

# **BROADBAND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES REPORT**

JUNE 2023

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# INTRODUCTION

## OVERVIEW

Over the last few years, federal and state governments have passed legislation providing billions of dollars funding for broadband and digital equity projects. As Riverside County works to close the digital divide for the approximately 67,000 households countywide without a home internet subscription,<sup>1</sup> it is evaluating available funding opportunities to support this critical work.

This report focuses on the various federal and state funding opportunities available to Riverside County, as well as its partners, as it continues initiatives to improve broadband availability, affordability, and adoption in the county. This report serves as a complement to the Broadband Gaps and Opportunities Report, which provides additional context about the county's current broadband environment and goals for the future.

## What is Broadband

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines broadband as the high-speed internet access that is always on and is faster than traditional dial-up. The FCC currently uses a minimum speed of 25/3 megabytes per second (Mbps\*) – which means a download speed capable of streaming information at a rate of 25 Mbps and an upload speed for sending information at 3 Mbps. Internet speed at 25/3 is used as the benchmark for high-speed service. However, as the world increasingly moves online, including through remote work, learning, and telehealth, greater bandwidth and faster speeds are required to meet our needs. As a result, the FCC has pushed to increase the benchmark for broadband from 25/3 Mbps to 100/20 Mbps. This need to increase minimum speeds is echoed in many federal funding programs and policies, including those established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which require funded infrastructure deployment projects to deliver 100/20 Mbps speeds in order to bring adequate broadband speeds to communities across the country that have been left behind by a variety of socioeconomic factors and now find themselves caught in the digital divide.

## Broadband Challenges in Riverside County

Addressing the digital divide is a top priority for Riverside County to ensure the county's long-term economic growth as well as the well-being of each of its 2.4 million residents. The goal of closing the digital divide can be approached through the lens of three key pillars:



### **BROADBAND AVAILABILITY**

is the ability of households and businesses to obtain an internet connection based on available infrastructure and market services.



### **BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY**

means that plans are both reasonably priced for the services offered and that residents can pay for the plans and devices needed to access the digital world.



### **BROADBAND ADOPTION**

means that individuals have the skills and knowledge to utilize broadband effectively in their daily life.

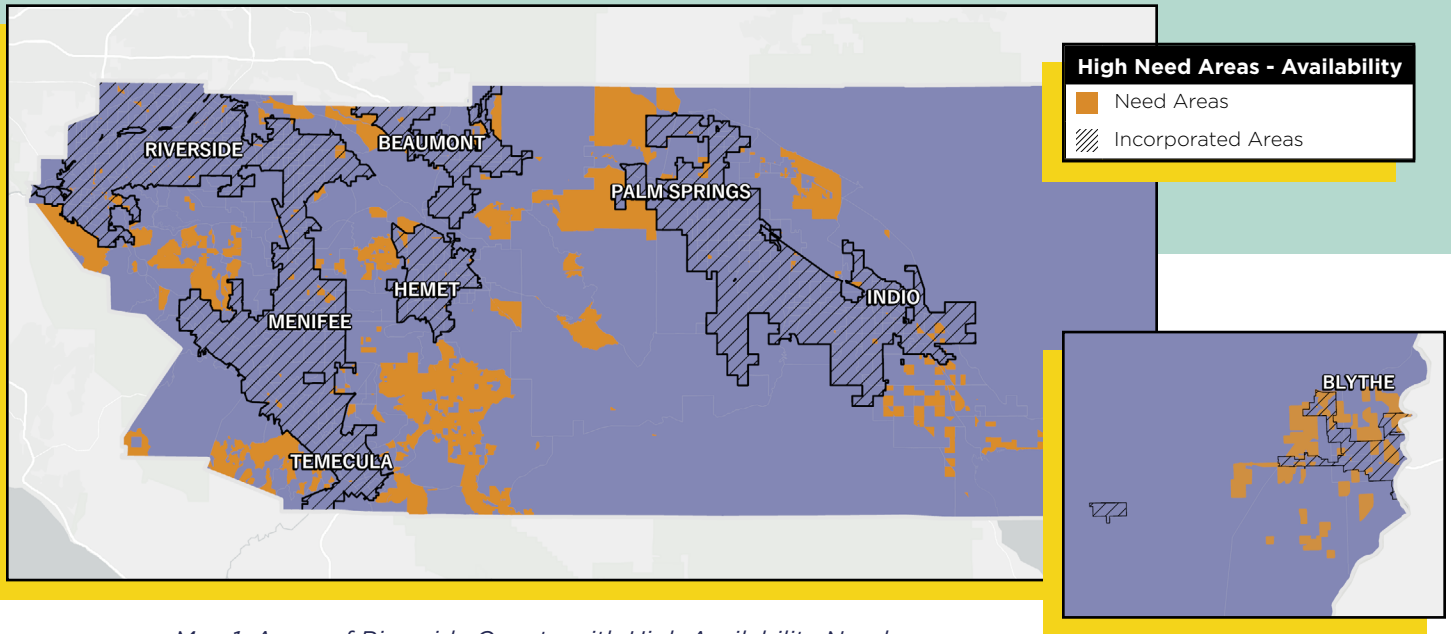
1

US Census Bureau, [ACS Table S2801: Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions, 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021](#)

## AVAILABILITY

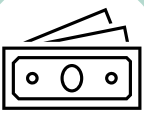


While many locations in the area do have broadband internet available to households and businesses, not all areas have service at broadband speeds. Approximately 29,000 locations lack any option for internet which meets the FCC’s definition of broadband speed (25/3 Mbps), according to provider-reported data.<sup>2</sup> In addition, many more do not have service options for speeds which meet the State of California’s broadband threshold of at least 100 Mbps download speeds, with nearly 37,000 locations without 100/20 Mbps speeds.<sup>3</sup>



Map 1. Areas of Riverside County with High Availability Needs

## AFFORDABILITY



Many households do not have broadband subscriptions due to prohibitively high costs of service and devices. These costs can be a challenge for even middle-income households, with as many as 360,000 households—which makes up 50% of all households—in Riverside County facing affordability challenges. Furthermore, 34,000 households lack any kind of internet enabled device, and an additional 54,000 households rely solely on a smartphone for an internet connection, which is inadequate for many important internet-related tasks.<sup>4</sup> Without affordable devices, residents cannot fully utilize the benefits of connectivity even if they subscribe to discounted or subsidized broadband service.

<sup>2</sup> Federal Communications Commission, FCC National Broadband Map, December 31, 2022 (Last Updated 5/24/23)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

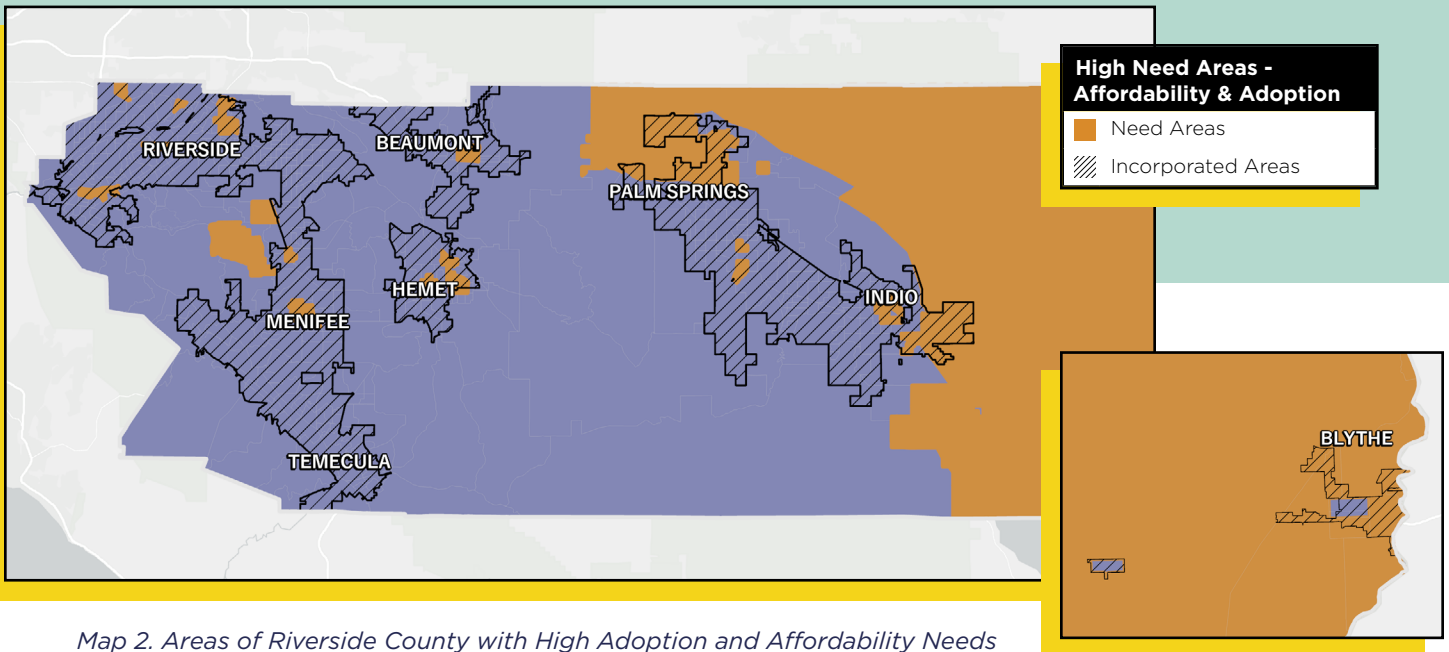
<sup>4</sup> ACS 5-Year estimates 2017-2021, [Table S2801 Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions](#)



## ADOPTION



Many residents in Riverside County are not able to effectively take advantage of internet connectivity in their everyday life due to lacking the understanding, skills, and knowledge to do so. Even with affordable connectivity they cannot fully access the resources, and advantages of connectivity. Furthermore, many of these households tend to fall along socioeconomic lines, meaning that inadequate access to broadband is disproportionately experienced by residents in socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. This includes county residents that are low income, may not have obtained a post-secondary education, have disabilities, are senior residents, or reside in a rural area. This has consequently contributed to a “digital divide” which has exacerbated existing socioeconomic challenges. To address this challenge, a host of digital inclusion initiatives must be considered from digital literacy trainings to device loan and giveaway programs to digital navigators. Much of the broadband funding becoming available will specifically address digital equity and presents an opportunity for the county to leverage grant funding to execute these initiatives.



