California Library State Broadband Program – Service Updates

Webinar Transcript from March 29, 2022

REED STREGE
Okay, good morning.

My name is Reed Strege and I’m the Library Programs Administrator at the California State Library. In this webinar today, the California State Library and our partners will go over details about the upcoming program transition and answer your questions about the transition and current broadband access opportunities for the state’s eligible library locations. I’d like to introduce my new colleague, Josh Chisom, who is the broadband Program Opportunities Manager at the California State Library. Josh.

JOSH CHISOM
Thanks, Reed. Again, my name is Josh Chisom. I'm excited to be here today. I'm taking over the role that was previously filled by Laura Sasaki. I'm sure many of you have interacted with her.

My background is, I've got about 17 years' experience working with broadband for anchor institutions, particularly schools and libraries, and very specifically around the E-rate universal service fund program. My enthusiasm and passion is really around helping to connect rural, hard-to-serve areas and communities to broadband, places that have had a challenge doing that in the past.

In general, our broadband program is aiming to bring these connections to all California public libraries. About 88% of our public library jurisdictions are currently connected, or are in the process of being connected, and that's 949 library facilities. Our goal is to get that remaining 12% connected in an efficient and affordable way.

So far in the last eight years, about 52 million dollars has been invested by the State of California into this program, and we've got additional funds coming in for the next few years. We're really excited about the opportunity and looking forward to helping these more isolated and underserved communities get connected.

Again, my name is Josh I'm really excited to be here, and if you have any questions, need any help from us, just please feel free to reach out. And now I'm going to hand it off to Heather Mills.

HEATHER MILLS
Thanks, Josh, and thanks, Reed. My name is Heather Mills. My title at CTC is the Vice President of Grant and Funding Strategies, and CTC has been engaged with the State Library to take over administration from Califa for the program and for the grants program as well, eventually.

With us today is also Paula McKinnon from Califa. In case there are any questions that you guys have, that she can answer for you.

Our plan today is to go over at a fairly high level some changes to the, you know, what you can expect for changes to the administration coming up. It'll be pretty small, we hope, contracts transition. We're going to talk a little bit about the grants program, and I'm pretty sure that there's still a little bit of year 7 funding for the equipment grant available as well, so we'll highlight that and we'll talk a little bit about next steps, and other things you can look forward to from our team as we move forward with the changes.

Feel free to ask questions in the chat during the presentation. I think the way that Zoom works is they've got a Q and A option that we can go through as well.

We're going to, at the end of the presentation, dive into Q&A questions as well. But and I'll introduce my team in a second. They will probably interrupt me with questions that you put in the chat as we go to make sure that everything is hopefully, timely and when they come up to you for asking those questions.

So let me dive in really quick-- next slide, please-- and tell you a little bit about the program partners, the State Library you know, CENIC, I think you know as well. CTC Technology & Energy is the new entity for you, and you may have met me a little bit in the past.

CTC has been working with the State Library, for I think three or four years now advising in regards to broadband in general. CTC has been in business for, gosh, I think approximately 40 years now, and we do generally engineering and design for the public sector. Specifically, my team works with management, Grants management services as well, and CTC is able to provide a sort of deep and wide expertise related to broadband engineering overall.

So next slide, please. I won't spend too much time reading through that. I do want to take a minute to introduce you to the CTC Team. It takes a lot to run a large consortium like this program is. We've essentially called me the Program Administrator.

My team working with me, you'll hear the name Caroline Mueller. She's the Project Coordinator. Rachel Stogner is our Grants Coordinator. She'll be your main point of contact for anything related to grants and grants questions, or handholding for filling out application forms, that sort of thing. Kayleigh Pears, who is helping to moderate the Zoom today, is our Communications Coordinator.

And then you guys have probably, some of you at least, have probably met or spoken with Jim Zimmerman, who is one of our principal network engineers. He's also here today, and he's the point of
contact for helping you sift through those technical decisions that come up about once a year when you’re looking at those RFP responses each time.

Next slide, please, next slide, there we go.

