligation target. Evaluation data and reports are used in Learning Communities to invite peer coaching and foster peer accountability.

It should be noted that there are economies of scale and blended costs if all Components of the Digital Equity Ecosystem are managed as a coherent system that results in less than $1,000 per Adoption with all-in costs including administration (see below the Projection of Possible Impact).

**Summary of CETF Existing Assets and Resources to Support Digital Equity Ecosystem**

The California Emerging Technology Fund has developed a cost-effective Digital Equity Ecosystem that is operated as seamless continuum of supports for CBOs so they can focus on outreach and delivery of services in-language and in-culture to reach the most low-income households. The following are the CETF assets and resources to support the Digital Equity Ecosystem:

- Working Relationships Statewide with Spectrum of Community, Public, and Private Partners
- Operations at Scale for Cost-Effective Implementation and Grant Management
- Ability to Partner with New CBOs as Additional Trusted Messengers to Build Local Capacity
- Understanding and Experience in Planning and Managing Direct Notification
- Tool Kit and Templates for Affordable Internet Service Offers in Multiple Languages
- Get Connected Call Center with Ability to Accommodate Multiple Communications Channels
- Curricula to Train Digital Navigators and Coach to Success
- Digital Literacy Training Curricula and Facilitator Guides (UNESCO Framework 6 Elements)
- Digital Literacy Skills Proficiency Self-Assessment for Common Metrics
- Online Learning Platform with Curriculum Content and Self-Assessment Process
- Experience in Organizing and Supporting In-Person Enrollment Events Statewide
- Knowledge in Public Awareness Advertising in Community and Ethnic Media Channels
- Established Strategies to Generate Revenue Streams for Computing Devices
- Data Analysis to Benchmark Costs and Project Possible Impacts
- Deep Experience in Integrating and Managing All Components of Digital Equity Ecosystem

**CETF Public Comment on the Draft Digital Equity Plan to Set Goals – January 2024**

CETF concurs with the construct of Access, Affordability, Adoption to organize the approach. The Examples of Specific Barriers for Covered Populations are a faithful summary of input during the planning process. These insights underscore why outreach to Covered Populations is most effective when conducted by "trusted messengers" who are composed of and have established working relationships with the Covered Populations and communicate in-language and in-culture. At the same time, the "common barriers" for Covered Populations are essential to inform effective strategies to achieve Digital Equity. The most significant of these "common barriers" are: (1) low income; (2) need for information in-language and in-culture; (3) lack of awareness about affordable Internet service; (4) need for digital literacy; and (5) availability and access to an appropriate affordable computing device. The results of the 2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey reveal a striking concentration of poverty for all digitally-disadvantaged residents within every Covered Population. As previously presented to the Statewide Planning Group, the following are the percentages of the Covered Population digitally-disadvantaged households (Unconnected and Underconnected)—who are low-income, underscoring the concentration of poverty that should be the primary lens for targeting resources):

- Overall Population 69.6%
- Covered Households 100%
- Language Barrier 81.7%
- Racial and Ethnic Minorities 77.7%
- People with Disabilities 75.8%
- Women 73.9%
- Aging Individuals 69.2%
- LGBTQIA+ 62.5%
- Rural Residents 58.3%
- Veterans 57.7%

Poverty is more defining for being digitally-disadvantaged than any other factor for Covered Populations. This underscores the relevance of Affordability in the assessment of the Current State of Broadband and Digital Inclusion which is even more urgent as a challenge given the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) "freeze" of the IIJA Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) as of February 7 absent action by Congress to extend and reauthorize ACP.

The 2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey also provides a sound basis to estimate the number of digitally-disadvantaged households and residents who must be reached to achieve Digital Equity. This data can be very helpful in defining the scale of the challenge and helping limited target resources to achieve Digital Equity. For example, based on the 2023 Statewide Survey:

- 9% of the Overall Population HHs are Unconnected (about 1,189,583 HHs and 3,550,982 residents) and 3% are Underconnected (about 396,528 HHs and 1,183,661 residents).
- 13% of Covered Households are Unconnected (about 355,342 HHs and 1,060,718 residents) and 5.8% are Underconnected (about 158,537 HHs and 473,243 residents).
- 14.8% of Households with a Language Barrier are Unconnected (about 603,880 HHs and 1,802,620 residents) and 3.8% are Underconnected (about 155,050 HHs and 462,835 residents).
- 12.2% Latino Households are Unconnected (or about 628,893 HHs and 1,877,285 residents) and 3.3% are Underconnected (or about 170,110 HHs and 507,790 residents).

While there is some overlap among these population segments, in estimating the magnitude of the digitally-disadvantaged to be reached to achieve Digital Equity, this data indicates that there are no less than 2.5M HHs to get connected to the Internet, which will require a robust Adoption strategy as well in an infrastructure program for Deployment. Another important indicator of digitally-disadvantaged residents is the number of California HHs who were eligible for ACP, which is more than 5.8M (5,844,797 HHs was the March 2022 baseline). With more than 2.9M HHs enrolled in ACP, almost 2.9M, who are the most digitally-disadvantaged and economically-fragile to reach.

These 2.9M HHs are the poorest, most economically-fragile, and most digitally-disadvantaged residents and should be the focus of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant.

