



The Maddy Institute

The San Joaquin Valley – Inspiring Public Leadership

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***New #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork Will Seek Millions in Public Investments to Advance Region's Future***

Fresno, CA (October 25, 2021) – The Maddy Institute announced that it is joining the San Joaquin Valley Regional Broadband Consortium (SJVRBC), under the leadership of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, and the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), on a new joint effort—collectively called #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork — to seek State and federal funding for broadband infrastructure projects throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

The Maddy Institute Executive Director Mark Keppler welcomed the announcement of the initiative, noting, “This is the critical path forward to implementing the recommendations that emerged from a [Maddy Institute Roundtable in December 2020](#) in which the leaders of the Valley’s four public universities (Fresno State, CSU Bakersfield, Stanislaus State, and UC Merced) uniformly called for broadband throughout the San Joaquin Valley to ensure all higher-education students can excel academically and help drive economic development in the region.”

Leaders at four major Central Valley higher education institutions also applauded the new network.

Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, President, California State University, Fresno State, said, “The economic and social vitality of our Central Valley is anchored in the power of broadband. Broadband is necessary for a future of opportunity and success for economic startups, vital to ensuring a healthy community through Telehealth, and key to fomenting a dynamic democracy.”

Lynette Zelezny, President, California State University, Bakersfield said, “At CSU Bakersfield, there is a sense of hope and vitality like never before in the history of our university. Families of the Southern Valley are seizing the life-changing opportunity of a university degree and joining us as we unlock the promise of our community...But our students and families face a digital divide that puts this great Valley at a serious disadvantage. Give us access to a reliable internet connection and other digital tools, and watch our students soar.”

Ellen N. Junn, President, California State University, Stanislaus said, “The Central Valley cannot be left behind. Strengthening these collaborative and innovative opportunities in our Valley will strengthen all of California. The digital divide for students and faculty in the Central Valley became starkly apparent during COVID and now we have the opportunity to learn valuable lessons about how to create more effective teaching and virtual learning environments. Having access to these significant state and federal funds to accelerate broadband access and improve student learning will be invaluable to the future success of generations of our students here in the Central Valley.”





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Juan Sánchez Muñoz, Chancellor, University of California, Merced said, “Today, the Internet is at the center of almost all we do — from ordering a meal to talking to our doctors. The pandemic taught us the internet can be a great equalizer – if you have adequate access to it. And yet, so many students still face challenges accessing their education without extra support such as loaner laptops and personal WiFi hotspots. We cannot let the chance to close the opportunity divide slip by neglecting to close this digital divide, keeping the Valley and its people from their full potential.”

The #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork was also applauded by several other Valley leaders, including the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC), Fresno Cradle to Career Partnership (C2C), San Joaquin Valley Funders Collaborative (SJVFC), and San Joaquin Valley Health Fund (SJVHF).

SJVRBC executive Eduardo Gonzalez, Director of the California State University, Fresno Office of Economic and Community Development (OECD), the fiscal agent for the Regional Broadband Consortium, said “We are excited to again be joining forces with CETF in the #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork initiative to ensure that the San Joaquin Valley can compete for our fair share of State and federal dollars for high-speed Internet service throughout the region. SJVRBC prepared a Preferred Scenario in 2020 to achieve ubiquitous broadband in the San Joaquin Valley and now we need professional project management to bring together all stakeholders to agree upon priority projects, prepare applications for State and federal funding, and mobilize support to ensure success.”

CETF is supporting #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork by engaging the firm of FPG LLC, led by Francis P. Gornick, Ph.D., Chancellor Emeritus of West Hills Community College District, to provide project management to complement the outreach and community engagement by the SJVRBC. FPG LLC will be responsible for coordinating a “Request for Partnership” (RFP) process to invite incumbent Internet Service Providers (ISPs)—both public and private to determine how much of the need they can meet in conjunction with their expansion plans and what will have to be built by government. FPG LLC also will assist project applicants in seeking State and federal funding to build broadband infrastructure for the “hardest-to-reach” unserved and underserved areas.

CETF President and CEO Sunne Wright McPeak said, “The California Emerging Technology Fund is energized by the opportunity to complement the leadership of SJVRBC by engaging Dr. Gornick to lead the essential work to bring together all stakeholders and ISPs to reach agreement on broadband Internet infrastructure construction to reach all residents and all anchor institutions through #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork. Dr. Gornick is a long-time champion for ubiquitous broadband and brings a lifetime of executive management to support civic leaders in getting everyone connected to high-speed Internet service.”

CVHEC Executive Director Benjamin Duran, Jr., Ph.D., former President of Merced College, said, “All 29 members of the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium, serving more than 250,000 students, know first-hand the need for high-speed Internet throughout the region to ensure that all residents have opportunities for quality education. We commend CETF and SJVRBC and enthusiastically welcome Dr. Gornick to lead #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork.”





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About The Maddy Institute

The Maddy Institute was established to engage, prepare and inspire the next generation of government leaders and civil servants. Activities primarily focus on Citizen Participation, Policy Analysis and Leadership Training. Our Leadership Training programs include an extensive government intern program for college students throughout the Valley, as well as the *Wonderful Public Service Graduate Fellowship*.

To learn more about The Maddy Institute, visit www.maddyinstitute.com or follow us [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Youtube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About the San Joaquin Valley Regional Broadband Consortium

SJBRBC is funded by the California Public Utilities Commission to promote construction of quality Internet infrastructure in the 8-County San Joaquin Valley Region to assist the State in meeting the goal of at least 98% broadband deployment in each region. SJVRBC operates under the umbrella of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley headquartered at Fresno State.

About the California Emerging Technology Fund

CETF is a statewide non-profit foundation with the mission to close the Digital Divide in California. CETF partners with public agencies and stakeholders to accelerate the deployment of high-speed Internet infrastructure, provides grants to non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) to assist low-income households adopt broadband and become digitally proficient, leads and manages School2Home to successfully integrate technology into teaching and learning with deep parent engagement to close the Achievement Gap in middle schools in low-income neighborhoods, and promotes Digital Inclusion in public policy to achieve Digital Equity.