So, I want to take a minute and just pat everybody on the back. This is a really successful program. It was implemented in 2014, in case, I think most of you know that. But, as far as you know, Josh mentioned earlier, approximately 88%, I think I clocked it at approximately 90%, because I like to round up just a little bit. But that’s not anything to shake a stick at. That’s a lot of hard work that went into that and I want to make sure I take a minute to say thank you to Califa, to Paula, and her team. They’ve done a really wonderful job over the last, gosh, eight years, I think is what it’s about seven or eight years there, and SCLC also was a program manager for the grants program previously, so that it feeds into a lot of, you see that number 12.75 million awarded in grant funding approximately that we have another 6 million to hand out for beginning in year 8, and we’ll talk about that a little bit more this afternoon as well, or this morning, as well. We’re also really excited for getting the rest of the eligible libraries into the consortium as well. We have seven library systems joining this cycle, so lots of exciting things coming up.

Next slide, please. Next slide. There we go.

I want to make sure for those of you who are not familiar with the process of things. I’m not going to spend very much time on this at all. In fact, I will let you know that we’ll do we’re planning a series of short webinars in the near future to go over some of these things, but generally the way that the consortium comes together each year. We have a cycle that sort of coincides with the E-rate cycle. There’s an enrollment period in which you say “Yes, I’d like to, we’d like to be on the RFP that gets issued,” and then once those bids all come back, there’s a contract period, during which you’re making decisions and moving forward with those decisions, and then a connection period.

Again, this is very high level, and very quick. It’s a lot more complicated than that, and we will have a webinar in the future about it. And right now, we’re somewhere between Stage Two and Stage Three there for a number of you.

Next slide, please, and we’ll also spend a good amount of time or not a good amount, we’ll spend a good meaty hour, probably on a webinar in the near future regarding the bid process and how the RFP Cycle works for the program in general. A lot of this work is happening in the background, really the library systems, you know. You start off by telling us if you want to take part as part of Step One, and then the program does a good amount of work until we get to Section Four, the bid process, review, and selection of services so, we’ll spend some time going over these items in that webinar, and the thing I want to highlight for you for those new library jurisdictions coming on each year will generally set up a live in – live in person – a Zoom meeting, probably to review your options with you. That’s something that Jim Zimmerman would attend to help you navigate. Those bids and help you understand what your options are so that you can make decisions.
Current members, you'll generally be forwarded the bid responses and we'll follow up with you too, to please make decisions by a certain date. Usually, it has to coincide with when the CENIC team needs to in file their, the form 471, which is, of course, part of the E-rate process that we're tied to, and then of course, there's a contract process, and I'm going to talk about that in just a minute.

Next slide, please. Recent/Upcoming Changes is probably what this should say.

So, CTC Technology & Energy is coming in as the new Program Administrator: We're in the middle of a transition process, and one of the things that we're implementing is a new name for the program. The previous name of the program is the High Speed Broadband in California Libraries Program. We thought something a little easier to say would be helpful, so we're going with California Library Connect, or CLC is how you might hear us refer to it. That's going to be a lot quicker and easier for us to talk about the program in the future.

We have set up a new website, and it will be filled out in short order over the next few weeks. You can go there now if you would like for a very basic look at things, it's got some email addresses on it, and such as well. You're going to be able to find, in the future, forms and information, probably some templates for things as well. That's where we'll have access to a grant portal for you, as well, in there, and you can expect that, you know, basically the depths and breadth of CTC's capabilities are available to any member of the consortia who needs it. So, you would contact Jim Zimmerman or anyone of Caroline, Rachel, or I if you have questions about that and then, Caroline, I don't want to hog all the time here.

CAROLINE MUELLER
Oh, yeah, you'll be able to contact us, is through that email that'll be listed on the website. If you check it's admin@californialibraryconnect.org and you can reach us all there.

I would also note there was a question earlier about whether this presentation will be available. It will be posted on the website as well along with a recording.

HEATHER MILLS
So other small changes you'll notice, the invoices are going to look a little different. We're still working on how that's coming together, but we want to reinforce the timing of your reimbursements if you if you have those, that just is not going to be affected by what we're doing on the administrative side of things. That's part of the overall process that still runs through.

CAROLINE MUELLER
That's right. And if you, you may have seen that both Christian and I were on the reimbursement emails, asking you how you would like to receive your room reimbursements for the upcoming year, so we are keeping all of that information fluid between the two organizations and we're going to make sure this transition is as smooth for everyone as possible.
HEATHER MILLS
Great. Next slide, please.

LOA’s. So, if you are a current member, and you put together any E-Rate LOA’s in the last year.

I don’t believe that there’s anything that you need to do in regards to the E-rate letters of authorization, and as far as CPUC Letters of authorization are concerned. We’re verifying and checking on a few things, but I do want to make sure that I mention that if you are adding library locations or changing a library location for whatever reason where we do want to make sure that you verify that the certification through the CPUC. And we will be doing that as part of an onboarding process as well for any new jurisdictions that come on.

