Good morning, everyone. Well, we're going to wait a couple of minutes just to give people a chance to get logged in and deal with any technical issues, and then we'll get started.

OK. Hey. Well, good morning, everyone. I think we'll go ahead and get started. Welcome to our talk about the California Collaborative Connectivity Grant through the California State Library. Let's go ahead and do the next slide.

So, my name is Josh Chisom. I'm the Broadband Project Coordinator for the State Library. I've been there about a year and a few months, and I help manage the three broadband programs we have going, and today we're going to talk about the newest one. Joining me is Rachel Stogner. She's our Grants Coordinator for these projects, and she'll be taking the second part of the presentation. And also, Caroline Mueller, who is running the slides for us today, thankfully. We also have Heather and Kayleigh, who I don't believe are on the call today, but are also integral parts of the operation. And on the State Library side, we also have Wendy Amireh, who's attending, but she handles the sort of fiscal side of the Grant operations. Next slide.

So just to kind of run through what we're going to talk about today, we're going to give you an overview of the Collaborative Connectivity Grant, what the intent behind the program is, who's eligible, requirements. If you sat it on one of these, we did a couple, I think two of these webinars last year. There is some new content. We've made some slight changes to the program and actually expanded what can be applied for, so I think it will still be worth your while to stay through. So, we'll talk about that, the Planning Grant, which is sort of a new twist to this, and then we'll pause for some Q&A, and then I'll hand it off to Rachel. She'll walk you through the application and the timeline for applications, and then we'll handle any further questions at the end. Please feel free to put your questions in the chat and we will address them, like I said, when we get to a good point to pause.

OK, so this Grant is, it's a one-time pot of money and it was created by an act of the California State Legislature, and its intent is to sort of piggyback on federal Grant programs for broadband expansion, and its focus is on isolated and underserved communities, so you don't have to be isolated to be underserved. But we're looking at what we would call under-connected communities, where that area lacks affordable broadband both to anchor institutions, households, and so forth.
And what the Grant program is looking for is collaborative partnerships between public libraries, California public libraries, and other anchor institutions in their communities. So, the idea is you get together with local schools, healthcare, tribal facilities, local education agencies, county offices of education, that sort of thing, and do a procurement to get fiber to your facilities, the facilities of the anchor institutions, with the hope and intent that of, the sort of, to-and-through concept, where if the anchor institutions are connected and have affordable broadband, then it's much, much more likely that affordable broadband will be available to households and businesses in that area. So, it's really about that last mile, getting broadband into communities that have lacked it up until now. A component of it is they want E-rate eligible applicants. They want the projects to leverage federal funding, whether it's E-rate or ReConnect through the USDA, or other available broadband [funding]. And this program we have, the Collaborative Connectivity Grant, is the gap funding. So, it's paying what the feds don't. OK, let's go ahead and do the next slide.

So again, to talk about this a little bit more, you know, we're looking at expanding broadband access into areas where it does not exist in an affordable, modern sense, so, that's, that is the point of this. You know, we've got a lot of middle mile funding going on, you know, connections, backbone of the Internet, expanding out into new parts of California. And this is for that last connection into the community, with the idea that we'll get the anchor institutions connected and then that will spread out and to local households and businesses. And what the program will cover is essentially the again the gap between what, for example, the E-rate program would cover for schools and libraries, but we can cover things that aren't necessarily E-rate eligible. So really, it essentially ends up being a zero-cost, at least for the upfront. Now of course, there's the monthly charges for broadband that go on after that. And there are other funding opportunities to cover that. This is for the upfront construction cost, project costs, project management costs that you would incur, and depending on various factors, you know, this could end up being a zero-cost upfront for libraries and their partners when they apply for this. Let's go to the next slide.

So, eligibility, again. A California Public Library must be involved, must be one of the applicants on this. They don't have to be the lead applicant. They just need to be part of it, and part of the project needs to be getting an under-connected library facility connected. The anchor institution types that are mentioned in the law are schools, tribal facilities, and telehealth providers. It doesn't necessarily limit it to those, but those are the ones that they are focused on here. And it doesn't limit the number of partners. It could be just the library plus one, or plus every public-facing anchor institution in the community. And again, Rachel will go through the specifics of the application process shortly. But again, this is gap funding, so, the intent is not to fund your entire project. The intent is that the applicants will go out and seek federal funding, and potentially other sources of state funding, and this would cover the gap between that and the full cost of the project. So, if you're familiar with state matching, the state matching process through E-rate, it's pretty much the same kind of idea as that. And let's go to the next slide.

