Frequently Asked Questions about the California Interactive Broadband Map

Q: When I go to the map, what am I seeing displayed?

A: The default view when you launch the California Interactive Broadband Map is the Consumer Fixed Downstream Deployment layer. Displayed are the maximum downstream broadband speeds in each Census Block ranging from less than 200 Kilobits per second (Kbps) to over 2 Gigabits per second (Gbps). These are arranged in 12 color-coded categories:

- >= 2 Gbps
- >= 1 Gbps < 2 Gbps
- >= 500 Mbps <1 Gbps
- >= 100 Mbps < 500 Mbps
- >= 50 Mbps < 100 Mbps
- >= 25 Mbps < 50 Mbps
- >= 10 Mbps < 25 Mbps
- >= 6 Mbps < 10 Mbps
- >= 3 Mbps < 6 Mbps
- >= 1 Mbps < 3 Mbps
- >= 200 Kbps < 1 Mbps
- < 200 Kbps

You can turn off the layer by going to the “Layers” icon and under the “Broadband Deployment” menu and de-select “Consumer Fixed Downstream Deployment.”

Q: When I do an address lookup to see what providers are available at my home, the list of providers is wrong, or are the speeds listed not available where I live.

A: For wireline and wireless providers, the data is at the Census Block level. In urban areas, a Census Block is generally the same size as a city block, but in rural areas, Census Blocks may be significantly larger. For mobile broadband providers, we rely on speed test results from our statewide mobile field test and Census Tract information. Census Tracts are made of Census Block Groups, which are then further made up of Census Blocks. The mobile field test data is adjusted based on the combined standard deviations of east and west servers and are interpolated to create statewide coverage maps. This means it is possible that broadband service may be available to a household in your Census Block, but the service is not available to your own home. In this case, we encourage you to fill out the “Public Feedback Survey” (use the link provided on the interactive map after you do an "Address Lookup” using the “House” icon). You will see a survey prompt in the upper lefthand corner after you enter your address. We use Public Feedback data to validate provider claims, and in cases where we have a public survey report of “no service” for a certain provider at a Census Block where they claim service, we will remove the service from the Census Block.

Q: If service is available to someone in my block but not to my home, then isn't the map wrong?

A: The map is intended to be a starting point for discussion. It is also used by grant applicants and staff as a tool to look up necessary demographic and broadband information by census block and census block group. The map itself is never the final word in determining grant eligibility or in deciding which areas of California are unserved.

Q: Does the CPUC do anything with the data they receive from providers, or do they simply just publish it on the map?

A: Each data set collected from broadband providers is reviewed and checked to ensure mandatory fields are filled in correctly. After initial review, the data are transferred to the Geographical Information Center (GIC) at CSU Chico for geo-coding and geo-matching. In cases where we receive street address level data from providers, the addresses are assigned a point location, (geo-coded) and then geo-matched to Census Blocks. The final step in is validation. The CPUC validates broadband deployment data using numerous resources, including subscription data, public feedback, and CalSPEED test results submitted by the public. We remove broadband deployment in Census Blocks where we are unable to validate broadband subscriptions, or where Public Feedback records indicate no service for a household in that Census Block. Areas we are unable to validate do not mean there is no service, or that service at a particular speed is not available, rather, it means that we are unable to confirm the presence of service based on the data sources available to us.

For mobile wireless broadband, we drive across the state through urban, rural and tribal areas to measure actual end user experience available at 4,000 test locations. The tests confirm the existence (or lack) of service, and the data speeds and service quality currently available at that time and location for the four major mobile wireless providers. Using the results from that testing, we employ a model that estimates likely upstream and downstream speeds in areas between the test locations.

In addition to drive testing, we have created a free mobile wireless app called "CalSPEED," which is available through the Apple Store on iPhone and through the Google Play store on Android. Users can run their own speed tests, and the test results will be shown on the Interactive Map after 24 hours. We also offer a CalSPEED desktop app, available at www.calspeed.org, which provides a downloadable Java application to run CalSPEED on Windows and Macintosh machines. Those results are uploaded to the map roughly every 24 hours. The map also has a Public Feedback that shows locations where we received a survey response using the public feedback tool in the map.

Q: What are the definitions of "Unserved" and "Priority Unserved?"

A: In July of 2021, Senate Bill SB-156 was signed by Governor Newsom, and it changed the CPUC's definition of "served" to greater than or equal to 25 Megabits per second downstream and 3 Megabits per second upstream. Speeds falling below that combined standard are deemed "Unserved," which includes speeds below 25 Megabits per second downstream and 3 Megabits per second upstream but

are higher than 10 Megabits per second downstream and 1 Megabits per second upstream. “Priority Unserved” refers to speeds below 10 Megabits per second downstream and/or 1 Megabit per second upstream.