So Caroline, did I miss anything there?

CAROLINE MUELLER
I don’t think so. I’m going to go ahead and answer a question that just came in from Chris Weimer: will you be changing the naming convention of the circuits on the invoices, or keeping them the same? So those naming conventions will come from CENIC, and they will not be changing.

HEATHER MILLS
All right next slide, please, next slide. Thank you. I think the Internet might be slow.

So quick overview of the contract transition process.

And just be aware, we understand that some of this might take a lot longer than we would like for it to take. That’s why we have a great partner in Califa and CENIC, and of course the State Library will be working through as quickly as possible for the transition process, but we know that it’s some jurisdictions may require a little more timing-conscious efforts there. So, we will be in touch about that.

Directly following this webinar, when you close out, a survey should pop up, a post-webinar survey, and you will also get a follow-up email from us as well. Don’t worry, that will have links to all of these things in it, and it’s a really quick survey. I promise we’re just asking you to confirm your contact information for contracts, billing, and your technical contact, and then we’ve got a little box in there, eh, it’s not that little, where you can tell us any specific needs that you have relating to contracts administration, or contracts transition, so that we have a heads up about what to look for.

You can expect over the course of the next few weeks that you will be getting contact from us in in various forms, either a reminder email or, we’ve actually set up a little call center for the CLC.

You might be hearing from Hannah Bagget who works in our call center, or if David Tidd, just following up to see if you have any questions to make sure we get that very quick four-question survey filled out, and I
will probably be reaching out to a number of jurisdictions over the next two weeks, to just introduce myself again, and also follow up on any questions I may have about your contracts transition needs in general.

We will be forwarding the, I've been referring them as templates, to you, and I'll go over what those, what that means in just a second, regarding the contract documents, probably via email. But we'll be working that out in the next couple of days, and exactly how we'll do that. Right now, we're working through a number of contract items that will enable us to forward those things to you. We have to make sure everything lines up properly. Caroline, did I miss anything here, also?

CAROLINE MUELLER
Once everything lines up, you will be able to pass those documents onto the libraries. We may also have them up on the website. I don't think we've got that quite worked out yet. But yeah, I think we can go on to the next slide and really introduce those options.

HEATHER MILLS
Right? Okay. So, the goal of the transition for the contracts is to allow CTC to more formally take over administrative items and relieve Califa of them. So, we understand that, as I mentioned earlier, some of your contract processes may be more complicated than others. So, we came up with two options.

One would be an addendum that will allow essentially administrative transfer of responsibilities to CTC but that will keep Califa in the mix a little longer, to keep all of those other things enforceable. That will allow us time to then go through a new contract process with you, and really understand what the timing is for that.

For some of you it may be just as simple as going to a new contract. The terms basically shouldn't change there are some things that the State Library requires be in all of those contracts, and we will provide you a summary of those items when we formalize and send out the draft documents to everybody as a process.

So I want to pause there really quick, and see if there's any questions about contracts transition at this level that we can answer for you.

All right. I've paused for effect. Okay, and you can always feel free to email us at the email addresses that are on the website, or we'll also send them out in the follow-up email here, and I think it's even on the, at the end of the survey as well, and there's a phone number there that you can call to reach to our call center. That's Hannah or David if you have an urgent burning question there as well. Hannah's able to handle a number of things, and she can get you directly in contact with us if needed as well.

Okay, let me just check here. Okay, so as far as the timing for transition of things, as soon as the new contract is signed with CTC is essentially the timing there, and we're working through the documents
themselves. So, my hope is that within the next few weeks we'll have clear, direct timing for you as soon as we finish up a couple of items.

All right. Next question, or next slide, please. So, really quick, and I'm going to turn it over to Rachel so that she can dive in and make sure everyone is aware of what our options are. If you were awarded a grant or are in the process of being awarded a grant through the State Library Program, right now, those are grants managed by Califa, and so you would be in touch with Califa if you have any questions regarding those. Califa is engaged through the end of June, I believe, to handle those grant items, and you know, let us know if there's any questions regarding how that works out.

There are, as I mentioned earlier, there's $6 million available for Year 8. We have classically referred to them in the program as the equipment grants. But as Rachel will go over and I think most of you know there's so much more than equipment grants, so we want to make sure that you're aware of that and Paula, correct, me if I'm wrong, I believe there's still some Year 7 funding available for grants as well.