2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey

The 2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey was sponsored by California Emerging Technology Fund and California Department of Technology and conducted by University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

The percentages below from the 2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey have been applied to the attached Projected Digitally-Disadvantaged Households by Covered Populations to determine the percentage impact of the Get Connected! California Partnership on the overall need in the state.

| **Socio-Economic Demographic Group Region Covered Population** | **Percent Connected** | | | **Percent Unconnected** | **Total Percent Digitally-Disadvantaged** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Total** (Rounded) | **At Home** (Rounded) | **Underconnected** (Smartphone Only) | Priority Target for Adoption | Unconnected + Underconnected |
| **All California** | **91%** | **88%** | **3%** | **9%** | **12%** |
| ***Covered Populations*** | | | | | |
| Covered Households* | 87% | 81% | 5.8% | 13.0% | 18.8% |
| Racial Ethnic Minorities | 92% | 88% | 3.6% | 8.4% | 12.0% |
| People with Disabilities | 91% | 87% | 3.9% | 8.7% | 12.6% |
| Aging Individuals | 91% | 87% | 3.6% | 9.2% | 12.8% |
| Veterans | 92% | 89% | 3.2% | 7.7% | 10.9% |
| Language Barriers | 85% | 81% | 3.8% | 14.8% | 18.6% |
| Rural Residents | 89% | 86% | 2.8% | 10.8% | 13.6% |
| ***Other Socio-Economic Demographic Groups*** | | | | | |
| Low-Income | 87% | 81% | 5.8% | 13.0% | 18.8% |
| African-American | 92% | 88% | 4.4% | 7.7% | 12.1% |
| Asian | 96% | 94% | 2.2% | 3.5% | 5.7% |
| Latino | 87% | 84% | 3.3% | 12.2% | 15.5% |
| Spanish-Speaking | 78% | 74% | 3.9% | 21.8% | 25.7% |
| 60 and Older | 91% | 87% | 3.6% | 9.2% | 12.8% |
| High School Diploma | 91% | 90% | 0.5% | 8.6% | 9.1% |
| No HS Diploma | 79% | 75% | 4.5% | 21.0% | 25.5% |
| ***Regions*** | | | | | |
| San Joaquin Valley | 89% | 87% | 1.8% | 11.1% | 12.9% |
| San Diego County | 91% | 87% | 3.5% | 9.9% | 13.4% |
| Los Angeles County | 91% | 88% | 2.5% | 9.5% | 12.0% |
| Central and Pacific Coast | 91% | 89% | 2.3% | 9.2% | 11.5% |
| North Bay North Coast | 93% | 91% | 2.0% | 7.3% | 9.3% |
| Inland Empire | 93% | 90% | 3.1% | 6.7% | 9.8% |
| Orange County | 94% | 92% | 1.5% | 6.6% | 8.1% |
| Bay Area | 94% | 91% | 3.3% | 5.7% | 9.0% |
| Sacramento Valley | 95% | 94% | 1.2% | 5.3% | 6.5% |
| Other Rural California | 94% | 91% | 3.3% | 5.3% | 8.6% |

*Covered Households: 150% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

The 2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey found that the overall lack of awareness of affordable Internet service offers is the biggest hurdle in reaching low-income households in all Covered Populations. For example, only about 1/3 (33.5%) of Covered Households eligible for the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) were aware of program (23% Unconnected HHs; 43% Underconnected HHs; 32% Connected HHHs) and even less (25.8%) are aware of Internet Service Provider (ISP) lower-cost affordable Internet service offers. Further, 61% of Unconnected HHs cited Cost as a factor with cost being rated the most important factor: 35.6% cited Cost as the primary reason for not being connected while only 2.7% (less than 3%) cited the lack of infrastructure. About 1/3 of the Unconnected HHs also cited the lack of digital skills and a computing device as a barrier. Thus, the leading and linchpin strategy in the Digital Equity Ecosystem is Direct Notification to reach Covered Populations, which involves a Credible Source (Public Agencies, Schools, Health Plans, and Public Utilities, which are different than Trusted Messengers) directly informing households on existing major public assistance programs (Medicaid/Medi-Cal, SNAP/CalFresh, WIC, Pell Grants, Tribal TANF) that they are eligible for an affordable lower-cost Internet service plan and providing them with a telephone number of the Get Connected Call Center so that Digital Navigators can immediately assist them. Community Outreach in-language and in-culture by community-based organizations (CBOs) as Trusted Messengers augments and reinforces the Direct Notification.

<u>Concentration of Poverty is the Overall Lens on Covered Populations</u>

The common factor among the Digitally-Disadvantaged HHs for all Covered Populations is poverty. Below is the data from the 2023 Statewide Survey that underscores the concentration of poverty by Covered Population which supports the approach and strategies in the GCCP Work Plan. By focusing on reaching Covered Households through Direct Notification to participants in major public assistance programs, the Digitally-Disadvantaged HHs in all other Covered Populations are likely to be reached.

**Percentage of Digitally-Disadvantaged Households Who are Low-Income**

| **Population** | **% Poverty** |
|---|---|
| Overall Population | 69.6% |
| *Covered Populations* | |
| Covered Households | 100% |
| Language Barrier* | 81.7% |
| Racial/Ethnic Minority | 77.7% |
| People with Disabilities | 75.8% |
| Aging Individuals (60+) | 69.2% |
| Rural Residents | 58.3% |
| Veterans | 57.7% |

*Home Primary Language Not English

**Distribution of Covered Populations Among Digitally-Disadvantaged Covered Households**

The following percentages of Covered Populations represented within the Unconnected and Underconnected HHs statewide are derived from the 2023 Statewide Survey. However, they are reasonably reliable to apply to any region or jurisdiction with significant numbers of low-income households. They can be used to estimate the number of low-income Unconnected and Underconected HHs for each Covered Population.

| Covered Populations | All Covered Households | Unconnected Covered Households | Underconnected Covered Households |
|---|---|---|---|
| Covered Households | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Language Barrier | 56.3% | 68.5% | 50.0% |
| Racial/Ethnic Minority | 80.4% | 90.7% | 73.9% |
| People with Disabilities | 32.8% | 30.2% | 52.9% |
| Aging Individuals | 32.7% | 51.0% | 55.6% |
| Rural Residents | 17.2% | 22.6% | 11.1% |
| Veterans | 15.3% | 16.7% | 33.3% |

It is important to underscore that socio-economic data must be gathered on each household served by Covered Population in implementing Competitive Grants, Capacity Grants, and CPUC CASF Adoption Account Grants and then compared to the expected distribution by Covered Population.

