

# CALIFORNIA ADVANCED SERVICES FUND

APRIL 22, 2026  
WORKSHOP REPORT

---

California Public Utilities Commission

Communications Division

Published July 17, 2026



---

## Table of Contents

|                                                               |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                                            | 3  |
| Opening Remarks .....                                         | 3  |
| Program Manager’s Remarks .....                               | 3  |
| Commissioner’s Remarks .....                                  | 4  |
| Director’s Remarks .....                                      | 4  |
| Federal Funding Program Update .....                          | 5  |
| Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD) ..... | 5  |
| Federal Funding Account (FFA) .....                           | 5  |
| CASF Program Updates and Stakeholder Discussion .....         | 6  |
| Public Housing .....                                          | 6  |
| Adoption .....                                                | 7  |
| Line Extension .....                                          | 9  |
| Consortia and Tribal Consortia .....                          | 11 |
| Public Comments/ Q&A .....                                    | 16 |

---

## California Advanced Services Fund Public Workshop

April 22, 2026 | 10:00 a.m. to 02:30 p.m.

CPUC Auditorium | 505 Van Ness Avenue | San Francisco

<https://www.adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc/workshop/20260422/>

## Introduction

Pursuant to Public Utilities Code section 281, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC or Commission) holds an annual public workshop to facilitate collaboration among regional consortia, stakeholders, local governments, existing facility-based broadband providers, and consumers regarding unserved areas and cost-effective strategies to achieve broadband access goals. As part of this requirement, on April 22, 2026, the CPUC's Communications Division (CD) held the workshop in San Francisco, which was attended by 57 virtual attendees and 35 in-person external attendees; in-person attendance by internal staff was not tracked.

The following report provides a summary of the workshop presentations, discussions, remarks and participant feedback. It reflects the information shared during the workshop and is not intended to replace or modify official Commission decisions, program requirements, or other official Commission communications.

## Opening Remarks

### Program Manager's Remarks

The workshop was opened by **Selena Huang**, Program Manager for the CD's Broadband, Video, and Market Branch. She welcomed participants and noted that this was the first California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) workshop conducted in a hybrid format, allowing participation both in person and virtually. She provided context on the purpose of the workshop, which is to facilitate collaboration among regional consortia, stakeholders, local governments, existing facility-based broadband providers, and consumers regarding unserved areas and cost-effective strategies to advance broadband access goals.

She provided a brief overview of the CASF program, including its six subaccounts: Broadband Adoption Account (Adoption), Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Grant Account (Consortia), Line Extension Program (LEP), Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account (Infrastructure), Broadband Public Housing Account (Public Housing), and Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTA). She noted that, since program inception, the CASF program has awarded more than 1,460 projects, totaling over \$480 million, to provide broadband access to eligible Californians. She highlighted recent program updates, including Decision (D.) 25-11-003, which modified program requirements and

---

guidelines for CASF Adoption, Consortia and LEP and closed the associated rulemaking proceeding. She noted that the CASF Infrastructure application deadline was postponed from April 1, 2025, to October 31, 2025, to allow applicants additional time to leverage federal funding allocated to California under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. She also noted that the CPUC received multiple applications across CASF accounts, including Infrastructure, Adoption, Public Housing, and Consortia, reflecting continued demand for broadband funding. She concluded by emphasizing that, while the CASF program has made meaningful progress, continued coordination and stakeholder engagement remain critical to advancing broadband access goals and addressing the digital divide.

## Commissioner's Remarks

CPUC Commissioner **Darcie L. Houck** opened her remarks by emphasizing the importance of the CASF program and its role in expanding broadband access statewide and closing the digital divide. She noted that substantial progress has been achieved through the collaborative efforts of Commission staff and community partners, alongside recent program changes intended to improve accessibility and overall effectiveness.

The Commissioner explained that the purpose of the annual workshop is to gather input from consortia, service providers, and other program participants. This feedback is essential for evaluating program performance, identifying challenges, and determining whether additional modifications are necessary to enhance program outcomes. She highlighted the creation of three new Regional Tribal Consortia and expressed interest in their development over the coming year.

She underscored the importance of stakeholder contributions in ensuring that grant funding is effectively utilized and that broadband infrastructure continues to be deployed statewide. She concluded by noting her enthusiasm for hearing stakeholder feedback and fostering open dialogue, which remains a key focus of the workshop.

## Director's Remarks

**Maria Ellis**, Director for Broadband Initiatives in the CD, opened her remarks by providing a broader overview of the Commission's communications work and how the CASF fits within that portfolio. She explained that the CD's goal is to help bring safe, accessible, reliable, and affordable communications services to all Californians. She noted that CASF is one of several programs within the division's work to oversee the communications industry in California, including public safety, universal access to essential services, and broadband deployment and adoption initiatives.

Director Ellis highlighted three major areas of work within the CD. First, she described the Commission's role in public safety and carrier oversight, including licensing companies, overseeing compliance, addressing consumer complaints, enforcing service quality standards, and implementing network resiliency rules such as backup power requirements to support disaster preparedness. Second, she discussed universal service, emphasizing that access to safe, reliable, and affordable communications services is a matter of equity. She noted that the CPUC manages six public purpose

---

programs, of which CASF is one, and that these programs help expand voice and broadband access for schools, libraries, public anchor institutions, and disadvantaged communities throughout the state. Third, she discussed broadband investment, noting that while the workshop would focus primarily on CASF, the Commission also administers other major broadband funding programs, including the Federal Funding Account (FFA) and the BEAD Program.

## Federal Funding Program Update

Director Ellis provided an overview of the CPUC's federal funding related broadband efforts, focusing on the Last Mile Federal Funding Account and the BEAD Program. She explained that these programs are part of a broader strategy to deploy broadband infrastructure across the state while also supporting affordability and long-term access.

### Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD)

Director Ellis highlighted the BEAD Program, describing it as a major federal investment intended to support broadband planning and infrastructure. The workshop slides noted that the national BEAD program totals \$42.45 billion, of which California's allocation is approximately \$1.86 billion. The slide further noted that California has the highest number of unserved and underserved locations of any state or territory and that the CPUC has pursued a "doing more with less" approach in implementing the program.

She explained that the CPUC implemented changes required by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) June 2025 Restructuring Policy Notice, negotiated cost reductions for many projects, and submitted the state's Final Proposal to NTIA in December 2025. She noted that the proposal achieved 100 percent coverage for all eligible locations. The slides further stated that the Final Proposal included approximately \$1.57 billion for 325 proposed projects across all 58 counties, covering 338,567 locations. She emphasized, however, that NTIA still had final review authority and that changes could still result from the curing process.

She further outlined the program's current activities. These include multiple rounds of "curing," in which NTIA provides change requests related to proposed projects, subgrantees, costs, and other Final Proposal components. After NTIA approves the Final Proposal, staff plan to return to the Commission with any revisions made during curing for ratification by resolution. She also noted that the subgrantee agreement was undergoing internal review to ensure accuracy, compliance, and alignment pending Final Proposal approval.

### Federal Funding Account (FFA)

Director Ellis described the Last Mile FFA as a multi-year program intended to provide approximately \$2 billion over the life of the program to support wireline broadband infrastructure throughout California. She explained that the CPUC has not yet received all appropriations needed to fully reach that total, but that with the funds appropriated to date, the Commission has worked to make investments across the state. She noted that the goal of the program is to support broadband

---

infrastructure projects in all 58 counties, and that this statewide county-level funding goal has been met through the first two rounds of awards.

She explained that the CPUC completed two rounds of awards under the Last Mile FFA, with first-round awards supporting projects in 52 counties and second-round awards adding projects in six additional counties: Calaveras, Contra Costa, Inyo, Monterey, Orange, and Trinity, thereby reaching all 58 counties statewide. Director Ellis emphasized that although the statewide county coverage goal has been reached, there is still substantial unmet need, noting that the first and second rounds together generated roughly \$5 billion in funding requests. By comparison, the CPUC has been able to make about \$1.23 billion in grant awards to date.

Director Ellis reported that the program has awarded 106 technical assistance grants and 122 projects across California. She noted that many of these projects were initially developed with technical assistance support from CPUC staff, the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) Program, and in some cases the TTA Program. She highlighted that 120 of the 122 projects include an affordable or low-cost broadband offer, which she described as an important part of the state's effort to promote broadband affordability.