PAULA MCKINNON
Correct. Christian has been reaching out to some of you. But if you haven't heard from Christian lately and you're looking to buy something, please do!

HEATHER MILLS
Please do, yes, and we'll of course be working with Califa, as well. So, and keeping track to make sure that your Year 7 money is spent down as well for the Year 8 equipment grants. I'll let Rachel talk about that in just a second. There will be a new application portal, and that access will be sometime in mid-May when we'll start intaking those early to mid-May. We'll try to make it sooner rather than later.

I also want to make sure everyone's aware that there's also going to be a new program that we're referring to as the Cooperative Grants Window potentially opening sometime in 2022, summer of 2022. Sorry, I've had way too much coffee this morning. So, we're currently working on the design of that program with the State Library, and we'll have much more information about that in the near future. We'll probably have a webinar in regards to that, as well as part of our slate of webinar options.

And so next slide, please. So, Rachel I'm going to let you sort of run with this one and tell everybody about our options for grants and things.

RACHEL STOGNER
Sure, Thank you, Heather. So there the broadband equipment grant, or the broadband support grant, as it was previously called, is designed to remove connectivity roadblocks related to any internal, networking, wiring, sorry internal network wiring equipment, or design expertise.

So, the year 8 grants are going to be hosted through WizeHive. So the WizeHive version of the application will be very similar to the Submittable version that is currently up now. There'll just be a few
changes that will help streamline the application process along with some changes to things like the budget spreadsheet and the narrative prompts.

So in regards to eligibility, eligible costs will include costs associated with technology. So, network equipment, as well as the installation and configuration of that equipment. Building infrastructure modification, so that would be special new construction and upgrades to inside wiring. Network wiring Consultations will also be included in eligible costs, so that includes professional network consultation and technical training for library staff. hardship funding will be available for reoccurring circuit costs.

For the first 12 Months, and the CLC team, and I will be able to provide support for navigating and filling out these applications. Once that goes live through WizeHive, and we’ll be available through both email and the hotline.

And so one last kind of aspect is there’s going to be a slight change to the end-of-grant reporting. We’re going to start requiring end-of-grant reporting, but it will be available to submit through the application portal as well.

I think that’s all, Heather, if there’s nothing you have to add.

HEATHER MILLS
I don’t think so. Are there any questions about the Grant program? For the equipment grants at this moment?

All right. next slide, please.

All right So, next steps. When we close out from here there’s a survey, quick survey, I promise, will take you less than five minutes to fill out. I’m sorry to ask you to fill out a survey, I know you probably do that a lot. We just want to make sure that we have the most up-to-date information, and we thought this would be the fastest way to get it.

Take a look at the CLC website. Sorry, californialibraryconnect.org. There’s not much there now. There’s a lot coming in the next few weeks, as we fill out the information there feel free to reach out to Rachel to check out grant options for Year 8, and definitely reach out to Califa if it’s something you want to apply for it right now so that they can allocate the remainder of the available funds they have first.

We’re going to be following up on the survey, we’re going to be following up on the contracts. Expect Caroline and I, and probably Hannah and David, as well in the call center for reaching out to you for that.

We also have a number of workshops or future webinars planned. Caroline, what’s on that list that you have? I’m sure you have it at your fingertips.

CAROLINE MUELLER
I do, and I'm so excited to share. So some of the future webinar topics we're excited to have, are going to be an overview of steps to connectivity with the California library connect program, review of the RFP cycle and bid process, a review of how LOAs work for new libraries coming into the program, a review of eligible grant expenses that's a little bit more in-depth than what Rachel shared today, and a look at how E-rate and CTF discounts actually work, we've had some questions about that recently and also, how budgeting for circuits and reimbursement timelines work.

So, for instance, the E-rate program, those reimbursements are generally months later than the beginning of those budget cycles. So yeah, we're going to be going over all of those things soon.

HEATHER MILLS
Great, thank you, and then I'm going to re-emphasize, Again, if you have questions about the technical details of your circuits or anything like that, you can, of course, always reach out to our team and we can help navigate who the best person is to answer those questions, either the team at CENIC, who are wonderful and fabulous, and have been great, fabulous partners for the program, as well as Jim Zimmerman as well.