*Approved by the CETF Board of Directors June 6, 2024*
*Updated October 2024*

# Strategic Action Plan for Digital Equity
# Outline for Local Governments
# Overview and Guide

**How to Use the Outline**

The purpose of this Outline is to provide an easy and efficient tool for Local Governments to develop a Strategic Action Plan for Digital Equity without a big expense or long time delay. A working version of a Plan can be developed by existing staff within a few hours by gathering baseline data on: (a) Deployment: Unserved and Underserved households (a measure of the availability of high-speed Internet infrastructure, referred to generically as "broadband" including both wireline and wireless networks); and (b) Adoption: Unconnected and Underconnected households (a measure of the number of residents who have no home Internet service, referred to as Unconnected, and those who have only a smartphone, referred to as Underconnected). These data are foundational for setting Deployment and Adoption Goals for a Strategic Action Plan.

The Outline sets forth a logical sequence of 12 Sections as an approach and guide to developing a Strategic Action Plan. Once the above baseline data regarding Deployment and Adoption is gathered for the Local Government jurisdiction, an interim working version of a Plan can be prepared by simply using the Outline content for the remaining Sections. Then, a more detailed version can evolve over time based on experience.

A Local Government can jumpstart the process of preparing a Strategic Action Plan by first implementing the Framework and using the Best Practices Check List to gain familiarity with the issues and experience in tackling the Digital Divide. It also is helpful to use the Resource Guide: *A Broadband Deployment and Adoption Guide for Local and Regional Leaders* (published by the Connected Capital Area Broadband Consortium and the California Emerging Technology Fund and posted on the California Department of Technology. The overall thrust should be to get into action as soon as possible instead of pursuing a long planning process.

Local Governments should establish an outreach and engagement process to obtain community input and technical expertise, which will require a modest investment of time to organize, summarize, and synthesize. However, a Local Government can engage the community and stakeholders to jumpstart action using the Framework and Check List and at the same time gather input for the Strategic Action Plan.

**Framework to Close the Digital Divide, Promote Digital Inclusion, and Achieve Digital Equity**
**(Challenge, Process, Results)**
**How to Jumpstart Strategic Planning with Action Today**
**September 2024**

**Encourage Ubiquitous Deployment**

- **Identify Needs of Unserved and Underserved HHs, Anchor Institutes, Other Locations**
- **Engage ISPs to determine willingness to collaborate and partner.**
- **Help develop last-mile project applications for CPUC funding.**
  - Obtain CPUC Maps to gather data about existing Internet infrastructure, speeds, and adoption rates (CSU Chico can format at needed). Engage appropriate Departments to guide and assist with this initiative.
  - Meet with all ISPs with a set of written questions to ask their plans for deployment to upgrade to unserved and underserved areas. Prepare a summary of the ISPs meetings (and ISP info) as background to inform a Public Forum).
  - Convene a Public Forum with ISPs (in-person and online) for residents to report their connectivity issues and hear responses from ISPs. The announcement of the Public Forum can include a survey or invitation for residents to register problems and complaints. Summarize Public Forum discussion and prepare a report for the Board or Council.
  - Present Report to the Board or Council with all participating residents and ISPs invited to comment. Designate a Department to lead on Digital Equity, especially to work with ISPs and stakeholders in developing infrastructure applications including inventorying of public assets that can be made available for partnerships. Oversee the development and submission of last-mile applications to the CPUC for California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) Federal Funding Account (FFA).
  - Work with appropriate Department and other appropriate agencies to notify and assist all publicly-subsidized housing complexes (government and non-profit organizations) about availability of grants from CASF Broadband Public Housing Account.

**Promote Universal Adoption**

- **Get 90% of All Low-Income HHs Enrolled by 2027 (95% by 2029).**
- **Incorporate Digital Inclusion into contracts with all relevant community services CBOs.**
- **Assist CBOs to apply for CASF grants for adoptions, including digital literacy training.**
  - Establish a Digital Equity Task Force to lead-drive progress. Study ACP Enrollment data as an indicator to identify and target need. Affiliate with *Get Connected California!* for mobilization to reach low-income HHs.
  - Request appropriate County Departments to notify all Medi-Cal and CalFresh recipients request the COE to engage all School Districts to notify all NSLP students-families about available lower-cost Internet service offers from Internet Service Providers (ISPs): 90% of low-income HHs are in these 3 Big Populations). Reach out to higher education institutions to notify all Pell Grant recipients about affordable offers.
  - Distribute information about affordable offers through all communication channels.
  - Organize *Get Connected! Days* (Enrollment Events). Invite ISPs to help staff.
  - Request CETF to train staff and CBO contractors about affordable offers to staff and guide CBO contractors on how to apply for grants from CASF.

**Strategic Action Plan for Digital Equity**
**Outline for Local Governments**
**June 2024**

## I. Purpose

A. Set forth the Findings and Declarations of the Local Government Board or Council, such as:
   1. It is an imperative to close the Digital Divide (the Challenge) through Digital Inclusion (the Process) to achieve Digital Equity (the Result).
   2. Digital Divide is another manifestation of the Economic Divide, Wealth Gap, and Opportunity Gulf associated with concentrated and persistent poverty rooted in systemic racism. Thus, closing the Digital Divide requires a comprehensive, integrated set of strategies that institutionalizes Digital Inclusion to achieve Digital Equity.
   3. Digital Equity is a 21st Century Civil Right.

