



# El Dorado County Office of Education

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP SEEKS CPUC GRANT FUNDING TO IMPROVE INTERNET ACCESS AND ADOPTION IN CENTRAL EL DORADO COUNTY**

The Camino Fiber Network Cooperative (CFNC), the El Dorado County Office of Education and the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce have joined in a public-private partnership to seek grant funding available through the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to improve Internet access and adoption in central El Dorado County.

The CFNC-Central El Dorado County Regional Broadband Consortium is requesting funding from the Regional Broadband Consortia Grant Account of the California Advanced Services Fund, a program administered by the CPUC.

If the consortium is awarded funding, it will engage in a three-year project to plan the construction of fiber to the premises telecommunications infrastructure potentially serving 44,551 households and 5,252 businesses in the region and to increase awareness and adoption of the services it can provide.

The planned open access network will be owned and operated by CFNC and capable of delivering a variety of Internet-based services including high speed Internet access, voice, video content and two-way videoconferencing.

CFNC's consumer cooperative ownership structure provides a critically needed alternative business approach to investor-owned providers who have left large unserved gaps in the region's telecommunications infrastructure.

"As education increasingly moves toward digital textbooks and online content, it's critical students and their parents have access to broadband Internet that has the capacity to deliver these materials," said EDCOE Superintendent Vicki Barber.

"Too many central El Dorado County families live in homes that lack decent and affordable Internet access," Barber noted. "The children living in those homes are educationally disadvantaged compared to kids

elsewhere in the state and the nation who have modern Internet access.”

Adequate Internet telecommunications infrastructure is also essential to the county’s economic vitality as the local economy recovers from the economic downturn.

“We are very interested in improving the county’s outdated telecommunications infrastructure from an economic development perspective,” said Laurel Brent-Bumb, CEO of the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce. “Many of our members are small, home-based businesses who find it very challenging to obtain adequate Internet access.”

CFNC President Fred Pilot, who coordinated the formation of the consortium and its grant application to the CPUC, is optimistic the consortium’s proposed project will be funded.

“The consortium’s proposal squarely addresses all three elements of the grant criteria of promoting broadband deployment, access and adoption and particularly deployment,” Pilot said. “Deployment of advanced telecommunications infrastructure is key and makes possible enhanced access and adoption of Internet-based services,” he added.