

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



December 18, 2020

To: Members of CASF Distribution List

Subject: Solicitation for California Advanced Services Fund Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Grant Applications (Applications Due February 1, 2021)

This letter is to inform prospective applicants that the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission), Communications Division (CD) is accepting California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia grant application proposals to fund activities meeting program guidelines.

Background

On October 15, 2017, Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill (AB) 1665¹ (Garcia, Statutes of 2017) into law, which among other things, established continuation of the CASF Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Grant Account (Consortia Grant Account) with an additional \$10 million in available funding.

On October 25, 2018, the Commission adopted Decision (D.) 18-10-032, implementing programmatic changes to the Consortia Grant Account as required by AB 1665, that funds be used to “facilitate the deployment of broadband services by assisting infrastructure grant applicants in the project development or grant application process”.²

Pursuant to rules developed to implement the law, the Commission will consider funding Consortium activities that achieve the following objectives:

- Collaborating with the Commission to engage regional consortia, local officials, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), stakeholders, and consumers regarding priority areas and cost-effective strategies to achieve the broadband access goal.
- Identifying potential CASF infrastructure projects, along with other opportunities, where ISPs can expand and improve their infrastructure and service offerings to achieve the goal of reaching 98% broadband deployment in each consortia region.
- Assisting infrastructure applicants in the project development or grant application process.
- Conducting activities leading to infrastructure applications.
- Assisting the Commission in publicizing requests for wireline testing volunteers in areas, as needed.

¹ AB 1665 is codified at Public Utilities Code (Pub. Util.) Code, § 281, Ch. 851, Stats.2017.

² Pub. Util. Code, § 281(g)(1).

CD previously held two rounds of solicitation for Consortia grant applications, respectively, on March 29, 2019 and April 23, 2020. Subsequently, the Commission approved nine Consortia grants with [Resolution T-17669](#) on October 24, 2019 and two Consortia grants with [Resolution T-17708](#) on October 22, 2020. The approved Work Plans and Performance Metrics Plans are available on the CASF Consortia webpage: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/General.aspx?id=870>. The Commission continues to accept Consortia grant applications for regions that are not currently represented or not currently funded by CASF. As of the date of this letter, there is approximately \$5.3 million³ remaining in the Consortia Account (this amount is estimated and, hence, is subject to revision).

Eligibility

An eligible Consortium may include representatives of organizations including, but not limited to, local and regional government, public safety, elementary and secondary education, health care, libraries, postsecondary education, community-based organizations, tourism, parks and recreation, agricultural, business, workforce organizations, and air pollution control or air quality management districts. An eligible Consortium is not required to have as its lead fiscal agent an entity with a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity.

Application Package

To assist prospective applicants with the application process, the CASF Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Grant Program Administrative Manual (Administrative Manual, *Version 7, April 2019*) provides a series of application attachments illustrating the various informational requirements and documents that must be properly completed and submitted as part of the application. The Administrative Manual is available on the CASF Consortia webpage: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/General.aspx?id=870>. Key attachments include:

- CASF Consortia Grant Application Checklist
- Description of Existing and Past Non-CASF Funded Projects
- Board Member Background and Project Role
- Work Plan and Performance Metrics Plan
- Proposed Budget Plan
- Affidavit Form.

The application must include specific work activities; measurable, tangible, and verifiable work deliverables; specific timeline milestones; quantitative and data-driven performance measures; and the method for performance tracking and measuring in their proposed *Work Plan and Performance Metrics Plan*. Examples of activities, deliverables, and performance measures are provided in the *Work Plan and Performance Metrics Plan* form template. Grantees must provide reporting and payment request documentation of performance/outcomes, consistent with the applicant's *Work Plan and Performance Metrics Plan*.

Both existing and newly formed consortia may submit applications. Applications will be evaluated based on meeting all the requirements in the Information Required from Applicants and scoring criteria. Applications will be objectively evaluated on how well they meet the goals of the CASF Consortia Program consistent with Pub. Util. Code § 281.

³ The \$5.3 million includes approved Consortia awards as of December 18, 2020 and state operations as of June 2020. The \$5.3 million does not include one application currently under Commission review and future state operations.

Application Submission and Evaluation Process

The maximum funding cap per year per consortium is \$150,000, until December 31, 2022, plus \$10,000 (per consortium for up to 5 representatives) for attendance at the Annual Public Workshop. All proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the scoring criteria in D.18-10-032.⁴ Applicants that meet a minimum threshold scoring criteria of 70 points (out of a possible 100) will be considered for funding. Where multiple consortia apply for the same region, the consortium with the highest score will be considered for an award.

As with the previous grant approvals, CASF grants awarded will be limited to and apply only to activities and programs that are not already funded by any other public or private sources. CASF grants awarded will be only one consortium per geographic region, along county lines. A consortium may represent more than one county, but a county may not be represented by more than one consortium.

CD will notify an applicant by letter specifying the reasons for rejection, should an application fail to meet the criteria set forth in D.18-10-032.

Applicants must submit their proposals by February 1, 2021 via email or U.S. mail⁵ to the below addresses to ensure consideration.

[CASF Consortia Grant Administrator@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:CASF_Consortia_Grant_Administrator@cpuc.ca.gov)

California Public Utilities Commission
Attn: CASF Consortia Coordinator
Communications Division
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3298

If you have questions, please contact [CASF Consortia Grant Administrator@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:CASF_Consortia_Grant_Administrator@cpuc.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Robert Osborn, Director
Communications Division

⁴ D.18-10-032, Appendix 1, pp. 11-12.

⁵ Due to the COVID-19 emergency, paper copy submission is not required. CD reserves the right to request paper copy as necessary for review of applications when the [Governor's Executive Order N-33-20](#) is lifted.