California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)

Broadband Adoption Account

Eligibility Requirements and FAQs

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1. What is the Broadband Adoption Account?

    a. *The Broadband Adoption Account provides grants to projects that will increase publicly available or after-school broadband access and digital inclusion, such as grants for digital literacy training programs and public education to communities with limited broadband adoption.*

2. How much funding is available?

    a. *$20 million in grants will be available through the Broadband Adoption Account.*

3. Who is eligible to apply for funding?

    a. *Eligible applicants include local governments, senior citizen centers, schools, public libraries, nonprofit organizations, and community-based organizations with programs to increase publicly available or after school broadband access and digital inclusion, such as digital literacy training programs.*

    b. *Publicly supported communities who are otherwise eligible to apply for funds from the Broadband Public Housing Account are also eligible to submit an application only after all funds available for adoption projects from the Public Housing Account have been awarded.[1]*

4. How will projects be evaluated?

    a. *Applications will be evaluated based on meeting all the requirements in the Application Package and Preference Checklist in Commission Decision*

5. What types of projects are eligible for funding?

    a. *Digital Inclusion Projects: Digital Inclusion projects may include digital literacy training programs and public education to communities with limited broadband adoption, including low-income communities, senior citizen communities, and communities facing socioeconomic barriers to broadband adoption.*

    b. *Broadband Access Projects: Broadband Access projects may include projects that increase or provide free broadband access in community training rooms or other public spaces, such as local government centers, senior citizen centers, schools, public libraries, nonprofit organizations, and community-based organizations.*

6. What types of costs associated with the projects are eligible for reimbursement?

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[1] Pub. Util. Code, § 281 (i)(3)(C).

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a. *The following may be eligible for project cost reimbursement:*

    i. *Education and outreach efforts (including travel, up to 10% of grant amount) and materials;*

    ii. *Acceptable computing devices and software within limits;*

    iii. *Printers;*

    iv. *Routers;*

    v. *Provision of technical support for the installation of equipment subsidized through this program or technical support for the equipment for the duration of the project subsidized through this program;*

    vi. *Desks and chairs to furnish a designated space for training/access;*

    vii. *Gathering, preparing, creating and distributing digital literacy curriculum (for Digital Literacy projects);*

    viii. *Digital literacy instructors or staffing for monitoring the designated space or staffing for call centers.*

7. Is there a limit to how much funding an applicant can request?

    a. *No, there is no statutory limit to the amount of funding an applicant can request for a proposed project. However, projects requesting $100,000 or less in funding may be eligible for expedited review. (Please refer to the* Application Package *for more information on how to qualify for expedited review.).*

    b. *Reimbursement for in-classroom computing devices used in community training rooms or other public spaces is limited to$750 per device, with a cap of 15 devices per designated space or project.*

    c. *Reimbursement for take-home computing devices is limited to only households that participate in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, the National School Lunch Program, or the Women, Infants, and Children Program upon completion of the digital literacy training courses (Digital Literacy Programs only). Reimbursement for these take-home computing devices is limited to $150 per device, is limited to one device per eligible household, and is limited to $10,000 per application/project location. Grantees should ensure proof of eligibility in their distribution of computing devices for households.*

8. With regards to the reimbursement limitation on the device cost and quantity, can the applicant leverage other funding sources, or use out of pocket funds for the costs exceeding the limit?

    a. *Yes. The CPUC encourages applicants to consider the availability of other funding sources for the project, including contributions from broadband service providers, or from other public or private broadband adoption programs, including the California Teleconnect Fund or any reasonably available program.*

9. Is there a limit to the number of projects an applicant can apply for?

       a. *No, there is no statutory limit to the number of projects an applicant can seek funding for.*

10. Will preference be given to certain types of projects?

       a. *Yes. AB 1665 requires the CPUC to give preference to projects in communities with demonstrated low broadband access, including low-income communities, senior citizen communities, and communities facing socioeconomic barriers to broadband adoption. The CPUC will prioritize projects for funding based on the preferences met.*

11. How are communities with demonstrated low broadband access defined?

       a. *Communities with demonstrated "low broadband access" for the Adoption Account are defined as communities or areas having low broadband subscription rates (a.k.a., low broadband adoption) relative to the statewide average[2] including communities facing socioeconomic barriers to broadband and adoption.*

12. How are communities facing socioeconomic barriers to broadband adoption defined?

       a. *Communities facing "socioeconomic barriers to broadband adoption" include low-income communities, communities with a high percentage of residents with limited English Proficiency, communities with a high percentage of residents with limited educational attainment, or communities with some other demonstrated disadvantage which affects broadband adoption.[3]*

13. How are low-income communities defined?

       a. *Communities that are considered "low-income communities" include those with a median household income at or below the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program income limits for a household of four[4]. "Communities" can be geographically defined by a political or US Census geographic extent (such as a city or county boundary, or a census tract/block or designated place), by location (such as a public housing complex or senior center) or by the class or category of people served (such as disadvantaged youth).*

14. Is there a time limit between the awarding of funds and project completion?

       a. *Yes. Grantees must start the project within six months of grant approval and must complete the project within a 24-month timeframe thereafter or earlier. The CPUC may withhold or terminate grant payments if the grantee does not comply with any of the requirements set forth in its application and compliance with the*

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[2] According to the annual survey conducted for the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), as of July, 2016, California has an overall adoption rate of 84% (http://www.cetfund.org/node/9318).

[3] California Broadband Report, A Summary of Broadband Availability and Adoption in California as of June 30, 2011, Pages 22-28, show correlation of factors relative to adoption. See http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/General.aspx?id=5753

[4] CARE income limits can be found here: http://consumers.cpuc.ca.gov/lowincomerates/.

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CASF. In the event that the grantee fails to complete the project in accordance with the terms of approval granted by the CPUC, the grantee will be required to reimburse some or all of the CASF funds that it has received.

15. What are the Reporting requirements once funding for a project is granted?

    a. *Please refer to the Decision for the Reporting requirements.*

16. How can I apply?

    a. *To Apply,*

        i. *Review Adoption Account Application Instructions;*

        ii. *Complete and Submit Adoption Account Application Package*

17. When are the application deadlines?

    a. *Applications may be submitted at any time. However, the CPUC will consider applications submitted on or before each deadline as a batch, until all funds have been awarded. Any deadline falling on a holiday or a weekend will be extended to the following business day. Please refer to the website for the current schedule.*

18. How does an application qualify for "expedited" review?

    a. *Projects eligible for expedited review are those that request $100,000 or less and meet all of the checklist criteria. Please refer to the Application Package for the Checklist criteria. An application that does not qualify for expedited review may still be considered for a grant via the traditional CPUC Resolution approval process.*

19. How will applicants find out if their application has been approved or denied?

    b. *Applications approved via expedited review will be notified by an approval letter and others will result in a Resolution which will be mailed to the CASF service lists. All approved applications will be listed on the website. Commission staff will notify an applicant by letter specifying reasons for rejection should an application fail to meet the Commission criteria or other factors.*