B. State the purpose of the Strategic Action Plan for the Local Government.

C. Describe how it is to be implemented and used by the Local Government.

## II. Overview

A. Describe the nature and impact of the Digital Divide in the Local Government jurisdiction.
   1. Explain how the Digital Divide impacts the public and private sectors, especially the low-income and other digitally-disadvantaged residents.
   2. Acknowledge the 2 Complementary Dimensions of the Digital Divide:
      a. Deployment: Deployment is the construction of broadband infrastructure. Broadband is a generic term for high-speed Internet infrastructure including wireline and wireless networks and technologies. It is necessary by not sufficient to close the Digital Divide and achieve Digital Equity.
      b. Adoption: Adoption is the process of enabling households to harness the power of technology to save time and money and improve their lives (see below the description of Adoption). Increasing adoption rates (or subscriptions to Internet service, referred to as "take rates" of broadband deployment) supports the economic viability of deployment.

B. Summarize history of Local Government leadership to address the Digital Divide, promote Digital Inclusion, and achieve Digital Equity (to provide perspective and context). Reference existing policies and ordinances and include them in Section XII Attachments.

C. Discuss the Roles of Local Governments (see attached description of the 5 Roles):
   1. Policy Leader
   2. Planner
   3. Regulator
   4. Consumer Purchaser
   5. Service Provider

## III. Summary of Needs and Challenges

A. Deployment: Review existing data sources to quantify number of Unserved and Underserved households (HHs), anchor institutions, and other locations in the local jurisdiction to prepare a "Map of Needs and Opportunities" with identified Public Assets. ["Unserved" is defined in State law and CPUC regulations as locations with less than 25/3 Mbps. Given that the State and CPUC standards for deployment is > 100/20 Mbps, Underserved can be considered locations between 25/3 Mbps and 100/20 Mbps.]

1. CPUC Maps: 25/3 Mbps and 100/20 Mbps (CSU Chico North State Planning and Development Collaborative is a source—see below for contact information).
2. Other Relevant Data and Information (such as number and approximate locations of hotspots distributed by School Districts to support distance learning (as an indication of insufficient broadband infrastructure and/or inability to afford home Internet service).

   Work Products (20-40 hours: to be completed by existing staff within 60-90 days):
   a. Map of Needs and Opportunities with Public Assets (see below) with number of Unserved and Underserved HHs, anchor institutions, and other locations.
   b. Inventory Public Assets (and identified on the Map of Needs and Opportunities).

   [Public Assets include: ROWs; light poles; traffic light standards; public property for co-location; and other utilities conduits such as for water or sewer.]

B. Adoption: Review existing data sources to quantify the number of Unconnected (no home Internet connection) and Underconnected (smartphone only Internet access) HHs in the Local Government jurisdiction and prepare an analysis (which may be a range from various sources to inform setting Goals).

1. Statewide Survey on Broadband Adoption (see 2023 Statewide Survey data below which can be applied to any Local Government populations for reliable estimates).
2. Census Data – America Community Survey (ACS)
3. Pew Charitable Trusts Surveys
4. California Department of Technology (CDT)
5. Number of HHs on Medi-Cal and CalFresh per the County; and number of students eligible for National School Lunch Program (NSLP) by School District per the County Office of Education (COE)

   Work Products (20-40 hours: to be completed by existing staff within 60-90 days):
   a. Table of Data of Unconnected and Underconnected HHs from data sources.
   b. Estimate of range of Unconnected and Underconnected HHs (to inform Goals).

## IV. Goals

A. Qualitative Goals

1. Ubiquitous Deployment: Ensure all households and other locations have access to high-speed Internet infrastructure sufficient to support all economic endeavors (user demand) with sufficient speeds at all times to enable and support distance learning and telehealth for all residents. Other locations (customers) include: public safety agencies; anchor institutions (schools, libraries, health and medical facilities, community centers); small businesses (especially in low-income neighborhoods); central business districts; and research institutions.

2. Universal Adoption: Assist all residents, particularly low-income households, get connected at home to high-speed Internet service that is affordable with an appropriate computing device and sufficient digital literacy proficiency to help improve their lives (save time and money). Assist other customers, especially small businesses in low-income neighborhoods, to become digitally proficient.

B. Quantitative Goals
   1. Achieve Ubiquitous Deployment (<100%) by 20XX (set interim milestones for 2024 and 2027).
   2. Achieve Universal Adoption (<100%) by 20XX (90% of low-income households by 20XX; 95% of low-income households by 20XX aligned with State Goals).

## V. Deployment Strategies to Achieve Goals

A. Adopt an Overall Policy and/or General Plan Element to establish the perspective of the Local Government to achieve Ubiquitous Deployment in the public interest and to promote high-speed Internet infrastructure as a "green strategy" (see *Resource Guide* for a template to customize for the Local Government). [An Overall Policy provides a foundation for development and implementation of other Deployment Strategies while a General Plan Element is being prepared along with a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR)—see discussion below. The Map of Needs and Opportunities is a logical exhibit for the Overall Policy and/or General Plan Element.]

B. Identify, develop and advance high-speed Internet infrastructure Last-Mile Projects to the "hardest-to-reach" Unserved and Underserved areas: rural, remote communities, including Tribal Lands; and high-poverty urban neighborhoods.
   1. Identify >3 Priority Areas for Last-Mile Projects by analyzing data and obtaining input from stakeholders and residents. Prepare a Priority Area Map based on the Map of Needs and Opportunities and any available additional information for an "at scale" Last-Mile Project and quantify the number of Unserved last-mile HHs (including residences on Tribal Lands), anchor institutions, and other locations. The term "at scale" refers to a project which deploys to all last-mile locations that can be reached and served by a given middle-mile network segment. Quantify the number of Underserved HHs, anchor institutions, and other locations in the Priority Area. Quantification of Unserved and Underserved HHs, anchor institutions, and other locations may need to be an estimate based on available information. [Don't worry about whether or not there are perfect maps and don't let that delay development of Last-Mile Projects. By focusing on the hardest-to-reach areas and engaging stakeholders, the process will reveal and verify Unserved and Underserved areas.]
   2. Develop and release an open, competitive "Invitation" to all interested private and public Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to submit Last-Mile Project Proposals based on the Priority Area Maps. [The open, competitive Invitation can be similar to the Request for Qualifications for Prospective Process (RFQPP) used by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) as well as the collaboration between the San Joaquin Valley Regional Broadband Consortium (SJVRBC) and the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) referred to as #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork.

