1. Civic Leader Engagement

Engagement of civic leaders in stakeholder organizations was the foundational strategy to leverage the original $60 million seed capital. Civic leadership is a powerful fulcrum to optimize the impact of all other strategies to close the Digital Divide in a state as large and diverse as California. CETF initially convened leaders in rural counties and funded the formation of Regional Consortia to implement Rural Regional Aggregation Demand Projects to identify needs, aggregate demand, and map assets to encourage broadband deployment. CETF also convened leaders around Urban Regional Roundtables to formulate action plans to integrate broadband applications into initiatives addressing local priorities, such as economic development, education, workforce training, and health care. CETF provided small matching grants for the formation of Urban Regional Consortia. CETF then sponsored legislation to fund Regional Consortia through the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) because the evidence showed their cost-effective positive impacts in driving to achieve broadband deployment and adoption goals. Today there are 15 Regional Consortia across California engaging the spectrum of stakeholders—local elected officials, government agencies, employers, community organizations, and broadband providers—to collaborate to close the Digital Divide.

Statewide organizations representing local elected officials—California State Association of Counties (CSAC), Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), and League of California Cities (LCC)—are providing pivotal leadership in advancing Digital Inclusion. CSAC, RCRC, and LCC joined CETF to convene Local Government Roundtables in 2013 and 2015 to identify opportunities and strategies to accelerate broadband deployment and adoption. County, city, and school officials throughout California are highlighting the needs for high-speed Internet services in their jurisdictions and leading by example on a variety of innovative initiatives.