

Digital Equity Community of Practice Meeting
February 26, 2026
10:30 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.
Meeting Minutes and Transcript

The Digital Equity Community of Practice Meeting met virtually on Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. Engagement and Operations Analyst Amanda Lee welcomed attendees and instructed them to introduce themselves in the Zoom Chat box with their name, job title, and affiliated organization.

Housekeeping

Ms. Amanda Lee reviewed a few housekeeping items for attendees to participate in the conversation and have the best experience throughout the meeting. ASL interpreters were available throughout the meeting. Closed captioning was provided as an option for attendees throughout the meeting. Ms. Lee also mentioned that the meeting's recording, minutes, and transcript will be posted on the Broadband for All (BB4All) portal.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome & Agenda

Deputy Director Adams welcomed participants and introduced the agenda. He outlined the purpose of the Digital Equity Community of Practice, focusing on Goals 2 and 3 from the Broadband for All Action Plan, and reviewed meeting norms. The agenda included an update on the CA Lifeline Home Broadband Pilot Program from CPUC Regulatory Analyst Loi Nguyen, a discussion on the Importance of Large Device Ownership by Dr. Amy Gonzalez from UC Santa Barbara, a demo of the Digital Equity Resource Finder by BEP Principal Shawn Daugherty, an update on the BB4All SDEP Request for Innovative Ideas from Broadband Manager James Spencer, an update on upcoming grant opportunities from Adoption & Digital Inclusion Manager Aracely Hernandez, a presentation on the Verizon-Frontier Merger Public Benefit Agreement by CETF President & CEO Sunne McPeak, and a Look Ahead from Engagement & Operations Manager Anh Nguyen.

Agenda Item 2 – CA Lifeline Home Broadband Pilot Program

Ms. Loi Nguyen, Regulatory Public Utilities Analyst from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), shared key milestones of the California Lifeline Home Broadband Pilot Program, which includes Commission Agenda Meeting on the Draft Resolution T-17903 took place on February 26, 2026. She provided

an update of the current approved participating service providers. Ms. Loi Nguyen invited her CPUC colleague, Chari Worster, to join her in answering pre-registration questions and questions raised by participants.

Questions

Ms. Anh Nguyen moderated the Q&A session. Ms. Loi Nguyen and Ms. Chari Worster proceeded to address questions from the pre-registration form and audience. The following meeting attendees asked their questions in the chat:

- Mark Revis, County of Napa
- Lindsey Skolnik, California Alliance for Digital Equity (CADE)
- Cinthia Diaz, East Bay Broadband Consortium
- Justin Wagner, Volcano Communications Group
- Tieu Ly, Felton Institute
- Patrick Messac, #OaklandUndivided
- Paul Hickman, community living campaign
- Arturo Juarez, NextGen Policy

Agenda Item 3 – Importance of Large Device Ownership

Dr. Amy Gonzalez from UC Santa Barbara presented on the importance of the Large Device Ownership research report conducted since November 2021. Her findings highlighted the device gap among three key vulnerable groups, including students, people with disabilities and chronic illness, and individuals experiencing housing insecurity with limited connectivity and computer access. She also shared additional data collected and compared to provide the audience with a clearer understanding of the work needed to support these focused vulnerable groups. Dr. Gonzalez concluded her presentation by outlining five key recommendations to close the device gap: increase ownership, ensure quality, prepare for disruption, pair with training, and protect public space access.

Questions

Ms. Anh Nguyen introduced Aracely Hernandez, Digital Inclusion Manager, to moderate the Q&A session, starting with the three participants that came off mute & the rest addressed on chat:

- Joel Block, WORKERS INTELLIGENCE
- Paul Hickman, community living campaign
- Wally Siembab, South Bay Cities Council of Governments' (SBCCOG)
- Sabrina Tam, digitalLIFT
- Karlha Arias, yūda ayuda
- Rich Levine, County Government
- Vera Hempel, KissUX

- Katherine Romo, HACLA
- John A Gutierrez, Jalore Strategy
- Kami Griffiths, digitalLIFT
- Jason Borgen, Santa Cruz County Office of Education
- John Gavin, Verizon

Agenda Item 4 – Digital Equity Resource Finder

Ms. Shawn Daugherty, Principal at BEP, shared the importance of the Digital Equity Resource Finder by outlining the goal, process, current responses, engagement efforts, and the intended outcome of this initiative for partners in the ecosystem. She also provided a live site demonstration, with assistance from Ms. Nguyen, highlighting the functionality of the Resource Finder and how it will support the ecosystem and community in efforts to close the digital divide. Ms. Daugherty concluded her presentation with a call to action, encouraging audience members to participate in user testing and to confirm or update information within the Resource Finder.

Questions

Ms. Anh Nguyen moderated the Questions session, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and Chat box. Ms. Daugherty and Mr. Adams proceeded to address questions.

There were three questions that came in through the Chat box from the following participants:

- Jason Borgen, Santa Cruz County Office of Education
- Katherine Romo, HACLA
- John Gavin, Verizon

Agenda Item 5 – Request for Innovative Ideas Update

Mr. James Spencer, Broadband Administrative Manager, reminded attendees of the Request for Innovative Ideas (RFI²), which was launched earlier in January and included seven different challenges. Mr. Spencer also shared key dates and provided a timeline overview for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the RFI². He highlighted that contract negotiations for Phase 2 began on February 17 and are expected to conclude on March 16 of this year.

Agenda Item 6 – Upcoming Grant Opportunities

Ms. Aracely Hernandez reminded the audience about several upcoming deadlines for Digital Equity Grants, including the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) Tribal Technical Assistance Account, CASF Broadband Adoption

Account, and CASF Broadband Public Housing Account. She reminded attendees that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TCBP) will release its Notice of Funding Opportunity in Spring 2026 and make an estimated \$500 million in infrastructure funding available. Attendees were provided with a QR code and shared links to the TCBP FAQs in the chat box.

Ms. Anh Nguyen moderated the Questions session, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and Chat box. Ms. Daugherty and Mr. Adams proceeded to address questions.

There were two questions that came in through the Chat box from the following participants:

- Patrick Messac, #OaklandUndivided
- Wally Siembab, South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG)

Agenda Item 7 – CETF Public Benefits Agreement: Verizon – Frontier Merger

Ms. Sunne McPeak, President and CEO of California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), began her presentation with an overview of the framework for the Public Benefits MOUs. She then discussed how this framework aligns with the BB4ALL and SDEP goals under three key priorities: ensuring all Californians have access to high-speed, high-performing broadband; providing affordable broadband and devices; and offering training and support to advance digital inclusion. She concluded her presentation with a call to action, encouraging attendees to participate in two tracks of listening sessions: one focused on Digital Inclusion held on Thursdays from 2–4 PM, and the other focused on small businesses held on Fridays from 12–2 PM.

Ms. Anh Nguyen moderated the Questions session, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and Chat box. Ms. Daugherty and Mr. Adams proceeded to address questions.

There were 2 participants who came off mute and 5 participants asked questions through the Chat box:

- Wally Siembab, South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG)
- Vera Hempel, KissUX
- Rich Levine, County Government
- Catherin Sandoval, Santa Clara University
- Nancy Schram, Ventura County Library
- Katherine Zigmont, California Emerging Technology Fund
- Barry Boyd, The Sacramento Environmental Justice Coalition Organization

Agenda Item 8 – Looking Ahead

Ms. Anh Nguyen, Broadband Engagement and Operations Manager, began her presentation by providing a summary of community feedback regarding topics, speakers, general improvements, and comments collected from pre-registration questions for future Digital Equity Community of Practice meetings. She then shared data from the pre-registration question, “What tool or resource would be most helpful to address your organizations, communities, or residents’ needs?” Ms. Nguyen also highlighted additional community feedback, including suggested improvements and comments. She then announced the next Community of Practice meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2026, noting that the meeting will remain within the same timeframe but may be subject to change due to holidays or other urgent needs. She concluded the meeting by demonstrating how to subscribe to Broadband for All email updates, how to access the Broadband for All portal, and by sharing the team’s contact information. Attendees were provided with a link to the Broadband for All email addresses in the Zoom chat box.

Ms. Nguyen thanked attendees and presenters for their participation and engagement. The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

(The recording and presentation slides from the meeting will be posted on Broadband for All portal.)

