



Guidance Document for Federal Funding Account Applications

California Environmental Quality Act Questionnaire

April 2025

Instructions: Applicants must complete the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) questionnaire for Federal Funding Account applications in the [Broadband Grant Portal](#). Applicants should ensure that a desktop search and field work of the proposed project site, if needed, have been completed, before responding to the questionnaire. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

Please note: Applicants requesting a categorical exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) must provide proper supporting documentation. Applicants must provide complete answers to the Federal Funding Account CEQA questionnaire in the Broadband Grant Portal and provide detailed descriptions of proposed avoidance measures, construction best management practices (BMPs), and field protocols. Applicants must adequately document that no exceptions to categorical exemptions apply; any exception that precludes a finding of categorical exemption requires the project to be subject to formal environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

1. A detailed map of the project area, including proposed sites for the project as well as any staging areas, access routes, etc. used during construction. Identify geography, terrain, arterial transportation, urban and suburban development, federal, state and local jurisdictional lands. Identify segments where fiber will be pulled through existing buried conduit, if any. A map of the proposed project sites must be included as a KMZ or Shapefile. *
2. A detailed project description of the proposed fiber alignment (city, county, community, neighborhood, land uses etc.), length of project, and roadways along the project alignment. Please address the following questions in your response. *
3. Will all new fiber be installed in existing conduit, or on existing utility poles? *
4. Identify all rights-of-way for new construction within the proposed alignment, existing aerial or buried infrastructure, and indicate whether any ground-disturbing activity will occur in roadways or road shoulders. Specify dimensions of any ground disturbance and whether ground-disturbing activities will be limited to previously disturbed areas or if they will impact undisturbed ground. *
5. Identify segments of new proposed underground/aerial infrastructure within the project alignment and length of each segment. Indicate which side of the highway, roadway or street the infrastructure is or will be sited. *
6. List type, size and spacing of proposed underground or at-grade pull boxes, hand holes or vaults. *
7. List the size and purpose of all proposed above-ground small structures such as cabinets, dishes, antennas, etc. *
8. Identify diameter and depth of burial of new conduit. *



9. A detailed description of proposed construction methods (e.g., directional boring, plowing, micro-trenching, open trenching, etc.) for each segment and their dimensions (depth and width). *
10. Identify BMPs that will be employed to reduce impacts of construction, such as construction crew training, adherence to vehicle storage and refueling protocols that minimize risks of pollutant runoff or spills, and sediment control procedures. *
11. Provide photos of the project and a preliminary design of the project. *
12. Is the project area located within a California State Scenic Highway? (Please note whether the highway is Officially Designated or Eligible.) *
13. Describe the efforts the applicant has taken to identify the presence of cultural or historic resources within the project alignment by answering the following questions*:
 - a. Has the applicant conducted a California Historical Resources Information System records search for the project area? If yes, describe the BMPs or mitigation measures the project will implement to avoid impacts on cultural or historic resources and/or whether the project will require a formal report under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If no, describe why the applicant has not completed this step.
 - b. Has the applicant submitted a request to the Native American Heritage Commission for a Sacred Land File search and Tribal Consultation List? If yes, provide details on contacted tribal parties. If no, describe why the applicant has not completed this step.
 - c. Are there Tribal lands within or adjacent to the project area? If yes, describe the efforts the applicant has taken to contact and consult with Tribes and to obtain any encroachment permits or approvals require for construction to occur. If no, describe the steps the applicant has taken to substantiate this response.
 - d. Are there any paleontological resources within the project area? If yes, describe the BMPs or mitigation measures the project will implement to avoid impacts to paleontological resources and/or how the project plans to comply with applicable regulatory requirements. If not, describe the steps the applicant has taken to substantiate this response.
 - e. List any technical cultural or historic reports, studies, or field surveys that have been completed for the project, and their findings.
14. Describe the efforts applicants have taken to identify the presence of protected biological resources within the project alignment by answering the following questions*:
 - a. Has the applicant conducted a California Natural Diversity Database search? If yes, describe the BMPs or mitigation measures the project will implement to avoid impacts on protected biological resources and habitats, if any. If not, describe why the applicant has not completed this step.
 - b. Will the project require any tree/vegetation removal or pruning? If yes, describe the BMPs or mitigation measures the project will implement to avoid impacts on birds and their nests/eggs in accordance with Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
 - c. Are there burrows or potential habitat for burrowing owls within or adjacent to the project area? If yes, describe the BMPs or mitigation measures the project will implement to avoid impacts on burrowing owls. If not, describe the steps the applicant has taken to substantiate this response.



- d. Are there wetlands, waterways, ponds, drainages, or other ways meeting the definition of a Water of the U.S. or Water of the State within or adjacent to the project area? If yes, describe the BMPs or mitigation measures the project will implement to avoid impacts to protected waters and/or whether the project will require permitting or approval under the Clean Water Act. If not, describe the steps the applicant has taken to substantiate this response.
- e. List any technical biological reports, studies, or field surveys that have been completed for the project, and their findings.
- 15. List any assumptions used regarding which type of CEQA review is anticipated and any citations to CEQA sections and exemptions as appropriate (e.g., Class 1, Class 3, Class 4 or Class 32 exemption, or an Initial Study, Environmental Impact Report (EIR, Negative Declaration), or Mitigated Negative Declaration). *
- 16. Does the budget of this project cover a [Proponent's Environmental Assessment \(PEA\)](#) and possibly an Mitigated Negative Declaration or Environmental Impact Report? *
- 17. If placing fiber on existing poles: will the project comply with the pole loading requirements of [General Order 95](#)? *
- 18. Identify any applicable local, state, or federal permits or approvals required, their issuing agency, including but not limited to Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, encroachment permit from the California Department of Transportation, Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, coordination with a regional air quality district, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or a country or city, etc., and for which project element[s] these permits are required. Provide any details for obtaining permits for placing fiber.
- 19. Is National Environmental Policy Act review required for any federal land or Bureau of Indian Affairs jurisdictional land component? *
- 20. Identify additional BMPs that the project has not already listed above that will be employed to minimize environmental impacts. *



Other Resources:

CPUC CEQA Website: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/ceqa/>

CPUC PEA Guidelines: [Word](#) • [PDF](#)

Federal Funding Account CEQA Questionnaire Acronyms:

BIA: Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM: Bureau of Land Management
BMP: Best Management Practices
Caltrans: California Department of Transportation
CalVTP: California Vegetation Treatment Program
CDFW: California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CDNPA: California Desert Native Plants Act
CDWR: California Department of Water Resources
CESA: California Endangered Species Act
CEQA: California Environmental Quality Act
CHRIS: California Historical Resources Information System
CNDDB: California Natural Diversity Database
DOC: Department of Commerce
DOE: Department of Energy
DOI: Department of the Interior
DOT: Department of Transportation
EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
EIR: Environmental Impact Report
FERC: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FGC: California Fish and Game Commission
HCP: Habitat Conservation Plan
IS: Initial Study
LCI: Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
MND: Mitigated Negative Declaration
NAHC: California Native American Heritage Commission
NEPA: National Environmental Quality Act
NMFS: National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NCCPA: Natural Community Conservation Planning Act
SLC: California State Lands Commission
SPP: State Protected Species
USACE: US Army Core of Engineers
USFWS: US Fish and Wildlife Services
WRCB: Water Resources Control Board