Digital Equity Community of Practice Meeting
October 29, 2026
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes and Transcript

The Digital Equity Community of Practice met virtually on Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. Engagement and Operations Analyst Ms. Amanda Lee welcomed attendees and then instructed attendees to introduce themselves in the Zoom Chat box with their name, job title, and affiliated organization.

Housekeeping & Agenda

Ms. Lee reviewed a few housekeeping items, meeting norms, and the agenda items. The ASL interpreters and Zoom closed captioning were available 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. She then shared an overview of the meeting agenda.

Meeting Agenda Items:

- Guest Speaker: Angela Siefer, Executive Director, NDIA
- CA LifeLine Home Broadband Pilot Program
- Digital Inclusion Partnerships Update
- Local Digital Inclusion Panel
- Upcoming Grant Opportunities
- 2027 Digital Equity Survey Briefing: Kat Zigmont, Vice President, CETF
- Future Meetings

Community Feedback

Ms. Lee highlighted community feedback gathered through this month's voluntary registration survey responses, which asked participants about topics, speakers, and improvements they would like to see in future Community of Practice meetings. Suggested topics included affordability, artificial intelligence and leveraging AI for equity, data protection and privacy, funding and grant opportunities, intermediate and advanced digital literacy training, technology accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and library digital inclusion services. Suggested future speakers included Angela Siefer of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) and Ms. Sunne McPeak of the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), both of whom were reflected in the current month's agenda. Ms. Lee noted that OBDL continues to promote the meetings through monthly broadband email updates, social media, and the Broadband for All portal, and encouraged participants to continue submitting suggestions.

Mr. Scott Adams, OBDL Deputy Director, then shared a highlight from the California Broadband Council meeting held the previous week, referencing a recent Pew Charitable Trusts report that tracked four cornerstone policies for

universal broadband: dedicated deployment funding, affordability requirements, minimum speed standards, and network scalability. California is the only state in the nation to address all four policies in statute.

Agenda Item 1 – Guest Speaker: Angela Siefer, Executive Director, NDIA

Ms. Angela Siefer, Executive Director of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), joined the meeting as a guest speaker and began by recognizing California's participation in Digital Inclusion Week, noting that seven separate events were held across California and that CDT was able to attend events in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Ms. Siefer encouraged participants to appreciate the level of engagement and participation from their state government, observing that most states do not have comparable support. She also shared that the first Digital Inclusion Week was held as a single day in 2016 before expanding into a full week.

Ms. Siefer then highlighted Net Inclusion, NDIA's in-person annual event, which will be held February 24–26 in Columbus, Ohio, and directed participants to digitalinclusion.org for information on both Net Inclusion and Digital Inclusion Week.

Ms. Siefer next provided a recap of the Digital Equity Act lawsuit. In May 2025, the Digital Equity Act was canceled by presidential announcement via social media post. In October 2025, during Digital Inclusion Week, NDIA filed a lawsuit. NDIA held one of the four competitive grants with a signed contract and elected not to pursue reinstatement of its own $25 million award, instead seeking reinstatement of the entire program. Ms. Siefer explained that the Administration subsequently approached the judge during the motion to dismiss and offered to reinstate the Digital Equity Act competitive grant program if racial and ethnic minorities were removed as a covered population. NDIA opposed the removal, noting that the population was included because those communities tend to be left out. The judge disagreed with NDIA's position and removed racial and ethnic minorities as a covered population, meaning that funds, if reinstated, could not specifically target that population.

Questions

Mr. Scott Adams moderated the Q&A session. Ms. Angela Siefer proceeded to address questions from the audience. The following meeting attendees asked questions:

- Rebecca Kauma, County of Los Angeles | Internal Services Department
- Mike Dawe, Sonoma County Library
- Erin Lorandos, Human-I-T

Agenda Item 2 – CA LifeLine Home Broadband Pilot Program

Ms. Loi Nguyen and Ms. Lisa Anthony, Regulatory Analysts with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), shared the program's latest enrollment and implementation updates, noting that one provider, Connect To Communications, was pending review; six additional internet service providers (ISPs) were pending in the onboarding and systems interface testing phase; and 13 providers were actively enrolling customers. As of October 20, 2026, the program had enrolled 25,518 new subscribers, processed 5,391 transfers, and recorded 22 reconnections, for a total of 30,931 subscribers. New enrollments continued to drive pilot participation, representing 82 percent of participation compared to an 18 percent transfer rate. Standalone broadband plans accounted for 67 percent of total enrollment with 20,690 subscribers, while bundled broadband plans accounted for 33 percent with 10,241 subscribers.

The presentation also covered recent process improvements. On August 21, 2026, the email-verification period was extended from three to seven days to evaluate whether the change would reduce avoidable denials. Ninety-three percent of successful email verifications were completed within the first three business days, with completion rates increasing significantly on business day three following third-party administrator (TPA) reminder notifications, demonstrating that reminders effectively prompt applicant action. An additional 280 applicants, or seven percent, successfully completed verification during days four through seven and likely would have been denied under the previous three-day window. On September 29, 2026, Comcast became the first broadband service provider to begin using the Service Provider Intake Application (SPIA) method to process enrollments into the Broadband Pilot, and the program anticipates improvements to the speed and success of enrollments with this enhancement.

Questions

Ms. Aracely Hernandez moderated the Q&A session. Ms. Loi Nguyen and Ms. Lisa Anthony proceeded to address questions from the audience. The following meeting attendees asked questions:

- Tom Mullen, County of Riverside

Agenda Item 3 – Digital Inclusion Partnerships Update

Mr. James Spencer, OBDL Broadband Administrative Manager, shared an update on the Digital Inclusion Partnership, through which CDT has partnered with seven entities to deliver free digital tools, training, and resources to community-based groups across California, providing residents with access to low-cost home internet, devices, and digital skills training. Mr. Adams noted the complementary role of existing funding streams, including the California

Advanced Services Fund Adoption Account and approximately $70 million in CETF merger commitment dollars from telecommunications mergers over the past year, observing that the Digital Inclusion Partners are intended to augment and support organizations that may not otherwise have access to such funds, and commending the program's progress over its first three months.

Mr. Spencer then shared partnership feedback and testimonials from participating organizations. Observations from the Digital Inclusion Partners included strong uptake of free AI courses among libraries and one location with a very small budget securing a Northstar license paid for a year through the partnership. Mr. Spencer also noted that some organizations remain short-staffed and lack capacity, and reminded participants that Ms. Hernandez would be highlighting funding opportunities later in the meeting that could help address that need.

Mr. Spencer concluded by sharing the Digital Inclusion Partnership Resource Sign-up Form for organizations interested in participating, noting that the form takes approximately five minutes to complete and that applicants will be referred to and contacted by one or more Digital Inclusion Partners within approximately 24 to 48 hours to discuss next steps. A QR code was displayed and a link was shared in the chat. No questions were raised following the update

Questions

No questions were raised following the update.

Agenda Item 4 – Local Digital Inclusion Panel

Ms. Aracely Hernandez, OBDL Digital Inclusion Manager, introduced the Local Digital Inclusion Panel, describing the panelists as professionals in the field who are addressing digital needs in their communities using the resources and services provided by the state's Digital Inclusion Partners.

Panelists

- Adele McClain, Adult Ed Coordinator, Apple Valley Adult School
- Martha Gomez, Managing Director, Trans Can Work
- Lily Rojo, Technical Services Librarian, Mendocino County Library
- Robert Guerrero, Digital Navigator, Sigma Beta Xi

Ms. Hernandez noted that Apple Valley Adult School is using the Northstar platform for digital literacy assessment and training services, Trans Can Work is using digitalLIFT services, Mendocino County Library is using Human-I-T services, and Sigma Beta Xi is using CETF resources.