Transcript

Good morning. Please use the chat box to share your name, title, and affiliated organization, as more folks are coming in. Good morning, and welcome to the February 26th Community of Practice Meeting, where we aim to foster alignment, coordination, and collaboration within the statewide digital equity ecosystem. On behalf of the State of California and the Department of Technology, we thank you for being here. Before we begin, a few housekeeping items. Next slide, please. Presenters, please cue Ricki to advance your slides. Select side-by-side speaker mode for the best viewing experience when slides are shared and for visibility of the ASL interpreters. We have seen requests for closed captioning in our pre-registration questions, so I want to take some time to remind folks that closed captioning is available by selecting CC closed caption on your toolbar and select show subtitle. If you cannot find it, please click the icon with three dots for more options. Please note there is time allocated for questions. Use the Q&A box to type your questions related to that portion of the agenda while the speaker is presenting. Use the raise hand icon on Zoom or star 9 if you're calling in by phone. Our team will request that you

come off of mute and video. Feel free to turn on your mic and camera at that time. Chat will be off while the presenters are speaking so that no questions are lost in the chat. Chat will be available when prompted. This meeting is being recorded. We will be posting the recording, slides, and transcripts of this meeting to the Broadband for All portal. Use the QR code listed on your screen or click on the link in the chat to access the post-meeting materials from past events. Because of this, AI note-taking bots are not permitted and will be removed from the meeting. Next, I would like to introduce Deputy Director Scott Adams to provide some welcome remarks and review our agenda.

Well, thank you, Amanda, and hello, everyone. Welcome to this month's Digital Equity Community of Practice. Always, it goes without saying we're incredibly thankful for your commitment and your partnership in closing the state of California's digital divide. Next slide, please. Now, as a reminder, you know, Broadband for All has three main goals. The first of which is that all residents have high-performance broadband available at home, schools, libraries, and businesses. So, there's a considerable amount of funding and effort being put into deploying infrastructure, both middle and last mile, throughout the state. This Community of Practice does not focus on those. There are other venues to focus on those, including the Middle-Mile Advisory Committee and the California Broadband Council. What we're focusing on here are Goals 2 and 3, that all Californians have access to affordable broadband and necessary devices, and that all Californians can access training and support to enable digital inclusion. Next slide, please. So, just wanted to remind folks of some meeting norms. We can really only dive into questions and comments on agenda items, and those will be addressed. We are going to monitor the chat, and it's not a warning. It's just a reminder that usually folks are really active there, and it's great, but disrupted behaviors will not be tolerated, and you know, individuals will be removed from the meeting if there's a disruption. Next slide, please. And so we've got a great agenda for you. We want to thank you all for, you know, continuing to provide feedback on the pre-registration questions on both topics and content that you want to be discussed, speakers that you want to see. We think that we've got a great agenda here that's been shaped by your feedback. First up is going to be an update on the LifeLine Program or the Home Broadband LifeLine Pilot Program at the PUC. We've got an excellent guest speaker today, Professor Amy Gonzales from UC Santa Barbara, to talk about her study on the Importance of Large Device Ownership. We're going to do a demonstration of the Digital Equity Resource Finder that is a result of a lot of your folks' effort to fill out the Digital Equity Resource Survey. Our team is going to provide a quick update on the current Request for Innovative Ideas that's out

there, and some Upcoming Grant Opportunities. And then, we have another special guest speaker, Sunne McPeak, from the California Emerging Technology Fund, who's going to talk about the Public Benefit Agreements that came out of the Verizon-Frontier Merger. And so, we'll conclude with Anh Nguyen, Looking Ahead, and that's it for me. I just want to turn it over and hope that you enjoy the speakers and the content, and we really look forward to engaging with you all in a bi-directional conversation in this Community of Practice.

Thank you so much, Scott. Next, I would like to bring up Loi Nguyen from CPUC to give us an update on the California LifeLine Home Broadband Pilot Program. Loi?

Thank you, Anh, for, thank you. Yes, I'm here. Can you guys hear me? Sorry.

We can.

Thank you for having the CPUC back to provide updates on the California LifeLine Home Broadband Pilot and to address registrant questions. Next slide, please. Okay, so today is February 26th, the Commission's agenda meeting. The Draft Resolution T-17903 is on today's agenda for a vote, which will start at 11 o'clock today. For advice letters, we've received a total of 16 as of today. We have approved a total of 15, so Ponderosa and Volcano was just approved last week, and we have one pending review of Calnet. Next slide, please. Okay, so the questions that we received from the registrants, we're going to answer them, and if we have more time, we'll take some from the audience. So the first question is, are there any additional financial assistance options available for installation fees, routers, etc.? So, the Home Broadband Pilot provides a \$39 activation or connection reimbursement per year, with a maximum of 2 reimbursements per household under General Order 153, Section 4.2.5. No additional financial assistance available for installation fees, routers, or related costs. So for questions 2 and 3 cover related topics so I will address them together. General and telecommunications-specific rules for filing advice letters are outlined in General Order 96B. Staff has 30 days to review and act on the advice letter, which includes the 20-day protest period. Suspension of the advice letter may occur for any of the following reasons: there's a timely protest filed, a resolution is required, the advice letter is not in compliance with the Commission statute's decision or resolutions, etc. Additional information is required by the Commission staff or Commission, and the analysts require additional time to review the advice letter. Now, the first suspension may last up to 120 days, and a second suspension may extend up to 180 days. The analyst

that is assigned to that advice letter will notify the affected carrier and, if applicable, the protester by email. The next question is, is this the correct page to find participating broadband providers and eligible plans? I only see cell phone service and home phone service at the CaliforniaLifeline.com website. The provided link directs users to the correct page to find participating broadband providers. Users should enter their zip codes and select a desired service type from the drop-down menu, such as cell phone service, home phone service, or broadband service. Now, providers will appear only after they have completed onboarding with the TPA, excuse me, including all required testing. Approved providers may not be listed until this process is finished, so we encourage users to check back regularly, as the list of broadband providers will be updated frequently in the coming weeks and months. And the last question is, sounds like the database is the same as LifeLine for phone. If I'm understanding, are there different applications for phone and internet, or is there just a single customer application for both? The LifeLine application is the same for all service types. Individuals do not apply directly to the program. Instead, they start their application process with their service, selected service provider. I think that's all the questions that we received from the submission from registrants. Anh, I'm not sure if we have time to take questions from the audience

Thanks, Loi. I think we have a couple of minutes, but I'm also not seeing any questions in the chat so far, and let's see, maybe. Oh, there's one in the Q&A. Where can we get a list of approved providers?

Well, we approved, so the list of approved providers through the advice letter was just listed on this slide. So, because they're still through testing, the approved providers to start enrolling participants are not available right now, because they're still going through the testing process.

Yeah, and I'm wondering, Ricki, can you bring back up the slide that shows the approved advice letters?

So the total list of approved service providers are these 15 that we received advice letters, that we have approved them, but they still need to go through the onboarding process and testing to ensure that their system is able to align with the TPA system.

And the TPA is the third-party administrator, right?

Correct. Thank you.

Got it. And so, I think that's an important distinction for some folks, because the advice letter's submitted, then it's approved, but there's a little bit of a, I don't want to say lag time, but follow-on time to actually do all the administrative and back-end stuff so that the participating providers can interface with your third-party administrator and show up on the website. Is that correct?

That's correct.

Okay.

Thanks, Loi. We're seeing two more questions in the chat, so I'll read them to you real quick. At what point will approved providers be searchable on the website?

So, I think Scott just provided information on that, so I think we just addressed that.

Yeah, Lindsey, I hope we addressed your question that Loi explained the process. Once the advice letter is submitted, it goes through review, it's approved, and once it's approved, there's some back-end. Great, okay. Glad we got to answer that question.

Thank you. And then this one is on promotional plans. Loi, I know you've shared that before, but either if there's more to share, can you share a bit more about detail regarding CPUC's promotional plans for this program? Are there any materials, such as flyers, folks can share with their communities about what's on offer and how to sign up?

Right, so I think we addressed this in a prior presentation that this is a voluntary program, so providers have the option to participate in the pilot program. And if they don't participate, or if there is a provider that's not participating in your area, then this program wouldn't be available. So, we don't have information for everybody. So, Chari, did you want to add on to this?

