

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Rulemaking to Consider  
Modifications to the California Advanced  
Services Fund.

Rulemaking 12-10-012

**OPENING COMMENTS OF SACRAMENTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
AUTHORITY TO ORDER INSTITUTING RULEMAKING 12-10-012**

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**OPENING COMMENTS OF [YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME] TO  
ORDER INSTITUTING RULEMAKING 12-10-012**

**I. Introduction**

In accordance with Rule 6.2 of the California Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) Rules of Practice and Procedure (“Rules”), the Sacramento Public Library Authority (SPLA) submits comments to the Order Instituting Rulemaking 12-10-012 (“Rulemaking”).

**II. Comments**

**I. Introduction**

Sacramento Public Library Authority (SPLA) respectfully shares these opening Comments with a focus on the question, “what can and should the Commission do in response to COVID-19?”.

**II. Interest in this Proceeding**

The Sacramento Public Library Authority is the fourth largest Library jurisdiction in California, with a service area of 995 square miles and 771,941 library card holders. The SPLA offers free computer access, technology instruction, and high-speed gigabit internet access

(wired and wireless) at all 28 locations. In addition, the Library offers wireless hotspot check-out from its bookmobile, providing critical internet access to high-need and geographically isolated populations.

The SPLA is governed by a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement including the County of Sacramento and the Cities of Citrus Heights, Galt, Isleton, Elk Grove, Rancho Cordova, and Sacramento. Sacramento Public Library Authority provides public library services that provide open access to diverse resources and ideas that inspire learning, promote reading, and enhance community life to all citizens in our member jurisdictions.

The Sacramento Public Library Authority's governing board comprises representatives from each member jurisdiction based on population and includes all five members of the County Board of Supervisors, five council members from the City of Sacramento, two members from the City of Elk Grove, and one member from each city council for the Cities of Citrus Heights and Rancho Cordova. The Cities of Galt and Isleton are co-represented by a single councilmember currently from the City of Galt, with the City of Isleton serving as the alternate. The Library Director serves as the Authority's chief executive officer and as secretary of the governing board.

### III. Considerations

Public Libraries are the heart of our communities, providing resources for all ages. When a pandemic occurs, the absence of access to the physical Library facility creates inequities for those who do not have an adequate device or access in the home, further widening the digital equity and digital divide chasm.

Sacramento Public Library provides access to computers and high-speed Internet access at all 28 library facilities. We offer a critical connectivity and accessibility link for our communities. The lack of adequate broadband infrastructure, and access to devices is a well-documented issue in the Sacramento region.

In rural areas of the region, as an example, the lack of high-speed internet are felt from two perspectives. Residents experience the disruptions to social, economic and democratic life related to lack of access to high-speed broadband. From a business standpoint, the lack of broadband coverage inhibits the use of technologies which can increase resource efficiencies.

Handheld devices are limited resources for meaningful access. Although mobile broadband access through handheld devices provides many valuable resources, input activities, especially related to employment and government resources, have many limitations. Due to the

small screen and keyboard sizes of handheld devices, completing job applications poses many challenges for users. Furthermore, many websites are not yet mobile friendly making this challenge even greater.

Without the presence of the library facility and the resources it provides, our most in-need populations have been left without access to critical services.

In order to address this issue, the Commission should consider rule changes to broaden the scope of the use of the California Advanced Services Fund to provide resources for public entities, like public libraries to expand its “broadband reach” to provide critical access to in-need communities. As anchors for the communities they serve, public libraries are the best government entity positioned to address current and future digital equity and divide needs. With strategic capital investment, our networks can be used to provide critical emergency services to our communities. Services such as municipal Wi-Fi or emergency services networks, are just two of many possibilities.

Public libraries are often the only place for the community to have access to high-speed connectivity or a device. The following are examples that illustrate how expanding the “broadband reach” of anchor institutions like the public library can address access needs.

Nonie-Wetzel Courtland Library-Sacramento Public Library’s Nonie-Wetzel Courtland Community library is the only place where the community can take advantage of high-speed internet connectivity, as the major providers have been unable or unwilling to provide service. Through herculean efforts, the Library in partnership with CENIC and GeoLinks was able to deliver Gigabit connectivity to the Library. This has been transformational for the Community, allowing for distance learning, online services, virtual author visits, coding classes for students and other opportunities unimagined and unavailable before.

Whittier Public Library-The Library successfully implemented a solution that broadcasted a wi-fi signal approximately 1 mile from the main library, affording at-need community members with access to critical broadband services.

In order to expand our scope, we require access to funding outside E-Rate and local funding. E-Rate has restrictions, and as such, growing our “broadband reach” can be cost prohibitive. Providing funding for hardware components, consulting, licensing, installation services and web filtering are a few examples of the many needs that the CASF could help subsidize.

The pandemic has illustrated that the digital equity and digital divides are further isolating and disadvantaging our at-need communities. Our networks must meet the local needs and interests of our communities to support all sectors and provide much needed access.

### **III. Conclusion**

The Sacramento Public Library Authority encourages the Commission to address structural weaknesses in our telecommunications systems, and to provide funding opportunities that will allow us to bridge the digital equity and digital divide issues that have become so apparent in recent weeks to ensure our at-need communities have access to the critical resources they need. that leave far too many vulnerable people of all ages without the information and voice they need.

Respectfully submitted,

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