

From: Anna Alvarado
To: [CA Broadband Council](#)
Subject: Skills for CA Comment Letter Re: CBC State Action Plan
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 5:05:14 PM
Attachments: Skills for CA Comment Letter - CBC Action Plan 11-17-20.pdf

Good afternoon,

On behalf of Skills for California, please see attached a comment letter regarding the Broadband Council's draft action plan. We hope the Council can consider our input and recommendations around implementing strategies to support digital skill-building and expand broadband access, particularly the recommendations outlined in the report linked in the letter. Please do reach out if you have any questions and we look forward to working with you.

Thank you!

Anna Alvarado (she/her)
Policy Director
California EDGE Coalition

<https://caedge.org/>

Education, Diversity, and Growth in the Economy



November 17, 2020

Amy Tong, Chair, California Broadband Council
Stephanie Tom, Deputy Director, California Department of Technology
Members of the California Broadband Council
1325 J Street, Suite 1600
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Public Comment to the CA Broadband Council State Action Plan

Dear Chairperson Tong, Deputy Director Tom, and Members of the California Broadband Council:

[Skills for California](#) is a statewide network of organizations advancing workforce development policies that remove systemic barriers and promote an inclusive economy for all Californians. As members of the Skills for CA Network, this letter serves as initial comments to the Council's draft broadband action plan.

The Skills for CA Network strongly believes that access to affordable, reliable, and quality high-speed internet is a right that all Californians should have in order to participate in a 21st-century economy. Roughly 15 percent of all California households - approximately six million people - lack broadband internet subscriptions. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital divide is leaving behind millions of students, workers, and low/no-income families who either lack access to broadband, digital devices, or essential digital skills. The role of structural racism in the digital divide is especially egregious in a pandemic economy in which workers of color have disproportionately lost jobs and are struggling to keep up with distance learning, remote job searches and work, and virtual access to critical public assistance programs, like unemployment insurance benefits. Additionally, businesses have also felt the impact of the digital divide, especially having to adapt and reform workplace policies by establishing telework strategies that protect the wellbeing of both employers and workers.

In response to your draft action plan, we appreciate and support the intent to deliver more access to high-speed internet and improve support for digital literacy and skills training programs. It is essential not only to have access to affordable broadband, - especially in the most underserved communities - but to also promote digital skill-building so students, adult learners, and workers have the capability to advance in today's workforce. Digital skill building includes the capacity to use technology and the cognitive skills necessary to navigate technology successfully, including in the ever-changing future of work. Equipping adult learners and workers with digital skills is vital not only for our economic recovery but most importantly, to have all Californians thrive in today's labor market. We appreciate the Council's proposed action of supporting local digital skills training programs as part of broader economic recovery efforts and point the Council to a recent report by National Skills Coalition, "[Four Ways to Promote Digital Inclusion for California's Workers](#)", that proposes four action steps the state can take to do that through new and existing programs, including with federal funds. We urge the Council to implement strategies to support digital skill-building and expand broadband access while also ensuring that equitable learning and training can continue while physical distancing orders are in place.

With your expertise on these issues, along with input from our stakeholder partners, we believe the Council has the opportunity to develop a robust and effective broadband action plan that will serve all communities across the state, particularly as you develop the plan through a racial equity lens.

Thank you for taking the time to review our input. We hope you find our feedback helpful as you move forward in finalizing the action plan. For any questions, please contact Anna Alvarado, Policy Director, at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Building Skills Partnership
California EDGE Coalition
California Long-Term Care Education Center
California Workforce Association
Goodwill Southern California
JVS SoCal
National Skills Coalition
Opportunity Junction
San Diego Workforce Partnership
UNITE-LA