



**Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant  
Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)**

**Summary of Relevant Report for Data Collection**

**Regional Broadband Consortium: Inland Empire Regional Broadband Consortium (IERBC)**  
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**Summary of Data Collected**

1. Riverside and San Bernardino County Cal Fresh Recipients
2. Riverside and San Bernardino County Medical Recipients
3. Riverside and San Bernardino County Schools – National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
4. Riverside and San Bernardino County Schools – Number of Wi-Fi Hotspots Distributed to Students

**Summary of Conclusions**

1. The California State Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Riverside County, and San Bernardino County do not keep track of or provide regular data for the number of CalFresh and Medi-Cal applicants or recipients with emails.
2. CalFresh promotes online applications. Approximately 1% of CalFresh applicants in the Inland Empire include an email with their applications. Note: providing an email is an optional item in the CalFresh application form.
3. Medi-Cal applications can be done online, phone, mail, or in person. It is not clear if an email is needed to apply online. There is no data available from the State or counties about the number of Medi-Cal recipients with emails.
4. Schools are not inclined to release address or location data for Wi-Fi Hot Spots that are provided to students or for those on NSLP. Without this data, it is difficult to correlate NSLP data with broadband infrastructure gaps, internet availability and speeds, internet adoption rates or affordability.

5. In 2001, over 100,000 Wi-Fi Hotspots were distributed in the Inland Empire to students requesting them. However, both Riverside County Office of Education and San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools cautioned on making a correlation to a student not having internet at home and requesting a hotspot from school. There are a variety of reasons students request hotspots and devices from the school, lack of internet at home is one of the reasons, but not the sole reason.

For example, students may also request Hotspots for convenience, to be able to move between homes, school activity locations, and various settings where they do schoolwork (e.g., students with shared custody arrangements or who does homework at a friend's house, at an after school program, or at a relative's home). A student might also request a Hotspot because the internet at their home is not reliable, or is heavily used within the household, or they share data with other family members that could lead to increased household internet cost without the Hotspot provided by the school.

### **Relevance of Findings and Conclusions: Potential to Reduce Trip Generation**

CalFresh and Medi-Cal data does not include email addresses or how applicants access the internet when they apply online. These processes could potentially be used to determine areas in the Inland Empire with low internet adoption rates; however, the lack of data collection in this area by public agencies, along with privacy issues, and no direct correlation to reduction of vehicle trips, preclude the usefulness of the data for the SCAG Caltrans Broadband Grant work.

NSLP data is readily available for both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, as well as by school district and individual schools. However, location of NSLP recipients is not allowed to be disclosed due to privacy issues. In Riverside County 65.4% of students, and in San Bernardino County 70.9% of students, are on the NSLP. It is inconclusive if being on the NSLP correlates with low internet adoption rates or a reduction in vehicle trips.

Inland Empire K-12 schools distributed over 108,000 Wi-Fi Hotspots to students in 2021 serving a total enrollment of 820,433 students in Riverside County (421,077 student enrollment) and in San Bernardino County (399,356 student enrollment). The data shows that 9% of Riverside County K-12 students, and 18% of San Bernardino County K-12 students, were provided a Wi-Fi Hotspot through their school in 2021. Although this shows a student need for Wi-Fi Hotspots in the Inland Empire, further study would be needed to determine if this information relates to a lack of internet at home, and if this were due to affordability, convenience or being in an unserved area.

Overall, the data collected for the Inland Empire as part of the SCAG Grant does show a high-level of usage of low-income programs (Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and NSLP), correlating with a high-level of poverty, disadvantaged residents and need Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

This data could be used to support more funding, programming and support related to broadband affordability, access and infrastructure deployment in the Inland Empire, which could lead increased internet use by disadvantaged residents and potentially lead to future reductions in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG).