



July 2023

Welcome to the summer 2023 edition of this newsletter. We offer you updates on an opportunity to help direct future broadband funding into Nevada County, advocating for internet service standards in California, federal broadband funding that has just been allocated to California, grants for last-mile broadband networks, financial assistance for low-income households to pay for internet service, and the state's effort to identify all organizations working to expand broadband (the DEEM tool). Reach out if you have questions or requests for future newsletter topics.



Help Direct Broadband Funding to Nevada County

Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, \$62 billion was allocated for broadband investment across the United States. In order to receive individual allocations, each state must implement a comprehensive engagement effort that seeks input from residents and incorporates that input into a State Plan. The more input, feedback, and involvement from the residents of the state, the more likely each state is to maximize the dollars they receive from the federal government that will lead to deploying broadband infrastructure and establishing digital equity. This could mean investment (or not) in your communities.

The California Department of Technology is developing the state's digital equity portion of the state plan that will determine how much of the \$62 billion will be allocated to California. Part of their community engagement effort in development of the state plan involves distribution and participation in a brief (10 minutes), anonymous [survey](#) by at least 250 residents from each rural county.

**Take the
Survey**

Internet Customers: Help Improve Internet Service Standards

You may recall a few months back when Nevada County helped to promote public comment hearings the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) was holding to investigate whether its voice service (phone) standards were meeting customers' needs. Now, the CPUC is seeking public input on whether the state should regulate internet service standards. The Cable Broadband Industry is arguing that that internet services should be excluded from any future rulemaking the CPUC does around customer service standards. Do you agree?



The issues that are being considered in this rulemaking include:

- What types of customer services requirements should the Commission adopt?
- What types of complaints from consumers should the Commission adjudicate?
- How should the Commission adjudicate complaints from consumers?
- What enforcement actions/penalties for violations should the Commission consider? For example, should consumers receive financial credits in their accounts in addition to penalties paid to the state as a part of the penalty structure?

If you'd like to see the public comments others are making or contribute your own to this rulemaking, you can do so [here](#).



\$1.86B in Federal Broadband Funding Heading to California

On Monday, June 26, the Biden-Harris Administration announced it would allocate \$1.86 billion in funding to California via the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. This allocation will support CPUC's efforts to build last-mile connections to unserved locations throughout California.

The NTIA also issued a final BEAD Challenge Process Policy and model challenge process on Wednesday, June 28th, providing states with additional guidance on how to design and conduct their BEAD challenge process, after soliciting and receiving comments from the CPUC and other stakeholders. The BEAD Challenge Process Policy and model challenge process are available to review [here](#) on NTIA's website.

The CPUC currently has an open rulemaking proceeding ([R.23-02-016](#)) that will establish program rules and guidelines, in accordance with the BEAD [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) from NTIA. The CPUC will submit a 5-Year Action Plan to NTIA for approval in August of 2023. More information on the 5-Year Action Plan is available from NTIA [here](#).

Grants for Last-Mile Broadband Networks

On June 30, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will open its **Federal Funding Account**, a \$2 billion grant program focused on building last-mile broadband internet infrastructure for communities without access to internet service at sufficient and reliable speeds. Applications will be accepted through the CPUC's **Broadband Grant Portal**. The deadline to apply is Friday, September 29, 2023, at 4 p.m.



The program will award grants to networks that provide reliable and affordable service to communities that need it most, particularly low income and disadvantaged communities facing a growing digital divide. Networks must be built using fiber or cable technologies to provide modern speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload. The program encourages tribal and local government participation and reflects the State's priority of bringing affordable service to all Californians.



Financial Assistance for Home Internet Service

Internet service has become a critical tool in our daily lives and yet, many households struggle to afford it.

The **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)** is a U.S. government program run by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to help low-income households pay for internet service and connected devices like a laptop or tablet. This program provides eligible households with the \$30/month toward their internet service, and a one-time payment of up to

\$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desk computer. You are likely eligible if your household's income is below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line (so, \$60,000 for a family of four), or if you or someone you live with currently receives a government benefit like SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, WIC, Pell Grant, or Free and Reduced-Price Lunch.

Check your eligibility for the program and apply at affordableconnectivity.gov.

Sign up by phone: (888)920-2762

Sign up online: internetforallnow.org/applytoday

Are You (or Your Organization) Working to Expand Broadband Access?

The State of California is asking partners to map their digital equity work and help us develop an inventory of organizations, programs, funding, and other resources that are, or can be, leveraged to promote digital equity and support implementation of the Digital Equity Plan. Please take a moment to fill it out for your organization and encourage others in your network or community to do so as well.

- [DEEM Tool](#)
- [DEEM Tool \(Spanish\)](#)
- [DEEM Outreach Toolkit for Partners](#)
- [DEEM for ISPs](#)