So again, just some more examples. A library and a school doing an E-rate project, a hospital and library that maybe, access some ReConnect funds, USDA. Or again, any of the other, there's so many different pots of money available for broadband right now. You know, we will review any applications that access those funds. Obviously, E-rate is the most likely because libraries, schools, that is their primary source of
federal funding for these projects. But we are open to looking at any other funding opportunities that may be available to you or your application partners in this.

So, as far as requirements are concerned, again, we will do a walkthrough of the application, but essentially what we're trying to do is not force you to do twice the work for applications. So, essentially if you, for example, applied for E-rate or are in the process of applying for E-rate funding for the E-rate eligible members of your purchasing consortium or your application partner, a lot of the application for us is essentially what you've already done for them. So, it's copies of those application materials, it's copies of the winning bid, and the bid evaluation materials, and so forth. So, this is really, almost all of it is things you were already going to be doing for a procurement of this scale and scope. There is, you know, a little bit of writing that's going to be involved, but we're trying to not make it an additional burden on top of the other Grant application processes that you would be going through for a project of this type. And again, there's an application checklist that is very easy to read, and will, kind of, walk you through everything you would need to apply.

So, one thing that we heard in the first cycle that this was available is that, you know, there are upfront costs, and some smaller institutions and potential applicants don't have the internal, you know, labor hours available, or potentially expertise, to get the project going and maintain it through the application process, both for us and for the other funding sources. So, what we have gotten approved is we can offer some upfront money if, for example, you know, a small library and school and other and, you know, other anchor institutions and a community would like to pursue this, but they don't have, for example, current E-rate consultant or a project manager that can handle something of this scope, we can help provide some funding for that. This, you know, would cover the application for our funds, for the Collaborative Connectivity Grant, but also the E-rate application and the other costs specific to the project. This wouldn't be to hire someone permanently; this would be for the project that you are for which you are applying for the funds from us and from the feds and from any other sources. So, hopefully, that will enable, maybe, smaller applicants who, you know, obviously we really want to see this get out to these underserved communities. You know, so if you don't have that in-house expertise, you don't have that consultant that knows all the ins and outs of the E-rate process and so forth, you can go ahead and file an application for the Planning Grant and potentially get some funding to get you through those initial phases prior to actually submitting the full application.

OK, so we'll pause here and see if there are any questions from the attendees, you can put it in the webinar chats. I don't see any.

RACHEL STOGNER
I see one in the Q&A.

JOSH CHISOM
OK. Oh, Q&A. Sorry I'm not - oh, there we go. OK, so there are libraries that only apply for WAN services through E-rate to avoid dealing with CIPA, will those libraries be eligible? If they are… so, the libraries and schools that apply must be E-rate eligible. That's what the law, that's what the legislative language says. So, you can be E-rate eligible without applying for E-rate. You would need to be pursuing some other
funding source, you know, again, this Grant opportunity is not to, it's not to fund 100% of the cost, but I would encourage you to reach out to us via e-mail or go ahead and submit an application. I can't promise that, you know, we obviously can't promise that any applications will be approved until we review them, but as long as, again, as long as schools or libraries that are participating in the application process are E-rate eligible, that is the baseline requirement for applying for this funding. So yeah, I hope that helps, I hope that gives you the information you need, and you can obviously feel free to reach out to us directly after this if you have a more specific question. But I do know that with libraries, CIPA can be a concern. I'm also the State E-rate Coordinator for libraries in California. So, if any folks on here that are interested in looking at ways to apply for E-rate without, the sort of... Well, if you have issues or questions about CIPA, I'd be happy to talk through those and potentially try and find ways to allow you to be in compliance with that, without compromising your services.

Any other questions? OK. Well, we'll also pause for Q&A at the end. So, I'm going to go ahead and hand it over to Rachel to do a walkthrough of the application. Rachel?

RACHEL STOGNER

All right. Hey, can everybody see my screen, look good? So, this is our home tab. So, if you go ahead and type in our website here. So, californialibraryconnect.org, you will be sent to our home page and so in order to get to the Grant portal, this is the easiest way to do it. Go to Grants, wait for it to load. It's taking a hot second, and then go to the California Collaborative Connectivity Grant. Then right at the front, very front, is the link to the online portal.