Director Ellis further stated that these awarded projects are expected to deploy approximately 7,500 fiber miles, benefit about 2.1 million Californians, and support roughly 4,000 community anchor institutions across the state. Looking ahead, she explained that the program's remaining balance, approximately \$550 million, has been penciled into the state budget for fiscal year 2027–28. If those appropriations are approved, the CPUC's goal is to open another statewide funding round and continue making infrastructure investments across California.

Director Ellis also included a grantee spotlight on the Chumash Fiber Network in Santa Barbara County. The project received a \$4.7 million award and has completed 13 miles of tribally owned resilient underground fiber across a six-square-mile project area. The project is expected to bring high-speed internet connections to about 300 locations, benefiting approximately 850 people on Tribal lands and in surrounding parts of Santa Barbara County.

## CASF Program Updates and Stakeholder Discussion

### Public Housing

**Presenter:** Taylor Cheim, Regulatory Analyst

**Section Update:**

The Broadband Public Housing Account (BPHA) was established in 2014 through Assembly Bill 1299 (extended by SB 745) as part of the CASF to expand broadband access and adoption in publicly supported housing communities. The program aims to enhance quality of life and increase economic opportunities for low-income residents by ensuring access to reliable, high speed internet services.

---

BPHA provides grants and loans to support broadband infrastructure projects serving low-income housing developments. All funded projects must deliver minimum service speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload and must offer internet access to residents at no cost for at least five years following project completion. In addition, eligible projects must be California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exempt to qualify for funding.

Recent program updates adopted under Senate Bill (SB) 156 expanded program eligibility to a wider range of publicly supported housing types, including publicly supported housing developments and other housing developments or mobile home parks. In D.24-03-041, the CPUC implemented the changes enacted by SB 156 and additional changes expanding eligibility to include farmworker housing, tribal housing, single room occupancy (SRO) units, apartment complexes. The program now supports two main categories of projects:

- **Infrastructure Projects:** These projects fund broadband network installations within a housing property, enabling service delivery to individual units once an internet service provider connects to the site. Funding may cover construction related expenses, including materials and labor, but does not support ongoing maintenance and internet subscription costs.
- **Internet Extension Projects:** These projects provide funding for infrastructure located outside the property boundary to connect underserved housing developments to existing broadband networks. This project type is intended to address situations in which service providers are unable or unwilling to extend service to a property at the required speeds.

BPHA continues to operate on a biannual application cycle. Since its inception, the program has awarded approximately \$22 million across multiple projects, connecting tens of thousands of residents in low-income communities. Funded projects have supported increased access to telehealth services, online education, workforce development, and other essential digital resources.

## Adoption

**Facilitator:** Bill Goedecke, Regulatory Analyst

### Section Update:

The CASF Broadband Adoption Account supports digital inclusion efforts by funding projects that promote broadband access, digital literacy, and connectivity for underserved populations. Eligible project types include digital literacy training, broadband access initiatives, and call center support services. Eligible applicants include local governments, schools, libraries, nonprofit organizations, and community-based organizations.

Since its inception, the Adoption Account has authorized approximately \$78 million in funding across hundreds of projects, serving hundreds of thousands of participants statewide.

D.25-11-003 introduced several updates to improve program effectiveness and accessibility. Key changes include increased flexibility in administrative processes, expanded eligibility to better include

---

Tribal entities, and the ability for Commission staff to propose limited administrative adjustments through resolution rather than formal rulemaking. These non-substantial updates are intended to streamline program implementation and allow for more timely responsiveness to program needs.

**Panelists:**

- **Kori Cordero**, Telecom Advocacy Managing Attorney, The Utility Reform Network (TURN)
- **Paulina Chavez**, Director of Programs, EveryoneON

**Summary:**

The panel discussion focused on how recent program changes are affecting adoption efforts on the ground and what additional improvements may be needed to better support digital inclusion work. Panelists emphasized that the inclusion of Tribal entities represents a significant and positive step toward expanding participation in broadband adoption programs. They noted that Tribal communities are increasingly engaging in telecommunications initiatives and that program changes supporting their participation are both timely and necessary.

Panelists also highlighted the importance of increased program flexibility, particularly the ability for CPUC staff to implement adjustments through the resolution process. This change was viewed as a meaningful improvement that allows for more responsive program administration and reduces delays associated with formal rulemaking processes.

From an implementation perspective, panelists emphasized that successful adoption efforts are highly dependent on community-based approaches. They noted that effective programs are tailored to local needs and often rely on trusted community partners, such as schools, local organizations, and social service providers, to deliver services and build participant trust. Flexible program design, including modular training and adaptable service delivery models, was identified as critical to meeting the diverse needs of different communities.

