"Broadband For All" has become the bumper-sticker slogan for several policy proposals and initiatives this year. However, by funding the right policies and programs, Governor Newsom and the Legislature are uniquely positioned to turn this visionary slogan into a reality.

Governor Newsom’s $7 billion budget proposal rightly prioritizes the need to invest in broadband as we need to do more to get California’s hardest to reach households and communities connected to the Internet. With such a large capital investment into broadband infrastructure this year, we have an opportunity to get it right and deploy broadband for all consumers.

5 Steps to Achieve Broadband For All

01. Prioritize Connecting Every Unserved Household

More than 462,000 California households do not have access to broadband. California must efficiently target the use of public funds where they are most needed — in unserved areas that do not have access to broadband at or above a speed of 25/3 megabits per second (Mbps). Connecting these unserved Californians to high-speed Internet should be the state’s utmost priority and the centerpiece of Governor Newsom’s and the Legislature’s broadband plan.

02. Avoid the Network to Nowhere: Middle-Mile with Last-Mile Will Make Connectivity Available to Consumers

The Governor’s broadband plan assumes that if the state builds a highway, someone else will build the necessary ramps and streets that connect to homes and businesses. In this scenario, the state could be left with a multibillion-dollar stranded investment in standalone middle-mile infrastructure that delivers broadband to nowhere. To ensure that California’s investment will actually bring broadband to those who need it most, we simply need to pair investments in middle-mile networks with last-mile connectivity.

The state’s existing California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) program funds both middle-mile infrastructure and the last-mile infrastructure needed to connect homes and businesses to service. In fact, at least 40 CASF grant applications are awaiting approval by the CPUC, including many projects that include both last-mile and middle-mile infrastructure. With the newly available broadband funds, these shovel-ready projects can be immediately deployed to connect unserved California households, rather than asking them to wait years for a state-run middle-mile network with no community connections.
03. Utilize Existing Programs to Connect Unserved Californians Quickly

CCTA proposes that $6 billion of the investment should be paid into CASF, providing an open application process that already allows public and private entities – including local governments, nonprofits, and tribal entities – to apply for grants to deploy broadband in unserved areas. With CASF, California already has a program in place to fund broadband infrastructure for the communities that need it most. Governor Newsom and state lawmakers should not create new separate programs that will only create more complexity and delays, which will jeopardize our opportunity to maximize federal funding before time runs out.

04. Remove Barriers to Expedite Broadband Deployment

Governor Newsom proposes expedited permitting to deploy broadband infrastructure faster. CCTA and our members support this approach. We need to establish policies that expedite permitting and other agency approvals for all broadband infrastructure deployment—whether funded by private investment, public funds, or both.

05. Broadband Adoption Policies Will Get More Californians Connected Faster

As we work together to get more Californians connected to the Internet, we must not lose sight of the fact that right now, 1.9 million households have access to high-speed broadband who do not subscribe to service. While CCTA members offer free and reduced cost Internet service to qualifying households for as little as $10 per month, barriers to broadband adoption remain including affordability, lack of devices, and lack of digital skills. CCTA encourages Governor Newsom and the Legislature to make broadband adoption a priority and supports making ongoing subsidies available for ALL eligible low-income consumers to help them pay for the service they choose to meet individual household needs.

Let’s Get it Right and Achieve Broadband for All Californians.