



California Public Utilities Commission
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PRESS RELEASE

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CPUC Invests \$42 Million to Help Close Digital Divide

Latest Grants Help Bring Broadband to Unserved and Underserved Communities and Increase Digital Literacy

SAN FRANCISCO, June 20, 2024 – Continuing its commitment to [Broadband For All](#), the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today approved over \$42 million in [California Advanced Services Fund](#) (CASF) grants. These grants aim to bridge the digital divide and enhance digital literacy across the state.

The following projects received funding to bring quality broadband and/or digital education to unserved or underserved communities:

- [Aromas-San Juan Project](#) (Res T- 17817)
 - **Funding:** Up to \$29 million from the [CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account](#)
 - **Project:** LCB Communications will construct a hybrid middle-mile and last-mile broadband network combining fiber-to-the-home to 1,038 unserved locations and Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) to an additional 63 unserved locations in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties.
 - **Benefits:** “This CASF grant will help close the digital divide for disadvantaged families who have been denied educational resources, job opportunities, essential services, and enhanced quality of life due to lack of broadband infrastructure,” said Elise J. Brentnall, Managing Partner of LCB Communications. “The CPUC award will allow LCB and our community partners to bring economic growth, educational equity, and full social

inclusion to an underserved community within San Benito County.”

- **Three County Fiber Project** (Res T-17821)
 - **Funding:** Up to \$10 million from the CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account
 - **Project:** Surfnet Communications will deploy last-mile broadband infrastructure to provide Fiber-to-the-Premises to 465 CASF-eligible locations in San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz counties, including low-income, rural, BIPOC, and ESL communities.
 - **Benefits:** “This project is not just about bringing better internet; it is about bridging the digital divide, fostering economic development, and future-proofing our infrastructure to meet evolving needs,” said Ken Nye, COO of Surfnet Communications. “With 100 percent funding from the CASF Infrastructure Grant Account, we hope to make significant strides in improving digital access and contributing positively to the economic and social development of these regions.”

- **LACOE and Parent University Projects** (Res T-17819)
 - **Funding:** \$1.3 million from the [CASF Broadband Adoption Account](#)
 - **Project:** Los Angeles County Office of Education’s (LACOE) Equitable Communities: Digital Literacy in a Technical Society project (\$320,126) and Parent University: Parent University California project (\$1 million) will provide digital literacy training to 5,340 participants. LACOE is the nation’s largest regional education agency, comprised of 80 K-12 school districts and serving 1.4 million students and their families each year. Parent University serves agricultural communities, rural and urban low-income neighborhoods, immigrant populations with limited English proficiency or non-existent language skills, areas with low educational attainment rates, and low-income urban neighborhoods across California.
 - **Additional Awards:** On May 7, 2024, the CPUC approved \$3.5 million for 36 digital inclusion grants to another 14 grantees, and on June 12, 2024, the CPUC approved \$1.4 million for 12 digital inclusion grants to one grantee. Collectively, these projects will provide digital literacy training to 8,500 participants, broadband access to 11,190 participants, and increase broadband access and digital inclusion in low-income, disadvantaged communities, and other communities facing socioeconomic barriers to

broadband adoption.

- **[Broadband Public Housing Account Projects](#)** (Res T-17824)
 - **Funding:** Up to \$596,315 from the [CASF Broadband Public Housing Account](#)
 - **Project:** Six projects will deploy wireless and wired broadband infrastructure for 346 units in publicly supported housing developments, enhancing access to government services, e-health, and online education.
 - **Additional Awards:** On June 18, 2024, the CPUC also approved \$334,775 to three additional grantees for seven projects.

- **[Rural Fresno Project](#)** (Res T-17823)
 - **Funding:** Up to \$519,260 from the CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account
 - **Project:** CalNeva Broadband’s Rural Fresno Project will construct a last-mile broadband network using hybrid fiber-coax technology for 500 unserved locations and FWA technology to 100 unserved locations in Fresno County.
 - **Benefits:** “The entire CalNeva Broadband staff is excited to expand its service footprint to enable it to serve every business, household, and anchor institution within the Coalinga and Huron city limits as well as rural areas outside of the cities,” said Thomas E. Gelardi, CalNeva Broadband Manager.

“I am pleased to support these grants for broadband infrastructure funding and digital literacy programs across California. In order to close the digital divide, we must build broadband infrastructure and make sure everyone is able to use it,” said Commissioner Darcie L. Houck. “I am also excited to support [Resolution T-17825](#) that increases the CASF budget from about \$72 million to over \$136 million for fiscal year 2024-25. These grants are one step in accomplishing our broadband goals in a manner that will maximize the impact of our investment.”

Since its inception in 2008, the CASF Infrastructure Grant Account has awarded more than \$344 million in grants, facilitating the expansion of broadband infrastructure to previously unserved areas throughout the state.

Driving Broadband Access and Equity Across California

In addition to CASF, the CPUC is driving forward a suite of broadband deployment, assistance, affordability, and adoption programs to accelerate the state’s commitment to bridging the digital divide. Together, these efforts aim to increase equitable and affordable access to high-speed internet service across California.

[California Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\) Program](#)

- **Funding:** California is eligible for approximately \$1.86 billion under the federal BEAD Program.
- **Latest Update:** The 120-day [Challenge Process](#) begins on July 8, 2024, to determine eligible locations for BEAD funding. The CPUC has a [Challenge Portal](#) where permissible challengers can register and submit challenges.

[Last Mile Federal Funding Account](#)

- **Funding:** A \$2 billion grant program for last mile broadband infrastructure projects, per [Senate Bill 156](#) (2021).
- **Latest Update:** The first round of recommended awardees was [announced](#) on June 7, 2024, with a rolling process continuing through summer and fall.

Together with CASF, these initiatives highlight the CPUC’s comprehensive approach to ensuring all Californians have access to reliable, high-speed internet. For more information on CPUC’s broadband initiatives, please visit our [website](#).

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About the California Public Utilities Commission

The CPUC regulates services and utilities, protects consumers, safeguards the environment, and assures Californians access to safe and reliable utility infrastructure and services. Visit www.cpuc.ca.gov for more information.