A Rural County also may want to participate in the process led and managed by the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC). Whatever approach is used by the Local Government, it ultimately needs to obtain Last-Mile Project Proposals from both public and private ISPs through a transparent and fair process to serve the public interest.] The Invitation should reserve the right to accept one or more Last-Mile Project Proposals, negotiate among ISPs for a collaborative joint venture, or reject all Proposals. The Invitation should require Last-Mile Project Proposals to include the following information, which all can be subject to non-disclosure agreements (NDAs):

- Number of Unserved and Underserved HHs, anchor institutions, and other locations to be reached (or reaffirm quantification for the Priority Area Map).
- Path(s) of deployment with a description of the infrastructure technology to be used, specification of the number of miles of infrastructure, statement of the construction costs per appropriate unit (such as per foot, meter, mile), and an estimate of the total cost of the Project (set forth for Unserved and Underserved HHs, anchor institutions, and other locations).
- Discussion of how the Last-Mile Project will relate and/or connect to the State Middle-Mile Network (referred to as GoldenStateNet or GSN, a wholly-owned subsidiary of CENIC as the third-party administrator), including whether or not the ISP proposes to: (a) use any of its own existing middle-mile facilities to save public funds; (b) build any or all of the relevant GSN middle-mile segments; or (c) just connect to GSN when constructed without constructing any new middle miles. Special attention to should be given to analyzing whether or not the Local Government's Last-Mile Project Areas are served by the GSN first 18 Projects and to inform CDT about the results of the analysis.
- Delineation of the construction timetable.
- Commitment to adoption activities that will be implemented and/or funded in conjunction with construction of the Last-Mile Project.

3. Negotiate with ISPs to develop relatively-detailed Last-Mile Project Proposals, secure written "agreements of commitments and cooperation" to work together to prepare Applications for public funding for the Last-Mile Projects.
4. Confer with CDT and CENIC to help prioritize GSN investments based on Local Government Priority Areas and Last-Mile Projects. Determine which middle-mile segments essential for the Last-Mile Projects will be built and/or funded by GSN and which should be included in the Last-Mile Project Applications for public funding.
5. Engage with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Communications Division (CD) to discuss and reach consensus on the priorities for Last-Mile Projects to receive California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) from $2B in CASF Federal Funding Account (FFA) and Infrastructure Grants Account per SB156
6. Assist ISPs in preparing Last-Mile Project Applications for public funding.
7. Help secure Last-Mile Project approvals and permitting from public agencies. This step for securing public funding for Last-Mile Projects to the hardest-to-reach areas can be supported by a separate effort to streamline all project approvals and permitting for deployment of high-speed Internet infrastructure, with priority attention to deployment projects that serve Unserved and Underserved HHs.

C. Promote additional networks and technologies to augment Last-Mile Projects as needed or relevant for the Local Government.
    1. 5G: Assess private-sector demand for 5G deployment (which requires a robust fiber infrastructure to support wireless transmissions). Consider inviting invitations from ISPs and negotiating agreements to provide a revenue stream from small-cell installations to support staff to facilitate deployment and fund grants to non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) to achieve Adoptions. Consider establishing what economists call a "virtuous circle" of collaborative ecosystem in the context of a sincere public-private partnership (economically-productive partnership).
    2. Public WiFi: Determine if there is a need for public WiFi in low-income neighborhoods and how such a network could be supported.
    3. Satellite: Become familiar with low-earth orbit (LEO) satellite constellation technologies and options to determine if there is a public service subscription application and/or other funding stream to test the service quality and cost-effectiveness.

D. Ensure that all Publicly-Subsidized Housing Complexes (government housing authorities and non-profit affordable housing organizations) get high-speed Internet infrastructure installed in all housing units and encourage them to arrange for digital literacy training.
    1. Reach out to Publicly-Subsidized Housing Complexes in the Local Government jurisdiction to inform them about the CPUC CASF Public Housing Account (PHA) grants.
    2. Convene workshops to provide technical assistance to all Publicly-Subsidized Housing Complexes in preparing Applications for CASF PHA grants.
    3. Facilitate a "Learning Community" among Publicly-Subsidized Housing Complexes to coach one another, share Lessons Learned, and provide peer accountability for results.

E. Develop and adopt a process for streamlining broadband project and permitting, especially deployment to the hardest-to-reach areas as discussed above. Embrace a general objective to approve and permit priority deployment projects as fast as ISPs can build ("public permitting at the speed of private construction").

F. Set forth other Deployment Strategies as appropriate (review Check List for Digital Equity).

## VI. Adoption Strategies to Achieve Goals

A. Adopt an Overall Policy to establish the perspective of the Local Government to achieve Universal Adoption in the public interest and direct all departments, agencies, and programs to incorporate Digital Inclusion into all public services as a commitment to Digital Equity. Acknowledge that an Adoption starts by getting an unconnected low-income household online and that a "full" Adoption must address and overcome all 3 barriers for low-income households (see below the definition and description of an Adoption).
    - Cost (including the cost for both Internet service and appropriate computing device).
    - Relevance (reason why outreach in-language and in-culture by "trusted messengers" (often referred to as "Digital Navigators") is essential to explain to unconnected low-income HHs how they will benefit from being connected at home to the Internet).
    - Digital Literacy (no one will subscribe to service and acquire a device if they don't know how to use it to navigate the Internet).

B. Develop and implement a plan to reach all low-income HHs in the jurisdiction to notify them about lower-cost affordable ISP Internet service offers and inform them about how to enroll. Request (a) County (appropriate departments) to notify all Medi-Cal and CalFresh recipients and (b) COE to engage School Districts to notify all NSLP students.

C. Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about affordable Internet offers targeting community and ethnic media channels. Seek shared funding from public agencies, ISPs, and philanthropy. Increased awareness through targeted media is key to augmenting the direct outreach to eligible HHs.
D. Distribute information about affordable Internet offers through all Local Government communications channels, such as: all public services and programs reaching low-income residents; community newsletters; utility bills or other service notifications in low-income census tracts or zip codes; government and community access video channels; and licenses for small businesses in low-income neighborhoods so they can notify customers.
E. Organize and host Enrollment Events (>20% of eligible HHs will need assistance to enroll) and promote affordable Internet offers during other community gatherings. Encourage ISPs to provide computing devices for Enrollment Events and collaborate with and fund CBOs to do outreach in-language and in-culture.
F. Convene workshops to inform and assist CBOs to apply for CPUC CASF Adoption Account grants to provide digital literacy training to enrollees (to achieve "full" Adoptions). Use the Digital Literacy Framework based on the UNESCO 6 Elements and the associated Self-Assessment Tool for pre- and post- evaluations of digital proficiency (see attached). Convene and facilitate a Learning Community among CBOs to coach one another, share Lessons Learned, and provide peer accountability for results.
G. Consider developing a workforce training program to recruit digitally-disadvantaged low-income residents to help implement both Deployment and Adoption Strategies.
H. Set forth other Adoption Strategies as appropriate (review Check List for Digital Equity).

## VII. Work Plan and Budget

A. Prepare a simple Work Plan setting forth the above Deployment and Adoption Strategies with specific related Activities in a Timetable with Assigned Responsible Personnel. Focus on launching Strategies and making significant progress in Year 1 (first Annual Work Plan). Evaluate progress and prepare an Annual Work Plan thereafter with an initial time horizon of about 3 years to accomplish the Goals. (Identification of Deployment and Adoption Strategies and preparation of the Work Plan should be possible within 90-120 days.)
B. Develop a Budget to implement the Work Plan. Begin by first analyzing how many of the Deployment and Adoption Strategies can be integrated into existing activities of the Local Government with no or modest marginal costs. Then identify a range of costs and funding options for the balance of Strategies and Activities. Available public funding includes grants for and from: CPUC CASF Infrastructure, Adoption, and PHA Accounts; Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA also referred to as the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law" or BIL) administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce National Information and Technology Administration (NTIA). IIJA funding is pursuant to the State Digital Equity Plan administered by CDT and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Plan administered by the CPUC. Local Governments also may want to seek funding from ISPs and philanthropic foundations.

## VIII. Oversight and Technical Expertise

A. Designate a Local Government Leadership Team composed of appropriate administrators and those who become the Assigned Responsible Personnel in the Work Plan to lead actions and deliver results—to "own" the work products and ensure timely progress.

It is most efficient and effective for Local Government "ownership of results" to begin with an internal Leadership Team rather than engage outside consultants.

B. Establish an outreach and engagement process to consult key stakeholders and obtain community input for the "Summary of Needs and Challenges" (Outline Item III) and to gather suggestions for Deployment and Adoption Strategies (Outline Items V and VI). Ensure a sufficient number of community forums are convened to capture the diversity of the population in the Local Government jurisdiction (usually >3 forums). It is most effective to complete Items I and II as background documents for the community forums. It may be more productive to meet with some key stakeholders, such as ISPs, in separate meetings to obtain candid, confidential, and detailed input. Consider conducting a community "feedback process" (which can involve a combination of distribution of documents, more community forums, and workshops with the Board or Council) after draft Deployment and Adoption Strategies are prepared.
C. Consider appointing a Community Advisory Committee to oversee development of the Strategic Action Plan (perhaps recruited in part from participants in community forums) and/or Technical Advisory Group to assist with review of ISP Last-Mile Project Proposals and help guide negotiations with ISPs.

## IX. Evaluation Framework

A. Framework for reporting progress in implementing the Work Plan.
B. Metrics for achieving qualitative and quantitative Goals for Ubiquitous Deployment, such as number of Unserved and Underserved HHs, anchor institutions, and other locations are to be reached in Last-Mile Projects and are reached in completed Projects.
C. Metrics for achieving qualitative and quantitative Goals for Universal Adoption, such as the number of Unconnected and Underconnected HHs who are connected sustainably to high-speed home Internet service and become digitally-proficient through digital literacy training using the Self-Assessment tool for standardized benchmarking (the number of "full" Adoptions achieved).
D. Increases in ACP Enrollment by Zip Codes and County (using CDT ACP Enrollment Tracker).
E. Local Government Check List for Digital Equity.

## X. Reporting Schedule for Accountability

A. Establish an internal monthly process for the Leadership Team to monitor progress in implementing the Work Plan and prepare a simple status report to County Administrator or City Manager.
B. Provide quarterly Update Reports and to the Local Government Board or Council.
    1. Progress on implementation of Deployment Strategies.
    2. Progress on implementation of Adoption Strategies.
C. Prepare an annual Progress Report to the Local Government Board or Council with an opportunity for public comment and feedback. The annual Progress Report should include at least the following content:
    1. Summary of quarterly Update Reports.
    2. Assessment of metrics towards achieving the qualitative and quantitative Goals for Deployment and Adoption (Item IV above).
    3. Status of completion and overall score on the Check List for Digital Equity.

## XI. Glossary: Definitions

A. Technology definitions and common terms used in literature.
   1. Broadband: Generic term for high-speed Internet infrastructure, including both wireline and wireless networks.
   2. Unserved and Underserved; Unconnected and Underconnected.
   3. Adoption: Process of addressing 3 barriers for low-income households, including the concept of a "full" Adoption involving digital literacy training to achieve standardized digital proficiency.