Yeah, so, hi everyone. Chari Worster here. I am one of the supervisors for the LifeLine Program. Wanted to address that question on promotional materials, and let's see so, promotional plans. We do not have promotional plans. The plans are being offered by the carriers themselves, so each carrier has their own set of plans. They market their plans. We don't market it for them. And because

their plans vary by carrier, we actually don't even, when you do the search in the California LifeLine website, you put in your zip code, and it gives you a list of the providers. After the providers are onboarded, it gives you a list of the providers and the plans that they offer, which can vary from one provider to another. Did I answer your question, Lindsey?

I think she'll have to reply to you in the chat, since we would have to unmute her. I know we are right on time, but I have one more clarifying question. Oh, Lindsey said I cannot come off mute, but yes, thank you, to your question, Chari. Wanted to address Cinthia's question real quick. Ms. Sunne McPeak will be presenting later on the Verizon Frontier Merger and can answer your question regarding participation in LifeLine. And Justin asked, just to confirm, is Volcano Telephone approved?

Yes.

Okay. Thought that was a very quick one, so I wanted to raise that. Well, thank you so much, Loi and Chari. Any questions that we didn't get to, as always, we'll send it to you, and hopefully we'll see you again next time. Thanks so much.

Thank you.

Yeah, thank you, good to see you. At this time, I would like to bring up Dr. Amy Gonzales, Associate Professor from UC Santa Barbara. And, Amy, over to you. Go ahead and unmute.

Okay, there we go. Thank you so much for having me. I'm pleased to be here. Give me one second to set up my slides, and then I can share a little bit about some research I've been doing over the years, and a particular report that folks in this room may find helpful. So, a lot of my work over the last few decades has looked at digital equity generally, but often with a focus on access to devices and the importance of having stable access to devices. And so, in this report, we use the term large-screen device ownership just to distinguish between, you know, smartphones and iPads, which of course are also computers, but what I'm really interested in is this the benefit of having stable access to a large-screen computer, a laptop, a desktop and some of what I'm going to talk about today stems from this report that was written a few years ago with Digitunity. It was published in 2021. I've left their website here with a link to a variety of other reports for those of you who may not have come across this resource. They do a lot of really great work in this space. And, sorry, let me just move that screen

share. And, at the time of the writing, one of the goals was to really try to synthesize the research to date that described the benefits of large-screen access. And in doing so, it became clear that there were, kind of, some groups that, in particular, we've demonstrated have, kind of what I'm calling are device-sensitive, right? Historic, kind of clear need. And so, that includes, sorry, students, so we know pretty well that from years of work that students with large screen devices, computers, perform better in school. They also have the capacity to develop to, excuse me, to develop the digital skills they need, to, to thrive in academic settings. But also people with disabilities and chronic illness, especially if there's any limitation to mobility, having access to a computer can be the difference between communicating with doctors or eHealth resources. Ensuring that this group has, kind of, optimal health outcomes, and also, social support that often comes from being online. And then finally, we also see that housing insecure individuals, because the computers often become the lifeline to community resources, job searches, healthcare providers. Of course, there are complications in accessing electricity, but both smartphones and computers can be really essential. Of course, when I wrote this report, I was writing it during COVID, and even as I was writing it, everything changed, right? Now it's much harder to ignore that computers are essential for all of us, especially given the range of sectors that have moved services online. So, I'm going to briefly share a bit more from two additional studies that also highlight this fact. The first comes from work that I've published recently with a colleague, and what we did was analyze two years of census data to try to understand and isolate the role of internet access, computer access, and smartphone access, as each of these was associated with beneficial uses of the internet. And in fact, what we find is that across those three, it was computers that were consistently the strongest predictor of using the internet in beneficial ways, right? Which, of course, ideally, individuals have access to all three of those. But, you know, having internet without a computer really limits what you can do, whereas, I mean, our inference is having a computer, sometimes without the internet, still means you can, if needed, go find internet access. So the computer becomes a really essential tool, and not only having that computer, but making sure it's a quality and reliable computer. Those individuals who had better working computers were even more likely to be engaging the internet in beneficial ways. So, I'm actually going to show a little bit of data, and I'll talk you through it, that illustrates this, because we tested this in a few different ways. So what you see here, this is an odds ratio, so anything above that dotted line shows that there is an increased positive association with these different outcome variables, including job searches, government service utilization online, and then these three different healthcare outcomes. And, so what we find is that across the two

different census years, there's four bars in each of these outcomes, because what we did was look at, in each of those years, what happens when a home has internet access, and what happens when a home doesn't have internet access. Does having a computer make a difference? Because in part, we thought, maybe you have to have the computer to benefit, excuse me, maybe you have to have the internet to benefit from that computer. But what you can see is that, consistently, even in homes that don't have internet access, so that is the darker green bars and the darker yellow bars, those homes are still benefiting. They're still more likely to look for jobs online or, you know, use their computer to communicate with doctors even if they don't have in-home internet access. So again, suggests that they're taking those devices somewhere, maybe it means they're using hotspots, we don't exactly know. But, again, the computer becomes really essential, and you can contrast that with a slightly different pattern of findings here on the right, what you can see is again, the darker colored bars are the households that have home internet access there in 2021, and the red bars are in 2023. And there you can see that in most of those cases, having a smartphone was also associated with increased job searching, accessing eHealth but, in the lighter blue and red bars, in some of those cases, you can see that having a smartphone and not having the internet at home actually decreased the chances that individuals would be doing things like applying for government services or looking up health information. And these are census data. It's hard to get at the why behind that, but this finding is consistent with other research that finds that smartphones sometimes are a distraction, right, from a lot of the work we need to do online. So the second article that I wanted to share with you really briefly, kind of illustrates this even further. This idea that smartphones just aren't enough that they don't allow us the same skill development and we also know that because being low-income, a person of color, having less education are all associated with being mobile only, only using the internet as your primary access, excuse me, only using your smartphone, it reflects this persistent digital inequality. And so, in this second piece, I think the importance of computers for developing the breadth of digital skills that we need is really highlighted. What researchers did was over a 4-year period, they tracked change in digital skills in households where people were either hybrid, so they had both a smartphone and a computer, or they were mobile only. They only had their smartphone as the central device for getting online. And what they find is so I'll talk you through this again. In this case, these boxes, each box represents two different ways that the researchers measured digital skills, and the line across the middle of those boxes in both cases just represents the average level of digital skills that people had. And so, what you're interested in is change between the way that people are getting online, and

whether or not that increased or decreased their digital skills. And what you can see is, for both measurements, both types of digital skills, all the way on the left, households that had a computer and a phone at the beginning of that study, and then did so at the end of the study, continued to increase in their skills. Similarly, if you look at the point all the way on the right of those graphs, households that went from being mobile only to getting a computer also increased their skills. However, the two graphs, the two points in the middle demonstrate that households that only had mobile phones over the course of that four years, or, I think most striking, households that went from using a computer to then only having a mobile phone, right? Somewhere along the way, they lost their computer access. They also lost digital skills. So, these skills that we get from having a computer, this ability to navigate our world today, are also precious, and they can go away, right? The authors refer to this as the deskilling of computer loss. And so it really speaks to the importance of having consistent access to large-screen devices if we're going to maintain a sufficiently digitally skilled society. So just a few recommendations, then, based on this work and other research that I've done. Of course, making sure that individuals in a household can all access a device as needed. That means if you are a very large household, you aren't having to share one device across many different people. Devices, computers are needed for work and school today, and ensuring that they're of high quality, right? That they allow us to do things like Zoom when we need to or create content on, you know, a lot of high data processing platforms these days. But at the same time, we need to, as kind of nonprofits, organizations, state offices, recognize that we can't move everything online without losing some of our citizens, so I believe strongly that we have to maintain redundancies, make sure that people can access services in person or over the phone, not exclusively online. And, of course, making sure that in accessing computers, or providing access to computers, we're not, we're pairing that with digital skills training, because we know very well that we need, that the device themselves, or the internet itself, is not enough without support. Finally, making sure that libraries and other public terminals are available when people simply cannot afford these very expensive, large devices that break and cannot always be replaced. So I'll stop there. Thank you very much to everyone for your time, and I'll take any questions that anyone has.

Thank you so much. I would like to invite our manager, Aracely Hernandez, to facilitate the Q&A.