Map 2. Areas of Riverside County with High Adoption and Affordability Needs

# HOW FUNDING CAN HELP

## OVERVIEW

Expanding broadband access in Riverside County will require significant financial investment from federal and state sources, as well as from private internet service providers. Through programs administered by both the state government, such as the CASF, and federal government, like ARPA and IIJA, the county has access to unprecedented funding to support its broadband expansion efforts. The county has already allocated \$7 million of its ARPA allocation for broadband needs, and can apply to millions more once certain funds become available. These opportunities include both broadband-specific programs as well as more general funding opportunities that the county can leverage to help achieve its broadband goals. The flow of funds that make up these opportunities is summarized in the chart below, with additional information on each program on the following pages.

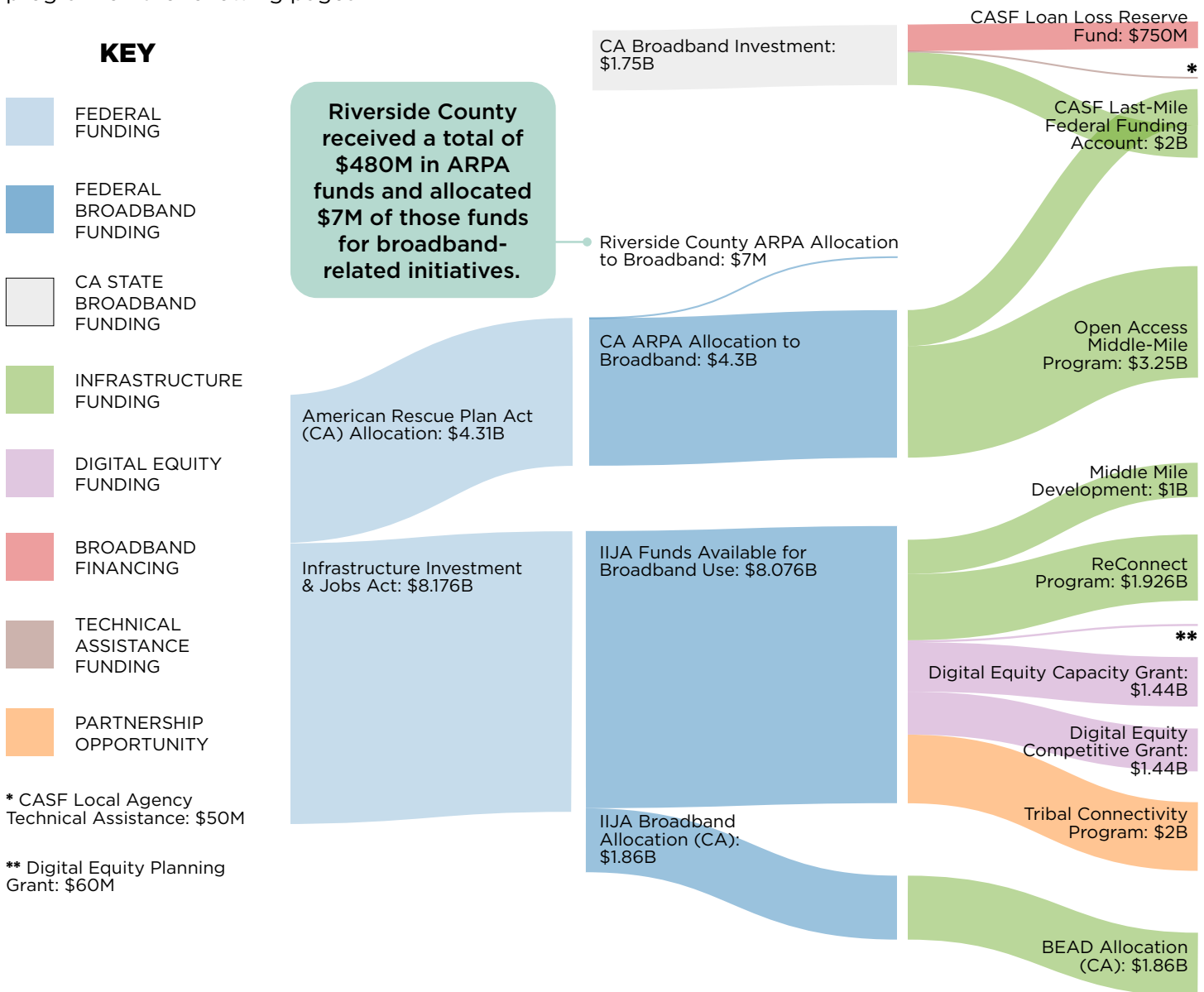


Figure 1. Federal and State Funding Available to Riverside County

# THE COUNTY'S APPROACH TO FUNDING

Although a wide range of federal and state grants are available, Riverside County has prioritized these opportunities based on the following factors:



## FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

In recent years the federal government has appropriated significant funding for and implemented programs to support universal access to affordable broadband service. Although efforts to provide accessible broadband began in the early 2000s, the significant digital divide laid bare during the COVID-19 pandemic has newly invigorated officials to develop efficient and innovative ways to deploy broadband infrastructure and improve equitable access to broadband speeds for all Americans. As such, Congress has included funding for broadband expansion in pandemic relief legislation, like the American Rescue Plan Act, as well as other landmark infrastructure investment legislation, like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA)

#### Overview

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law on March 11, 2021 to provide economic relief to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other allocations, ARPA provides \$7.6 billion to support efforts to expand broadband infrastructure and promote greater access to high-speed internet services, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This funding included support for two major broadband-related projects, and established the Capital Projects Fund and the State & Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, which provided funding to states for a flexible range of expenditures including for increasing broadband access.

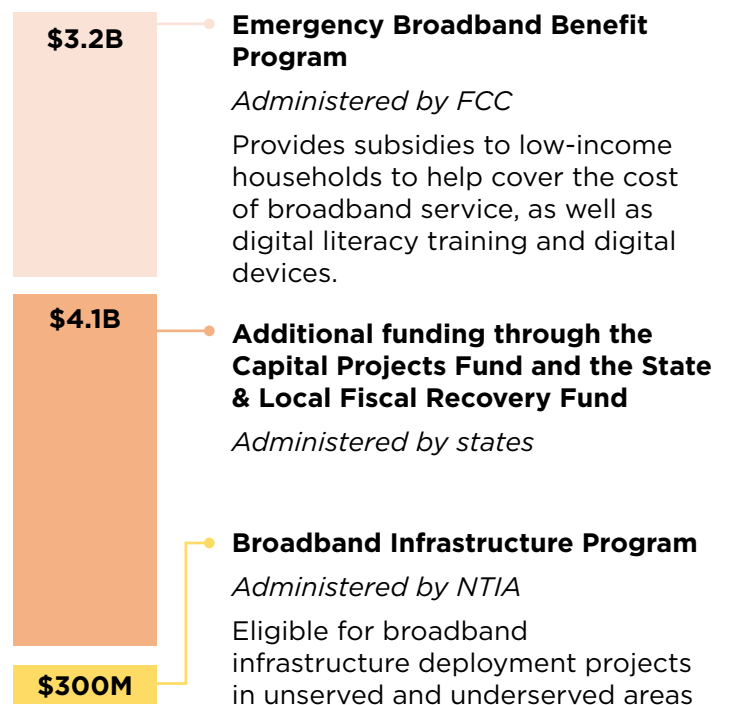


Figure 2. ARPA Grant Programs

## State ARPA Appropriation

The federal government awarded nearly \$28 billion in ARPA funds to California, including \$27 billion through the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund and approximately \$540 million through the Capital Projects Fund. California allocated \$6 billion of this funding toward broadband infrastructure deployment. Of the \$6 billion, \$4.3 billion came from the state's ARPA allocation, with the remaining funds coming from the state's General Fund.

## Riverside County Appropriation

In total, Riverside County received almost \$480 million in ARPA funds, \$7 million of which was directly invested in broadband-related initiatives. The county's investments went toward two separate but related broadband projects:

### BROADBAND STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Riverside County issued a solicitation which it then used to secure a consulting firm to assist the county in conducting a current state assessment which was then used as the basis for updating the Riverside County Master Plan. The Plan is intended to lay out strategies for the county to pursue to expand broadband access and close the digital divide through infrastructure deployment and digital inclusion activities which the consulting firm would assist the county in implementing. The scope also includes a variety of grant tracking, writing, and management work alongside assistance managing and securing public-private partnerships with Internet Service Providers (ISPs). The contract is expected to be a three-year long engagement through June 2025.