This is a great web page if you have any questions. It has a lot of different resources. We'll return to this as we go through the application. But it will get you to this portal. So, you'll need to sign up for an account. It's very, very easy. You just put in your e-mail address and then create a password. It sends a confirmation to your e-mail, and then you're able to log in. Let me log in. There it goes.

So, the first step to getting your application is creating a profile. So, I'm going to do a fake application here so it will let me go through. So, first you have to add your lead application organization name, so, I'm just going to put “EXAMPLE” here because we don't really need a real name. I'm not creative enough to come up with a pretend library or school, so we're just kind of “EXAMPLE,” and then you'll have to pick the organization type.

So as Josh said, you have to have a library involved in your project, but you do not have to have... that library does not need to be the lead applicant. So, if either a school or a healthcare organization or other educational institution, or any of the other eligible entities is the lead, you can go ahead and put them down here. And the lead organization is just going to be the organization that is doing the majority of the application. It maybe they are, you know, they're sort of just leading the project.

So, you'll need to select, we'll select we have a library and you'll put your street address, city, ZIP code. You have to be in California. You have to be in the United States. You have to be in California. Your website URL and then your contact's name. So, the reason we have, well, I have an “EXAMPLE@example.com.”
This is so that we know who we should be reaching out to in case we have any questions, or you know, we have any sort of follow-up, anything like that. So just put down the person who's, you would say, is best managing the project. If you have any. If anybody else needs to be contacted, we'll have space for that as well. Here, your phone number…

So, down here you'll go ahead and put down your partner organization. So again, you can have as many partner organizations as you want. At least one of these has to be a library, but the rest of them can be whoever you want. So, you'll have to enter the exact same information. We'll say we are working with a school in California. Same thing. So, once you have all this information filled out, you will be ready to start your application. So pretty simple, very basic, enter contact information and then you'll be ready to create your profile.

So, once you have created your profile, the next step is to actually begin your application. So, go ahead and click here to get started. It takes a second to load. And you can go ahead and begin your application by clicking this “open” button right here.

So, this has a little bit more information about the CCG program, about gap funding a little bit. It has a link to our website and a download link for that checklist. So, this checklist is also available on our website. Basically, it has all the information that you'll need to have before you get started. So, it's a really good resource so that you're not going into this application and going through everything and realizing, you know, you don’t have something. You'll have already everything ready to go so you can finish. Ideally, this should be a very short process.

So, the first thing you want to enter is your project title. Mine is not very descriptive, but when you're creating your project title, please make sure it's descriptive of what your project involves. So, if it's a connectivity program between a school and a library, you know, have the names of these two organizations and, you know, “Connectivity Projects,” something similar to that.

So, before you go ahead, we go ahead to the rest of the actual Grant, we're going to go ahead and walk through how to apply for the Planning Grant. Josh already explained what that entails, but essentially it is upfront funding to support like project managing, project planning, E-rate applications, things like that. And these are all going to be done on a case-by-case basis, so if you're interested in applying for the Planning Grant, go ahead and please fill out this information. And then save your application and contact us. We can be reached at Grants@californialibraryconnect.org. That'll be available on our website.

And so, I'm going to go ahead and click “yes” to this, “Are you applying for planning funds?” So, the first thing you're going to need is a quote or signed agreement with an estimate of the cost of the project management, E-rate consultant, whoever that you are planning on working with, and we use this to build out how much we are going to award you, if you are awarded. So, in order for us to know how much you should be getting, we need to know how much you need. So, here, you would be uploading, if you have like a quote from someone or an agreement or any other kind of documentation that gives you about how much this is going to cost, and you'll upload it here.
So, then we also ask you to fill out a specific budget. Our budget is a very simple Excel spreadsheet. If any of you have done any of our equipment Grants before, it's very similar. Basically, you just fill out this budget form, and each row corresponds to a different item. That is also available on our website right here, this budget spreadsheet. So, again, the website is a great hub for that kind of information. So, once you've filled out that budget, which should match one-to-one with your quote. If your quote is for, you know, $10,000, your budget should be for $10,000, then you'll also enter your funding request amount right here. Should match again, this is all just to make sure we know that you know how much you're asking for.

And then we'll just need a narrative of what your project is about, so, you know, if you're a school and a library doing a connectivity project, you know, what kind of communities are you connecting? Who are you? What are you doing? You know, those sorts of things.

