



STAFF REPORT
Board Meeting of May 18, 2022

AGENDA ITEM: 6-C

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SUBJECT:

Broadband for All Technical Assistance

Enclosure: No

Action: Information and Discussion Only

SUMMARY:

Last-Mile and Adoption Programs

In July 2021, Governor Newsom signed SB 156 providing a historic \$6 billion to accelerate the state's commitment to bridging the digital divide by increasing equitable, affordable access to high-speed internet service across California. Of this amount, \$2.75 billion was allocated to the California Public Utilities Commission to establish the following three programs:

1. Federal Funding Account

The \$2 billion Federal Funding Account is administered by the CPUC to build last-mile infrastructure for Californians without access to high-speed broadband service. The CPUC is implementing the program in [Rulemaking \(R.\) 20-09-001](#). [Read more on the Federal Funding Account.](#)

2. Loan Loss Reserve

A \$750 million Broadband Loan Loss Reserve Fund supports costs related to the financing of local broadband infrastructure development. The reserve fund expands local governments' ability to secure financing for building last-mile projects, with an emphasis on public broadband networks. The CPUC will implement the program in [Rulemaking \(R.\) 20-08-021](#).

3. Local Agency and Tribal Technical Assistance

The technical assistance grant programs providing funds to reimburse eligible local governments and Tribal entities for work that facilitates last-mile broadband infrastructure to communities lacking sufficient Internet. On February 24, 2022, the CPUC adopted the technical assistance decision and program guidelines ([D. 22-02-026](#)) as part of [Rulemaking \(R.\) 20-08-021](#). [Read more about the Local Agency Technical Assistance grant program.](#)

About the Program

In its ongoing commitment to bridging the digital divide, the CPUC established the Local Agency Technical Assistance grant program for eligible pre-construction work that facilitates last-mile broadband infrastructure projects. The program has a streamlined process for awarding \$50 million to eligible local agencies and Tribal entities in California by the end of 2026, including a \$5 million set-aside for Tribes. An overview of the Local Agency Technical Assistance grant program can be found [here](#). Information about related federal funding for last-mile projects can be found at [Broadband Implementation for California](#).

Funding Focus

Technical assistance grants support Tribes and local agencies in their efforts to expand broadband to communities lacking sufficient Internet. Grant recipients are reimbursed for eligible pre-construction expenses to provide last-mile connections to unserved and underserved communities. Examples of *reimbursable expenses*:

- Consultant or staff time for conducting needs assessments, environmental and engineering studies, network design, and broadband strategic plans.
- Costs incurred in forming a Joint Powers Authority for the purpose of bringing broadband to areas in need of sufficient Internet connections.

Eligibility and Timing

Application packets are estimated to be available and posted on the webpage by early May 2022. Grant applications may be submitted at any time after that by:

- Local agencies in California, including any local governments authorized to provide broadband service, are eligible to apply for technical assistance grants.
- California Tribes with or without federal recognition are eligible for Local Agency Technical Assistance funding and also may continue to apply to the CPUC's existing [Tribal Technical Assistance](#) broadband grant program, which is being maintained as a separate program.

The expected submittal time is June-July 2022 for Technical Assistance applications.

Resources and More Information

Local Agency Technical Assistance grant applications and guidance materials will be posted by early May 2022. Links for more information:

- Local Agency Technical Assistance Decision and Guidelines ([D. 20-02-026](#)) - Adopted February 24, 2022.
- [Tribal Technical Assistance Grant Program](#) – A separate funding source also available to California Tribes
- [Broadband Implementation in California](#) – Information about related federal funding for last-mile projects

[California Advanced Services Fund](#) – Information about additional broadband funding programs

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact to the approved 2021-22 Overall Work Program and Budget.