Panelists also discussed challenges related to timing and funding. They noted that there is often a lag between when community needs emerge and when policy or funding adjustments are implemented. Additionally, certain operational costs - such as transportation, staffing, and program delivery expenses - may not be fully covered by grant funding, creating gaps that organizations must absorb. These challenges can limit the scalability and sustainability of adoption efforts, particularly for smaller organizations.

**Stakeholder input:**

Stakeholder input during the Adoption panel emphasized several key themes. Participants highlighted the importance of flexibility in program design and administration, noting that community needs evolve quickly and require timely responses. There was strong support for continued efforts to streamline processes and allow for iterative program improvements.

---

Stakeholders also underscored the critical role of partnerships and trusted local organizations in delivering adoption services and ensuring community engagement. Trust-building was identified as essential to program success, particularly in underserved communities.

Participants raised concerns regarding administrative complexity and the burden associated with managing multiple applications and reporting requirements across programs. Suggestions included exploring greater standardization across applications and reporting processes to reduce barriers for applicants.

Finally, stakeholders emphasized the need to address funding gaps, particularly for costs not fully covered by grants, and to consider better aligning funding structures with the real-world costs of delivering adoption services. They noted that addressing these gaps would improve program effectiveness and enable broader participation in digital inclusion efforts.

### **Lessons Learned:**

Adoption Program's impact resulting from Decision D.25-11-003 will take effect beginning with the July 2026 application cycle. Further evaluation of the decision's impacts and implementation will be conducted at that time. (Subject to change based on report's publication date).

## **Line Extension**

**Facilitator:** Ben Swearingen, Regulatory Analyst

### **Section Update:**

In 2017, the California legislature passed the Internet for All Now Act leading to the creation of the Line Extension Program (LEP). The intent of the LEP was to offset the prohibitive cost to low-income households of connecting to broadband networks that often bypass them. Current LEP rules were established in 2019 by Decision [\(D.\) 19-04-022](#) and were revised in 2025 by [D.25-11-003](#). The LEP pilot was initially funded with \$5 million. The LEP has awarded \$2 million in grant funding to date with \$2.9 million remaining in the program fund.

D.25-11-003 has updated the LEP with major changes including:

- Expanded Eligibility: *Applicants with household income up to 120% of Area Median Income (AMI) may apply for an LEP grant*
- Increased Minimum Service Speed: *100 Mbps/20 Mbps*
- Increased Ministerial Approval threshold: *\$500 increased to \$6,000 for wireless service; \$9,300 increased to \$31,000 for wireline*
- Alignment with Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account rules in D.22-11-023: *Reimbursements at 10%, 35%, 60%, 85% and 100% of total project completion.*

- 
- Simplified formula for 100% funding for multi-unit projects: *50% of a project's customers must meet income eligibility for project to receive 100% funding*

D.25-11-003 also updated LEP with minor changes including

- Income-based threshold to qualify for 100% funding: *60% of State Median Income (currently \$70,860), 80% AMI, or a participant in a Public Assistance Program (e.g. SNAP, LifeLine, etc.)*
- Terminology: *Non-connected Household (no Internet connection) replaced by Unserved Locations (less than 25/3 Mbps)*

**To apply for an LEP grant, please see our [CASF Line Extension Program webpage](#) and scroll down to 'Applying for Funds'**

**Panelists:**

- **Elise Brentnall**, President & Chief Operating Officer, South Valley Internet
- **James Hackett**, Chief Operating Officer, Cruzio Internet

**Summary:**

The panelist discussion focused on grantees' reasons for pursuing an LEP grant and their experience with the program. Panelists discussed how the LEP enabled them to reach underserved communities with the San Jerardo Project and the South Valley Road Project, where the challenge was not identifying the need, but instead bridging the gap between existing infrastructure and delivering service. Panelists emphasized that the LEP grant solved numerous issues in their project areas that had limited deployment of broadband service, including right-of-way constraints, permitting requirements, mix of housing types and sustainable and affordable long-term infrastructure. Without the LEP grant, panelists discussed that these projects would not have been feasible within a reasonable timeframe and the cost would have been too great to justify. The grant made it possible to provide reliable internet access to an unserved community. The panelists discussed challenges and approaches they would have done differently, such as engaging earlier in the planning process to secure permits and pursuing opportunities to deepen community engagement. They emphasized that strong community needs, a clear technical approach, and support from the CPUC allowed them to deliver a successful outcome that they would use to model future projects. As a result, panelists encourage other internet service providers (ISPs) to apply for grants from the LEP.