Ms. Martha Gomez shared that staff training through the partnership had been especially valuable, noting that her organization had been informally

performing digital inclusion work with clients without recognizing it as such, and that access to a defined pathway to resources and a supporting curriculum had benefited both clients and the organization. She added that formal participation in the network has strengthened the organization's confidence and credibility when seeking funding for devices and when working toward a dedicated space with computers and laptops available for community use.

Mr. Robert Guerrero described his experience working with CETF as highly positive, citing one-on-one coaching and responsiveness as the partnership continues to add new tools. He gave the example of adopting HubSpot, a customer relationship management system that allows for more detailed information tracking, which he piloted himself for approximately one month before training other community-based organizations through ongoing meetings with CETF to share best practices. He also noted his organization's work reaching rural areas and low-income housing communities.

Ms. Hernandez emphasized throughout the panel that the resources promoted through the Digital Inclusion Partners, including digitalLIFT, Human-I-T, and free access to Northstar licenses, are free or low-cost, and encouraged participants to take advantage of them.

Questions

Ms. Aracely Hernandez moderated the Q&A session for the panel. The following meeting attendees asked questions:

- Sery Tatpaporn, A.B.L.E Community Development Foundation

Agenda Item 5 – Upcoming Grant Opportunities

Ms. Aracely Hernandez provided an overview of upcoming funding and grant opportunities. She first highlighted two federal funding opportunities administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA): the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program Round Three, with a November 17, 2026 application deadline and $540 million available for eligible applicants, offering $500,000 to $2,500,000 for broadband use and adoption projects and $1,000,000 to $25,000,000 for broadband infrastructure deployment; and the Native Entities Grant Program, also due November 17, 2026, which offers $250 million through awards ranging from $500,000 to $2,500,000, requires a 10 percent match, and supports broadband use and adoption activities, workforce development, and technology upgrades.

Ms. Hernandez also highlighted the Anthropic Claude Corps grant program, with a January 2027 application deadline for its second cohort, a $150 million initiative to train and deploy 1,000 young workers into 400 nonprofits across the United States, and the CPUC Digital Divide Grant Program R4, with an October 30, 2026 deadline, providing three grants for a total of $200,000 to address gaps

in broadband networks, affordability, access to personal devices, and digital skills training.

Ms. Hernandez then reviewed California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) programs, noting that the CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account 2026 application deadline had been extended from October 1, 2026 to November 2, 2026 in response to stakeholder requests for additional time to analyze new eligibility data and account for the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. She reminded participants that the CASF Tribal Technical Assistance Account, Broadband Adoption Account, and Broadband Public Housing Account operate on rolling deadlines, allowing applications to be submitted at any time, with a January 1, 2027 deadline for each.

To close, Ms. Hernandez shared a slide recently presented by the CPUC at the California Broadband Council meeting showcasing the impact of CASF grants across the state. CASF Infrastructure Grants have awarded $166 million for 17 infrastructure projects serving more than 3,800 locations in 17 counties; CASF Adoption Account Grants have awarded over $11 million for 114 projects in 27 counties as of July 2026; CASF Broadband Public Housing Grants have awarded $2.4 million to 17 projects, with $3.7 million pending for 18 applications; and CASF Consortia Grants have awarded approximately $3.4 million to six consortia across 16 counties. Ms. Hernandez encouraged participants to continue applying for and taking advantage of CASF grant accounts. QR codes were provided throughout the presentation to direct attendees to additional program information and application resources.

Agenda Item 6 – 2027 Digital Equity Survey Briefing: Kat Zigmont, Vice President, CETF

Ms. Kat Zigmont, Senior Vice President of the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), presented the 2027 Digital Equity Survey briefing in place of Ms. Sunne McPeak. Ms. Zigmont explained that CETF has worked with CDT to benchmark and refine the survey questionnaire to ensure it assesses the major challenges and changes since the prior statewide Digital Equity Survey and remains relevant to the 2027 population.

The survey will use a sample size of 1,650 households to achieve a margin of error of less than three percent, matched to population demographics, and will be conducted through random digit dialing supported by advance texting and an online survey option. CETF is working with the University of Southern California Equity Research Institute as its independent research partner, along with Davis Research, which conducts the random digit dialing. Ms. Zigmont noted that this methodology produces an unbiased and clear picture of the digital divide.

The survey is scheduled to launch in mid- to late January 2027, timed to follow the election and holiday season in order to produce the best possible response results. The survey's stated purpose is to benchmark progress since 2023 by region and population, assess and quantify remaining challenges to closing the digital divide, and provide guidance for implementation of the Broadband for All and State Digital Equity plans to help target resources.

Questions

No questions were raised following the update.

Agenda Item 7 – Future Meetings

Ms. Amanda Lee announced that the next Community of Practice meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 19, 2026, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., noting that the meeting was scheduled a week earlier than usual in light of the Thanksgiving holiday. She also noted that an additional meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 17, 2026. Ms. Lee concluded the meeting by sharing several ways for participants to stay connected with the California Department of Technology's Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, including a QR code to subscribe to Broadband for All email updates, a link to the Broadband for All portals, and contact information for future inquiries.

CDT Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy stayed to check for any final questions. Ms. Lee thanked participants and presenters for their engagement and partnership before adjourning the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

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

Transcript

Good morning, and welcome to the October 29th 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. Please use the chat box to share your name, job title, and affiliated organization as more folks are coming in. Before we begin, a few housekeeping items. Next slide, please. Thank you. 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. 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. Chat will be off while the presenters are speaking, so that no questions are lost in the chat. Use the Q&A box to type in your questions. Chat will be available when prompted. You may use your raise hand icon on Zoom or press star 9, if you're calling in by

phone, to come off of mute and video to participate. 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 slide, please. Because we want to encourage bi-directional conversations and active participation, we wanted to state some baseline understandings here that only questions and comments on agenda items will be addressed. The chat will be monitored, and disruptive behaviors will not be tolerated. We don't think this is going to be a problem, but individuals with disruptive behaviors will be removed from the meeting. Next slide, please. We have a great agenda set up for you today. We will begin with… by reviewing community feedback from all of you, and then we will have a guest speaker, Angela Siefer from NDIA. We will hear updates on the California Lifeline Home Broadband Pilot Program and Digital Inclusion Partnerships. Next, we will feature a panel with local organizations using digital inclusion resources by our partners. Then, Sunne McPeak from CETF will be joining us to talk about the 2027 Digital Equity survey briefing. To close out today's agenda, we will hear CDT OBDL updates on upcoming grant opportunities and future meetings. Next slide, please. In our registration questions this month, we asked all of you about topics, seekers, and improvements you would like to see in future Community of Practice meetings.
The highlighted text indicates some of the new feedback we received. As you can see here, these are some of the topics that many of you would like to see from this month's registration. Next slide, please. Here you can see that we have some future speakers that all of you have notated. Based on your feedback, we have Angela Siefer and Sunne McPeak speaking today. Next slide. We keep doing our best to improve, and we promote these meetings and our monthly broadband email updates, social media, as well as the Broadband for All portal. Please keep adding in your suggestions. We value your input and take it into consideration when planning for future meetings. Thank you again for your feedback. Next, I would like to pass the mic over to Deputy Director Scott Adams.

Thank you, Amanda. One of the things that we wanted to share with folks is a highlight that we shared during the California Broadband Council meeting last week, and that was, you know, Broadband for All, as you all know, has a lot of different goals, you know, and the three main goals of, you know, ensuring that all Californians have access to high-performance broadband at home, schools, libraries, and businesses. The second goal is that Californians have access to affordable internet and devices, and then have the third goal is to access the skills and training to enable digital inclusion. Well, the Pew Charitable Trust recently conducted a report that reviewed all of the 50 states in the United States from cornerstone policies for universal broadband. Those policies were

dedicated to funding deployment, affordability requirements, minimum speed standards, and network scalability. We have a little snapshot from their visualization here, and it shows that California is the only state in the nation that addresses all four of those policies and statutes. So, just wanted to say thanks to all of you who've advocated for those to you know, our partners to the legislature and the governor that, you know, here we focus on the last two goals of Broadband for All, but, know, how important the infrastructure, the speed standards, affordability are and just wanted to kind of say this is good news for California and for all of us. Back to you, Amanda.

