



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: June 25, 2025
Prepared on: June 18, 2025

Attachments: none

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 Information:

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, *updated 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 after some issues with the CPUC Broadband Grant Portal, the application window closed on June 2. Stimulus Technologies, Golden State Connect

Authority and Frontier submitted a total of 13 applications. Public information on the projects hasn't yet been made public in the CPUC Broadband Portal.

No other applications submitted during 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):

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program is a Federal broadband construction grant program that requires earth-based, last-mile infrastructure to deliver 100Mbps/20Mbps service to all unserved locations.

The CPUC is administering the implementation of the State's BEAD construction grant program, and the State is required to have project applications for all unserved locations in its Final Proposal to the NTIA late this fall. The BEAD application window closed May 9, 2025, and applications were submitted for projects in both Mono and Inyo Counties. Based on conversations with our regional provider, applications were submitted for all unserved locations in Inyo County, and for the two northernmost Census Block Groups in Mono County.

The NTIA issued a policy update to the BEAD program on June 6, 2025, which requires states to revise their BEAD subgrantee selection process. This notice modifies the technologies allowed for funding as well as the scoring rubric for evaluating applications. The emphasis on fiber-optic last-mile infrastructure is removed, the requirements for affordable plans and pricing models are removed, weighted or preferential scoring for projects connecting to public networks is not allowed, approval for any non-deployment costs has been rescinded, and licensed fixed wireless, unlicensed fixed wireless, and low-earth-orbit satellite are to be evaluated as equivalent to fiber-optic service.

- Policy update notice: https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/funding-programs/policies-waivers/BEAD_Restructuring_Policy_Notice

Every state will be required to conduct at least one additional subgrantee selection round using the new technology-neutral rules and scoring rubric. Additionally, the NTIA rescinded all Final Proposal approvals in other states that occurred prior to the publication of the policy update notice and will require them to reevaluate the applications based on the updated guidance.

The CPUC stated that they are "currently evaluating the new requirements and will provide additional updates when available."

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 work for the network-design in Furnace Creek (Inyo County) is underway.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

None.

LEGAL REVIEW:

Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

None, informational only.