Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority Agenda

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority

From: Scott Armstrong, Regional Broadband Coordinator

Subject: Informational Broadband Update

Meeting date: April 30, 2025

Prepared on: April 24, 2025

Attachments: none

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The following report provides information and updates associated with regional broadband activities. I would be happy to discuss these topics or any other broadband-related topics in more detail at your convenience.

General Broadband News:

The Inyo-Mono Broadband Consortium (IMBC) website (https://ConnectedEasternSierra.net/) includes broadband-related information for residents, businesses, and Internet Service providers in our region. The site also includes a variety of tools, such as a broadband needs estimator, speed tests, service issue reporting options, and several broadband-related maps.

Grants Information:

FFA Round 2 Grant, Limited Opportunity (Construction):

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) announced a Round 2 for the Last-Mile Federal Funding Account (FFA) grant on April 2. This grant opportunity is limited to projects in the 6 counties in which no Federal Funding Account grants were awarded. Those six counties include *Inyo*, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Monterey and Trinity Counties. The application window opened April 15 and

service providers have until *April 29* to submit applications. I'll have information on the project areas in the applications after the applications are made public in the CPUC Broadband Portal.

No other awards from the initial FFA application round will be evaluated or awarded.

- FFA Awards and Recommendations: https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/internet-and-phone/broadband-implementation-for-california/last-mile-federal-funding-account/federal-funding-account-awards

- CPU Broadband Portal: https://broadbandportal.cpuc.ca.gov/

- CPUC FFA Awards Dashboard: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/cpuc.broadbandsupport/viz/FederalFundingAccountAwardsDashboard/FFADashboardOriginal

BEAD (Construction and Digital Equity):

The CPUC published the State's timeline and final eligibility map for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) process. Service providers now have until *May 9, 2025* to submit applications. We are expecting some changes to the BEAD program in the next 4-6 weeks, but the specifics of those changes are still unknown. I'll have information on the project areas in the applications after the applications are made public.

- Bead Program Page: https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/beadprogram/

- Eligibility Map Page: https://register.challenge.cpuc.ca.gov/

USDA BTA 2023 (Technical Assistance only, no construction):

The USDA Broadband Technical Assistance network-design project for Hammil (Mono County) is in the contract preparation stage, and the contract for the network-design in Furnace Creek (Inyo County) is on the April 29, 2025 Board Agenda for the County of Inyo.

Update to the IMBC Broadband Needs Estimator – New Speed Test

The Broadband Needs Estimator has a new, easier to read speed test that doesn't jump to a different page when it's done. Click the Speed Test button to run the test. The Download and Upload results are in large text, and other details are available if you're interested. You can click the button again to re-run the speed test.

The Needs Estimator is linked from the IMBC Get Connected page
(https://connectedeasternsierra.net/get-connected/).

<u>BUDGET IMPACTS</u>:

None.

<u>LEGAL REVIEW</u>:

Not applicable.

<u>RECOMMENDATION</u>:

None, informational only.