Thank you, Scott. Next, I'm pleased to introduce Angela Siefer, Executive Director from NDIA. Angela, over to you.

Thank you, Amanda, and thanks to CDT for having me. I'm Angela Siefer. I'm the Executive Director of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. I live in Columbus, Ohio, and it is Trick or Treat night tonight here. Central Ohio does it weird; it's the Thursday before Halloween, so I'm having a very good day, excited about Trick or Treat. So, what NDIA does is gather up all the folks who are doing digital inclusion work, which is you all. And then, we help you all talk to each other, just as the folks in California do for you. Not all states have someone like CDT who can provide the service. So, we are a peer-to-peer network, but also, we interact with the federal government to bring the learnings from you all, and your needs and expertise to them, which is how we ended up with the Digital Equity Act, and we will talk about that today. I want to first note quickly that Digital Inclusion Week was a couple weeks ago. It's the first full week of October every year. If you didn't participate, I welcome you to next year, but we do always have a lot of participation from California. Rebecca Kauma in particular is always like; California is going to have the most participation every year. It's adorable. So, we, it was really great. This past year, we had both; we had wait, I do have this number. I just wasn't ready. 7 different events going on in California. The one in LA and the one in San Francisco, CDT was actually able to attend, so that's really awesome. Because I think that's. I would encourage you all to be really appreciative and thankful for what you have in your state government: that they are engaged, and they are participating, and they do show up at your events, and they hold events like this. Because many most states just, they just don't have what California has. So, kudos to all of you for making that happen, because you are the ones who made that happen. So, the other big event that NDIA has is Net Inclusion; that's our in-person event. Digital Inclusion Week is about folks being able to do what they do in their communities, and then we all lift each other up. During that time, and Net Inclusion is the in-person event. We move it around the country. This year, it's in my city, so I'm excited. It's in Columbus, Ohio. I welcome you to join us. It's February 24th to the 26th, and you can find all of that at digitalinclusion.org, whether it's information about Net Inclusion or Digital Inclusion Week, which the Digital Inclusion Week, we are…

the very first one was in… actually, the very first one was a day, not a week. So that was in 2016, and at the time, I told the person, the volunteer who suggested it, I'm like, I don't have time for this, but you should go ahead and do what you want to do. And it turned out to be a really great idea. So now it's a whole week. Okay, so moving on to the topic that you all definitely want to discuss, which is the Digital Equity Act lawsuit. Quick recap. In May of 2025, the, President Trump had canceled the Digital Equity Act via a Truth Social Tweet Post. And then in October, during Digital Inclusion Week, actually, of 2025, NDIA filed a lawsuit. So, we had one of the four competitive grants that had an actual signed contract. And we really wanted the whole program to come back, so we chose not to fight for our own $25 million to be reinstated, but to instead fight to have the whole program reinstated. And then what happened, just a couple of months ago, actually, was the Administration went to the judge during the motion to dismiss, which was an odd time to do it. But went to the judge and said, if you remove racial and ethnic minorities as a covered population, then we will reinstate the Digital Equity Act competitive grant program. Remember, the competitive one is not the money that was coming into the state; the competitive one is exactly what it sounds like: competitive across the country. NDIA said, no, no, no, don't do that. The racial and ethnic minorities are included as a covered population for a reason, right? These folks tend to get left out. We need to be sure to include them. This is… it's essential to not remove that covered population and the judge disagreed with NDIA and did remove the racial and ethnic minorities as a covered population. That's not to say you can't… you wouldn't be able to still serve folks, assuming this money does come to be. But it means you cannot specifically target them with the funds. What we are hearing right now from NTIA is that the NOFO will be released this December. They had originally said that to the judge. And we were all like, okay, maybe. But then, just this past Friday, there was a joint report that was submitted by NDIA and the government. This joint report- I'm not a lawyer; I should always say that a hundred times when I'm talking about the lawsuit, because…If I get something wrong, now you know why. The joint report is where NDIA and the federal government agree as to what goes in this one document to give to the court. And we didn't really have anything to say for the joint report that was due on Friday, but the federal government did. They said that the NOFO is on track to be released in December. That is really important. The other thing they said was that we did issue the request for comments for the Paperwork Reduction Act. This is not a particularly exciting request for comments. The date has passed. NDIA did submit comments. We… I viewed it, again, not a lawyer, but I viewed it as an important step to show that they are, in fact, moving forward to get this NOFO out. So that is very exciting. It also means that it could happen during the holidays, so I very much encourage you all to plan and think about this. We do not know what will be in that Notice of Funding Opportunity. Sorry, NOFO is Notice of Funding Opportunity. We don't… do not know what will be in it, and because we don't know, there's only a limit as to what you… how you can

prepare, but what you could do is come up with some possibilities; you can discuss partnerships. Who you may want to be interacting with on this grant, and then when it does come out. You'll be ready. So, we do encourage you to make those preparations now. Scott, go ahead. It's time for. Some questions?

Yeah, thanks so much, Angela, for both being here and the role that NDIA plays nationally as, really a champion for digital inclusion and the resources that you guys put together. Thanks for establishing Digital Inclusion Day and then week, and for your advocacy on behalf of the competitive grant program, you know, I'm sure you know, here in California, at least one group, the California Emerging Technology Fund, was also awarded a grant, and then, I think, there were 12 or 13 California-serving coalitions that had been recommended to receive those funds. So, excited of the potential for it to come back, and I think it's, you know, grateful for your guys' advocacy for, and, and great to make that happen. So, folks, you know, we do have time for some questions. Please feel free to raise your hand, and we can unmute your video and mic. Okay, there you go. We've got Rebecca. Rebecca, you're on.

Yeah, thank you so much, and of course, I'm going to ask Angela a question. You're in my state, so it wouldn't be proper if I didn't ask you a question. Thank you very much to you and your team for sharing this information and for always keeping us up to date. And so, just a little bit of context, the County of Los Angeles did apply for the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program. We went through the process, and we were still waiting to hear back what our status would be. Just given all of the information that you've heard, Angela and all of the insights that you've been collecting from NTIA, the advocates that have also been, working closely with NTIA, are there any lessons learned, or any insights that you would give to those respective organizations that will be convening, you know, similar stakeholders again that we should take into consideration with applying?

The Native Entities Grant Program is active right now at NTIA. We do not know if they will follow any of the requirements or any of the priorities that they have in the Native Entities Grant Program. They are using money from the Digital Equity Act for that grant program, so we don't know, but it's probably, if you have time not a bad idea to look at that NOFO. NDIA did do, we did a webinar with Waskawiwin, and so there is, on our website, in a blog post, there's a recording of the webinar if you want to hear our assessment of that NOFO. Again, caution: we don't know if it will look like that, but I do think it could give you some ideas of the different directions that the NOFO could go.

Okay, thank you so much. And one follow-up question in regards to that. Do you anticipate that, because obviously it was a different administration that was reviewing the applications, and obviously they were trying their best to ensure

that resources were being spread out across all states? Do you anticipate that it will be similar to this NOFO? So, for example, it looked like when they were selecting, they wanted to ensure that applications perhaps maybe cross state boundaries. Do you think they will most likely look at similar stuff? In that way, and then also in regards to funding allocations, do you recommend that people stay within the allocation, or, you know, continue to apply in large sums? I was just curious to see, because it… I could see it looking very differently, but also.

Right.

It was a different administration, too, so I'm not sure what to expect.