Following the discussion, the panelists responded to questions and comments from Commissioner Houck. The Commissioner emphasized that projects addressing areas without access to broadband are precisely the types of projects the Commission is looking to fund. The Commissioner asked if anything that worked well on their LEP projects would be replicable to Public Housing. The panelists answered that their initial LEP lessons that could be applicable to Public Housing are related to technological shortfalls on backhaul and providing support to the local area network to properly utilize the services. The Commissioner followed up by asking if they would be likely to use the program again under the revised rules in which the panelists answered yes.

---

### **Stakeholder input:**

Stakeholder input during the discussion emphasized how the LEP program provided funding to build broadband projects in areas where it was otherwise not financially viable, thereby helping to close the digital divide. Specifically, they emphasized that communities which previously had no high-speed internet access now have reliable gigabit-level service. They discussed that closing the digital divide has a broad effect, such as improving education access by giving consistent access to online learning, homework, and communication with schools. Furthermore, the residents are now able to access telehealth services and communicate with loved ones from other areas. While there were some challenges with permitting and coordination, the panelists highlighted that with careful planning, coordination, and persistence, the LEP is an effective tool for eliminating the digital divide and delivering meaningful, high-quality connectivity.

### **Lessons Learned:**

There have been no LEP projects undertaken since the Commission's approval of D.25-11-003. One outcome expected from the expanded eligibility for LEP grants in D. 25-11-003 is an increase in program participation. This has yet to be seen. LEP staff will further evaluate the decision's impact on LEP implementation and outcomes after projects funded and built under the new rules have been completed.

## **Consortia and Tribal Consortia**

**Facilitator:** Paul Schindler, Regulatory Analyst

### **Section Update:**

Before beginning the panel discussion, Paul Schindler provided a brief overview of the major Consortia Account changes adopted in D.25-11-003. He explained that the Decision broadened both who the program can serve and what the program can support by creating a pathway for three Regional Tribal Consortia, expanding eligible work to include BEAD-related infrastructure activities and other eligible deployment programs such as the LEP and Public Housing, and adding new administrative flexibilities, including up to 15% administrative or indirect costs, up to 25% startup costs for new consortia, and up to 10% budget variance by objective without prior approval if the annual cap is not exceeded. He also noted that the decision formalized bimonthly coordination meetings between CPUC staff and Consortia, with Broadband Caseworkers participating.

### **Panelists 1 – Consortia Discussion:**

- **Connie Stewart**, Executive Director of Initiatives, Cal Poly Humboldt and host of the Redwood Coast Broadband Consortium
- **Navreet Hundal**, Project Coordinator, Connected Capital Area Broadband Consortium
- **Liliana Aide Monge**, Director, UNITE-LA
- **Patrick Messac**, Director, East Bay Broadband Consortium

---

## Summary:

The Consortia panel focused on how D.25-11-003 changes are affecting Consortia work on the ground and what additional changes may be needed going forward. Panelists generally welcomed the expanded scope of eligible activities, including support for BEAD-related infrastructure and other deployment programs, and emphasized that the new administrative flexibilities and formalized bimonthly meetings have been helpful. At the same time, panelists stressed that future changes should address reimbursement timing, annual audit requirements, and the continued separation between infrastructure support and broader adoption or “take rate” work. Several panelists argued that consortia are uniquely positioned to support community-level adoption, demand aggregation, and public awareness work, but that current rules do not fully support that role.

**Connie Stewart** identified the bimonthly meetings and budget variance flexibility as especially useful changes, saying they would save time on the back end for reimbursements. She suggested exploring more frequent reimbursement options, such as monthly or quarterly reimbursement, noting that upfront costs are especially burdensome in rural areas. Connie further raised concerns about the annual audit requirement for individual grants and said the program should better distinguish between adoption, digital equity, and support for take rate, which she described as an important part of successful deployment.