### ACP OUTREACH CAMPAIGN



In August 2022, Riverside County awarded the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) a \$3.5 million contract to conduct ACP outreach throughout Riverside County. Through this contract vehicle, CETF will assist the county with establishing a strategic outreach strategy to ACP-eligible households across the county through a wide range of advertising mediums, in-person enrollment events, and a county-specific call center hotline to help ACP-eligible residents enroll in the program.



## INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA)

### OVERVIEW

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed on November 15, 2021, as a “once-in-a-generation investment” in the nation’s critical infrastructure needs. The IIJA allocates nearly \$65 billion exclusively for broadband initiatives, including for building new infrastructure, improving existing infrastructure, and increasing funding for broadband affordability programs for low-income households. IIJA-funded programs emphasize the importance of prioritizing unserved and underserved areas<sup>5</sup> in order to promote equitable access. Eligible entities vary for each program but typically includes U.S. states, territories, Tribal governments, and units of local government.

The IIJA established several signature programs intended to expand broadband access and close the digital divide, including the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, the Digital Equity Act programs, the ReConnect Program, and the Affordable Connectivity Program. The following pages describe these key programs in more detail. The IIJA also appropriated funding for middle-mile infrastructure, the Tribal Connectivity Program, and the Rural Broadband Program.

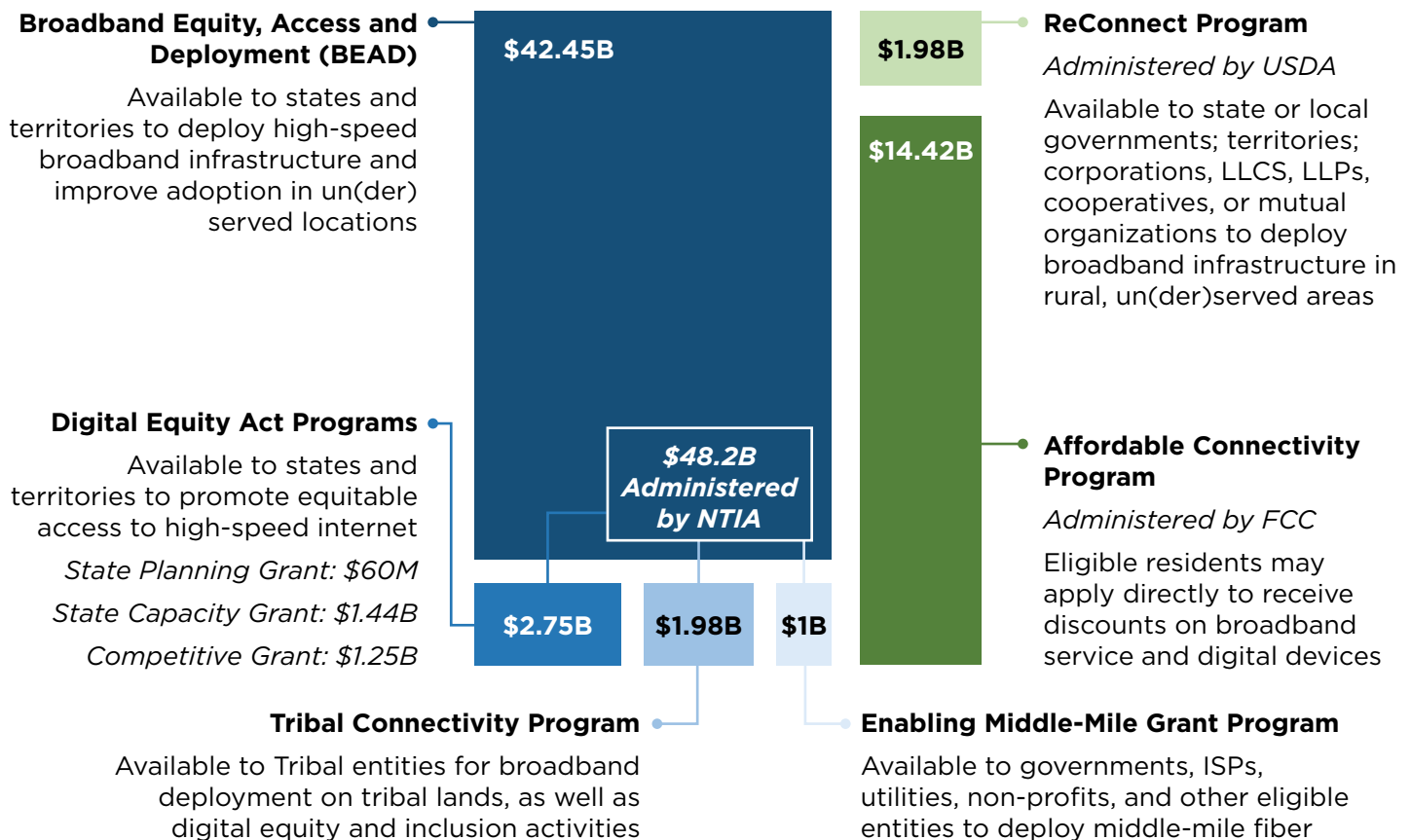


Figure 3. IIJA Grant Programs

5 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, 47 U.S.C. 702, Division F, Title I, Sec. 60102(a)

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

<b>Program Overview</b>	BEAD aims to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved locations to increase adoption of high-speed internet.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States and territories</li> <li>FCC guidance specifies qualifications for subgrantees</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broadband planning, including research, data collection, and training</li> <li>Deploying or upgrading broadband in un(der)served areas and multi-unit residential buildings</li> <li>Digital adoption and equity activities</li> <li>Workforce development programs</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total funding: \$42.5 billion</li> <li>In December 2022, California received \$4.9 million to fund its initial BEAD planning efforts, including development of its 5-Year Action Plan and proposal for using its full award. In June 2023, the Biden Administration announced final state BEAD allocations and allocated \$1.86 billion to California.</li> <li>BEAD funds are awarded directly to states and territories. Local governments, ISPs, utilities, community-based organizations, and other entities may receive funding through subgrants to support various activities funded by BEAD.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State develops 5-Year Action Plan, which is due 270 days after receiving initial planning funds</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Once California receives its full BEAD allocation, it will have the ability to award subgrants to local governments like Riverside County. This funding could fund a wide range of digital equity-focused broadband projects, including ones related to the eligible activities listed above.
<b>County Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local governments should engage with the state-level administering entity to learn about the state's 5-Year Action Plan development planning and opportunities for partnerships. Local governments may also consider opportunities to contribute to the state's 5-Year Action Plan and later stages of the BEAD program, including performing community outreach and digital inclusion activities.</li> <li>Subgrantees are required to provide matching funds of not less than 25% of project costs. Funds from other federal programs generally cannot be used as matching funds.</li> <li>Subgrantees are required to submit reports, at least semiannually, to the entity administering funds. At minimum, an infrastructure project must report on service locations, number of customers, types of facilities, speeds of service, prices of service, construction status, and mapping updates.</li> </ul>

## Digital Equity Planning Grant

<b>Program Overview</b>	Established by the IIJA, the Digital Equity Planning Grant is a \$60M formula-grant program that awards funds to be used by states to develop a State Digital Equity Plan in order to promote digital equity, inclusion, and ultimately, widespread broadband adoption.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States</li> <li>• Territories</li> <li>• Tribal governments</li> <li>• Recipients can also distribute subgrants</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, implement, and oversee digital equity plans</li> <li>• Make awards to other entities to help in developing digital equity plans (community anchor institutions, county and municipal governments, local education agencies, nonprofits, Tribes, civil rights organizations, etc.)</li> <li>• Improve the online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources</li> <li>• Implement digital equity plans and digital inclusion activities</li> <li>• Provide digital literacy and skills education to covered populations</li> <li>• Facilitate the adoption of high-speed Internet by covered populations</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	State of California allocation: \$4,001,525
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 13, 2022 - application opens</li> <li>• July 12, 2022 - Planning application or letter of intent due</li> <li>• January 17, 2023 - Planning Fund Application for Territories Due</li> <li>• State plan to be developed within a year of the planning grant award</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Through the state's digital equity planning process, Riverside County has an opportunity to get involved and provide feedback on planning and implementation activities. Once the state receives funding for implementation through the Capacity and Competitive grants, Riverside County will likely receive funds as a subgrantee.
<b>County Considerations</b>	Program awardees are required to report annually on the use of funds, progress made towards fulfilling grant objectives, and the implementation of the State Digital Equity Plan. Additional reporting requirements include semi-annual financial reports and semi-annual technical reports.

## Digital Equity Capacity Grant

<b>Program Overview</b>	Established by the IIJA, the Digital Equity Capacity Grant allocated funds to states to assist with the implementation of their respective State Digital Equity Plan.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Planning Grant: states, territories, Tribal governments. Recipients can also distribute subgrants.</li> <li>Capacity Grant: states, territories, Tribal governments</li> <li>Competitive Grant: states, territories, Tribal governments</li> </ul> <p><i>*Note: only entities that completed the planning grant program can apply for a capacity grant</i></p>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States</li> <li>Territories</li> <li>Tribal governments</li> <li>Recipients can also distribute subgrants</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	Total funding: \$1.44 billion
<b>Timeline</b>	Capacity Program funding will be made available once states have developed their State Digital Equity Plans, sometime in 2024.
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Through the state's digital equity planning process, Riverside County has an opportunity to get involved and provide feedback on planning and implementation activities. Once the state receives funding for implementation through the Capacity and Competitive grants, Riverside County will likely receive funds as a subgrantee.
<b>County Considerations</b>	Program awardees are required to report annually on the use of funds, progress made towards fulfilling grant objectives, and the implementation of the State Digital Equity Plan. Additional reporting requirements include semi-annual financial reports and semi-annual technical reports.