Right, so I would keep all those options open..

Yeah.

As you're preparing, because NDIA is also considering, if we applied, what would that look like,

Right.

And so, I would encourage folks: don't narrow yourself, don't box yourself in at this stage; keep, you know, keep all the different possibilities around. Even as you're talking to different partners and potential partners, to not confirm any of those arrangements, because we don't know…

Right.

For example, we don't know what the grant amount might be. It could be way smaller, like last time it was,

Right.

Hey, go big if you have… if you can tell us why you're going big. And I… we don't know if that will be a possibility or not, so we'll just caution everyone. To be having conversations and do the kind of, like, oh, maybe it could go this way, could go that way. Because the more you can afford to spend any time doing that, which, again, again, this is not always a good use of time, if you do a little bit of that, then you won't be surprised if it is, like, totally…I think some of the requirements in the Native Entities Grant Program- those I would really be looking at because it is some serious restrictions,

Right.

And so, it… that could help you also determine if you're like, if it actually looks like this, we're out, we're not gonna apply.

Yeah.

Like, you might make that determination- I'm not encouraging that, but it would help you to know where your lines are, so to speak.

Right.

Yeah, so...

Thank you.

Thank you, Rebecca, for the question, and thank you, Angela. I know for the folks here, we try to do our best to bring you as much information as possible, and there's kind of a line on how far you can go on that. The good news is that NDIA challenged it; there's an agreement. It looks like it's moving forward, gonna be there in December, so be prepared and opportunistic in a line to take advantage of it, but as far as the details, you know, you can look at a lot of the other programs. The federal administrations change priorities slightly, and they reconfigure it, so as soon as we all have info, we'll do that. Gonna have two quick questions, because we've got to move on to our next thing, because PUC has to get going. Mike Dawe, Angela asked the question, do you know if the funding will be contingent upon CIPA?

C-I-P-A. Somebody tell me what this is?

Yeah, I'm not sure what that means.

Child Information Protection Act.

Oh I…

Yeah…

It's basically that libraries or entities need to have filters in place to be eligible for funds.

Yeah, I… just looking at how this administration has operated, if you look at what has been required for IMLS grants, and what has been required for that Native Entities grant. There's probably a solid chance.

Alright, thank you so much.

It's a good chance. And then, Erin, quick question from you, because we've got to shift to PUC. Good to see you, Erin.

Absolutely. Thank you so much for the opportunity. Hi, Angela. Hi, friends. Just putting out there that Human-I-T is working to coordinate applications, so if any entities in California, you know, are interested in partnering, I can share my contact information again in the chat. We would love to have those conversations with you. Thanks so much, and happy Halloween.

So much, and, you know, coordination, partnership, and alignment is what we strive for. It's part of our digital equity plan. Angela, thank you so much for coming, and thank you for your work and advocacy. We really appreciate you taking the time to spend with folks here in California.

Thank you all for having me. Have a great day. Happy Halloween!

Thank you, and Amanda, back to you.

Great. Thank you so much, Scott. Next, I'm pleased to introduce Loi Nguyen, Public Utilities Regulatory Analyst from the California Public Utilities Commission, to provide updates on the California Lifeline Home Broadband Pilot Program. Welcome, Loi. Thank you for joining us today. I'll pass the mic over to you for your presentation and then leave room for questions at the end. Over to you.

Great, thank you, Amanda. Good morning, everyone. I'm pleased to provide updates on the California Lifeline Home Broadband Pilot Program. Just a, there was an update to the number of advice letters. So, we have received a total of 20 advice letters to date. One is pending, which is to connect to communications. Five are completing onboarding. City of Ontario has completed their onboarding process. However, they are on hold to…on hold to, enrolled customers, because they are waiting for the Customer Portal 2.0, which will be implemented in quarter… The second quarter of 2027. So, we have a total of 6 that are pending onboarding, 14 that have been approved, for enrolling customers, and 13 are currently enrolling. Okay, next slide, please. Okay, as of October 20th, the broadband pilot has 30,931 subscribers. New enrollments continue to drive the pilot, with 25,518 subscribers, or 82% of the broadband pilot population; 5,391 subscribers, or 18, are due to transfer, where individual was already enrolled in the Lifeline program under either a wireline or wireless plan, and transfer their discount to the broadband pilot. Next slide, please. We also wanted to highlight the program is actively monitoring the opportunities to increase efficiency through process improvement. For example, on August 21st, we had the TPA increase the email verification period from 3 days to 7 days to help reduce avoidable denials during the application process.

For Broadband-only applicants are required to complete an email verification process because this is how we receive all program notifications. And while 93% of successful email verifications are completed within the first three days, the program listened to the feedback from broadband providers that some applicants require more time to complete that process, so we extended that window from 3 to 7 days. So, we have heard back that has been a great implementation for process improvement. Another highlight is, on September 29th, Comcast became the first broadband service provider to begin using the Service Provider Intake Application, which we call SPIA. method to process enrollment. This API, or Application Program Interface between the TPA and the service provider, Allows near real-time enrollment. The program is monitoring and expect this to help speed up enrollment process…

Great. Well, thank you so much, Loi. Always appreciate the ongoing…

Applicant. Next slide, add to my presentation, so I will take any questions.

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Loi appreciate your ongoing updates, and it's really exciting to hear, the increase in the recent subscriber count that's helping to drive more pilot participation. We definitely want to encourage folks to go off mute or raise your hand if you have any questions specific to the California Life and Home Broadband Pilot Program. I'm happy to have you join us. And also appreciate any process improvements that are being identified, and I think the deadline, or the extension of 7 days, has definitely made some differences there. Alright, just want to make sure we give folks opportunity to ask any questions, again, related to the California Lifeline Home Broadband Pilot Program.

Yes, Chris, quick question, if I may. This is Tom Mullen from Riverside County. I'm, Good morning. Is there any updates on other ISPs moving through the enrollment process for participation in Lifeline?

So, we currently have the pending, ISP, so the, the five, which is Frontier, Verizon Wireless, Cal Ore, Pinnacles, and Ponderosa. Frontier, we anticipate they are currently in the testing process. So, they should be ready to go live soon. And so those are pending right now for the onboarding with the interface testing.

Thank you.

Aracely Hernandez: Thank you. Any other questions from folks? Feel free to unmute yourself, ask any questions, or you're welcome to also use the chat or Q&A feature.

Yeah, and I just want to reiterate for folks, too, I know, Tom, the question you asked is important to folks as well, and when we post the slides on the, And send them out to folks. Loi actually has a really, you know, her first slide shows the status of each of the ISPs there, so you can get that information as well.

Great, well, I will go ahead and pass the mic back over to Amanda if there aren't any other questions. We'll move on to the next segment.
Thank you so much, Lee.

Keep up the great work over there. We're really proud of this program, and everyone's eager to help promote it and make folks aware of it, and help them sign up for it.

Thank you. Thank you all.

Thank you, Loi. Next, I'm pleased to introduce a Broadband Administrative Manager, James Spencer, to discuss Digital Inclusion Partnerships updates. Over to you!