And, with that, I think we're in our Q&A section right now, so if there's any questions we can, I think we're able to unmute you during the process. Just be aware that there's about a hundred of you on here, or 85 it looks like. So please feel free to ask any questions that you may have about the transition right now.

All right. Reed, or Josh, anything to add as well?

REED STREGE
Nothing for me at the California State Library except to feel free to reach out to Josh, he dropped his email there in the chat, if you have any questions about the broadband program in this transition. Well, we have some good amount of time here. If anyone has any questions for our partners at CTC.

HEATHER MILLS
We do have a few questions, I think, coming in right now, and in regards to Samantha Yeung's question: Do we need to have a new LOA with CTC?

If you signed an LOA related to E-rate, you actually have that signed with CENIC who is the lead for the consortium, so the answer to that is no you shouldn't need a new LOA for E-rate with CTC, because that LOA is actually with the with CENIC as the lead for the consortium there. Paula, do you have anything to add? You look like you do?

PAULA MCKINNON
Sure, sorry, I'm just going to look one of those up to verify that.

HEATHER MILLS
Yeah, we did. We did do that. Okay, Thank you.
And then, as far as Lisa, thank you for that question. I think that in regards to what date you need to have a new contract in place by, we're going to say as soon as possible. So, we're working on that timeline, and our hope is that it won't be more than the end of April when we're done with, you know, getting all of that information over and everything in process. But we will be keeping everybody updated on those timelines as we are able to do so. But as soon as possible is the is the answer, and we're working towards, again, getting the contract documents over to you as soon as we resolve a few things with everything that's going on.

I'm not sure who's asking this question, but it is, we already deal with USAC directly on RFPs through an account for discounts and E-rate funding. will this process change?

For those things that you're doing directly, no, that process wouldn't change. The RFPs that we're referring to are specifically related to services provided through CENIC, and its and other partners for circuits that you have that so that process shouldn't change for you. You are absolutely able to apply for E-rate funding directly for other items.

CAROLINE MUELLER
All right. Looks like we also got a question in the chat here from Ryan Ibarra, saying “the contract SDCL has is with Califa. I believe so. I think we would have to have a transition for our contract. I'll have to double check that now.”

HEATHER MILLS
That's correct, any contracts that you have with Califa would need to be transferred over, related to the consortium work, would have to be transferred over to CTC: So, if you're attending here today, and you're getting services through CENIC or the consortium, then that is absolutely correct.

CAROLINE MUELLER
And we'll be sending out documents about that in the near future.

HEATHER MILLS
Okay. You're welcome, Ryan. And then I see a question in here in regards to, I think that's the CPUC California Advanced Services Fund Broadband Grant. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't believe that the consortium deals with those grants in particular. Nope.

And everyone, thank you so much for your questions, because I think this really helps everyone across the board who may have, who may have the same questions, but not even realize that they have those same questions.

Michael Perry. Thanks for this one. The only thing on existing contracts that would change is shifting from Califa to CTC. Basically everything else remains the same. So, it's really just about administration of
details in that way. So again, we’re working on timelines and everything for you, and we’ll keep you all in the loop as the as the process comes together and gels a bit more.

Again, Christopher, we’ll provide you with a bit more detail in regards to timing and everything related to the new contract with the with CTC as we take over administration.

All right. Any other questions? Okay.

Well, everyone, Thank you so much for your time today. I love giving people back some of their day. We didn’t want to take up a whole hour if we could help it, and I’m sure you’d like to go get lunch if you haven’t done so already. Again, feel free to email us at admin@californialibraryconnect.org.

In fact, can you put up the last slide, Kayleigh, just so that everyone can see?

I think it’s on there. Californialibraryconnect.org. Our emails are at the bottom of that website as well.

Again. The content will be added over the next few weeks more content, anyway, and you can feel free to email us with questions.

There’s a survey as soon as you hang up here that you’ll be asked to go through that has a phone number in it.

You’ll also get an email from us I think probably within the next few hours with a thank you, as well, and we will be posting the recording of this webinar on the website, as well, so that you’ll have access to that. And you’ll be hearing from us probably pretty frequently over the next weeks and months, as we work our way through the transition process with contracts and things.

Reed, Josh, anything else from you today?

REED
Nothing from me from the State Library team. How about you, Josh?

JOSH
No, just again. Thank you all for attending, and please reach out if you have any more questions when you think occurs to you after we’ve signed off, we’re here to help,

HEATHER
And with thanks to Paula and the Califa team and the CENIC team, who I believe maybe listening in it as well, for attending.