B. Official terminology used by the Local Government, including organizational structure.

## XII. Attachments

A. Maps of Broadband Deployment and Adoption for Local Government
B. Data Analysis for Adoption and Status of ACP Enrollment
C. Information About Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and Other Affordable Offers
D. Digital Literacy Framework and Self-Assessment
E. Local Government Check List for Digital Equity (Current Status and Score)
F. Other Local Government Relevant Policies and Ordinances
G. Links to Other Available Resources
   - California Department of Technology Website Broadband For All Website
   - Resource Guide: *Getting Connected – A Broadband Deployment and Adoption Resource Guide for Local and Regional Leaders* (posted on the CDT Broadband For All website; published 2021 by Connected Capital Area Broadband Consortium and CETF)
   - Local Government Check List for Digital Equity

**Additional Information to Support Preparation of a Strategic Action Plan**

**Map of Needs and Opportunities**

The purpose of a Map of Needs and Opportunities is to provide a common visual document of all the broadband (high-speed Internet infrastructure) needs in the Local Government jurisdiction, including Unserved and Underserved households, anchor institutions, and other locations. It also becomes a base document for developing and seeking public funding for Last-Mile Projects, including informing an open, competitive, and transparent public process to invite collaboration from private and public Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and other stakeholders in achieving Ubiquitous Deployment.

A comprehensive Map of Needs and Opportunities should include the following information or be a series of "overlays" to the CPUC Broadband Map for the Local Government jurisdiction:

- CPUC Broadband Maps (25/3 Mbps and 100/20 Mbps)
- Unserved Rural Communities (including Tribal Lands)
- High-Poverty Census Tracts (by percentage of poverty in 20 percentage-point bands)
- Communities Reported by School Districts as Unreliable Internet Infrastructure and Access
- Communities Reported by Health Providers as Unreliable Internet Infrastructure and Access
- Planned Surface Transportation and Transit Projects
- Broadband Strategic Corridors (submitted by Regional Consortia and mapped by Caltrans)
- Caltrans Existing and Needed Fiber Network for Traffic Management and Controls
- CENIC Networks
- All Publicly-Subsidized Multi-Unit Housing Complexes (Housing Authorities and Non-Profits)
- All Anchor Institutions
- OES Infrastructure (Fairgrounds, Emergency Response Staging Areas, PSAPs, FirstNet Nodes)
- Sensitive Habitats (as identified by CDFW, Regional Agencies)
- Cultural Assets (from Consultations with Tribal Leaders and Other Experts)
- Public Assets for Collaboration and/or Joint Use (including Water Districts' ROWs)
- IOUs and Other Public Utilities Fiber Networks (and ROWs)

Local Governments can obtain cost-effective and timely professional assistance for mapping from California State University, Chico:

North State Planning and Development Collective
35 Main Street, Suite 132
California State University, Chico
Jason Schwenkler, Executive Director
Email: jschwenkler@csuchico.edu
Telephone: (530) 898-4372 (Office); (530) 680-3653 (Mobile)

**2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey**

***Sponsored by California Emerging Technology Fund and California Department of Technology***

***Conducted by University of Southern California (Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism)***

The percentages below from the 2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey can be applied to the population of any Local Government jurisdiction for a reasonable estimate of the number of Connected, Underconnected, and Unconnected households (HHs).

| Socio-Economic Demographic Group Region Covered Population | Percent Connected | | | Percent Unconnected | Total Percent Digitally-Disadvantaged |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Total** (Rounded) | **At Home** (Rounded) | **Underconnected** (Smartphone Only) | Priority Target for Adoption | Unconnected + Underconnected |
| **All California** | **91%** | **88%** | **3%** | **9%** | **12%** |
| ***Socio-Economic Demographic Groups*** | | | | | |
| Low-Income | 87% | 81% | 5.8% | 13.0% | 18.8% |
| African-American | 92% | 88% | 4.4% | 7.7% | 12.1% |
| Asian | 96% | 94% | 2.2% | 3.5% | 5.7% |
| Latino | 87% | 84% | 3.3% | 12.2% | 15.5% |
| Spanish-Speaking | 78% | 74% | 3.9% | 21.8% | 25.7% |
| 60 and Older | 91% | 87% | 3.6% | 9.2% | 12.8% |
| High School Diploma | 91% | 90% | 0.5% | 8.6% | 9.1% |
| No HS Diploma | 79% | 75% | 4.5% | 21.0% | 25.5% |
| ***Regions*** | | | | | |
| San Joaquin Valley | 89% | 87% | 1.8% | 11.1% | 12.9% |
| San Diego County | 91% | 87% | 3.5% | 9.9% | 13.4% |
| Los Angeles County | 91% | 88% | 2.5% | 9.5% | 12.0% |
| Central and Pacific Coast | 91% | 89% | 2.3% | 9.2% | 11.5% |
| North Bay North Coast | 93% | 91% | 2.0% | 7.3% | 9.3% |
| Inland Empire | 93% | 90% | 3.1% | 6.7% | 9.8% |
| Orange County | 94% | 92% | 1.5% | 6.6% | 8.1% |
| Bay Area | 94% | 91% | 3.3% | 5.7% | 9.0% |
| Sacramento Valley | 95% | 94% | 1.2% | 5.3% | 6.5% |
| Other Rural California | 94% | 91% | 3.3% | 5.3% | 8.6% |
| ***Covered Populations*** | | | | | |
| Covered Households* | 87% | 81% | 5.8% | 13.0% | 18.8% |
| Racial Ethnic Minorities | 92% | 88% | 3.6% | 8.4% | 12.0% |
| People with Disabilities | 91% | 87% | 3.9% | 8.7% | 12.6% |
| Aging Individuals | 91% | 87% | 3.6% | 9.2% | 12.8% |
| Veterans | 92% | 89% | 3.2% | 7.7% | 10.9% |
| Language Barriers | 85% | 81% | 3.8% | 14.8% | 18.6% |
| Rural Residents | 89% | 86% | 2.8% | 10.8% | 13.6% |

*Covered Households: 150% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

**Overview of a Local Government Programmatic Environmental Impact Report**

Purpose

The purpose of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to provide an overall jurisdiction-wide analysis of the impacts and assessment of the net environmental benefits of a major infrastructure system, such as high-speed Internet infrastructure, which is referred to generically as "broadband" and includes both wireline and wireless networks. It provides a context for the assessment of impacts of any specific project and sets forth accepted data, consistent set of requirements, standardized methodology, and reliable recommendations for mitigations. It avoids repeated duplications of effort by applicants, thereby reducing costs and decreasing processing time. The certification of a Programmatic EIR by a Local Government provides a "rebuttable presumption" legally should litigation arise regarding a specific project that the jurisdiction has exercised due diligence in considering environmental impacts, net benefits, and reliability on the sufficiency of approved mitigations.

Analyses of Overall Impacts and Public Benefit

A Local Government Programmatic EIR should include at least the following scope of analyses of overall impacts and public benefits:

- Identify the households and other locations in the Local Government jurisdiction (including incorporated Cities if being done by County), which are Unserved and Underserved and need to be connected to high-speed Internet infrastructure consistent with State and federal speed thresholds and County performance standards to achieve the goals
- Develop a reliable projection of vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) avoided if all unserved and underserved locations in the Local Government jurisdiction are connected to high-speed Internet infrastructure with projected associated reductions in criteria pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The projection should be based on a comprehensive and representative review of literature and research on the relationship between broadband connectivity and VMT and GHG (such as the Summary of Research compiled for the Caltrans Grant to the Southern California Association of Governments). Projections of avoided trips should begin with a reliable inventory and analysis of all trip generation with a defensible projection of trip reduction by segment of the inventory based on reliable existing survey data, such as the USC-CETF 2021 Statewide Survey on Broadband Adoption and research published by the University of California, Davis Institute of Transportation Studies.
- Delineate and quantify all other potential impacts and prospective public benefits to be derived from ubiquitous broadband deployment with an analysis of net impacts vs. benefits, including public safety considerations and quality of life.
- Inventory and map all known (previously identified and characterized) sensitive environmental and cultural assets in the Local Government jurisdiction to be protected and preserved in the construction of broadband infrastructure with a reliable description of procedures for notifying the Local Government and other responsible public agencies along with approved acceptable standardized mitigation measures.
- Assess the potential to attract capital investment into the Local Government jurisdiction and increase economic productivity (such as job generation, increased wages, decreased costs of operations) with the availability of ubiquitous high-speed Internet infrastructure at all households and other locations.

Project-Specific Assessments

A Programmatic EIR should set forth project-specific assessments to be conducted for each broadband construction application and the process for submitting the assessment results in conjunction with an application. It also should prescribe the procedures to request and obtain a CEQA Negative Declaration or Exemption based on the project-specific assessments. Examples of project-specific assessments include:

- Description of the number of households and other locations to be connected by the broadband infrastructure deployment project with the calculations of the net impacts and benefits based on the Programmatic EIR.
- Identification of sensitive environmental and cultural assets along the path of deployment for the proposed infrastructure construction.
- Interruption and/or closure of public facilities and service during the construction period.

It is envisioned that a Programmatic EIR can be completed efficiently without excessive costs or time delays by conducting certain tasks in conjunction with or in parallel to existing or planned work for either a General Plan date or an EIR on a specific broadband project. Local Governments may be able to and leverage in-kind contributed resources from collaborating partners, such as the Regional Broadband Consortium and the Metropolitan Planning Organization and/or Council of Governments.

**Definition and Description of Broadband Adoption**

In closing the Digital Divide (the Challenge), strategies must promote Digital Inclusion (the Process) in all programs that serve digitally-disadvantaged residents to achieve Digital Equity (the Result). While Ubiquitous Deployment of high-speed Internet infrastructure is necessary, it is not sufficient to close the Digital Divide. Achieving Digital Equity requires Universal Adoption to ensure that all digitally-disadvantaged residents are able to use the Internet and computing devices with sufficient proficiency to help improve their lives. "Adoption" refers to the process of getting a household sustainably connected to the Internet at home and proficient in digital literacy skills.

The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) has established in regulatory proceedings before both the CPUC and FCC that an Adoption must address the 3 barriers for low-income households (Dr. John Horrigan 2013 research):

1. Cost (including the cost for both Internet service and an appropriate computing device).
2. Relevance (the reason why outreach in-language and in-culture by "trusted messengers"—the original "Digital Navigators"—is essential to explain to low-income unconnected HHs how they will benefit from being connected at home to the Internet).
3. Digital Literacy (no one will subscribe to service and acquire a device if they don't know how to use it to navigate the Internet).

A successful Adoption usually involves the following steps in assisting residents in unconnected households to: (a) understand the benefits of being connected online at home; (b) become aware of available affordable Internet service options; (c) acquire an affordable device for connecting to the Internet; (d) learn the foundational skills of digital literacy; and (e) select and sign up for home Internet service. It should be understood that community-based organizations (CBOs) who are the "trusted messengers" doing the outreach, assisting households sign up for home Internet service, and delivering the digital literacy training are what has become termed a "Digital Navigator"—and CETF CBO grantees have been doing the work of Digital Navigators for more than a decade.

Thus, by definition, introductory digital literacy for base functionality is embedded in an Adoption. However, not all digital literacy training results in an Adoption unless it is has an explicit outcome associated with funding for the program. Further, as many CETF grantee partners know from their deep and extensive experience in digital literacy training, more training often is needed and wanted by many Adopters to become sufficiently proficient to use the technology to optimize saving time and money.

CETF and grantee partners work on budget of $350-$400 per Adoption with digital literacy training consistent with the first 3 Elements of the UNESCO Digital Literacy Framework using a standardized Self-Assessment Tool for pre-and-post measurements to quantify improvement in proficiency. This approach allows normalization of data across the state and comparisons of performance.