Yeah, thank you, Amanda. I am excited to share a Digital Inclusion Partnership update with everyone today. We can go to the next slide, please. And so, as we've been reporting out and highlighting over the last few communities of practice, we've established 7 Digital Inclusion Partnerships, 4 of those which provide direct services to local organizations. This slide here just shows you the level of interest. So, we've had 79 organizations sign up in the first 3 months, where referrals were made to CETF, Digital Lift, Human-I-T, and Northstar Digital Literacy. From those sign-ups, we've made 178 referrals, and the partners have followed up with 100% of those folks. And so, just in case folks are wondering how there can be more referrals and sign-ups, one sign-up can't equal referrals from or to numerous partners. And so, we did some analysis of the efforts through the first quarter of partner outreach. About 54% have gotten back to them, and about 8% of folks have declined services. We can go to the next slide, please. And so, this slide it's really encouraging, and we're actually quite proud of it. Our digital inclusion partners submitted their first quarterly reports, and we aggregated the data to highlight what these collective actions have achieved. And if you look here, you see over 6,800 folks connected to low-cost offers of Lifeline through CETF and our partnership with them. Direct notifications to over 9.5 million folks through 7 partner entities. 61 organizations are accessing one of the two digital literacy training platforms, with 700… 706 assessments taken. With 365 active residents in those platforms. On the digital navigation side, both CETF and Digital Lift have trained 35 digital navigators over the last 3 months, and that's gonna ramp up significantly by the end of the year. Something that's also really cool is virtual digital navigation and tech support. The numbers you'll see are 47,000 digital navigation sessions performed through

the CETF Call Center. And another 6,900 virtual digital navigation center sessions through Human-I-T. So, we're really excited about that. And then lastly, Human-I-T's working with us on devices. 61 organizations are participating with them on the device program. 21,000 devices were donated to them, and of those 1,500 were distributed to deserving families. Next slide, please.

Yeah, and actually, James, if we could keep it here real quick, I just wanted to say thanks to you and the team for putting these together, and to note, you know, you know, here in California, we have the California Advanced Services Adoption Account Fund, which is, you know, really critical to providing that funding for organizations to do this work. And, you know, CETF's got the merger commitment dollars through the telecom mergers over the last year, about $70 million. And so, these Digital Inclusion Partners are really intended to, you know, augment or support any of those groups or others that might not necessarily have the funds, but to utilize state funding to develop resources to help support that ongoing, and so in 3 months, it's really impressive, James. Good job.

Yeah, thank you for the kudos, and thank you for kind of teeing up this next slide a little bit. So, if we can go there. And so, here's our partnership feedback. We're sharing with you some of the testimonials. I won't read them all, but folks are excited and interested in these resources. Some of the observations from our Digital Inclusion Partners are that the libraries seem to really be taking advantage of the free AI courses. One location with a very small budget, through this partnership, was able to get a North Star license paid for a year. The other thing that is kind of validated, but we already knew, is that even though we've got these great resources, some of the organizations are just short-staffed and lack capacity. So, I want to remind folks that Aracely will be highlighting some of the funding opportunities later that can help address this, and which kind of Scott just teed up. So, thank you there. Next slide, please. And so, here's our Digital Inclusion Partnership Resource sign-up form. So, if your organization would like to take advantage of these free tools, training, and resources, this is the sign-up form you would complete. We have included the QR code here. We'll also put in a link in the chat. It's a very simple process, probably takes about 5 minutes to complete. After completion, within about 24 to 48 hours, you will be referred to and contacted by one or more of our digital inclusion partners to discuss next steps. So, if you still want to sign up, you can do it on the form here, and that concludes my update. We are now open for questions. Feel free to raise your hand and enter questions into the chat. Not seeing any. Kick it back to you, Amanda.

Thanks, James. Next, I will bring up… Deputy Director Scott Adams to introduce our special panel this morning. Scott?

Amanda, I think Aracely's gonna be moderating this panel.

Oh, my apologies. Aracely.

No problem. Thank you so much, Amanda, and thank you, Scott. We are very excited to share with you that we have a local digital inclusion panel that's joining us today. These are amazing professionals in the field who are addressing digital needs in their communities by using the resources and the services from our Digital Inclusion Partners. So, I'd like to invite our panelists to please turn on your camera, unmute yourself. We can spotlight you to join us for a fire-side chat so we can learn more about your services, and I can go ahead and do some quick introductions before we get started. I see Martha, I see Lily, I see Robert. And I also see Adele. Thank you so much for joining us. Adele is part of Apple Valley Adult School, which is using the North Star platform for digital literacy, assessment, and training services. We have Martha Gomez, who is the Managing Director with Trans Can Work, who is using, the Digital Lift services. We also have Lily Rojo joining us, who is a technical services librarian with Mendocino County Library using Human-I-T services, and then we also have Robert Guerrero, who's a technical… excuse me, who's with Sigma Beta Xi, an organization that handles the call center and internet enrollments, and also is a digital navigator who recently completed some training services there. So, welcome, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. We are very excited to have you join this panel discussion today. Why don't we start with Adele to kick us off? Thank you so much, Adele, for being a part of this conversation.

No problem.

And we will pass it along to everyone on, or everyone else as well. But tell us about your organization: what is their primary function, and how does digital inclusion fit into that?

Good morning, and I'm very happy to have been invited. This beautiful background is not where I'm from. I'm from the desert. I'm actually at the Cape Conference inside Cupertino, where I'm dealing with dueling Wi-Fi issues, but my phone works. So, you know what? I'm just experiencing issues that I know my students probably have up here, or students would have up here, so that's fine. Because you're around several hotels, and your computer wants to connect to all of them, and it can't make up its fine. So, I run an adult school in Apple Valley, California. Additionally, I actually opened Lucerne Valley Adult School, which is very remote. I serve approximately…600 learners directly, and then I have another 400 that come to me for ESL or CTE from the college. We offer digital literacy to all of our clients, whether they're ESL HSE, high school diploma, CTE. It seems like everyone in that continuum needs a different support, and we have an open lab. We also do a cross-reference between the… when the library is not open, they can send people to us. They… we also run a North Star

Digital Literacy Program. At any given time during the year, we probably have 40 to 60 people taking advantage of that service that we so appreciate, because from basic literacy all the way to Excel skills, they're using them. We have our youngest clients, because we're an adult school, are 18, but our oldest client right now is 84. I think we have a lot more in the senior citizen population that have discovered us, because we're about a mile from the senior center. We cannot say enough good things about Northstar. We started as a pilot with through OTAN, and we started with approximately 20 students, and like I said, now we're serving upwards of 60.

Thank you so much. Yes, let's, well, before we jump right into,

Oh sorry.

The North. Yeah, let's just do a quick round of introductions, so that we could also hear from our other panelists, and, maybe, Martha, if you could also tell us a little bit more about your organization's primary function, and how digital inclusion fits into that.

Yeah, good morning, everyone. So, Martha P. Gomez, she/they pronouns. I'm with Trans Can Work. And so our primary function is really workforce development, economic empowerment, and so a lot of the stuff that we do is around resume writing, cover letter, and things like that, but the truth is that, unknowingly, we were doing digital inclusion, and so, you know, clients need access to internet to apply for jobs; they need access to technology to sometimes keep jobs, and so we've been doing a lot of the work without knowing that we were doing the work, so we were able to find this great community, and so it's making our job a lot easier, and it's definitely helping our clients become more connected to resources in the digital space.

Thank you so much, Martha. And Lily, I'll turn it over to you. Tell us about your organization and how digital inclusion fits into that.

So I work in a rural Northern California public library system in Mendocino County. I've been there for almost 15 years now, and our purpose is to educate, provide culture, provide entertainment, and a huge part of that over the last several years has been our digital inclusion program. So, we really try to offer tech devices for loaning, so that patrons can have things like laptops or Wi-Fi hotspots available to borrow for free from the library. We have tech help events at each of our branches, so people can drop in and get one-on-one help with how to use their smartphone, how to use email, how to use social media. Any question they can think of. We have digital literacy training workshops. Where we teach in classroom environments, and we're just so grateful for the opportunity to partner with these digital inclusion organizations, because it

really, like Martha said, it makes our jobs so much easier to have those resources available and basically be able to do a plug-and-play program. It's really amazing, so thank you.

Thank you, Lily. Appreciate your welcoming. All right, and we have Robert, last but not least.

