Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority Agenda

STAFF REPORT

To:	ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From:	Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Executive Director
Subject:	Consider and Accept California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) Broadband Consortia Funding
Meeting date:	June 24, 2026
Prepared on:	June 16, 2026
Attachments:	Appendix B – Consortia Grant Forms

ANALYSIS / DISCUSSION:

The member agencies of the ESCOG have collaborated under broadband consortia over the past decade – the Eastern Sierra Connect Regional Broadband Consortium (2012 – 2015) and two iterations of the Inyo-Mono Broadband Consortium (2016-2019 and 2023-2026). The primary focus of the work performed under both entities was to effectively leverage the broadband expansion and adoption opportunities created by the Digital 395 middle-mile network.

At the March 13th ESCOG Board meeting, your Board directed staff to submit an application to renew the Inyo-Mono Broadband Consortium (IMBC) for three years. The grant was awarded on June 15, 2026 in the amount of $600,000 over three years.

The IMBC "Connected Eastern Sierra" 2026-2029 Work Plan would focus on the following five objectives:

1) Collaborating with the Commission and other state agencies to engage regional consortia, local officials, ISPs, stakeholders, and consumers regarding priority areas and cost-effective strategies to achieve the broadband access goal;
2) Identifying potential CASF infrastructure projects or potential broadband deployment projects related to new programs created under SB 156 and AB 164, along with other opportunities, where ISPs can expand and improve their infrastructure and service offerings to achieve the goal of reaching 98% broadband deployment in each consortia region;

3) Assisting potential CASF infrastructure applicants or potential applicants for broadband deployment projects related to the new programs created under SB 156 and AB 164, or other state and federal programs deploying broadband in California, including Broadband Equity Access, and Deployment (BEAD) in the project development or grant application process;

4) Conducting activities that will lead to or that can be reasonably expected to lead to CASF infrastructure projects or broadband deployment projects related to new programs created under SB 156 and AB 164, or other state and federal programs deploying broadband in California, including BEAD, the Federal Funding Account, Middle-Mile, Broadband Loan Loss Reserve, and Local Agency Technical Assistance;

5) Assisting the Commission in publicizing requests for wireline testing volunteers in areas, as needed; and

6) Assisting the Commission in promoting broadband deployment in California, related to CASF Infrastructure Projects as defined in Section III, the Federal Funding Account, Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative, Broadband Loan Loss Reserve, and Local Agency Technical Assistance programs created under SB 156 and AB 164, or other state and federal programs deploying broadband in California, including BEAD.

The previous round of IMBC funding was administered through a contract with Inyo County for Broadband Coordinator Services. That position is now vacant, and Inyo County has indicated they do intend to rehire for that position. Staff recommends ESCOG prepare a Request for Proposals for a contract to fulfill the scope of the grant. The CASF Grant Consortia Forms must be signed and returned by July 15, 2026.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

The IMBC will reimburse up to $200,000 per year for 3 consecutive years ($600,000 total) from the CASF Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Account fund.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel has reviewed this item and found it is consistent with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommended Motion: Authorize the Chair to Sign the California Advanced Services Fund Grant Consortia forms to accept funding for the Inyo Mono Broadband Consortium. Direct staff to prepare a Request for Proposals for a qualified consultant to provide Inyo Mono Broadband Consortium administration services.