Hi, good morning, everyone. Thank you so much, Dr. Gonzales, for your presentation, especially ending with actionable recommendations to close the

gap. As you know, as we heard, large screen device ownership, such as laptops and desktops, is a very critical component of digital inclusion, and also, it's outlined in our Digital Equity Plan. So, as you stated, this really matters as it relates to improved economic and educational outcomes. But also acknowledging that we want to meet people where they are, especially, you know, in the continuum to connectivity approach. So, yeah, as your research shows, just, you know, these digital choosing strategies must prioritize device access alongside internet connectivity, and of course, digital skills training. So I do want to open up the floor, and the chat, I believe, is now open so that our team will be helping me sort through some of the questions that are going to be coming in from the audience. If anyone would like to share your thoughts on the topic, or ask any questions, you know, feel free to raise your hand, use the Zoom toolbar located on the bottom, and we will prompt you to unmute yourself and turn on your camera, if possible. I do see that there is some questions coming in? Just give me a second here to sort through. And again, folks, feel free to raise your hand, and we can call on you to unmute yourself. I do see there's a question that came in. The question is, are there any broadband access program components that are directed to stroke survivors, a disadvantaged community with severe physical and mental disabilities? This community suffers from instant, unanticipated impairments of vital functions and need broadband access and large video screen access.

Depending on how that, kind of what the, Joel's getting at, someone else in the room might be better equipped to answer, because I have looked at research that talks about the importance of having access for, kind of, chronically ill or at-risk individuals for health, and I can certainly speak to that, but I don't know about I'm not the person to talk to speak to what's available regionally for that community, so I don't know if anyone else can speak to that, or wants to chime in?

Yeah, you know, I'm gonna jump in here. I think it's a really good question. I think it speaks to the complexity of the, you know, the digital divide and device access, and you know, the technological needs of folks. I think that this is a great topic that we were thinking about discussing at a future Community of Practice, both what current programs, whether it's through the Public Utilities California Connected Program, or, you know, programs through the Department of Rehabilitation so, definitely if there are folks that want to comment on this, do, and, our team will take that back and, you know, see what we can find in terms of resources and speakers on this topic.

Can I speak?

Yes, is that Joel?

Yeah, I'm a stroke survivor from 2020, during COVID, and what happened, I'm a lawyer as well, and I've been around lots of stroke survivors in groups in the Long Beach area, in Orange County. So I can tell you that I had to get two large screens I've set up now, after my stroke, in order to function with communications using my existing broadband. So, I'm trying to affirm Amy's research that when you have a stroke, you are more likely, especially people with strokes in physical, with both physical and mental problems, I have some limited cognitive problems, my speech is generally okay, but you definitely, so much of what we do, you cannot do in person anymore after a stroke. If you wanna challenge a parking ticket or a moving violation, if you want to apply for a benefit. There's so many things you depend on that you cannot go in person, because you can't get access to that. You don't have driving, you can't drive anymore, often after a stroke. So, this is a community that's the silent community. It's very, the major post-stroke symptom is depression, so you tend to hide at home, and you just don't get out and this is really critical for that community. And if anybody wants to take it down on any information, I can put them in contact with the Stroke Support Association, which is one of the major stroke support associations in the state of California. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Joel, yeah, for sharing that, and yeah, we hear you and appreciate you sharing any additional resources. I do see there's a couple more questions.

Yeah, I was gonna say, if you want, Aracely, I can just kind of rapid fire through those, because I'm guessing that you probably have limited time, but because some of these I can't answer as well as I'd like. For example, that second question about iPads in school. There is research on that, and it is very mixed, because having access to a device can often be really powerful, but obviously, there are distractions. So this is kind of a the school setting and kind of the there's a happy medium, right? We want access, but sometimes we don't want too much access. So that's a slightly different beast, and I'm happy to talk more about that. I wish I knew more about that. I'm experiencing this with my own child, the kind of tension of wanting to have access for skills and development, but not wanting to over-rely. Is there information available by county and census track? There are in some, in some datasets. The one that I was dealing with was not, was not looking at census and county level data, but, you know,

depending on the outcomes you're interested, that can exist. The question related to determining deskilling. It's a good question. Participants do self-assess. That's why the researchers use two different measures of digital skills, and they're pretty different, and both of them have been validated to be linked to actual performance. And so, even though it was actual self-report, the questions that people self-report on, they're things like, do you know what a cookies is, or how to use it? Are you familiar with a PDF? So it's actually a kind of interesting set of skills assessment. But the, and the other one's actually even more complex, but they are associated with behavioral outcomes, so that's why they use them. But that's a very good question. Is there a...

I could just, looks like there's another question there. Is there a difference between personal ownership and shared computers, like through a library?

Yeah, that's...I was gonna hit that one next, and I don't... That's a really good question, and I have not looked... I mean there's at least one study that comes to mind about how personal ownership is more important for students, right? When those students, students don't have a device at home and they have to go to a library, that's a lot of time and energy, so I think in general, I, you know, for especially for skill building, having access at home and for education is pretty important, but I don't know...Beyond that one study, if there's a lot of work that has looked at that particular tension. I don't know if you want me to try and keep running through the rest of those, Aracely, I'm happy to.

Yeah, no, no.

And Dr. Gonzales, I think one thing, too, we also allow people, if they'd like to, to voice their questions, and just want to make sure that we're, like, kind of, answering the person who is asking the question, not just the question itself, to acknowledge that, that's being responded to. Back to yours.

Yeah, sure, yeah, thank you. I do see there's another question, specifically around the differences between desktop and laptops, such as in relation to screen size and keyboard size. Looks like Wally asked that question.

That's a really great, great question, and I actually don't know about that research. I'm guessing that there might be, particularly with respect to certain communities, such as, like some, someone with any sort of disability that might affect, you know, vision or other kind of critical, kind of processing, skills. But, but I

don't know that work, and, so I can't speak to it, but I'm guessing that it's out there within, kind of, the health practitioner community.

Got it. Yeah, and I do see that, Catherin asked I think it's a question more specifically on digital literacy training, which we will continue to include more topics in future Communities or Practice, I think, yeah, this topic today is more specific to devices and, you know, specifically on large screen devices. So, Catherin, thank you so much for your question. Please let us know if you have anything more specific as it relates to today's topic. And again, folks, feel free to raise your hand. We can unmute you so that you could go ahead and ask your questions.

Here's an interesting question from John Gutierrez. Is there any data on how mobile-only customers use their device to tether to a large screen device?

Yeah, that's, I was gonna hit that one, because that's a really good one, and it actually came up in that, that paper that we just published, because the census... The short answer is there will be, because the census has just started to collect data on use of hotspots to the degree that that's what you're getting at, right? The idea that I'm using my smartphone to then give me, maybe if I don't have broadband, is that serving to give my laptop access to the internet at home? I think this is something that researchers and practitioners and agencies are really going to need to dig into more, because I think we need a better understanding of use of smartphones as hotspots, but I think as of right now, that's still a bit of an open question.

One interesting thing I wanted to bring up here is that during the, you know, the last four years, a lot of our listening sessions and, in developing this, the State Digital Equity Plan, we, you know, heard, you know, from organizations but also individuals about the, like the, one of the reasons for, large screen devices and devices with keyboards is that, you know, folks are better enabled to optimize applications and programs on, you know, on computers than they are on their mobile phones, and so when you're looking at specific outcomes like education or work development, I mean, I remember, many of these stories, but one that really drove home for me, was we were at a planning session up in Eureka, at a community center with about, you know, 150 students there, and the, the student career development coordinator was talking about how the difference between outcomes with their students, where some students were developing their resumes on computers, and some on their mobile phones, and when they printed them out, the ones that were developed on a mobile phone were, sort

of misaligned, and how just that could, disadvantage a person. So, really appreciate, this, this work, and I know it's super important to folks here. Looks like we've got some more hands up, Aracely.

Yeah, why don't we have Paul unmute himself, and go ahead and ask your question. Paul, looks like you're muted again.

We work with seniors with disability, and we have a tech lab, a tech program, that we assist seniors and people with disability with any kind of tech support they need. We help them fix, we'll fix their phones. Sometimes they have a lot of seniors and people with disability have difficult sometimes, because your phone might push the wrong button or whatever, and it's just not working. And so we do, we'll fix it for free, and plus we have classes. It's right near San Francisco. And plus, we have a program where we escort some seniors to the lab, because a lot of folks don't like getting out and going to a new place. But, it's right, you know, on Mission Street, 1663 Mission Street. And, at one time, we would give it out free iPad for the senior disability, and we would help them set it up and everything. And that was a good program, but we just ran out of iPads. I mean, just, couldn't get no more.

