

Request: Capital funding to build the “Merced Educational and Community Broadband Services Network.”

Background: Merced County, the City of Merced, Merced City School District, and Merced Union High School district are evaluating options to form a JPA to implement the Merced Educational and Community Broadband Services Network. This joint agency would use funding for the construction of infrastructure and equipment. Example expenditures would include fiber optics in the public right of way, cell towers, wireless equipment, software, and services.

Local Impact:

The Merced Educational and Community Broadband Services Network would provide free or low-cost wireless broadband services to the Citizens of Merced. The uses would be:

- 1: Free internet services to children for educational purposes.
- 2: Low-cost internet services for residents.
- 3: Internet services for government smart city infrastructure.

The project will help bridge the digital divide for members of the community that are in unserved, underserved or cannot afford broadband internet services.

- 1: Enable students’ access to online educational services.
- 2: Enhance employment opportunities in the new digital economy.
- 3: Enhance access to online Government and Telemedicine services.

Other Considerations: Without access to high-speed internet services Merced County children will be left behind in their educational studies. For-profit internet service carriers want to expand services in these communities with 5G technology, but this may take years for these new services to be available to underserved areas of the community. 5G services may never get into the most disadvantaged areas of the community as it may not be profitable to the internet service carriers. The Merced Educational and Community Broadband Services Network goal is to provide internet services to these underserved areas.

Beneficiaries:

- Merced County residents and children
- Merced regions government and educational organizations

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