Hey folks, I do appreciate the time here. So, I'm from SBX, it's Sigma Beta Xi. Originally, just real quick, started in high school, just as a kids giving back to the community. This was over two decades ago. A little older now. But we did turn that into a non-profit. It's non-profit; we have, we give, you know, collect clothing and different donations and give back to the community, pantries. But one of my most pride and joys of our staff in our building is we have what's called a clubhouse, a workshop, with tons of computers and technologies set up for after-school timing for students all around the Riverside community, or wherever, if they can get there, will help them. So that if they have, like, tough tasks, projects, things that involve technology that these, under, you know, privileged houses are not having in their homes, so the technology factor trickled into digital literacy. I'm a certified digital navigator. We definitely do, whole tons of laptops, you know, Chromebooks, giving back to the community, but the most important part is showing them how to use them, putting them in their hands, making Gmails for the first time. I love Adele said, an 84-year-old, I had an 81, she got me, I'll find me. I'll get, you know, get there. But it's awesome to include these folks that have never touched a mouse for the first time, and, you know, to see it and be so wild and stuff, and then by the end of it, have their own email, have a Facebook inviting friends and stuff, super cool stuff. So, can't say enough about the tools and the resources that have been given in this digital inclusion, and we're excited for the future.

Very nice. Thank you so much. And one thing that really stood out to me, Martha, you mentioned, how you were doing the work without really knowing, that you were doing the work, right? Digital inclusion, right, sometimes gets wrapped into other services, right, whether it's, you know, youth development programs. Obviously, libraries are, you know, supporting patrons with so many different needs. Of course, you know, adult learners, so I think, you know, it's just really important how digital inclusion gets wrapped into all these, different services, and it is part of ongoing needs. Martha, I know, you know, you mentioned you have to get going soon, so I want to make sure that we have time to hear from you and tell us a little bit more about your experience in terms of connecting with DigitalLIFT. How, you know, how's that going? How has that been so far from the beginning up until where you are now?

I will say… And this is not DigitalLIFT, just, you know, accessing digital resources was very confusing at the beginning, and really it's more because, you know, it's

usually Google searches, and there's so many places out there that are at cost, and so it was really difficult to filter out, like, who was trying to sell us something, and who was actually there as a resource, and so, I got very lucky that it didn't take me too long to get connected to DigitalLIFT and then that really helped streamline everything else once I… once we got connected with DigitalLIFT and, like, all the resources that they were able to give us, the training for staff, for myself, really has helped. Like I said, we were unofficially doing the work, and we didn't realize how much digital inclusion we were already doing with clients. So, it was kind of reaffirming, reassuring to know that you know without the official term, we were already working towards that, but being able to have, like an actual pathway to resources, to have a curriculum that really kind of supports what we're doing has really helped us. Both for the clients, so that we're not just pulling things out of every other place, but it also has helped us as an organization, because now we're… we feel more confident when we are out there looking for monies, and trying to, you know, access funding for laptops, you know, we would love to, like Robert said, our next goal is to have, like, an actual dedicated space with, like, computers, laptops that people can come in and use, and so…Now, one, we do get emails that help us, kind of like, who's funding different projects, but two, we're able to confidently say, hey, we are part of this network; we have the support; we have these programs that we are going to be using as part of creating that thing, and I think that it really adds validity to what we're doing. So, we're not just coming out and saying, this is what we want to do, like, off a whim. And so, I think in that way, both as an organization and for clients, having something foundational really helps.

Exactly, yeah. Thank you so much, Martha. Yeah, thank you so much for sharing your experience, and just, again, you know, the ongoing need, and also the fact that these are free resources, right? All the resources that we are, you know, promoting, you know, through our digital intrusion partners are free resources through DigitalLIFT, through Human-I-T, right? They're either free or low-cost, right? Some devices, of course we have free access to Northstar licenses. And so, yeah, just want to make sure that folks are fully aware that these are free resources that we want to make sure folks are just aware. Robert, can you tell us a little bit more about your experience in using CETF resources? Where are you in the process of using the resources, and how has your experience been in connecting with this partner?

Yes, ma'am. To be honest with you, Aracely, I can't say enough great things about CETF. They're very inviting, you know, a very family-oriented type of atmosphere. They will one-on-one coach you if you have an issue or a, you know, kind of a hold back on what tool, how it works, because we're always adding new things. So, with my part, especially partnering up with CETF is, just to give an example, like, we're adding HubSpot, which is a CRM that allows us to kind of have the information kind of more detailed, and I was one of the ones

that took it on firsthand for about a month. And then, train my other CBOs and other folks on it, constantly in Zoom meetings and stuff with, CETF to make sure that we're fine-tuning when we learn things that are better this way, or, you know, better, best practice. Shall I say, I'll share that with CBOs and make sure that everybody's on task. So, can't say enough about them. Like I said, the most inviting company I've ever worked for, and I've spent a couple decades with other companies, and I'm very excited to work in the community. We go to rural areas, we go to low community housings and stuff, and we really push through. And those tools, those resources are how we're able to function, you know, in that type of pace and in that environment, so…

Thank you, yes, and it's really great to hear that you completed your Digital Navigator training certification, so yeah, it's really good to hear that CETF is doing amazing work, providing the services and providing, you know, some coaching along the way. Adele, can you tell us a little bit more about your experience using Northstar? What was your experience like connecting with a partner? Where are you at in terms of using the resources? I believe you have over 100 learners that are registered to Northstar, right? Tell us a little bit more.

We do, so, we have, like I said, a variety of programs we offer at Apple Valley Adult Education. So, we have about 100 students that come to us to get ESL courses through the college, and then we have our citizenship class. Many of those students lack the skills to do things… simple skills, like making their doctor's appointments, or even learning how to navigate the communication system of our school district. So, because our lab is… is an open one, they can come in, and they can get one-on-one support if they need it. Our Digital Literacy Day is typically Monday, so we any instruction is actually done on that day. For the first hour of the morning, we have some direct instruction for the most basic level literacy, and then throughout the week, we have some one-on-one support in that lab. We also have students that are there in order to gain credit for those classes, and those would be any of the Components that are levels 3 are higher. We've even given them a ZIP code. They don't get college credit, but they definitely would get high school credit towards completing their CTE. And that was something we actually did, like, starting year 3. Years 1 and 2, we were just learning the system, and we were learning where it made sense to support our learners in other programs. I…

That's really amazing to hear, and also, Lily, I do want to give you the opportunity to talk about your experience in using Human-I-T resources and services. Tell us what your experience was connecting with them, and where you are in terms of, you know, accessing their resources.

So, connecting with Human-I-T was very easy. I filled out the CDT survey and received a response very quickly from Human-I-T. We set up a virtual meeting to

go ahead and talk about some of the different services that Human-I-T might be available to our library patrons. And so far, what we've done is come up with co-branded flyers, with information about how to access digital navigator services, how to access, courses online for digital literacy training skills. They can access them by phone; they can access them online, so it's really nice for our patrons' convenience. We've given those out to all of our branches. We promote them during our tech events that we have. Human-I-T also offers help with finding low-cost devices and low-cost, affordable, reliable internet. So, we definitely offer that to patrons who come in and are asking questions about, oh, where do I find, you know, a device that's suitable, that's reliable, that I can afford? It's great to be able to have something that I can just give to the patron and say, you know, we vetted this for you, this is a trustworthy source, please get in contact with these people, and they can help you further. So it's really been amazing. We also have a technology training webpage, which has all of our links for online resources, so we promote Human-I-T through that as well.

That's really great to hear, Lily. And yes, I definitely want to highlight, right, the importance of promoting the services to, you know, to your patrons, to your students, right, to the people that you serve across your communities, right? Because we want to make sure that folks are fully aware of these services, whether it's digital literacy training services, whether it's digital navigator services, the importance of accessing low-cost internet. And also, of course, devices. So, yeah, thank you so much for sharing that. Martha, I do want to turn it back to you. What would you tell other organizations, just in terms of your experience with using digital resources, just, you know, so far your experience with using digital, how would you…? What would you tell other organizations that perhaps are not familiar, or that could benefit from these resources?

