



Item 18: California Environmental Quality Act Questionnaire for California Advanced Services Fund Applications

Updated September 30, 2025

Please complete the following Questionnaire and submit it as part of Application Item #18 in your CASF Infrastructure Grant Application.

In addition, applicants must send the Questionnaire to the CPUC Energy Division at the following email address [CASF CEQA@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:CASF_CEQA@cpuc.ca.gov) (per Sec. 8.18, D.22-11-023)

For inquiries regarding the content of the CEQA questionnaire, please email [CASF CEQA@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:CASF_CEQA@cpuc.ca.gov)

For general Infrastructure application questions or assistance, please contact [CASF Application Questions@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:CASF_Application_Questions@cpuc.ca.gov).

There are five categories of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions that may apply to CASF Infrastructure Grant Projects, depending on the specific project description. Applicants must provide a detailed statement identifying which CEQA exemptions are applicable to their proposed projects. This statement should include supporting documentation and factual evidence sufficient to demonstrate that the claimed exemptions are appropriate and justified.

14 C.C.R. § 15301 – Existing Facilities

14 C.C.R. § 15302 – Replacement or Reconstruction

14 C.C.R. § 15303 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures

14 C.C.R. § 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land

PRC § 21080.51 – Linear Broadband in a Right of Way

Instructions: Applicants must complete the (CEQA) questionnaire for California Advanced Services Fund applications. Applicants should ensure that the records search and field work of the proposed project site, if needed, has been completed, before responding to the questionnaire. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

Please note: Applicants requesting a categorical exemption under CEQA must provide proper supporting documentation. Applicants must provide complete answers to the CEQA questionnaire 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 in 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 (ROW) 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 (CHRIS) 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 (NHPA). If not, describe why the applicant has not completed this step.
- b. Has the applicant submitted a request to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for a Sacred Land File search and Tribal Consultation List? If yes, provide details on contacted tribal parties. If not, 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 required for construction to occur. If not, 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 on 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 (CNDDB) 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 on protected water 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 [ND], or Mitigated Negative Declaration [MND]). *
16. Does the budget of this project cover a [Proponent's Environmental Assessment \(PEA\)](#) and possibly an MND or EIR? *
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. *

NEW SB 131 (2025) Statutory Exemption, PRC sec. 21080.51 Broadband Statutory Exemption
Statutory Exemption should be used when a project does not meet the categorical exemption criteria. However, certain cases may require IS/MND or an EIR.

(a) CEQA does not apply to a project undertaken by any entity, including a public entity or private or nonprofit corporation, that consists of linear broadband deployment in a right-of-way, including a right-of-way of a local street or road, if the project meets all of the following conditions:

- (1) The project is constructed along, or within 30 feet of, the right-of-way of any public road or highway.
- (2) The project is either deployed underground where the surface area is restored to a condition existing before the project or placed aerially along an existing utility pole right-of-way.
- (3) The project incorporates, as a condition of project approval, measures developed by the Public Utilities Commission, the Department of Transportation, or the city, county, or city and county responsible for the right-of-way to address potential



environmental impacts. At minimum, the project shall be required to include monitors during construction activities and measures to avoid or address impacts to cultural and biological resources.

(4) The project applicant agrees to comply with all conditions otherwise authorized by law, imposed by a city, county, or city and county, as part of a local agency permit process, that are required to mitigate potential impacts of the proposed project, and to comply with the Keene-Nejedly California Wetlands Preservation Act (Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 5810) of Division 5), the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), as applicable, other applicable state laws, and all applicable federal laws.

Statutory Exemption (SB 131) Applicant Responsibilities¹: In addition to responding to CEQA questions 1 - 20, applicants should take the following steps to expedite the process

21. Provide the CPUC with accurate project maps confirming the Broadband Project is within 30 feet of a road right-of-way.
22. Perform a search of cultural resources studies and a record search of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) for the presence of cultural resources along the route.
23. Coordinate with Tribes along the project route to collaboratively develop mitigation measures and monitoring plan in areas where cultural resources are present.
24. Perform a desk-top analysis for the presence of biological resources and propose mitigation or avoidance measures if sensitive species are present.
25. Contact local governments along the project route to notify them of the project; and
26. Provide a list of all required permits (Coastal, local, encroachment, etc.).

¹ (b) If a project meets all of the requirements of subdivision (a), the person undertaking the project shall do all of the following:

- (1) Notify, in writing, any affected public agency, including, but not limited to, any public agency having permit, land use, environmental, public health protection, or emergency response authority, of the exemption of the project pursuant to this section.
- (2) Provide notice to the public in the area affected by the project in a manner consistent with subdivision (b) of Section 21108 [notice of exemption process].
- (3) In the case of private rights-of-way over private property, receive from the underlying property owner permission for access to the property.
- (4) Comply with all conditions authorized by law imposed by a city, county, or city and county as part of any local agency permit process, that are required to mitigate potential impacts of the proposed project, and otherwise comply with the Keene-Nejedly California Wetlands Preservation Act (Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 5810) of Division 5), the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), as applicable, other applicable state laws, and all applicable federal laws.



Other Resources:

CPUC CASF CEQA Email: CASF CEQA <CASF_CEQA@cpuc.ca.gov>

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

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

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
CNDDDB: 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