## Digital Equity Competitive Grant

<b>Program Overview</b>	Established by the IIJA, the Digital Equity Competitive Grant provides funding to eligible entities to promote broadband adoption across low-income households and other target populations. Grants will be used to develop and implement digital inclusion activities.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political subdivisions</li> <li>• Tribal entities</li> <li>• Nonprofits</li> <li>• Community anchor institutions</li> <li>• Local educational agencies</li> <li>• Workforce development organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement digital inclusion activities that benefit the Covered Populations</li> <li>• Facilitate the adoption of internet by Covered Populations in order to provide educational and employment opportunities to those Covered Populations</li> <li>• Implement training programs for Covered Populations that cover basic, advance, and applied skills or other workforce development programs</li> <li>• Make available equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, or digital network technology for broadband services to Covered Populations at low or no cost</li> <li>• Construct, upgrade, expend, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for Covered Populations through community anchor institutions</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	Total Funding: \$1.25 billion
<b>Timeline</b>	Competitive Program to launch within 1 month of first Capacity awards (sometime in 2024)
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Through the state's digital equity planning process, Riverside County has an opportunity to get involved and provide feedback on planning and implementation activities. Once the state receives funding for implementation through the Capacity and Competitive grants, Riverside County will likely receive funds as a subgrantee.
<b>County Considerations</b>	Program awardees are required to report annually on the use of funds, progress made towards fulfilling grant objectives, and the implementation of the State Digital Equity Plan. Additional reporting requirements include semi-annual financial reports and semi-annual technical reports.

<b>Program Overview</b>	The ReConnect Loan and Grant Program provides loans and grants to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	U.S. Department of Agriculture
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States</li> <li>• Local governments</li> <li>• Territories</li> <li>• Corporations, LLC, LLPs, cooperatives, or mutual organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction or improvement of facilities required to provide fixed terrestrial broadband service</li> <li>• Acquisition of an existing system that does not currently provide sufficient access</li> <li>• Pre-application expenses</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total funding: \$1.9 billion for Round 4, funding for future rounds TBD as of June 2023</li> <li>• Maximum award amount: \$35 million for the 100% grant; \$25 million for the 100% grant for projects serving areas where 90% of households lack sufficient access to broadband</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Applications for Round 4 of ReConnect Program funding closed in November 2022. NOFO for future rounds of funding TBA as of June 2023.
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Riverside County's rural and unincorporated areas are among the most underserved areas in the county. In partnership with ISPs, the county can leverage ReConnect funding to support its efforts to better connect these regions. The ReConnect Program is comprised of several grants, including a 100% grant (i.e. 0% loan) and a grant for projects serving areas where 90% of households lack sufficient access to broadband.
<b>County Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USDA requires a 25% match for the 100% grant but does not require a match for the grant for projects serving areas where 90% of households lack sufficient access to broadband.</li> <li>• Reporting requirements vary depending on the type of financial assistance that was approved for the entity. Grantees are required to submit quarterly and/or annual reports to USDA, detailing certain financial, operational, construction, and performance data.</li> </ul>

## Affordable Connectivity Program

<b>Program Overview</b>	ACP provides eligible households with a discount of up to \$30 per month (or up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands) toward internet service, and a one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	Federal Communications Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating Internet Service Providers</li> <li>• Eligible low-income households</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly internet plan subsidy</li> <li>• One-time device discount</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total funding: \$14.2 billion</li> <li>• Benefits received by consumers are passed directly to participating ISPs</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuously accepting consumer enrollment and provider applications for participation</li> <li>• As of May 2023, ACP has not been renewed and existing funding is expected to run out by mid-summer 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Approximately half of all households in Riverside County are eligible to receive benefits under ACP, and as of May 2023 approximately 39% of eligible households are enrolled in the program. The county's current enrollment brings in roughly \$4.2M into the county in federal subsidies each month.

## OTHER FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

In addition to funding authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, other federal funding sources exist to support broadband-related initiatives. This funding includes the E-Rate Program, which was established by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission. More information about the program is available below.

### E-Rate Program

<b>Program Overview</b>	E-Rate provides affordable broadband service to schools and libraries, with discounts ranging from 20% to 90% of eligible service costs.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	United Service Administrative Company under the supervision of the Federal Communications Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools</li><li>• Libraries whose budgets are completely separate from any schools</li></ul>
<b>Eligible activities</b>	Discounts for broadband service defined by two categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Category 1 services: telecommunications, telecommunications services, and Internet access</li><li>• Category 2 services: internal connections, basic maintenance of internal connections, and managed internal broadband services</li></ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Total funding: Unlike many federal programs, FCC's E-Rate Program is not funded through appropriations; funding instead comes through contributions collected from providers of interstate and international telecommunications. In May 2023 FCC announced that approximately \$5.46 billion would be available to meet funding requests received for funding year 2023.<sup>6</sup></li><li>• Discounts range from 20% to 90% of eligible service costs.</li></ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding available annually, typically in March of each year. Applications for the FY 2023 funding cycle closed on March 28, 2023.</li></ul>
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	E-Rate provides an opportunity to provide discounted broadband service to schools and libraries, which are key community anchor institutions in the county.
<b>County Considerations</b>	E-Rate provides a 20% to 90% discount on eligible service costs, which results in a 10% to 80% match required by the participating institution.

6 Federal Communications Commission, Eligible C1 and C2 E-Rate Requests Public Notice; [https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DA-23-425A1.pdf](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-23-425A1.pdf)





## Lifeline

<b>Program Overview</b>	The federal Lifeline program provides a discount on phone and broadband service for qualifying low-income households.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	United Service Administrative Company under the supervision of the Federal Communications Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating internet service providers</li> <li>• Eligible low-income households</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone or broadband service. Eligible consumers may receive a discount on either phone or broadband service, but not both.</li> <li>• Service must provide at least 25/3 Mbps speed.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total funding: \$836 million for FY 2023</li> <li>• Monthly broadband benefit: \$9.25 (up to \$34.25 for those living on Tribal lands)</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers may sign up for Lifeline at any time. USAC requires consumers to recertify that they are eligible annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Lifeline provides another avenue for discounted broadband service for Riverside County's lowest-income households. Households that qualify for Lifeline benefits automatically qualify for ACP, and can receive both benefits at the same time.

# STATE FUNDING SOURCES

In 2021 Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 156, which appropriated \$6 billion to support programs to expand broadband access in rural and low-income areas across the state. The state appropriated \$4.3 billion of the funding allocated for these programs using California's federal ARPA allocation, with the remaining funds coming from the state's General Fund.

SB 156 required the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to establish the Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Program, which provides funding for regional broadband consortia to develop and implement plans to expand broadband access in target areas. The CPUC also established a new state Office of Broadband to coordinate and oversee these efforts across state agencies. SB 156 also made some critical changes to the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF), which includes several projects that support statewide broadband expansion and are funded through a surcharge on telecommunications carrier revenue. The bill updated the state's broadband standards, including by making the following key changes:

- 1 | Redefined "unserved" as an area where no providers offer services that meet the broadband threshold of 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream (25/3)
- 2 | Prioritized unserved areas with broadband available only at speeds at or below 10/1 or areas with no internet connectivity
- 3 | Required funded infrastructure projects to provide speeds of 100/20 speeds

SB 156 also invested \$6 billion to establish the following programs:

Set aside  
**\$2 billion**  
for **last-mile broadband infrastructure** through a newly established Last Mile Federal Funding Account



Allocated  
**\$3.25 billion**  
for a **statewide open-access middle-mile network** to be implemented by the California Department of Technology



Directed the use of  
**\$750 million**  
to establish a **Loan Loss Reserve Fund** to help local governments obtain better borrowing terms for broadband deployment projects



## California Open Access Middle-Mile Network

Through the California Open Access Middle-Mile Network, the state has invested \$3.25 billion to construct 10,000 fiber optic backbone to enable an open-access middle-mile network. The California Department of Technology, which is overseeing this initiative, will work to complete all construction by December 2026 as guided by ARPA expenditure requirements.<sup>7</sup> The proposed network will pass through 533 miles of fiber across Riverside County.<sup>8</sup> The intention behind making the middle-mile network open-access is to ensure that once it is operational, other entities and internet service providers will be able to connect to the middle-mile network and build out last-mile infrastructure to deliver service to the premises, or to households and businesses to be served. Due to this effort by the state, the majority of the funding programs will focus on funding last-mile infrastructure deployment projects, and middle-mile only when necessary, to ensure that efforts are focused on building out Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) and connecting the end user.



<sup>7</sup> California Department of Technology, [Middle Mile Broadband Initiative](#)

<sup>8</sup> California for All, [Statewide Construction Evaluation Map of 10,000 miles of proposed build](#)

## Changes to the California Advances Services Fund

As a result of SB 156, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), which administers the State's California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) to fund broadband adoption and infrastructure projects, was tasked with establishing the rules for and administering two new programs, the Last Mile Federal Funding Account and the Loan Loss Reserve Fund.