Thank you, yeah, thank you so much. Sharing your resources, yeah, we're hearing, we're seeing some responses, from folks in the ecosystem sharing some resources that they have available, whether it's digital literacy trainings or specific needs to seniors with disabilities or, folks, yeah, yeah, may need some additional support. So yeah, thank you so much for sharing. I do see one additional hand that was raised. Do we still have time for one more question?

Yep.

Alright, now it looks like we have Wally that had raised his hand.

Yeah, thanks for doing this research. I've been curious about this for years and years, and I'm so happy that you made this a focus of stuff. And I know myself, I wouldn't, in terms of the key, I asked the keyboard and the monitor, because I'm not a very good typist. And so, having a big keyboard is really important to me, and I even bought one for my smartphone. And it's, in other words, you can use the smartphone as part of, you know, just plug it into your monitor and so forth, and you get pretty good access about it. But I would suggest that you also take a look at the applications. The applications on a smartphone, in terms of photos and video, are just really exotic, and if you're talking about building skill sets.

Gosh, I, I shoot with a little collection of people, and my goodness, what you can do on that, on that smartphone in terms of editing the photo and making it go in slow-mo if you're doing video and stuff. So, I suggest that there's maybe those sorts of variants in applications in terms of developing skill sets. And finally, I would say I'm with a Council of Governments, a Joint Powers Authority, and we're looking at internet access in three different levels, all the way up to sort of a digital factory as a point of community focus, and a lot, we work in the land use transportation world, and so you talk a lot about trans-oriented development. We're trying to talk about digital-oriented development, and making it the center of a neighborhood center. So that's sort of the direction we're going. But anyway, any comments would be great, but I love your research and can't wait to read more of it.

Thanks. Yeah, that's really great, and I think you're making a great point about the application. Certainly when it comes to photos, I'm sure phones have large screen devices beat hands down, because, right, in so many ways, that's what these things have become, is really fantastic and amazing video and photography devices, but I'm sure there are others where, you know, we as researchers tend to look in averages, but of course things are going to vary by application and outcome, of interest as well, and I think that's great. Your program also sounds great. Having, I think, I'm sure folks in this room are more aware than others, just how creating spaces for digital services, because they are the lifeline to everything else we do today, for better or for worse, that needs to be often the hub to get life done, so...

Thanks.

Well, thank you all for taking the time to chime in and ask some questions and some comments, and of course, thank you so much, Dr. Gonzales, for joining us for your presentation today. This was really, really great information, and we look forward to perhaps bringing you back in the future to continue this discussion. So, I'll go ahead and pass it back over to Anh, and we'll go ahead and move along. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Gonzales and Aracely and Scott, for coming on to moderate the questions. Great questions from the group. Now I would like to bring Shawn Daugherty to give a quick update on the Digital Equity Resource Finder. Let me find Shawn real quick to spotlight her. There we go, and we'll follow up with a demo.

Great! Hi everybody, nice to see you all again. I'm going to provide an update on where we stand with the Digital Equity Resource Finder, and then Anh and I are gonna walk through what we've developed for you all. So, Ricki, you can go to the next slide, please. Just a quick reminder for everybody that the goal of this work was really to enhance the existing Digital Equity Resource Finder. The original one was developed with data received during the digital equity mapping process when we developed the State Digital Equity Plan. So, that was a couple of years ago now, and we really wanted to make sure that the Resource Finder had the most up-to-date information on services being provided to the community. So, that was really the goal, is to really enhance the current finder. We launched this process back in November with a survey that was distributed, and we got outstanding response from the community. Over 180 organizations provided responses, which actually accounts for more than 800 locations across the state that provide services, so over services are being provided in over 800 locations, which is just fascinating and so exciting. We did an extensive amount of stakeholder engagement during this process. Obviously, we've talked on these monthly stakeholder briefing calls. We've done some user testing. We've worked with a number of entities on bulk uploading their data if they had a significant number of sites so we've, you know, we've really engaged with the community through this process, and we're really excited about the result, you know, this updated Resource Finder, which I think we're ready to kind of walk the community through right now, Anh so, if we want to go on to the next slide. As Anh kind of brings the demo, the test link up, it's going to be exciting. We're going to see both a tabular view and a map view, and really walk through some of the walk through the site that we have for you.

That looks good, Shawn. Let me see if you see it.

I see it, thank you, and I hope everybody can be seeing it as well. So, this is the landing page for our new Resource Finder. As you can see at the top, there's just a brief summary, and this is where, at the top, you can add a resource or update your resource. I'll get into both of those just a little bit later on, but the functionality to both increase the capability and make sure that your resource that is included within the Finder is most up-to-date. If going down just a little bit, you have the ability to search whether you are a resident or an organization. And we're going to walk through this from the resident lens first, and then kind of come back to the organizational lens. Next over, you'll see the opportunity to search by county. So, we can go down to maybe Alameda County. Anh, I don't know which one we want to pick, it's right there. We are then able to sort by service type. Are you looking for free or low-cost devices? Are you looking for

digital skills training? Are you looking for technical support? You can select as many or as few as you want. Thanks, Anh. You're doing a good job of walking it through there. And then service type. Do you, are you looking for something in person, right? Digital skills training in person, an in-person community, computer lab, are you looking for a service that's offered virtually? Or you can search by both, both in-person and virtual. And then there's also the open search functionality. You can, you know, put in broadband, you can put in computer. Laptop. It has a broad search range. And then, as you can see, this is the mapping functionality, which is the default view, and it pops up to Alameda County. Each of those orange dots is a location or a service location, an entity that is providing services within that county region. And then over to the right-hand side, I guess, would be the card. It has the name of the entity. It has an address, and if you happen to be on your mobile device, you can click on there and get directions to see how far away it is, and then there is the link to the URL. Anh, if you want to click on learn more, you'll see how it accorded and expands, and it says, at this location, all of these services are offered. These are the languages the services are offered. Are they offered free of charge, or is there a charge associated with it? And then contact information. That might be a phone number, that might be an email address, or both. And then, you can click show less, that's an option as well. And then all of these, it defaults to sort by A to Z, but you can also sort by proximity. So if you have, you know, the settings to allow where you are located, on your, on your device, it'll be able to say which service location is actually closest to where I currently am. And then, Anh, if you want to click on the table view. If you don't necessarily want to see a map and see what's close to you, you can just look at all of the resources that are available in that particular county. Again, sorted by service type of what you're looking for. It's the same kind of card view as you would on the side of the mapping functionality. On the page, I believe we can automatically display, I believe it's 30 results. Anh, if you're able to go to the bottom. Oh, yep. And we have the ability to translate into over 100 languages, so you can do the translation. So right down there, you can see how many results per page. You can expand it to all of the results, you know, page 1, page 2, so you're able to have access to all of those resources that are within the county. And so if we want to scroll back up to the top, Anh, great, and then let's change over to being an organization. So, again, you can search by either a resident or an organization. The locations will remain the same, but the types of support are different, whether you're looking at another organization to possibly partner, to do grant writing support with. These were, again, the service types that were in the survey that was circulated around. And then, Anh, I don't know if you want to click on one of those service types or not. Great. And then, again, that'll bring

down a redu... you know, that'll sort through the total 800 locations and bring you down to what is provided for that service in that particular county, or you can look statewide as well for any of these resources, both in a tabular view or in a ma- mapping functionality. Great, and as you can see, that is the statewide view of all counties that provide that particular service of information sharing to other organizations. And then, so you can see it's reactive, it zooms in, it shows the proximity to you, it's in as expansive or as narrow a search functionality as your needs allow. And then, Anh, if we want to go back up to the top, right, if you are on this call and your organization has not been submitted, you can click add a resource right up there, and that'll take you to the form to complete the resource. And thank you for going back automatically, and if you just need to update your resource, maybe something's changed. You can just click on that button all the time. And then, is that going to pop over to update a resource? Yes. Great. And then, once you click on the three authorizations, it'll give you a list of options of things that possibly have changed. Is there a new contact person? Do you have a new website? Do you offer additional services? Do you offer a new location service? You can go in there, and you can click on those, and when you click on it, more information will populate down. So as the point of contact has changed, as you can see, we ask, you know, what is that new information to be included within? So you don't have to worry about completing the whole form again. You can focus on just that one area where change has occurred. Great. And I think that's all kind of all the functionality we wanted to showcase here. I don't know if Ricki's able to bring the slides back up.