To just jump in with both feet, I guess. You know, do your due diligence. If you're already here, you're steps ahead, because you have a trusted resource. I think, like I said, on our end, finding the trusted resource, which is you all, was probably the biggest roadblock. But definitely, even if you don't think that digital inclusion is part of your job description or part of what you're doing, more than likely, most of us are doing some sort of digital inclusion, and so having our staff trained, having our staff knowledgeable of the resources, it will only help you, and like I said, even if it's not part of what your organizational mission is, it probably is, in some ways, beneficial to those clients you serve. So, be more open-minded in what you think you're doing for your community, because it probably is a lot more than you thought.

Exactly, and I love that you highlighted that these are trusted resources, right? They've already been vetted; we can guarantee that these are services that are definitely beneficial to help close the digital divide. Adele, tell us a little bit more about how, you know, you would tell other organizations in terms of using

the North Star platform. Yeah, how would you, you know, tell them that it's beneficial to them?

I try to get every adult school, because I'm…Throughout the state with adult schools, I'm on, I'm the treasurer for, CAEA. It's an organization for adult administrators, and I've tried to get all of them to take on board some kind of North Star, because they need it. I don't care what you provide in adult school; you're going to need digital literacy. And I do think it is probably the number one dividing factor right now between those who can succeed and those who can't, whether that means getting better healthcare, a sustainable wage job, helping their students in school, absolutely every level. So, I've been using it now for 6 years. I started, like I said, as a pilot with 20, trying to figure out what that looked like, and I also brought it out to Lucerne. But I don't… I don't know of another product out there that starts with the very, the basics that we all need and goes all the way up to, if you wanted to, you could train even the employees at your organization in how to do their office jobs better. So, I'm a huge proponent. I'm very grateful for the opportunity.

Exactly, and that's exactly what we're hearing, right? A lot of adult schools are, you know, perhaps using these services not just for students, but also for any staff members that could, you know, benefit from this additional, you know, training support or capacity building. So yes, digital navigation, right, is really important, and sometimes, you know, staff members themselves serve as digital navigators, and, you know, these are trusted messengers, and it goes a long way. Robert, tell us a little bit more about how, you know, you would help encourage other organizations in using digital inclusion services by CETF.

Yeah, I mean, well, as a call representative that takes inbound and outbound calls in the call center for families, I mean, I would 1000 let them know, not only do you have the full support, but they also give you all the tools and resources to reach out and to be reached for these communities to get the help. So, I mean, hand-in-hand, to be honest with you, at the end of the day, what we offer as far as resources and tools through CETF, I mean, absolutely endless ways to help. You know, because of the call center, because of the digital navigator trainings, things of that nature. There's self-taught trainings on the website. Our internetforall.org website gives great access to families that just want to, you know, initiate and kind of shop around and look. For those, discounts for their internet, but then also, you know. Being able to reach out to a call center representative like myself, who's ready to take on the task, you know, I tell people, folks, all the time: listen, if you're gonna work in this establishments and this type of stuff. Be patient. Be patient and understand it's a step-by-step process, and as Martha said, if you're already right here, you're already rolling, so have the confidence and attack at full force, right? I love that, Martha, absolutely.

Thank you so much, Robert, for that, and definitely, right, awareness is key, right? We want to make sure folks are aware of the services, of the available discounts for broadband, low-cost internet, and again, it is a step-by-step process, but it's a really simple process to fill out on our Digital Inclusion portal page to access these resources. Loi, did I give you the opportunity to also, you know, do a pitch, right? How would you pitch this to other organizations, to other libraries that, you know, are not fully aware of the resources that Human-I-T has?

I would say, especially for public libraries, it's 100% worth it to take the 5 minutes to fill out that CDT survey because you're getting so much more. I got so much more than I expected from my library. I got access to Human-I-T, Northstar, DigitalLIFT, AI, Digital Literacy Training. There are services out there that you might not be aware of that were in your wheelhouse in terms of teaching patrons' digital skills, digital literacy. I love it because I don't need to reinvent the wheel in terms of creating programming, in terms of looking through and finding what services, what devices, what low-cost, affordable internet programs there are for my patrons. I can go ahead and use these organizations that have, like, that's been said many times before, have already been vetted; it's really great. My interactions have been completely positive, very professional, very quick. If I've had any questions, they've been answered pretty much immediately, so I have nothing but good things to say about this Digital Inclusion Program.

Thank you so much, everyone. And I do want to also make sure that other folks in our audience have the opportunity to ask any questions, so I do want to open it up if anyone wants to raise their hand or unmute yourselves before we completely wrap up the panel here. And I know, Martha, you do have to get going, so if anyone has any questions for Martha before they leave, definitely encourage you to raise your hand or unmute yourself.

Hello? I have been raised by hand for a while now. Can you, can you guys hear me?

Thank you so much. Yes, go ahead. Sorry.

Yeah, I just want to say that my name is Sery Tatpaporn. I'm with ABLE Community Development Foundation, and we had worked with both DigitalLIFT and everybody on with Robert before. And he definitely had done a good job. He has sent, I think, at least, like, up to 40 or 50 different tablets, and keep it to our people in the Bay Area. And he also sent the trainer to teach the class up to, like, 2 different classes, class for 4 hours and 8 hours altogether. And I would like to expand that work and to do more, so we can have some limited, in terms of the device. And we have the demand, a big demand in our community, especially with limited English-speaking population. And I just had MOU with a

DigitalLIFT to train 10 digital navigators. And all these people are bilingual, and they already serve as a community health worker, and they have been trained as a community health worker, so…they're gonna add another skill to… to help people, so I just want to express my appreciation to Robert and… and I need you to live. So, thank you.

Great, thank you so much, Sarah, for your comments, and definitely, yes, we hear that there is an ongoing need in the Bay Area, right? And it sounds like, you know, you're already familiar with some of the services, but perhaps, yeah, there are some limitations as it comes to limited English speakers, so yes, we're excited to hear that you're looking to expand and access more resources there, so thank you so much for your comments. Anyone else, any comments, any questions, to our panelists before we wrap up? I know Martha had to get going, but we still have Adele, Lily, and Robert here joining us, so feel free to chime in if anyone has any questions or comments before we end this portion. Alright, well, looks like I don't see any other questions, so I want to extend my appreciation to all of our panelists that joined us here today: Lily, Martha, Adele, and Robert. You know, I think it's really great to hear how you're using these resources, how easy it is to sign up, you know, for these resources on our digital inclusion partnership page, which we'll be dropping in our… in the chat shortly. And just, yeah, want to encourage you all that are watching to please, you know, go ahead and sign up. If you have any questions, you're more than welcome to reach out, you know, to me to get more information about one specific, you know, service or the other. But again, these are really great services to close the digital divide, to support your local communities, and we're very happy that we had some speakers here today to join us, experts in the field that are supporting, you know, students, adult learners, patrons across the libraries, youth, right, with these resources. So, thank you so much, and we look forward to our next conversation. I'll turn it back to,

I want to thank Scott Adam, too, for helping.

I love it.

Thank you, Sery.

Thank you. Robert, thank you.

Yes, sir. Love it. Thank you so much for your time, and it's always a pleasure to be in these meetings. We gather so much knowledge, and we really appreciate what you folks do on your end. Appreciate it.

Thank you, Robert. Appreciate you. Appreciate y'all. Thank you.

Thank you so much, all of you, for joining us. Next, we are going to move to Aracely Hernandez to speak on upcoming grant opportunities. Back to you, Aracely.

Thank you so much, Amanda. So we're back, here to talk about upcoming grant opportunities. If we could move on, to the next slide, please. So to start off, I do want to highlight the upcoming federal grant opportunities. We have the NTIA Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, which has up to $540 million in funding for broadband use and adoption projects, as well as infrastructure deployment. The deadline is coming up next month, on November 17th. And we do have the QR code here that's available to access more information. Next slide. So the other NTIA grant I want to highlight is the Native Entities Grant Program, also with the November 17th deadline, for grants ranging from $500,000 to $2.5 million for broadband use and adoption activities, workforce development, as well as technology upgrades. Again, there is a QR code on each of our slides. To make sure that, you have that chance to access that information. Next slide. Alright, next is the Anthropic grant program. We've had this before, but it does have a deadline coming up at the beginning of next year. This is to train and deploy young workers over 18 years of age, while also equipping nonprofits with AI tools and systems. This is the second cohort in January. I believe potentially there's a third cohort coming, but I will keep you all posted if there is. But as of now, this is information that we have available here. And there is a QR code on the right-hand side as well. Next, slide, please. Alright, so moving along, to state grant opportunities by the Public Utilities Commission, is the Digital Divide Grant Program. The deadline here is October 30th, so that's actually tomorrow. This is designed to support rural and urban public schools and nonprofits. There's 3 different grants that are available here. They're noted on our slide, but essentially it's $100,000 for schools. And two additional grants, up to $50,000, for nonprofits to address gaps in broadband networks, affordability, devices, as well as digital skills training. Next slide. Alright, and here, I just want to remind everyone that the PUC extended the deadline for the Broadband Infrastructure account, from October 1st to November 2nd, so it gives folks the time to review the new eligibility data that relates to BEAD. There is more information on the Public Utilities Commission website, and you can use the respective QR code here as well. Next slide. Alright, so continuing with the Public Utilities, California Advanced Services Fund programs, as a reminder, these are rolling deadlines, meaning, you know, you can apply at any time, but they do have specific deadlines, but you can submit your application, really at any time. So we have the CASF Tribal Technical Assistance Program, the CASF Broadband Adoption Account Program, and the Broadband Public Housing Account Program. They all have a deadline of January 1st. So essentially, supporting local government, senior centers, schools, libraries, nonprofits, supporting with digital literacy and broadband access. And the public housing account is designed to support with building or connecting networking, offering

free broadband services for public and farm worker housing, mobile home parks, multi-dwelling units, and tribal housing. There is a QR code on each of the respective accounts here for more information, and we will be making the slides available. Next slide, please. Alright, so to wrap up, I do want to show a slide here that the PUC recently demonstrated at our recent Broadband Council meeting last week. It showcases the different California Advanced Services Fund grants that have made an impact across our state to support digital equity needs. It's really great to see, you know, the impact that, you know, these accounts are having, that these grants are having across our communities, and so I do want to encourage you all to continue to apply, take advantage of these CASF grant accounts, and it just really shows, right, that the work is paying off to support all of these efforts. So here you'll see all the different amounts that have been awarded across the different grants. And across the state. So, yeah, thank you all so much for continuing to support or to address digital equity, and to help close the digital divide. So, thank you all, and I will turn the mic back to Amanda for next steps. Thank you all.

Thank you, Aracely. Next slide, please. Great. So our upcoming meeting is Thursday, November 19th. It's a week early in light of the Thanksgiving holiday. So please join us for the November 19th. We also have one more in December as well. It looks like we have Kat Zigmont, who is coming in for Sunne McPeak, so if we could go ahead and spotlight her. Thank you so much. Welcome, Kat, and I will hand the mic over to you.

Hello, everybody. Thank you for having me today. Today, we're just going to talk a little bit about the statewide survey that we're doing in partnership with CDT has worked together with CETF to benchmark the questionnaire that we have put together. So, we've been working to refine the questionnaire from last year. We are making sure that we're assessing all of the major challenges and changes from the 2003 Digital Equity Survey that we did. So that it is more relevant to the 2027 population, we will have a sample size of 1,650 households with a 3% margin of error. So, we do this statewide survey. By random digit dialing. So, we work with, we are working with several partners, including the University of Southern California. And it's their Equity Research Institute, specifically, that we're working with, and then they also work with Davis Research, who actually conducts the random digit dialing. And through that process, we get a very unbiased and clear picture of the digital divide. Next slide, please. Is there another slide? We will be doing the survey in early, or in late January, early 2027. We're doing the survey after the election and the holidays so that we get the best results that we can. So, the progress is going very well, and we're really excited about seeing the results, so hopefully by April or May of 2027, we'll be out of the field and starting the analysis, and we look forward to sharing all of that with you all next year. So..

Thanks, Kat. And we really appreciate the partnership with CETF on this. It was a really positive experience, you know, doing the side-by-side surveys during the development of the Digital Equity Plan, and so I think it's really important to do the scientific, you know, method of the phone survey that does random digit dialing. And then also wanted to make folks aware that, like in 2023, we're working to develop a complementary online and mobile phone accessible surveys so that we can get more granular information at community-wide levels. So, for all of you partners, wanted to just make you aware that there's gonna be two ways, and gonna be a call to action to help distribute the online and mobile phone survey. Kat, you know, I think really important, like you said, this is… has been an ongoing survey, so there's a lot of the standard broadband adoption questions, that are there, you know, gonna make some slight modifications to update. The current system, but so much has changed, you know, since 2023. We were hoping to track progress, but, you know, we are going to really need to be establishing those new baselines, right? Yeah, that's absolutely right, and we do have the longevity questions that we've been tracking since 2008, and so we do hold very firm to those, but…

And as you know, as everyone knows, in 2003, we were in ACP times, and so we had a very different scenario. Not only in digital inclusion generally, but the use of the internet. And since then, a lot has changed; a lot of people have dropped off, we have this onset of AI coming into the picture, and so, yes, I think it is prudent to have a subset of questions that are for the moment, like we have in the past, but those through-line questions will hold steady so that we have a good comparison over time.

Got it, and why are we targeting January 2027?

Oh, well, because I know everybody is being texted and called for political campaigns and is avoiding their phones, and we don't want that to affect the survey itself. So yes, we're gonna wait for the wave of the election to pass, and then also the holidays. Yeah, and so we'll be in the field in late January, early February, and yeah, and then we'll, we'll go from there.

Got it. So, it's a great update for folks that, largely, similar questions, similar format as the previous survey, a few modifications to update, you know, realities of the Affordable Connectivity Program going away, the Lifeline Pilot, you know, coming here, and the increased usage of AI. Probably going to be some questions to look forward to, and, like, how people are actually using the internet, if that's changed at all. So, Kat, I'm wondering, I know we got a couple minutes, wanted to open it up. Is there anyone in the community that wanted to, you know, ask a question, weigh in regarding the Digital Equity Survey to either Kat or myself?

I welcome that.

Halt for questions. I don't see any in the chat or the Q&A. Are there any live questions? Okay, well, we need not, you know, force that conversation, just really, part of this, there's so many moving parts to closing the digital divide, from the infrastructure deployment to the, you know, getting people connected to affordable service plans and devices and the skills and training. This survey is gonna really help us, you know, acquire some data to implement our data-driven plan to close the digital divide. It's going to be timely, too, if some of the new federal funding comes online next year. So, Kat, thanks for stepping in and giving this briefing, and looking forward to more to come.

Thank you so much, Scott. It's a pleasure to be here.

Amanda, back to you.

Thank you, Scott. Thank you, Kat. Great. Just to reiterate, again, the next meeting will be on Thursday, November 19th, at 10:30, so we hope to see you there. We've also put in the chat the link, and then you can go ahead. Next slide, Ricki. Thank you all for being here today. If you have any remaining questions, our team will stay on for just a few more minutes. I'm happy to take any questions, but otherwise, thank you again, and we will see you next month. Take care. I see no questions. So, we can go ahead and close. Thank you all! Take care.