### Last Mile Federal Funding Account

The Last Mile Federal Funding Account was established to fund last mile deployment projects for unserved and underserved Californians receiving less than 25/3 Mbps of service. Grant recipients will then be required to build out their proposed broadband construction projects that deliver 100/200 Mbps to ensure adequate broadband speeds for modern uses.<sup>9</sup>

In turn, the CPUC will reimburse the following expenses as part of the broadband deployment projects proposed:

- Costs directly related to the deployment of infrastructure
- Costs to lease access to property or for Internet backhaul services for a period not to exceed five years
- Costs incurred by an existing facility-based broadband provider to upgrade its existing facilities to provide for interconnection
- Costs incurred during the period beginning March 3, 2021, and ending December 31, 2024.

In May 2023, the CPUC released new maps to assist funding recipients with identifying eligible areas for this broadband expansion assistance, in particular those with greater socioeconomic need.

### Loan Loss Reserve Fund

The Broadband Loan Loss Reserve Fund will use \$750 million as a resource to help units of local government and non-profits to secure better financing terms for their broadband deployment projects. Through these terms, borrowers will be able to obtain better borrowing terms.

## Existing State Broadband Funding Programs

In addition to the newly established broadband grant programs through SB 156, the State of California has five existing broadband programs that are funded and renewed each year: The programs, administered by the CPUC, include:

- CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account
- CASF Broadband Adoption Account
- CASF Broadband Housing Account
- Local Agency Technical Assistance Grant
- CASF Rural and Urban Regional Consortia Grant

As this section detailed above, numerous federal and state opportunities exist that can help Riverside County meet its broadband infrastructure and digital inclusion goals, and significant funding will soon become available as California finalizes planning of several programs. The county plans to pursue several of these opportunities, some in partnership with ISPs and other stakeholders. Where partnerships are not practical or allowable, the county is exploring other avenues for these opportunities. The county will monitor opportunities as federal and state entities release more information, including available funding, eligibility criteria, and deadlines.

9 California Public Utilities Commission, [Federal Funding Account Program Rules and Guidelines](#)





## CASF Last Mile Federal Funding Account

<b>Program Overview</b>	The Last Mile Federal Funding Account includes a combination of ARPA and state general funds to fund the construction of last-mile infrastructure to connect unserved and underserved communities to local networks.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	California Public Utilities Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local government agencies</li> <li>• Tribes</li> <li>• Nonprofits</li> <li>• Telephone corporation</li> <li>• Non-telephone corporations that are facility-based broadband providers</li> <li>• Cooperatives</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last-mile infrastructure deployment</li> <li>• Costs directly related to the deployment of infrastructure</li> <li>• Costs to lease access to property or for internet backhaul services for a period not to exceed 5 years</li> <li>• Costs incurred by an existing facility-based broadband provider to upgrade its existing facilities to provide for interconnection</li> <li>• Eligible incurred during the period beginning March 3, 2021, and ending December 31, 2024</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total funding: \$2 billion</li> <li>• Riverside County allocation: \$50,635,154</li> <li>• Maximum award amount: \$25,000,000</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Application deadlines TBA as of May 2023
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Through its \$50M allocation, Riverside County, as well as its local ISPs, have unprecedented support to extend broadband access to unserved and underserved communities by building last-mile infrastructure connected to existing broadband infrastructure or to the state's forthcoming open-access middle-mile network.
<b>County Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matching funds are not required. However, applications with matching funds receive credit based on the percentage of that match (up to 10 points out of 130 total possible points).</li> <li>• Grantees are required to file progress reports on at least a quarterly basis. CPUC will provide guidance and a template that is consistent with Treasury's Final Rule.</li> </ul>

## CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account

<b>Program Overview</b>	The Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account was created for the purpose of deploying communication services and promoting construction of broadband infrastructure to facilitate adoption by unserved communities with no service or slow service.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	California Public Utilities Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local government agencies</li> <li>Tribes</li> <li>Wireless carriers registered with CPUC</li> <li>Non-telephone corporations that serve as facilities-based broadband service providers</li> <li>Telephone corporations with a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN)</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Last-mile broadband infrastructure deployment</li> <li>Middle-mile infrastructure deployment accepted where existing middle-mile infrastructure does not support last-mile projects</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total funding: \$150 million</li> <li>Maximum award amount: \$25,000,000</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Closed as of April 1, 2023; next funding round TBA as of May 2023
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	The Broadband Infrastructure Grant provides resources for the county's last-mile infrastructure projects, particularly in unserved and underserved areas. This grant is especially applicable for the CVAG Last-Mile Project as well as the Cellular Tower Build Project and other last-mile projects the County may take on in partnership with local ISPs.
<b>County Considerations</b>	Grantees are required to file biannual progress reports.

## CASF Broadband Adoption Grant Account

<b>Program Overview</b>	The Broadband Adoption Grant Account provides grants to facilitate broadband adoption and digital inclusion. The account funds various publicly available or after-school broadband access, digital literacy training programs, and educational content for consumers with relatively low broadband adoption.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	California Public Utilities Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local government agencies</li> <li>• Senior centers</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Public libraries</li> <li>• Nonprofit organizations</li> <li>• Community-based organizations with programs to increase digital inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital literacy projects (e.g., digital literacy training, digital devices)</li> <li>• Broadband access projects (e.g., publicly available free broadband access in community training rooms or other public spaces)</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total funding: \$20 million</li> <li>• Maximum award amount: \$150,000</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 1, 2023; every January 1 and July 1 thereafter until funds are exhausted</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	The Broadband Adoption Account grant is a key tool for supporting the county's broadband outreach and digital literacy efforts. This funding could support expansion of the county's existing digital literacy programs and could support its ACP outreach program through per-participant reimbursement. The county may also use these funds to purchase digital devices, as the device reimbursement rates under this program are more generous than those available under ACP and other similar programs.
<b>County Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission may fund up to 85 percent of the total eligible project costs but the remaining 15% must be matched by other funding sources.</li> <li>• Up to three reports will be required throughout the course of the project: a ramp-up period report, a Year 1 Progress Report, and a Year 2 Completion Report. CPUC has provided templates for each required report.</li> </ul>

## CASF Broadband Housing Account

<b>Program Overview</b>	The Broadband Housing Account grant provides funding dedicated to broadband access and adoption in publicly supported housing communities.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	California Public Utilities Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public housing agencies</li> <li>• Incorporated nonprofit organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example eligible uses of funds include costs associated with broadband network connection to a publicly supported housing community, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Broadband networking equipment (modems, wireless bridges, switches, firewalls, routers)</li> <li>◦ Low voltage contracting work</li> <li>◦ Broadband network engineering and designing documentation</li> <li>◦ Hardware warranty of broadband network equipment</li> <li>◦ Installation, provisioning, and configuration labor costs</li> <li>◦ Taxes, shipping, and insurance costs directly related to broadband network equipment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total funding: \$15 million for FY 2022-23</li> <li>• Maximum award amount: \$150,000</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	July 1, 2023; every January 1 and July 1 thereafter until funds are exhausted
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	Although the county may not be directly eligible to receive funding under the Housing Account, it can work with local low-income and publicly supported housing communities to connect them to fast, affordable, and reliable broadband service.
<b>County Considerations</b>	Recipients are required to submit a project status report within 6 months of the award date. Project grantees are required to maintain the broadband network for a period of 5 years following installation and when services are turned on for residential use. Grantees are required to submit a key performance indicator report biannually for that same period of 5 years.

## CASF Rural and Urban Regional Consortia Grant

<b>Program Overview</b>	Rural and Urban Regional Consortia grants are available to support the deployment of broadband services by assisting CASF Infrastructure Grant applicants in the project development or grant application process or assisting broadband deployment projects related to programs created under SB 156 and AB 164, which include the Local Agency Technical Assistance grant and the CASF Last-Mile Federal Funding Account.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	California Public Utilities Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	Eligible consortia, which can include representatives of local and regional government, public safety, elementary and secondary education, health care, libraries, postsecondary education, community-based organizations, tourism, parks and recreation, agricultural, business, workforce organizations, and air pollution control or air quality management districts
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance with CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account</li> <li>• Broadband infrastructure deployment</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total funding: \$10.71 million for FY 2022-23</li> <li>• Maximum award: \$200,000</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Closed in July 2022; 2023 reopening date TBA as of May 2023
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	The CASF Rural and Urban Regional Consortia funding can be used by the County for any broadband infrastructure projects conducted through partnership with the Inland Empire Broadband Consortia.
<b>County Considerations</b>	Grantee consortia must submit biannual project progress reports in addition to biannual requests for reimbursement.

## Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA)

<b>Program Overview</b>	The Local Agency Technical Assistance grant reimburses technical assistance costs for broadband projects. part of the broadband initiatives passed under the CA SB 156, CPUC will receive funds from the State to allocate to technical assistance for local government's working on broadband deployment projects.
<b>Administering Entity</b>	California Public Utilities Commission
<b>Eligible Entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local agencies and local governments authorized to provide broadband service</li> <li>Tribal governments</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	<p>Developing broadband services in underserved communities, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental, feasibility, and engineering design studies</li> <li>Needs assessments, market studies, and strategic plans</li> <li>Forming joint powers of authority</li> <li>Consultant and community-based organization services</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total funding: \$50 million</li> <li>Maximum award: \$500,000</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications accepted on a rolling basis until funding runs out. As of March 2023, CPUC is no longer accepting applications from non-Tribal local agencies, but will continue accepting applications from Tribal governments until funding for those governments is no longer available.</li> <li>One application per fiscal year per applicant</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Riverside County</b>	LATA grant reimbursement grants can be used for broadband related work that can reasonably be tied to potential infrastructure projects. This grant would be applicable to the County's broadband needs assessment and planning efforts for infrastructure projects.
<b>County Considerations</b>	Grantees must report quarterly on project progress. Grantees must also submit monthly reports for each contractor undertaking a contract in excess of \$25,000. Finally, grantees must submit a Completion Report upon project completion in order to receive reimbursement for eligible expenses.



# PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Deploying broadband infrastructure is not something that the county can do alone, particularly as the county does not operate its own public broadband utility. Consequently, the county is cultivating public-private partnerships with ISPs and other broadband providers to bring infrastructure expansion projects to Riverside County. However, due to the national effort to expand broadband infrastructure, broadband service providers are in high demand. This is especially true for national, large-sized service providers with large networks and existing footprints in many cities and counties. Consequently, it is important to engage potential partnering ISPs early on in the broadband planning process.

While conducting assessments and establishing strategic plans are important to ensure initiatives are data-driven and strategically aligned, it is especially important to engage ISPs early on in the process for the following reasons:

- 1 ISPs and public partners can share data on broadband service and availability to drive decision-making and highlight areas of need:** While there are some sources of publicly available broadband service data, they might not always reflect the reality on the ground for all communities. For example, many communities that are categorized as “served” by 25/3 Mbps speeds may not actually be receiving this level of service or service at all. This data also does not reflect other privately held data by broadband infrastructure which is a good source for identifying where upgrades as opposed to completely new construction may be required. Engaging ISPs allows the county to share any data it may have on broadband infrastructure and areas struggling with poor or no service while in turn learning more about the networks of the interested private party and where they may be interested in expanding. This allows both parties to make informed decisions about how they can maximize the impact of future investments while being smart with how resources are used.
- 2 ISPs and public parties can identify priority areas and communities of mutual interest:** In order to establish partnerships with broadband service providers, it is important to establish what common goals and interests are shared between the county and the broadband service provider. Identifying “priority areas” to define the most un(der)served communities is a good steppingstone to prepare for these conversations as they will be the areas that the county will want to target to bring an infrastructure expansion project in partnership with a broadband service provider that may serve existing communities or is looking to expand their network.
- 3 Begin engagement with funding opportunities in mind:** Ultimately, the end goal for these partnerships is a broadband expansion project in a mutually agreed upon geographic area to serve an un(der)served community. This initiative will likely need ample funds to account for the required pre-construction and construction costs. Grant funding opportunities are key to these conversations as they determine the resources that can be leveraged for prospective projects, define the parameters of eligibility for projects and project areas, and establish a timeline for the planning process in order to be on time for submission. Engaging partners early on allows each party to share out information, arrive at grant-eligible areas of mutual interest, and ensure all required applications and documentation are submitted on time for funding requests.













The county plans to leverage funding opportunities to support and incentivize its partnerships with private broadband providers. The county’s plan for establishing partnerships with ISPs include the following steps:

- Conduct gaps analysis and identify priority areas in Riverside County
- Identify broadband infrastructure grant opportunities which Riverside County is eligible for
- Engage existing broadband service providers in Riverside County
- Identify an area of common interest and determine which communities would be most fit for key funding opportunities
- Identify qualifying grant opportunities and pursue application, either in partnership or in support.

### **Public-Private Partnership Models for Consideration**

A common framework, Altman Solon’s “Broadband Models for Unserved and Underserved Communities,” identifies five different types of public-private partnerships:<sup>10</sup>

PARTNERSHIP MODEL	ROLES	CONSIDERATIONS
<b>FULLY MUNICIPAL</b>	<b>PUBLIC ENTITY:</b> Owns Rights of Way (ROW), builds out middle-mile and last-mile infrastructure, operates the network, and provides service to end customer.	\$ 
<b>PUBLICLY OWNED, PRIVATELY SERVICED</b>	<b>PUBLIC ENTITY:</b> Owns ROW as well as middle- and last-mile <b>PRIVATE PARTNER:</b> Serves customer	\$  
<b>HYBRID OWNERSHIP</b>	<b>PUBLIC ENTITY:</b> Owns ROW as well as middle-mile <b>PRIVATE PARTNER:</b> Own last-mile, operate network, and provide service to customer.	 
<b>PRIVATE DEVELOPER, OPEN ACCESS</b>	<b>PUBLIC ENTITY:</b> Owns ROW <b>PRIVATE PARTNER:</b> Finances and builds middle- and last-mile while operating network. Service to customers is provided by multiple providers.	
<b>FULLY PRIVATE BROADBAND</b>	<b>PUBLIC ENTITY:</b> Owns ROW <b>PRIVATE PARTNER:</b> Service providers maintain ownership of all infrastructure, operation, maintenance, and service to end customer.	
<b>KEY</b>	 <b>Significant public funding</b>	 <b>Existing public infrastructure</b>  <b>Viable private partners</b>

*Table 1. Public-Private Partnership Models*

These partnership models provide options along a continuum from a low degree of private involvement to a fully private model. The most suitable partnership model is best determined by identifying a level of desired private participation, the amount of public resources available to the county, and the risk appetite for each party.

<sup>10</sup> US Ignite and Altman Solon, [Broadband Models for Unserved and Underserved Communities](#)



## ***The county's approach to Public-Private Partnerships***

The partnership models presented above provide a list of partnership frameworks for the county to think about when considering what responsibilities for each party to assume based on risk appetite and the level of resources possessed by each. It is important to note that Riverside County does not have a public utility with which to leverage existing public infrastructure when considering options for how it can expand its broadband infrastructure and increase broadband access to residents. Furthermore, the county is restrained by the present lack of available public funding to be deployed for broadband infrastructure. It is likely that the needs across the county require up to hundreds of millions of dollars invested to lay out the needed infrastructure to connect all of county households. This is an effort the county or any one particular provider cannot do alone.

Consequently, the county seeks to establish a partnership with one or more broadband providers. The ideal partnership model for the county would possess the following characteristics:

- Partnerships established with more than one broadband provider to meet the service needs of residents across all districts. At present time, there is not one single broadband provider that serves the entire county. However, each district has a level of need that requires broadband infrastructure expansion for improved service.
- Infrastructure is financed, built, and operated by multiple broadband providers, akin to the Private Developer, Open Access model.
- The county shares data on broadband locations and advises on areas of need across the county.
- County assists broadband providers in generating and submitting grant applications to fund proposed broadband infrastructure projects.
- County contributes letters of support and solicits support from other regional stakeholders to strength applications submitted by broadband providers.

ACTIVITY	COUNTY	BROADBAND PROVIDER/ISP
Share data	•	•
Seek funding and apply to grants	•	•
Finance project		•
Build out project		•
Operate project		•
Maintain project		•

*Table 2. Riverside County's Approach to Public-Private Partnerships*

## ***Current state of broadband public-private partnerships in Riverside County***

The county began engaging broadband providers when it began the broadband planning process that kickstarted a refresh of its Broadband Master Plan in September 2022. Since then, it has engaged five different broadband providers that already provide broadband service within the county. The county will continue to work with these providers to pursue grant funding for infrastructure expansion and upgrades to networks in communities with demonstrated need for this work. The county looks forward to opportunities to continue this engagement as the State of California rolls out its Last Mile Federal Funding Account and BEAD funding opportunities, and as it deploys its GoldenStateNet middle-mile fiber project, 533 miles of which will be built in Riverside County.

# FUNDS IN ACTION

Riverside County and its partners can leverage these federal and state funding opportunities to address three key pillars underlying the county's digital divide.

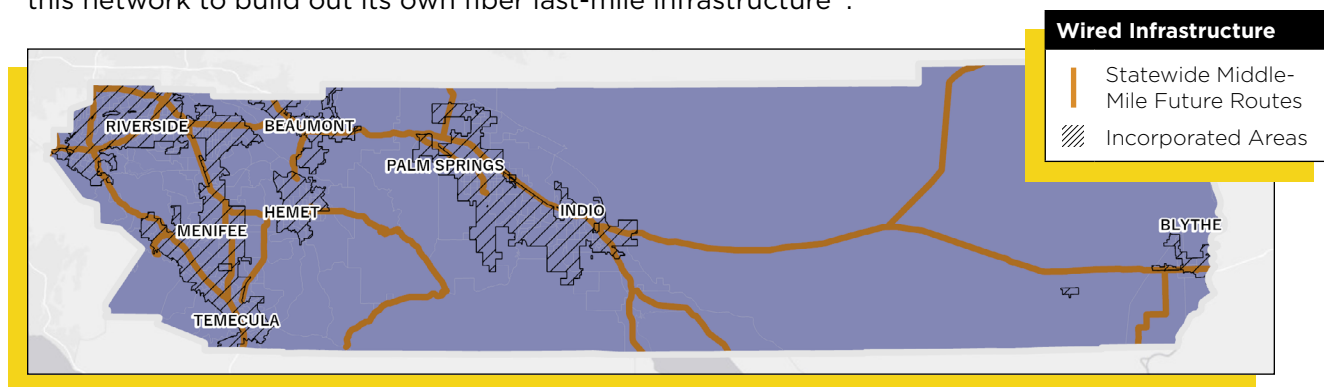
**Availability** refers to the existence of infrastructure supporting high-speed internet access for county residents and businesses. The county also has a gap in the **affordability** of broadband subscriptions, as well as of other costs associated with connection to fast, reliable internet, such as digital devices. Finally, **adoption** is the issue of the rate with which residents connect to and use the internet to its full benefit.