The next thing is what your Planning Grant is about. Who is this person? What do you need? You know, what is, what are your project needs currently? Why are you applying? Those sorts of questions.

And then lastly, what is this Grant funding for? You know, why would it not be possible without Grant funding? Pretty quick narrative, you don't need to write a novel, just sort of giving us an overview of what we're expecting. We have character counts here. That does not mean you need to write 2000 characters. That just is, you know, we don't want you to. We don't need too much information if you feel like there's more stuff we should know, please send us an e-mail, if there's any additional considerations that you think would be important.

Ah, so then again, you know, a library must be involved, so please list the library system and the branches involved in the project. And if you've identified your partner, just click "Yes". Tell us what kind of partner they are and what kind of organization they are and give us their name, so we know who we're working with. And then provide a narrative about the relationship between those two organizations. So, what kind of collaboration are you doing? You know who's managing the project? What's the collaborative element? You know, some of these we're anticipating, maybe kind of creative, where you know the relationship may not just be, oh, we both need to get connected. It could be something that's mutually beneficial for your community, so we just want to know what your collaboration entails.

So, then the last couple steps. So, then tell us you know, what are the tasks that you anticipate have to be done in the future? So, besides the actual Grant funding, you know, are you in the process of applying for a federal Grant? Are there other concerns that you have around, you know, project management, the longevity of, you know, your projects, things like that? Anything else you can think that, you know, is important to your project sustainability.

And then we have a space for any additional comments if you have them. And then, umm, any supplementary documentation. So that is what you need for the Planning Grant.
I’m going to go ahead and make that disappear and we’re going to talk about what you need for the Collaborative Grant. So again, we’ll need your main applicant organization, your partner applicant organization, and the library jurisdictions involved, and then which branches are going to be impacted specifically. And we will need their addresses. So, if any of those locations are leased, we have a question for that, and then we just ask for the duration of the lease, how many years are left in the location. So, pretty easy. We just need to know, you know, which locations we’re working with.

The next section is your executive summary. So, we need a high level, you know, give me your elevator pitch of what your project is. So, the parties involved and your project goals. So, who’s going to benefit from the funding? Why do you need funding and who are the different organizations involved?

Next, we’re going to talk about the impact of your project. So, which communities are affected by this project? So, please identify them by their official designation. If, you know, if it’s a town or community or a neighborhood, please, you know, give us specifics and if possible, the census blocks, and as much detail as you can provide in this section, the better. We want to know, you know, why is your project important? You know, this is your chance to give us your, you know, convincing story about why, you know, how this is going to really help your community. We know it’s going to, but this is your spot to, you know, make that shine. So, if you have any letters of support or any kind of documentation that shows how this is going to support your community, help your community thrive in some way, please upload them here in this section.

So, the next one is going into project costs. So, the first thing we’re asking for is the total cost of the project. That’s not including, like, any funding. So, how much is your project going to cost? And then we’re going to ask you for how much you are asking for in federal funding. And as Josh said, this can be E-rate funding. This can also be any other kind of federal funding that’s relevant. But just for whatever your application is, the total amount of that federal funding. If you have other project funding besides the federal, anything else, not including our Grant, please enter that here. This little section will add up all this math so that you can know to make sure that you were asking for everything correctly.

So, then we have a little bit longer section of your project narrative. So again, we’ll want all organizations involved, which will be your school library, tribal organization, and healthcare organization, whoever is involved, and then institutions, which is going to be whatever the federal entity or entities you are applying to, you’re going to want to put those here. So, if you are applying to E-rate, see, that’s what you’re applying to, and any individuals involved in the projects as well, if there are any.

And so, then you can show the demonstrated need of your community. Feel free if you want to copy and paste from your previous section down here. So, also mention things like remoteness, poverty, lack of existing infrastructure, anything that shows that, you know, you have that need. And then what you anticipate your federal funding timeline is. So, have you submitted an application? Are you in the process of submitting an application? Have you already received funding and now you’re looking for that last little bit to, you know, cap off? And then the timeline of your project. So, when a submission is awarded when you’re anticipating getting awarded. All of that good stuff.
So, then the anticipated benefits of the project you're in affected communities. And then, lastly, any roadblocks or any previous attempts to complete the project that have been unsuccessful. So, that's sort of again, works into the where the need comes in. And you don't have to answer these questions in this exact order. These are just the just the, you know, minimum of what we need to see for you to get funded.