Yeah, and Shawn, I wanted to just say, like, thank you to everyone who contributed, everyone on this Community of Practice who contribute to promoting out the Resource Survey to identify services and locations, for both themselves and their community. And, you know, this is an iterative process. We acknowledge that there's more out there in California than is currently here. This is voluntarily submitted information, so we're always looking to expand. We also wanted to thank, I think since the last time we came, we did some user testing on this, and it was based on the feedback that we got from those users that we made some of these changes. Back to you, Shawn.

Yeah, no, that's great. So, Ricki, if you're able to go to the next slide, I think we can kind of walk through somewhat of that user testing feedback was, right? We added the mapping functionality, we created, you know, some fuzzy logic. We validated some URLs, so the early testing feedback has directly impacted, hopefully, the quality of this product. And as Scott mentions, this is a work in process, so if we actually want to go to the next slide. I think there's, we have a

couple of ways that maybe this can hopefully be further improved. One way that we did hear feedback is possibly having more specific URLs as opposed to generic, just programmatic, or organizational URLs. So, we welcome the submission or modification to any of the resources in here, if you do have a URL that takes you specifically to your device program, or specifically to your digital literacy program, as opposed to your organizational one, if that is a change you would like to make. Same thing with contact information. I know that some people have, you know, info at or an email address, for an organization, if there is a specific person who might be contacted. Again, if that is a change you'd like to see, we welcome you submitting the updated resource form, and then also...

Hey, Shawn, do you mind if I, I'm gonna jump in here on that point on personal versus generic contact information, because, you know, we want to be responsive. We heard from a lot of partners that it'd be nice to have a personal contact of, like a program director or coordinator, with, like, a personal email and a phone number. And so, we accommodated that in the survey, and we even had the disclaimers that folks had to sign to get through that. But we also heard from some folks that they, they weren't aware that that information was going to be shared, and so this is our opportunity to go back to you and just say, you know, we're constantly willing to work and iterate in, you know, you find out, if you provide it personal and you want to give generic information, absolutely fine. They've got, figured out a way to do that, and vice versa. Thanks, Shawn. Sorry to keep disrupting your flow.

No, no, not a problem at all. And I think just kind of the last one we wanted to talk about is really highlighting any in-person locations. And so that now that people might see, how the functionality of this work, works, that if you, you know, offer services in person, in location, to reach out to us, submit that updated form, and so that we can really highlight the services being offered in specific counties in, in person, knowing how critical they are to the community. And if you have any other changes, you know, has personnel changed? Have you provided more services? Do you want to change the languages in which your service is offered? So, we know the success of this Resource Finder is really hinges on the accuracy of the data, and we want to make it as great of a resource for the community and with the community as possible. So, I believe that QR code at the bottom takes you to the test link, where you are able to update your resources, but Anh, please correct me if I am wrong on that. I got the thumbs up, so I think I'm correct. Great, so if there's any questions, I'm happy to take them now about the enhanced Resource Finder.

Thanks so much, Shawn. We also added the test link in the chat, so if folks weren't able to QR code capture that quickly, it is now in the chat, and we'll give folks a couple minutes to raise hands and to see if there's any questions as well. So far, I'm not seeing any. There's one. Jason asked, how do we vet quality and keep it up, keep the DE Resource Finder updated?

So, that update resource link is a permanent link, so at any time, if anything changes within your organization, you can submit the data to be updated, so really hoping organizations will submit their updated data. But I think we also might have a plan for reaching out on a regular basis to organizations, within the Resource Finder, to kind of remind them of that as well. So, a little bit of CDT doing some of the work, as well as this wonderful community-owned resource.

Thanks, Shawn, and thanks for the question. I am seeing another one. Is there a general contact email that will be listed on the Resource Finder in case public users encounter any bugs or technical issues?

Anh, I think, yes, absolutely, there will be an email address. Is it, and I think we can put it in the chat, correct?

We can put it in the chat.

And it will also be on the resource itself.

In the update resource page, you'll see that email, and it's also actually under add a resource, it's the same, deem atstate.ca.gov. So, if I know I spoke that very quickly, but we'll make sure to add it in the chat. Thanks for the question, Catherin. I am seeing no hands and no chat. I'm going really slow in case folks are just holding off on it. And, will this be available to revisit from John?

John, are you able to come off mute? What do you mean by revisit? I'm sorry.

I think, if the question is, at the end of these meetings, all of the recordings and the. Presentations in the minutes, or...posted on the Broadband for All portal, so I think, John, if that's what you're asking about, yes, these will be made available, and we always send out an email thank you to folks who both register and attend, because we know a lot of people register, and something comes up. So, yeah, these are available and archived on the Broadband for All portal.

Great.

Great. And so, right, this is just kind of a little test preview. We hope to have it, the... it all officially...

Hold on a sec.

Oh, okay.

One more thing, Jason Borgen had a question. Is there anything on the roadmap to allow rating and review by users?

Yes, we just don't know where on the roadmap that is, but we've been discussing that. So, love the idea, and would love more ideas, how we can improve it once folks take a look at the test link and we post it. This is an iterative process, and it's really working with you all, the experts, and the community to see how we can have this address, or address part of our collective needs.

Thanks for that, Scott. And I would say we're good to move forward. Thank you so much, Shawn, and great to partner with you to do this demo. Thank you.

Thanks, everyone.

Thanks, all. Ricki, can we have the slides back up? So next, I would like to bring our staff, Broadband Administrative Manager, James Spencer, to give a quick update on the Request for Innovative Ideas.

Thanks, Anh. We can go ahead and skip to the next slide, please. So, just a quick update from me. At the last Community of Practice, we reported out that the Request for Innovative Ideas concept papers were due January 30th. So, we're thrilled with the level of interest and excited to share that we received a lot of great responses in each of these 7 categories. Our focus and intent, you know, as some of you suggested in the pre-registration questions, has been to procure and develop tools and resources to support this ecosystem's digital equity work. Because this is an open solicitation, we cannot discuss the ideas of the vendors that were submitted at this point, but we are on track and beginning Phase 2 conversations. We will definitely share updates as they become available. Next slide, please. So here's a snapshot of the full timeline. As you can see, we are on target and hoping to start awarding contracts in the second quarter of this year. And that just, that concludes my update. I would like to now bring back Aracely

Hernandez, who will share upcoming grant opportunities as requested by attendees.

Thank you so much, James. Appreciate the introduction and thank you all for your continued engagement. I'll be sharing some upcoming grant opportunities. Next slide, please. So here, we're reminding folks about the California Advanced Services Fund Programs that are offered by the California Public Utilities Commission. First, we have the Tribal Technical Assistance Program, with a deadline of April 1st. This is specific to California Tribes and Tribal Consortia, with up to \$250,000 in funding for voice and broadband access. Next, we have the Broadband Adoption Account with the July 1st deadline. The eligibility here includes local government, schools, libraries, and community-based organizations, with a focus on digital literacy and broadband access in community spaces. And the last one is the Broadband Public Housing Account for public and farmworker housing, mobile home parks, as well as tribal housing and multi-dwelling units. The focus here is to build or connect networks offering free broadband service. And all the links are embedded in the headers, along with QR codes to the CPUC site for more information. Next slide, please. And here we have an ongoing reminder from the NTIA, as it relates to the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program for up to \$500 million in estimated funding. While we wait for more information and for the NOFO to be released this spring, it's anticipated that this may complement some of the BEAD infrastructure investments. Again, there's more information with the link, to frequently asked questions with more details, as well as a QR code here. And I'll go ahead and wrap up to the next slide and open it up to see if there's any remaining questions.

Thanks, Aracely. At this point, we can take questions for any upcoming grant opportunities. Giving folks a few seconds to type in the chat or raise their hand. Huh. Any update on BEAD non-deployment funding?

No updates, Patrick. Not at present. I mean, PUC's leading those efforts, and, you know, there's been a number of opportunities for folks to weigh in to the NTIA, and the new guidance and directions on the non-deployment funds is imminent.

Thanks, Scott. I see one.