## Availability

A wide range of physical infrastructure is involved in making high-speed internet available to residents, and each internet connection option, including fiber, copper, cable, and fixed wireless, has different speeds, costs, and other attributes. Of all of these technologies available in Riverside County, fiber is notable for its speed, reliability, and resilient construction, but many of the more remote areas of the county lack any fiber infrastructure whatsoever. Regardless of speed or reliability, approximately 67,000 households in the county lack any at-home internet subscription for a variety of reasons including lack of availability in their area or very poor service speed offerings.

Numerous federal and state opportunities are currently or will soon be available to address Riverside County's broadband availability challenges. Many of these grants also provide the county with the opportunity to partner with ISPs as it pushes providers to expand infrastructure and service to more locations in the county.

- 1 California's Middle-Mile Network:** Through California's middle-mile initiative, the state plans to construct 10,000 miles of open-access fiber lines statewide, and several of the planned routes extend through Riverside County, as shown in the map below<sup>11</sup>. When complete, this project will connect unincorporated areas and even the most remote areas of the county to fiber, including the City of Blythe, which currently predominantly relies on unreliable copper and fixed wireless service. The middle-mile network will allow providers in Riverside County to leverage existing fiber lines to reach areas that were previously more challenging to serve. While this is not a direct funding opportunity, it is still a significant asset to the county as it allows last-mile initiatives to build off this network. For example, in its updated Fiber Master Plan, the City of Indio has already announced its interest in using this network to build out its own fiber last-mile infrastructure<sup>12</sup>.



Map 4. Middle-Mile Network Route in Riverside County

<sup>11</sup> State of California, [California Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative](#)

<sup>12</sup> City of Indio, Fiber Master Plan (2022)

- 2 CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account:** As described earlier in this report, the Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account provides funding to support broadband infrastructure projects in underserved and unserved areas. In Riverside County, these grant funds could support a wide range of last-mile infrastructure projects to bring high-speed connectivity to the county's rural areas that currently lack it, which the county would pursue in partnership with local ISPs.
- 3 CASF Last Mile Federal Funding Account:** In April 2022, CPUC announced it had allocated \$50M from its Last Mile Federal Funding Account for last-mile projects in Riverside County.

## Affordability

Broadband service affordability is a critical barrier preventing more widespread connectivity. This is the case nationwide, including in Riverside County, where 96% of households with annual income over \$75,000 have a home broadband service plan, whereas just 74% of households with annual income under \$20,000 subscribe to a plan. Fortunately, several federal funding opportunities exist to address affordability challenges that low-income households face, and, as of January 2023, 50% of households in the county are eligible to receive benefits under these programs because of their income or existing eligibility for other federal assistance programs. By promoting the availability of these federal benefits, Riverside County has an opportunity to expand broadband service to its lowest-income households.



**Affordable Connectivity Program**

**Lifeline**

**E-rate**



## Adoption

Digital equity programs can help enable more widespread adoption of broadband internet service and establish digital literacy training programs to ensure residents are able to take full advantage of internet service available to them. Through its focus on equity, BEAD provided significant funding for programs promoting broadband adoption and digital literacy, which are key elements of closing the digital divide.

### Digital Equity Act Programs

State Digital Equity  
**Planning Grant** Program

State Digital Equity  
**Capacity Grant** Program

State Digital Equity  
**Competitive Grant**  
Program

**CASF  
Broadband  
Adoption  
Grant Account**

# FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES & RECEIVED GRANTS FOR RIVERSIDE

Riverside County has already received funding through the CPUC's Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant, and is tracking several other key state and federal funding opportunities as it continues to pursue support for its broadband expansion goals. These grants are described below.

## Pursued & Received Grants

### LATA

In December 2022, the CPUC awarded Riverside County \$500,000 through LATA to support technical assistance efforts through the county's broadband deployment projects. Riverside County can use these funds for eligible purposes, which include environmental studies, network design, engineering studies, needs assessment, market studies, and broadband strategic plans.

## Priority Grants

While Riverside County is tracking broadband funding opportunities, there are a number of key opportunities that are in strategic alignment with the county's broadband objectives. These funding programs are top of mind for the county and are prioritized on the basis of their availability, funding amount, reduced competitiveness, and applicability to broadband-related activities. The county's broadband team is paying particular attention to updates to funding availability and, when available, plans to pursue the following opportunities:

		GRANT NAME			
		Last Mile Federal Funding Account	CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account	CASF Broadband Adoption Account	BEAD
The County's Funding Prioritization Factors	County Eligibility	•	•	•	•
	Availability of Funds	•		•	
	Partnership Opportunities	•	•	•	
	Alignment with Priorities	•	•	•	•
	Application Deadlines	•		•	

The county has an opportunity to partner with an ISP to build funded infrastructure.

Application tool available June 2023; application goes live summer 2023.

The county will work with community organizations that offer digital literacy programming.

Due July 1, 2023

As California gets closer to receiving BEAD funding to support implementation of its BEAD-related plans, the county will be paying close attention to funding opportunities available to local government agencies.



# NEXT STEPS

As Riverside County continues its broadband expansion work, it will assess the opportunities identified within this report to continue to refine and recommended funding opportunities for its Broadband Business Plan and Long-term Strategy. Funding sources mentioned here can be aligned to specific county departments, as well as any future broadband initiatives the county may consider. As it considers these funding opportunities, the county plans to work with ISPs to identify need and collaborate on grant application submission.

# APPENDIX

## Methodology

This report was written following extensive research, including review of dozens of reports, webinars, grant notices, news articles, and case studies to develop this report. Funding opportunities reviewed during development of this report and that were shared with Riverside County are presented in the Appendix.

## Funding Dashboard

The following pages list an overview of the significant funding available in the current or near term. Some programs with closed application windows are reoccurring programs, and may soon receive addition rounds of funding and reopen.

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
<b>Federal Funding Opportunities</b>				
Broadband Equity, Access, & Deployment (BEAD) Program	States	\$41,601,000,000	States, District of Columbia, territories, local governments (as state subgrantees)	Closed
New Markets Tax Credit Program	Community Development Financial Institutions Fund	\$5,000,000,000	Community Development Entities	Closed
Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program	Department of Agriculture	\$1,300,000,000	Libraries, Higher Education Institutions, state and local governments	Applications are accepted from lenders year-round
Rural Business Development Grant Program (RBDG)	Department of Agriculture	\$41,000,000	State, local, territorial governments, or Tribal/ Native American governments	Closed
USDA Community Connect Grants	Department of Agriculture	\$79,000,000	Tribal governments, state and local governments, other legal entities	Open (Applications due June 20, 2023)
USDA Rus Technical Assistance	Department of Agriculture	\$20,000,000	Higher Education Institutions, Tribal governments, state and local governments, other legal entities	Open (Applications due June 20, 2023)

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program	Department of Agriculture	\$2,836,100,286	Public bodies, community non-profits, Tribes	Open (rolling)
Rural Broadband Loan and Loan Guarantee Program	Department of Agriculture	\$11,869,000	State, local, territorial governments, or Tribal/ Native American governments	Closed
Rural Community Development Initiative Grant Program (RCDI)	Department of Agriculture	\$6,000,000	Public bodies, non-profit organizations, qualified private organizations	Open (Accepting applications until June 28, 2023)
Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Programs (REDLG)	Department of Agriculture	\$39,000,000 loans and \$10,000,000 grants	Electric Utilities/Co-ops	Closed
Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans and Loan Guarantees	Department of Agriculture	\$690,000,000	State, local, Tribal governments, non-profits	Open
Community Facilities (CF) Guaranteed Loan Program	Department of Agriculture	\$500,000,000	Libraries, K-12 schools, Higher Education Institutions, local governments, Tribes, non-profits	Open (rolling)
Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants	Department of Agriculture	\$62,510,000	State and local government entities, non-profits, Tribes	Closed
FY 2021 - 2023 Economic Development RNTA	Department of Commerce	\$2,500,000	Higher Education Institutions, political subdivisions of a State, Tribes, district organizations	Open (Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis)
Magnet Schools Assistance	Department of Education	\$109,000,000	Local Education Agencies (LEAs)	Closed
Migrant Education Program - State Grants	Department of Education	\$375,626,000	State Educational Agencies	Available annually; applications submitted at the beginning of each reauthorization cycle
Small, Rural School Achievement Program	Department of Education	\$93,920,000	K-12 schools, local governments	Closed

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
Full-Service Community Schools	Department of Education	\$30,000,000	Higher Education Institutions, political subdivisions of a State, Tribes, district organizations	Closed
GEAR UP (Gaining early awareness and readiness for undergraduate programs)	Department of Education	\$368,000,000	K-12 schools, Higher Education Institutions, states	Closed
Indian Education Title VI Formula Grants	Department of Education	\$105,381,000	K-12 Schools, Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Native American-Serving NonTribal Institutions	Department of Education	\$5,120,000	Higher Education Institutions, Native American- serving nontribal institution with undergraduate enrollment with at least 10%	Closed
Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk	Department of Education	\$48,239,000	State Education Agencies	Closed
Rural and Low-Income School Program	Department of Education	\$93,920,000	K-12 Schools, local governments	Closed
Smart and Connected Communities	Department of Education	\$26,000,000	Higher Education Institutions, non-profits, state and local governments, private organizations	Open (Proposals accepted through April 1, 2024)
Promise Neighborhoods	Department of Education	\$81,000,000	Higher Education Institutions, Tribal/ Native American governments, Alaska Native Controlled organizations	Closed
Statewide Family Engagement Centers Program	Department of Education	\$15,000,000	Statewide organizations in partnership with state education agencies	Closed
Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program, Title IV, Part A	Department of Education	\$1,220,000,000	K-12 schools, state and local governments	Open
Title III, Part A: Strengthening Institutions	Department of Education	\$109,007,000	Higher Education Institutions, non-profit organizations	Closed



Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
Title III, Part B: Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program	Department of Education	\$337,619,000	Higher Education Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Closed
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers	Department of Education	\$1,259,673,000	State Education Agencies	Closed
Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants	Department of Education	\$715,455,000	State Education Agencies	Closed
Adult Education – National Leadership Activities	Department of Education	\$13,700,000	Higher Education Institutions, state and local governments, non-profits	Closed
American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities	Department of Education	\$38,080,000	Higher Education Institutions, Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program	Department of Education	\$50,650,000	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions	Department of Education	\$5,120,000	Higher Education Institutions, Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander- serving institutions with undergraduate enrollment of at least 10% Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students	Closed
Education for Homeless Children and Youth	Department of Education	\$106,500,000	State education agencies	Closed
English Language Acquisition State Grants	Department of Education	\$797,400,000	State governments	Closed
Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (Title I, Part A)	Department of Education	\$16,536,802,000	State and local governments	Closed
Indian Housing Block Grant - Competitive	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$129,248,141	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
Indian Community Development Block Grant Program – American Recovery Plan (ICDBG-ARP)	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$280,000,000	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Title VI Loan Guarantee	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$45,000,000	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Home Investment Partnerships Program	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$1,500,000	State, local governments	Rolling
Capital Fund Program	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$2,800,000,000	Local governments, public housing authorities	Closed
CDBG Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$300,000,000	State, local, territorial governments	Open
Choice Neighborhoods	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$10,000,000	County, city governments, Native American or Tribal governments, non-profits	Open (Applications due June 6, 2023)
Indian Community Development Block Grant Program	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$70,000,000	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Indian Housing Block Grant	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$647,000,000	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Indian Housing Block Grant – American Rescue Plan – Formula (IHBG-ARP)	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$450,000,000	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Workforce Development in Telecommunication Sector: Apprenticeship Investments in Support of Broadband and 5G	Department of Labor	\$5,997,096	Higher Education Institutions	Closed
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)	Department of Labor	\$2,900,000,000	State, local, Tribal governments	Closed
EDA Planning and Local Technical Assistance Programs	Economic Development Administration	Not identified	Higher Education Institutions, political subdivisions of a State, Tribes, district organizations	Open (Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis)



Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
Regional Technology and innovation Hubs	Economic Development Administration	\$500,000,000	An eligible consortium including one or more of each of the following: Higher Education Institutions, state, territorial, local, or Tribal governments, industry groups or firms in relevant technology, innovation, or manufacturing sectors, economic development organizations or similar entities focused primarily on improving science, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, or access to capital, and labor organizations or workforce training organizations.	Phase 1 Application Deadline: August 15, 2023
FY 2020 EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs including CARES Act Funding	Economic Development Administration	Not identified	Private institutions of higher education, state or county governments	Closed
Rural Digital Opportunity Fund	Federal Communications Commission	\$11,200,000,000	General public, local governments, Native/ Tribal entity, non-profit, private sector entity. Must meet other criteria for location in eligible areas.	Reoccurring program; next auction TBA as of June 2023
ACP Navigator Program	Federal Communications Commission	\$5,000,000	Public and government entities, local, state, Tribal governments	Closed
Affordable Connectivity Program	Federal Communications Commission	\$14,200,000,000	Households, participating service providers	Open
High-Cost Program (including Connect America Fund, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and 5G Fund)	Federal Communications Commission	\$5,000,000,000	Facilities-based providers of voice and broadband services	Fund is currently working with eligible carriers
Lifeline	Federal Communications Commission	\$836,000,000	Households	Open
Rural Health Care Program	Federal Communications Commission	\$298,000,000	Healthcare facilities, eligible health care providers	Open

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
COVID-19 Telehealth Round 2	Federal Communications Commission	\$249,500,000	Healthcare facilities, post-secondary educational institutions offering health care, teaching hospitals, medical schools, community health centers	Closed
Emergency Connectivity Fund	Federal Communications Commission	\$7,170,000,000	Schools, libraries, Tribal libraries, consortia of schools and libraries	Closed
E-Rate Program	Federal Communications Commission	Funding comes from provider contributions	Libraries, schools	Closed
National Competitive Outreach Program	Federal Communications Commission	\$60,000,000	State, local, Tribal governments, US territories,	Closed
Tribal Competitive Outreach Program	Federal Communications Commission	\$10,000,000	State, local, Tribal governments, US territories,	Closed
National Leadership Grants for Libraries	Institute of Museum and Library Services	\$13,406,000	K-12 schools, Higher Education Institutions, states, libraries	Closed
Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants	Institute of Museum and Library Services	\$1,200,000	Tribal or Native American Governments, Alaska Native Controlled Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations	Closed
Grants to States Program	Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)	\$168,803,000	Libraries, state, local, or territorial governments	Closed
Project Overcome	National Science Foundation	\$1,945,000	Higher Education Institutions	Closed
Spectrum and Wireless Innovation enabled by Future Technologies (SWIFT)	National Science Foundation	\$13,000,000	Higher Education Institutions	Open (Applications due June 5, 2023)
Campus Cyberinfrastructure	National Science Foundation	\$15,000,000 to \$20,000,000	Higher Education Institutions, non-profits	Open (Applications due September 11, 2023)
Civic Innovation Challenge (CIVIC)	National Science Foundation	\$11,000,000	Libraries, K-12 schools, Higher Education Institutions, state and local governments	Closed

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
State Digital Equity Capacity Grant	National Telecommunication and Information Administration	\$1,440,000,000	States, territories, local governments	Closed
State Digital Equity Competitive Grant	National Telecommunication and Information Administration	\$1,250,000,000	Local education agencies, state governments, Tribal governments, non-profits, community anchor institutions	Closed
State Digital Equity State Planning Grant	National Telecommunication and Information Administration	\$4,001,525	States, territories, local governments	Closed
Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program	National Telecommunication and Information Administration	\$2,000,000,000	Tribal governments, Tribal colleges or universities, department of Hawaiian Homelands on behalf of the Native Hawaiians	Closed
Enabling Middle Mile Infrastructure Program	National Telecommunication and Information Administration	\$980,000,000	States, Tribal governments, political subdivisions of a state or economic development authority	Closed
Broadband Infrastructure Program	National Telecommunications and Information Administration	\$288,000,000	State and local governments, for-profit organizations	Closed
Public Housing Operating Fund	Office of Public and Indian Housing (Department of Housing and Urban Development)	\$7,806,000,000	Public housing authorities	Closed
Rural Connectivity Program (Re-Connect)	U.S. Department of Agriculture	\$1,150,000,000	State and local governments, corporations, Indian Tribe or Tribal organizations. Must meet other criteria for location in eligible areas.	Closed

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
<b>State Funding Opportunities</b>				
California Teleconnect Fund	California Public Utilities Commission	\$108,296,000 for FY 2022-23	Schools and community colleges, libraries, government hospitals/clinics, community-based organizations, 2-1-1 providers	Open and ongoing as of May 1, 2023
CASF Broadband Adoption Grant Account	California Public Utilities Commission	\$20,024,000 for FY 2022-23	Local governments, senior centers, schools, public libraries, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations with digital inclusion programs	July 1, 2023, and every January 1 and July 1 thereafter until funds are exhausted
CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account	California Public Utilities Commission	N/A	Local governments, Tribal governments, wireless carriers registered with CPUC, non-telephone corporations that serve as facilities-based broadband service providers, telephone corporations with a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity	June 1, 2023
CASF Line Extension Program	California Public Utilities Commission	\$5,000,000	Individual households or property owners, subject to income limitations	Open and ongoing as of May 1, 2023
CASF Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Grant Account	California Public Utilities Commission	\$10,710,000	Eligible consortium (representatives of local and regional government, public safety, elementary and secondary education, health care, libraries, postsecondary education, community-based organizations, tourism, parks and recreation, agricultural, business, workforce organizations, and air pollution control or air quality management districts)	Closed
Last-Mile Federal Funding Account	California Public Utilities Commission	\$2,000,000,000	Local government agencies, non-profits, telephone corporations, non-telephone facility-based broadband providers, electric utilities, cooperatives, Tribes	June 30, 2023
Loan Loss Reserve Fund	California Public Utilities Commission	\$750,000,000	Local government agencies, Tribal governments, non-profits	Open and ongoing until funds are exhausted as of May 1, 2023

Opportunity Name	Administrating Entity	Funds Available	Eligible Entities	Deadline
Local Agency Technical Assistance Grant	California Public Utilities Commission	\$50,000,000	Local agencies and governments authorized to provide broadband service, Tribal governments	Closed to non-Tribal entities as of March 24, 2023
CASF Broadband Public Housing Account	California Public Utilities Commission	\$15,000,000	Public housing agencies, non-profits	Open (Applications due July 1, 2023)
High-Speed Broadband in California Libraries	California State Library	\$3,795,000	California libraries	Closed
Community Development Block Grant (Riverside County allocation)	Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$7,000,000	Non-profits, Higher Education Institutions, Cooperating cities, other government agencies or special districts	Closed