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Update on Broadband and Digital Equity Initiatives, including projects funded by the American Rescue Plan Act

Presented to the Solano County Board of Supervisors
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ARPA/State Funded
Broadband & Digital Equity Programs

Funding Source	Amount	Description
ARPA Initial Study Q4 FY2021/22	$488,000	Broadband/digital equity needs assessment
ARPA Broadband Infrastructure Q3 FY2022/23	$2,200,000	Buildout with Comcast, Cal.net, Valley Internet
ARPA Digital Equity Programs Q3 FY2022/23	$1,794,941	Devices, training, outreach, equity grant program
California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Local Area Technical Assistance (LATA) Grant Q3 FY2022/23	$500,000	Technical design & broadband planning
→ CTC Technology	→$435,000	→Broadband Handbook + GIS Impact Report
→ Golden State Connect Authority(GSCA)/Tilson/UTOPIA	→$65,000	→Gov't fiber network design

Total Funding: ARPA $4,482,941 and CPUC $500,000
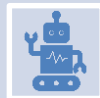
Broadband Infrastructure – Reach & Readiness

Cal.net: $943K, up to 837 homes, fixed wireless, towers operational

Valley Internet: $856K, targeting 570 homes, designs complete, permitting underway

Comcast: $400K, 108 homes in Elmira, fiber-to-home, boring fiber line from Vacaville to Elmira this month. Expecting customer hookups by December 2025 to begin. One easement document in process with county Planning

CTC (via LATA): $435K for Strategic GIS analysis, CPUC FFA targeting, RFP prep

GSCA/Tilson/UTOPIA (via LATA): $65k for Countywide gov't fiber network high-level design

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Regional Grants - Broadband

California Public Utilities Commission Federal Funding Account (CPUC - FFA):

- City of Vallejo projects under CPUC's Last-Mile FFA have received awards totaling $3,806,104 for VIP Fiber.

- $13,201,420 additional allocated to Solano County has not been awarded.

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD):

- California received $1.86 billion in BEAD funds

- CPUC is in subgrantee selection, with state's final proposal due Oct 2, 2025.

- No official applicant list by county released yet; however, Comcast did confirm major projects submitted for unincorporated Solano County.

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City Broadband Engagement

City of Vacaville and Intrepid Fiber Networks:

The City of Vacaville conducted a public-private partnership RFP process to expand broadband using a city-owned network:

- Intrepid Fiber Networks was selected as the top-scoring proposer. The City Council authorized negotiations with Intrepid to form a public-private partnership to construct and operate fiber infrastructure.

Intrepid's proposal:

- Build the network at no cost to the City, with Intrepid owning the network.
- Bring in its own capital, handling construction, operations, permitting, subscriber drops, NOC, billing, customer service, marketing, and matching/contributed funds toward grants.
- Support digital equity, economic growth, and enhanced city operations, while also increasing eligibility for state and federal funding—including CPUC's Last-Mile FFA grants

Solano County Broadband High-Level Design

Golden State Connect Authority Project Update:

Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) is a broadband joint powers agency of Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), created to pursue rural broadband solutions.

- GSCA assisted the County in exploring opportunities to connect local government centers.

- Estimated countywide build cost ~$41 million.

- Work serves as planning and eligibility groundwork for grants, not a shovel-ready project.

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Digital Equity Outcomes

Tech Exchange: 21 literacy cohorts, 16 workshops, 400 laptops distributed

DigitalLIFT: 115+ devices, job readiness classes, multilingual partners

Meals on Wheels: 298 tablets, 90% report improved social/emotional wellness

Other Partners: Match2Hire, 500 students served, and Independent Living, 239 tablets for seniors coupled with training from DigitalLIFT

Library WiFi device lending program: Popular program & impactful program, with over 5,300 checkouts. *"Literally because of your incredible service loaning out internet access and tablets I was able to create a resume and land a job."* Challenge: Devices not being returned after lending.

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External Funding Sources – Digital Equity

Federal and State Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Digital Equity Funding:

- Solano County, in a joint project with Napa County and cities from both counties, applied for $7.8 million in BEAD Digital Equity federal funds to support local digital equity projects. Over $600k in local cash match was identified showing strong local government support.

- The Digital Equity Act was canceled by the Trump administration, eliminating federal BEAD equity funding nationwide.

- The State's BEAD Digital Equity allocation program was also terminated before Solano County could apply.

External Funding Sources – Digital Equity

California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) funding:

The County provided seed support with ARPA funds to launch local programs, and now these partners are sustaining and expanding their work with CPUC CASF funding with support from Solano County:

- Community Tech Network – $104,174 for Solano County Digital Literacy (Dec 2024)

- Tech Exchange (Oakland Tech Exchange) – two awards of $104,395 each for English and Spanish-language programs in Solano County (Dec 2024)

- Solano Empower Tech – indicated receipt of a 2025 CASF award (not yet posted in CPUC records)

- City of Vacaville – $111,255 for senior digital literacy classes (Dec 2024)

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Broadband and Digital Equity Next Steps

- **Maximize broadband funding:** Advocate for deployment of Solano's remaining $13.2 M in CPUC broadband funds and support new BEAD grant proposals (e.g. Comcast's projects in unincorporated areas) to extend high-speed internet in unserved communities.

- **Promote public–private partnerships:** Encourage city–ISP collaborations (like Vacaville's Intrepid Fiber project) that leverage private investment to expand fiber infrastructure with minimal public cost.

- **Fill digital equity gaps:** Expand support for community digital literacy and device programs via state grants (e.g. CASF) to offset lost federal and state digital inclusion funding.

- **Rebuild regional collaboration:** Work with Contra Costa and Alameda counties to revive a broadband consortium and jointly advocate for reinstating state support (e.g. CPUC consortia grants) for coordinated broadband planning.

- **Enhance Library Wi-Fi Lending Program:** Library to apply for CASF funding in January 2026 and modify program to get referrals for qualified persons to address return of devices.