Yeah, and I would say thanks, and that's actually a good potential topic for the next Community of Practice.

Agreed. Wally?

Yeah, hi, this is for Scott. I assume the answer is no, but I wanted to see. We all put so much effort into the digital equity grants in 2024-25, and of course the Trump administration canceled all of it. Is there any sign of life whatsoever in having any of that come back?

You know, if present, Wally, you know, I don't have an answer for you. What I can say is that, you know, we're trying to do as much as we can, working with PUC and the Broadband Council members and the Community of Practice folks here to continue to do and implement as much of the Digital Equity Plan as we can, with the current resources. And also looking at, you know, opportunities to align and, really, collaborate with other folks and other efforts, and I think one of the things I see, Sunne took her camera off, and she's prepared to do this. I think this is a really good segue. We're keeping our eyes out for funding opportunities to support the capacity needs outlined in the Digital Equity Plan, and Aracely and others. If there are no other questions, I think this is a good segue that we have Sunne dive in and tell us about the really significant, public benefit merger commitments that CETF was able to negotiate out of the Verizon and Frontier Merger, and some of the potential opportunities for collaboration alignment with folks here. So, Sunne, over to you.

Thank you very much, Scott. I appreciate the opportunity for the California Emerging Technology Fund to report to you. I'm actually joined here today by our Treasurer CFO, Rich Motta, on our board, and our Senior Vice President, Kat Zigmont, with Patti Bibby, Kyle O'Ryan, Kerstyn Olson, and Jessica Woznak, and I introduced them, along with all of our partners who were on this call, because CETF is a pretty small team, and we rely on working with partners in order to get the work done. So, going to the next slide. I want to share that the California Emerging Technology Fund is negotiated for public benefits agreements over the last decade with various ISPs. Internet service providers going through corporate consolidations. Each of those has essentially a three-section commitment on public benefits that relate to what we call appropriate, fair, and comparable. In deployment, looking at getting households connected, anchor institutions, and consulting with the Regional Broadband Consortia and metropolitan planning organizations. The second category of public benefits is always in affordability, which includes at least 5 years of an affordable offer from the ISP and now, also participation in the LifeLine Home Broadband Program. That question was asked earlier. And third, in adoption or digital inclusion

benefits. For the Verizon acquisition of Frontier, which the Public Utilities Commission approved on January 15th, going to the next section. Next slide, please. You will see that there are some very significant benefits that were negotiated, not only by CETF, but also by the California Advocates in the CPUC and the Communication Workers of America. That includes, on the deployment commitment, going to 75,000 households with fiber and also installing 250 new towers for wireless access, where the terrain really needs that kind of technology. There's also a commitment for continuing Regional Broadband Consortia consultation. The second is for affordability. Verizon committed to 10 years of offering their current affordable program and also participating in the new LifeLine pilot project offered by the Public Utilities Commission. And third, Verizon has made a commitment of \$40 million into digital inclusion, which is to get 100,000 unconnected, low-income households online and another \$1 million to help reach out to the small business community in order to take advantage of a commitment that Verizon has made to provide \$500 million to small businesses in California. The Public Benefits Agreement also provides that if enough of those small businesses participate in the Verizon programs, which are called Digital Ready and Small Business Accelerator, that they will commit another \$150 million into California. This potential commitment of up to \$650 million for small business, small businesses to become ready to be competitive, to go after contracts, for suppliers, as suppliers with companies and public agencies, not only ISPs, but also the utilities, is very significant. One of the largest I've ever seen for small business in California. And lastly, our Public Benefits Agreement recognizes the need for getting to inclusion, diversity, and equity, such that by the time we complete this public benefits MOU, that we have workforce and also a supplier diversity that represents the population of California. Now, going to the next slide, you'll see that this structure of a Public Benefits Agreement works really well in terms of the commitments by the state, the priorities in Broadband for All that was announced by the governor in 2019, and the Broadband for All Action Plan. This is also aligned with that Digital Equity Plan that the state developed, that Wally asked about. And, in particular, Scott started at the beginning. There are actions in the Broadband for All Action Plan related to deployment. Here, we're talking about the digital inclusion and adoption side. And in the Broadband for All Action Plan, particularly Action Number 16 and 18 are totally aligned with getting everybody connected with a device, and being able to consult and work with the community, all of the resources throughout California. And so, I've listed on the right-hand side what those public benefits are aligned to those three goals of the California Broadband Action Plan, and particularly those in digital inclusion, which is a new resource that the state has to work with, and that's why, going to the next slide. We are very anxious to involve all of you who

want to participate in figuring out how we actually optimize this investment by Verizon through the California Emerging Technology Fund, and we're conducting in March and April two strands of listening sessions. We will do the strand around digital inclusion to use the \$40 million to get 100,000 low-income, unconnected households online and digitally proficient. We will conduct those on Thursdays, 2 to 4 p.m. The California Department of Technology will actually post a schedule that has targeted, sort of, segments or groupings of potential partners, so that you can register for the one that is most appropriate. And then a second listening session strand will be for small businesses and networks of small businesses on Fridays. They will be 2 hours long as well, and probably always beginning at noon. It's possible that, depending on the flexibility of our expert partner network, that we do it at 12:30 or 1 o'clock. But this is a really important opportunity for us to collectively think through and refine what we know, and all of us have a lot of years of experience. We know what the price points are, generally, to get someone connected to the internet, what it means to deliver digital literacy training, and now what we're trying to do is just make sure we listen to all the ideas. Maybe there's a better idea to accomplish those goals, and then to invite people and organizations to say, here's how much of the 100,000 households we might be able to take responsibility for. So we can sort that all through, put it out in a draft action plan in May, and our board will review it and adopt, adopt it in June, so that we can begin implementation in the new fiscal year. So there is a QR code for your use. I will just note that our Senior Vice President, Kat Zigmont, will be doing all the registration, working with CDT, and will also be conducting much of these listening sessions. So I think with that, we can open up for questions, if anyone has them.

Thanks so much, Sunne. Yeah, we can take this slide down, please. And really appreciate you advocating for California, well, you and Cal Advocates and CWA. I think that, you know, the question was asked by Wally, about funding for the Digital Equity Plan, and really, the whole ecosystem has to be kind of savvy, put together a collective savvy to do that and these, you know, merger opportunities, I believe there's one more in California, present an opportunity, potentially to fund resources here. So, folks, we've had really fruitful conversations thus far, and questions. Please, feel free to raise your hands, and we'll unmute you, or, okay, here's one question from Rich Levine, and then we'll get to Wally. Let me see, thank you for the info that you've done. Will there be any push to lean into the cell towers being placed where cell coverage is the worst, especially in rural areas besides urban areas?

Rich, it's good to see you again. Thanks for all your work in Marin and your partnership over the years. The answer is yes, which is why, also, Rich, that there will be an ongoing series of regular consultations with the Regional Broadband Consortia. So you're part of North Bay, North Coast Broadband Consortium, and the whole process of this consultation, and the purpose is to identify the highest priority areas. That goes also for the 75,000 household commitment for fiber deployment, which was negotiated not only by CETF, but also by Cal Advocates, who have also some additional performance requirements, and so the answer is yes, leaning in. I've actually gotten quite a bit of feedback already for the North Bay North Coast as to where there are some other priority areas, and where it is harder to deploy on a wireline connection or fiber, and North Bay North Coast has a lot of those areas, then that should be the priority for the wireless connectivity.

Thanks, Rich, for the question, and thanks, Sunne, for the answer. Let's go to Wally. Wally?

Thanks, Scott. And Sunne, thank you. You know, I have, back in the cable television days, when we used to get 5% franchise fees, and bandwidth and production facilities for, you know, PEG access. I've just stewed for a long time over the fact that the internet is three-dimensional chess compared to cable, which was kind of checkers. And no one ever talks about the public benefits from this incredibly powerful technology, so I really appreciate that you have forged ahead with this and really have gotten something out of this merger. And I think it's just a wonderful area to I'm really happy you have done this, because the public benefit of this technology is never really talked about. But the question I have is when you're talking about an action plan, do you have any sort of thoughts? I know that's a listing session you gotta go through, but do you have any thoughts on the kind of what are the categories of actions that might be in play out of this?

We do, and so thank you, Wally, and I surely hope you and Gateway Cities and your whole, you know, group that is doing the partnership locally will participate in one of those listening sessions.