**Navreet Hundal** emphasized that the decision’s changes support work that goes beyond mapping and infrastructure planning by allowing consortia to do more information sharing and broader community support. She noted that local governments increasingly view broadband as extending beyond infrastructure alone and often want support related to adoption and other broadband-for-all goals. She suggested that consortia can help meet that broader need by building on best practices and partnerships already developed in their regions.

**Liliana Aide Monge** said that the ability to work with the Public Housing Account and the LEP was important because infrastructure and adoption work go hand in hand. She also highlighted the value of the 15% administrative allowance, aligning grant timing more closely with fiscal year cycles, and the bimonthly meetings with CPUC staff. Like Connie, she supported future changes that would allow consortia to play a stronger role in adoption-related technical assistance and community support.

**Patrick Messac**, speaking as a prospective East Bay Broadband Consortium applicant, highlighted the inclusion of tribal lands and BEAD-related activities as important program changes. He emphasized that facilitating deployment is essential to addressing affordability, whether by bringing a first option to rural and tribal areas or by introducing competition in lower-income communities that have limited choices. He also argued that consortia should be able to use every available tool and should remain engaged after infrastructure is built so communities understand how to connect to and benefit from those investments.

The second round of discussion focused on how current consortia can help new tribal and non-tribal consortia avoid starting from scratch. Connie said that existing consortia can help by sharing lessons learned, maintaining strong communication with local tribes and community partners, and being clear about what grant funds can and cannot support. She stressed that long project timelines require

---

sustained community communication, especially in areas already waiting for middle-mile and last-mile deployment. Liliana encouraged prospective applicants to plug into existing collaboration spaces, particularly California Emerging Technology Fund's (CETF) Digital Equity Coalition and the bimonthly CPUC-Consortia meetings, which she described as valuable venues for technical briefings and practical implementation support. Navreet similarly emphasized the importance of existing forums for information-sharing, pointing to the wide range of skills current consortia bring and noting that established consortia and shared service providers may already have regional knowledge useful to new applicants.

Patrick added that new consortia are coming online at a critical moment for California's digital equity ecosystem. He argued that regional broadband consortia can serve as key conveners during a period when infrastructure investments are large, but broader digital inclusion work remains underfunded. He urged the Commission to consider opening a proceeding to more directly address the role of adoption in consortia work, arguing that infrastructure without adoption is incomplete and that consortia are well positioned to support community-level adoption and affordability efforts.

Commissioner Houck thanked the panelists for their work and emphasized the importance of consortia in bringing broadband to communities with limited access. She also noted her excitement about the creation of Tribal Consortia and asked each panelist what one thing Commission staff and the Commission should keep in mind when considering future program changes. In response, Liliana said the Commission should continue expanding the consortia toolkit so community engagement can include discussion of multiple programs and options. Navreet emphasized the need for continued funding and a wider scope that reflects the real need local governments raise in practice. Connie said the Commission should focus on both the state's deployment and adoption goals and support expanding consortia funding and eligible activities. Patrick said the Commission should approach the work with urgency and give consortia the scope necessary to respond to local community needs. Commissioner Houck closed by thanking the panelists and stating that she appreciated the discussion and recommendations.

### **Stakeholder input:**

Stakeholder input during the Consortia panel strongly emphasized three themes. First, participants broadly supported the expanded scope of the Consortia Account and the decision's efforts to align consortia work more closely with California's broader broadband deployment landscape, including BEAD, LEP, and Public Housing activities. Second, participants highlighted the value of administrative improvements, especially the new administrative cost allowance, budget flexibility, and formalized bimonthly meetings with CPUC staff. Third, multiple speakers urged the Commission to further evolve the program to better support adoption-related work, including take rate, demand aggregation, public awareness, and coordination across multiple broadband programs, arguing that these activities are essential for ensuring infrastructure investments achieve their intended impact.

### **Panelists 2 – Tribal Consortia Discussion:**

- **Kori Cordero**, Telecom Advocacy Managing Attorney, TURN
- **Linnea Jackson**, General Manager, Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District

- 
- **Forest James**, Founder and CEO, EnerTribes

### **Summary:**

The Tribal Consortia panel focused on the opportunities and practical challenges associated with implementing the new Tribal Consortia framework established under D.25-11-003. Discussion centered on how Tribal Consortia could help tribes coordinate regionally, access training and technical assistance, engage more effectively with CPUC processes, and build on the work of existing consortia without requiring tribes to start from scratch. Panelists emphasized that the new framework represents an important first step, but that successful implementation will depend on sustained outreach, flexibility, cultural competency, and continued refinement based on tribal experience.

