



California Partnership for the
San Joaquin Valley



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY REGIONAL
Broadband
CONSORTIUM

New #SanJoaquinValleyNetwork Will Seek Millions in Public Investments to Advance Region's Future

*Top Valley leaders applaud new partnership led by SJVRBC, with support of CETF,
to advance Digital Equity and economic opportunity*

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San Joaquin Valley, California — 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) today announced a new joint effort—collectively called **#SanJoaquinValleyNetwork**—to seek State and federal funding for broadband infrastructure projects throughout the San Joaquin Valley. This initiative is being applauded by the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC), The Maddy Institute, Fresno Career to Cradle Partnership (C2C), University Executives, and Business Leaders.

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 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 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**.”

The Maddy Institute Executive Director Mark Keppler welcomed the announcement of the **#SanJoaquinValleyNetwork** 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.”

Fresno C2C Executive Director Linda Gleason proclaimed “Fresno Cradle to Career Partnership, representing over 360,000 children and youth throughout Fresno County, knows that digital inclusion is essential across all of our sectors and we must work together to ensure that everyone has quality Internet access and digital literacy. We applaud the **#SanJoaquinValleyNetwork** partnership and its alignment with C2C values to ensure that the San Joaquin Valley can compete for our fair share of State and federal dollars to equitably meet the access and adoption needs of all children and families.”

Philip Neufeld said on behalf of the Fresno Coalition for Digital Inclusion (FCDI), “We are eager to participate with CETF and SJVRBC in the **#SanJoaquinValleyNetwork** Initiative to better connect the digitally underserved in urban and rural communities. We bring to this effort a collaborative spirit, an equity lens, and community connections. FCDI includes anchor institutions, agencies and community-based organizations committed to improving digital literacy and equitable access to affordable wireless Internet services and high-quality broadband.” FCDI is affiliated with the SJVRBC and Cradle to Career.

Leaders at four major San Joaquin Valley universities also applauded the new **#SanJoaquinValleyNetwork**.

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.”

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.”

Business leaders through the region expressed enthusiasm for **#SanJoaquinValleyNetwork** bringing together a critical mass of organizations to join forces and welcomed Dr. Gornick in taking the helm for this initiative in which all willing stakeholders have an opportunity to be a part of the solution. Bitwise Industries Co-Founder & CEO said, “Closing the Digital Divide and bringing reliable internet to all residents is the first step to improving the lives of the millions living below the poverty line in the Central Valley. Providing digital literacy and the skills to seek high-growth, high-wage jobs in the technology industry are key to lifting under-estimated regions out of poverty. We stand with **#SanJoaquinValleyNetwork** in its efforts to fund broadband infrastructure projects throughout the San Joaquin Valley.”

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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.