We will.

But, the kinds of questions that we are interested in, and we'll be asking during the facilitated conversation, and then recording so that you can see, is it a representation of what was said by each person or organization during the

listening session, is so how many people can you reach who are unconnected? What is that cost? We generally have some very good benchmarks by other partners who are part of this conversation as to what the outreach is. As Scott and Aracely and Anh know, I've reported to the Broadband Council now for this last year, on it takes an outreach that we do 1,000 to go out to 1,125 households to get one enrollment of an unconnected household. So we're looking at what is going to be that reach. The second is and then our call center folks are paid \$75 in enrollment. So, they answer almost 9 times 9 calls, or 10 times that number, in order to get to one enrollment. So it's a very thin margin that requires scale through our call center. Another question will be, so, for example, in Gateway Cities, how many people do you think you can reach who are low-income and unconnected, and also train in digital literacy with a set of curricula that is that we align to the UNESCO framework, and then we've got a rubric for, you know, pre- and post-testing. What can you do? Generally, that price point today, and what folks apply for through the California Advanced Services Fund, is between \$375 and \$415 to run the three, if you will, courses, and deliver 8 hours. So those are the kinds of benchmarks that we'll be asking. And then, you know, you tell us how many you can reach, because we need to add this up to how do we all get to collectively 100,000 households, and get them online and trained.

Cool.

Okay, thank you, Wally. I want to encourage folks, please, raise hands if you have any questions. We do have a question here. Catherin Sandoval asks Sunne and CETF, what is the speed for Verizon's affordable offer? Gigabit internet is critical for many households, particularly those with several users or needs for high performance.

And we should honor and recognize former CPUC Commissioner Catherin Sandoval, who also I had the opportunity honor to work with when I was Secretary of Business, Transportation, and Housing. She was my undersecretary. So, and Cathy has done much of this pioneering work. The threshold on the affordable offers and for the LifeLine program, is 100 down, 20 up. In some places, more is needed, and there is an increasing demand on bandwidth, but that is the current requirement and what the offers that Verizon has and LifeLine will meet.

Great, thank you for both the question and the answer. And then, I'm not seeing any more questions. I do see one here, and I'm not sure if any of it's directed towards you or to the community, but what role... Vera, do you want to come

up and ask that question? Do you feel comfortable coming off? There you go. Hi, Vera.

Hi, thank you so much. So my question would be, Sunne, directed to you, but also anyone who might be able to answer this, but what I haven't heard anything about AI playing any role in closing any of these gaps that we're facing when trying to close the digital divide, and what you mentioned, Sunne, was the reach of digital literacy programs, but also then, the after the support after a program ends, and the costs associated with those programs, and I would just be interested what your, what your take on that is.

So, we do find that there is a lot of curious interest, a lot of interest in having AI incorporated into the digital literacy training, and we work with a number of partners to continuously upgrade what is the lessons that go with the skill. The skills that are for each of the three courses that we offer that is the basic digital literacy. There's a set of 5 skills that a household really needs to be able to function. Dr. Gonzales talked about a lot of those, and AI is being incorporated. We do have a online asynchronous Digital Learn program that also is adding an AI course. Now, part of also what we are continuing to probe is how much information, using AI, can we glean from all the research to inform what we're doing. And then, part of the reason for the listening session, Vera, is for you to tell us what do you know, and how do you view what can be done? As I said, a lot of us have been doing this a long time. We keep refining all the numbers, and we are going into the listening session to be as inclusive and open, and to try to find better answers, which we trust happens with all of you involved.

Yeah.

Thank you.

And thanks, Vera, for the question, because, you know, AI adds a new wrinkle to this work. Obviously, it's both a tool and a skill and a competency to be learned, but I think what I was kind of inferring from your question was, how can the use of AI, you know, either improve or expand or enhance, you know, tools to address these gaps? And I think that that's potentially one for a further and ongoing discussion when we look at, you know, how this focuses on vulnerable populations and wanting to make sure that trust and biases aren't perpetuated and things like that. So, thanks for asking the question and bringing that to the Community of Practice and really appreciate your contribution here.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome. I'm looking at, there are, mostly comments in the, in the chat, and I know we're running low on time, but, Sunne, it's always a pleasure to have you, you know, in one of the pre-registration last month, folks had asked to have you come and speak, and so, thank you for doing that, and thank you for bringing the team. And, one point of clarification I had, while you have the two tracks of listening sessions in March and April, that, you don't have to be a member of those different, you know, categories, so if you want to attend one of the Thursday sessions, that's for, like, providers, practitioners, other folks, and then the Friday ones are for small businesses. But, if you can't make one that you think you're supposed to be at, you can go to one the following week, is that correct?

It is. We are encouraging, if you're able to attend the one that is most comparable to your particular organization to do so, but we do want to be able to accommodate anyone. And, we're urging everyone then, if you can't go to one that might be, for, for example, all of the resources that you pointed out, and Shawn and the expert resources, because we want you to invite everybody who has filed them or, an existing partner, grantee that we have with CETF, or the Get Connected California Partnership, then sign up for another one. We are asking that people participate in only one of each of the two strands, and then if you really do have a program that serves small businesses, or are you part of a network of small businesses, then of course, participate also in small business, but it's not for people to just come in observe. It is actually to be in a listening session and engaged in a conversation.

Got it. Well, thank you so much, Sunne and CETF team. I'm gonna turn it over to Anh to close out the Community of Practice with some final messages.

Thank you, Scott, and thank you, Sunne, Kat, for being on. You are definitely popular when it comes to requests, so I just want to thank you and represent our ecosystem to thank you for making time. So looking ahead, I know we're at time, so I'll go over these next few slides a little quickly. This is capturing all the feedback you've given us through the pre-registration, and as you see here, some has already been implemented, and we encourage you to continue responding to our pre-registration question, because it actually does get implemented in almost immediately, like Sunne's and Dr. Gonzales' presentation here. So on the DE topics, we hear health and telehealth has been suggested many times. Get Connected, school or anchor institution connectivity, just a call

out of few. And on future speakers, we hear Common Sense Media on AI literacy in education, ask for a California Department of Education, nonprofit, public and private industry leaders, U.S. Department of Commerce. This will be recorded, so feel free to review at your own leisure. And I'll go on to the next slide. We also ask for what tool or resource would be most helpful to address your organization, community, or residents' needs. And, no surprise, 62% answer all of the select the options that we have provided here, and 12% ask for free digital literacy skills and training, 3% on free online educational resources, 15% on DE Survey data. 3% on free digital navigator training, and 5% on free online workforce development and resources. And that's out of over 260 responses, so pretty significant. Next slide, please.

Yeah, and thanks, Anh. I just wanted to tie, you know, the results of this feedback back to both what we've seen and heard. There's a lot of resources here, a lot of folks sharing information in the chat, and also, as James mentioned, the subject of our Request for Innovative Ideas is to see how the Department of Technology and our office can help support acquiring, you know, tools and resources like these that we can then share out with the ecosystem. So, thanks for your feedback, and thanks, team, for asking those questions.

Thanks, all. Next slide, please. Thanks, Scott, for adding that. And last slide, on community feedback. Thank you again for all your positive affirmation that we are doing, and meeting your expectation, doing a good job, and here are a few other recommendations that we have to share, connect community-based organizations to resources, as Scott just mentioned. Have more actionable skills, more peer exchange practical examples, shorter presentation, clear follow-ups, and shared resources after meetings. So we'll make sure to post where you can find all these resources asynchronous after the meeting, and recommendations for training videos to act as refresher courses later down the line, more resources for sustained funding opportunity, and include scholars in public administration. So, all great feedback, and we will keep on referring to them as we build the rest of the year COPs. So, last slide, please. And just want to let you know, the next COP meeting is on Thursday, March 26th. It, throughout the year, it will be on Thursday, 10:30 to noon, subject to change if it falls on the holidays or something happens, but we are keeping the schedule for consistency and for you all to look forward to each month. And, actual last slide is a quick thank you for your participation and letting you know that you can subscribe to our Broadband for All monthly email update using the QR code. Our website and contact information is listed here. So with that, thank you so much for your time,

and thank you, our ASL interpreters, for interpreting all of our great presentations and all the presenters and attendees for your engagement. So, thank you so much. Have a great Thursday and an even better weekend!