**Kori Cordero** described Tribal Consortia eligibility as a major step forward because it creates a new opportunity for tribes to coordinate regionally through a body that can help provide training, technical assistance, contractor vetting, and support in navigating CPUC processes. Kori stated that Tribal Consortia could also serve as an important feedback loop between tribes, CD staff, and the Commission so that on-the-ground implementation challenges are communicated through the proper forums. At the same time, Kori cautioned that the initial three-region framework is only a first step and may present challenges because tribal communities across California have distinct geographies, histories, and cultural contexts that may not align neatly within three large regional groupings.

**Linnea Jackson** emphasized that Tribal Consortia should be viewed as both a learning opportunity and a partnership opportunity. She explained that tribal communities are simultaneously building out broadband in rural and historically unserved areas, often while pooling expertise, infrastructure, and other shared resources. Linnea noted that Tribal Consortia can learn from established consortia, but also bring significant value of their own through experience serving tribal nations, off-reservation communities, and ancestral territories. She also stressed that tribal regions should not be viewed in isolation, suggesting that statewide partnerships across regions may also be beneficial.

**Forest James** framed Tribal Consortia as a coordination structure that can help tribes access the resources needed to build and sustain broadband infrastructure. He argued that meaningful implementation begins before rules are finalized and depends on sequencing the program correctly. Forest stressed that tribes need time and support to undertake tribally paced governance steps such as council resolutions, memoranda of agreement, fiscal agent selection, and work plan development. He also raised issues related to regional scale, noting that a single Northern California consortium may not be sufficient given the number and diversity of tribes there. Forest further emphasized that funding distribution should account for the scale of need, that distinctions between TTA and Consortia activities should be clear, and that accountability should support tribal sovereignty rather than simply impose outside compliance requirements.

After Forest's remarks, Kori added that even establishing one functioning Tribal Consortium within three years would represent meaningful success, given the amount of education, outreach, and startup work required. Kori stated that having all three Tribal Consortia in place by that point would be a major success, with the moderator noting that moving from zero to one is often the most difficult step.

---

Commissioner Houck thanked the panelists for their recommendations and emphasized that tribal participation is central to the purpose of the Tribal Consortia framework. She stated that the point of these organizations is that they are “working for tribes by tribes” and ensuring that resources and programs meet tribal needs. She also noted that the decision contemplated additional workshops requested by tribes to help vet what the Tribal Consortia should look like before applications are issued, and encouraged continued participation so that the framework can be shaped by tribal communities over time.

In response to Commissioner Houck’s question about what staff and the Commission should keep in mind moving forward, Forest recommended building formal iteration into the Tribal Consortia framework from the outset. He suggested a tribal-led review at years one and two, rather than only a CPUC-led consultation, so that the framework can be revised based on what tribes actually encounter in implementation. Kori then stressed the importance of proactive outreach, warning that tribes may miss opportunities if information is shared only by email or website posting. Kori suggested that Commission staff go directly to places where tribal leaders already convene, such as the Tribal Nation Summit, Native American Day, and statewide tribal chairpersons’ associations, and consider bringing existing consortia representatives to help explain how the program works in practice. Linnea added that successful rollout will require multiple methods of communication and enough flexibility to allow the program to evolve based on the differing needs of tribal nations across regions and over time.

Commissioner Houck closed by agreeing that active engagement on the ground would be necessary to ensure the planned workshops occur and that the program develops in a way that meets tribal needs. She thanked the panelists and other tribal participants for the time they had invested in helping shape the program and expressed optimism that their continued involvement would strengthen the Tribal Consortia framework going forward.

### **Stakeholder input:**

Stakeholder input during the Tribal Consortia panel emphasized several recurring themes: the importance of regional coordination among tribes; the need for trusted, non-profit-motivated entities to support technical assistance and training; the value of learning from existing consortia while allowing Tribal Consortia to develop their own approaches; the need for clear distinctions between TTA and Consortia roles; the importance of outreach methods that reach tribal leadership directly; and the need for flexibility and iteration as the new Tribal Consortia program is implemented. Panelists consistently emphasized that the framework should be shaped by tribes themselves and should evolve based on lived experience rather than remain fixed after initial adoption.