So, again, if you have any additional information that will support that narrative, please feel free to upload it here. So, if your Grant has been awarded, we'll ask if it has gone out to bid. If it has gone out to bid, we will ask the number of bids and if your winning bidder has been selected. Those are just “yes” or “no” questions. And then you'll state your, the federal application status as of submission. It's going to be in process, submitted, or awarded. And then again, if there are any other funding sources being leveraged for your project, go ahead and answer that. If there are, we'll ask for a brief narrative that you explain what those funding sources are.

And then we will ask you to upload your project funding timeline. This is another item that is available on our website. So, this we call it a Gantt chart, but it is a timeline, it's a timeline Gantt chart. Essentially, this is just going to ask, you know, where you are in the project. We have different little milestones that you can use as a reference. If you need to change those milestones, that's fine, but we have them already set up for you.

So, lastly, we have your supporting documentation, so this is going to be, if you applied for E-rate, your Form 470 and 471. If you applied to a different federal program, this is where that's going to live. So, go ahead and upload that. If it's already gone out to bid, put the bid evaluation matrix. If it's already won, put the winning bid documentation. If you have a special construction, if somebody has already won your bid, put the cost breakdown here.

So, then remember to save your drafts as we go, you can mark as complete, and then it would be able to submit. So, if you have any questions for us throughout this process, please reach out to us through e-mail. Again, it's Grants@californialibraryconnect.org. And I think we are ready, Caroline, for us to go back to your screen.

JOSH CHISOM

All right. We've got a couple of questions in the Q&A. So, first off, we have a location inside of a National Park. Would the National Park Service qualify an anchor? There's also a public school nearby that I'm sure would qualify as well. School, definitely, and National Park, sure. Again, we can't definitively say this is eligible. This isn't until we read through the application and see what the intent and so forth is. But to me, the National Park Service is an anchor institution in that area. I'm sure that many of the people that live nearby and utilize the library and the school are National Park Service employees. It is a public facing, you know, public service anchor. So, you know, at the front of it, I don't see any issue with them being included as an applicant, and I would encourage you to reach out if you have more questions, and it sounds like it would be a great opportunity as far as you know, getting better broadband out into that area.
Second one is, does the funding from another source need to be awarded before applying for the Grant? It does not. So yes, an estimated amount would be fine. We should mention that because this is a gap funding opportunity, you do need to have your other funding locked in before the funds would be released from us to you and your project. So, if it’s an E-rate project, you would need to have a funding commitment decision letter. If it's through other grant opportunities, you would need to show us some proof that the other funding is there and will be available. And then the funding from us would be released to the applicants.

So, please throw any other questions anybody has in there. And yeah, sorry, I realized we didn’t talk about deadlines too much, but there isn’t really a deadline for this other than we need to get this money out. This is a one-time pot of money, and we need to get it out the door. Basically, this E-rate cycle and next E-rate cycle are pretty much all we have, so, you know, E-rate again, being the most likely source of the primary funding. Typically, you start that project in the next month or two, file your Form 470, put your RFP out to bid sometime in the fall. Make those, you know, bid selection process and everything. And then the application deadline for E-rate is typically the last week of March. So, we have this cycle going to March 2024 and the next one and that's it. The funding is not… funding must be committed by June of 2025, so that, that's sort of our deadline. After that, if we haven’t committed it, then it's probably just going to go away. So, we would strongly encourage applicants to, you know, get going on this and apply this cycle. I think we would love to see some big applications come in, and there's plenty of funding available. There's almost $35 million currently available in this program.

So yeah, any other questions? OK. Well, thank you all for sticking around and listening to our presentation today. Again, I strongly encourage you to apply. If you have any questions, you know, we're, unlike the E-rate program, available and ready to help with any questions, you know. When you submit the application, it's not going into a lock box, you know, we're going to reach out if we have any questions at all. And if you have, if you get into the application process and you're not sure of how to respond to something or what we're asking for, Rachel is always available to help walk you through that, and literally she'll get on and walk you through the application with the screen share if you need that. So, thank you all very much. Rachel, any closing thoughts?

RACHEL STOGNER
I think you covered everything. Do not hesitate to reach out to us even if you just have questions about you know, what we talked about today or anything else. Yeah, please know that our website is a great resource, and our e-mail inboxes are open.

JOSH CHISOM
Thank you everyone. Have a great day.