### **Lessons Learned:**

Staff observations from the initial implementation of D.25-11-003 indicate that the 10% variance allowance has improved flexibility and enabled faster payment processing for both consortia and staff by reducing the need for prior approvals for minor budget differences, provided the annual cap is not exceeded. Staff have initiated bi-monthly office hours with consortia to address questions and feedback, and participants have provided useful suggestions, including opportunities for consortia to share project updates and lessons learned with one another. Consortia feedback has generally been

---

consistent with staff observations, with panelists highlighting the value of the bimonthly meetings, 15% administrative cost allowance, and budget flexibility provisions for improving coordination, and reducing administrative burden in program implementation.

Staff also noted additional implementation progress. Two budget modifications have been processed to comply with the \$15,000 annual audit requirement. While the decision allows consortia to implement BEAD-related activities and seek reimbursement under the program, no related budget modifications have been submitted to date. The December 2025 grant cycle is currently undergoing the Commission resolution approval process, with projects expected to begin on July 1 to better align project periods with consortia fiscal years. The first Regional Tribal Workshop is currently in the planning process, and the CPUC expects to receive additional stakeholder feedback from the event.

## Public Comments/ Q&A

The public comments and Q&A section began by taking any questions from the in-person audience. They asked the following questions:

1. Any update on Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account?

One of the updates is the postponement of the “deem-deny” date (the date applicants are notified if an application is accepted or denied) from May 31st to July 31st. The deadline for the upcoming application cycle has been moved to October 1st, 2026. We have released a new map with 2024 data for use with the 2026 applications. The date changes were realigned to coincide with the funding dates of BEAD, to leverage the more significant amount of federal funding available and thereby preserve the more limited State funding. Is there a place to look for annual accounting to see how much is left in each account (infrastructure, Consortia, etc.)? This way we can see which are fully spent and which are underutilized.

The CASF Annual Report shows how much has been spent on each project and how much is left in the fund. The Annual Reports come out in the Spring of the previous year, so it will not be fully up to date. CPUC Staff encouraged stakeholders to stay engaged and apply whenever possible.

2. Many of the programs are missing over 90% of ISPs in California. For the various programs, is consortia the best method to bring in small ISPs? What is the mechanism for them to come in? There are 120 not in the CPUC system, so how do we get them involved?

Every year, we do broadband data collection (BDC). 183 service providers participated. We recommend encouraging them to participate in the BDC, because that gets them on our radar. We do outreach, but the BDC helps and they have to participate in the BDC to qualify for grants. The CPUC website has links to connect you to the Consortia in your area. Even if you send it to the wrong one, we will assist you in getting in contact with the correct Consortia.

- 
3. For FFA, previous rounds had allocations by county. In previous rounds, one county received full allocation while other counties received a third. If there is another round, will this allocation remain for future rounds or be reallocated?

Maria Ellis answered that if the CPUC receives the \$550 million in allocation, the current plan is to allow statewide grant making up to the county allocation. That is the decision that was adopted by the Commission.

4. For the Infrastructure grant, our small rural community seems ineligible with the recent map publication. Local speed tests show they are actually below or barely on the edge of qualifying. Is there consideration for raising the 25/3 Mbps designation?

The best way to get an answer to whether or not your specific community qualifies is by applying.

Maria Ellis followed up by saying we understand that there are locations just out of reach of 25/3 Mbps, but we have to work within statutory requirements for what we are allowed to fund. This is frustrating for both us and applicants. For speed tests, you can send them to us and that could be the basis for us to use in our next evaluation of the map.

After the in-person questions, Commissioner Houck thanked the panelists and audience for participation. Afterwards, the panelists asked for any inbox or online questions of which there was one:

5. The caller discussed expanding Consortia's scope of work and reimbursement specifically the Adoption components of lifeline and digital navigation skills needed. Furthermore, the caller commented that they wanted CASF Adoption Grants to allow one-on-one services particularly with seniors' or any residents' usage of small screens. He asked that the grant programs be expanded or re-evaluated to allow these types of services to go forward today and in the future to help residents.

Staff answered that we do consider those questions. It would be a big departure for the structure of the program, but we welcome the discussion and look forward to discussing it at a future proceeding.

The public comments / Q&A section concluded with Selena Huang providing closing remarks for the Workshop.