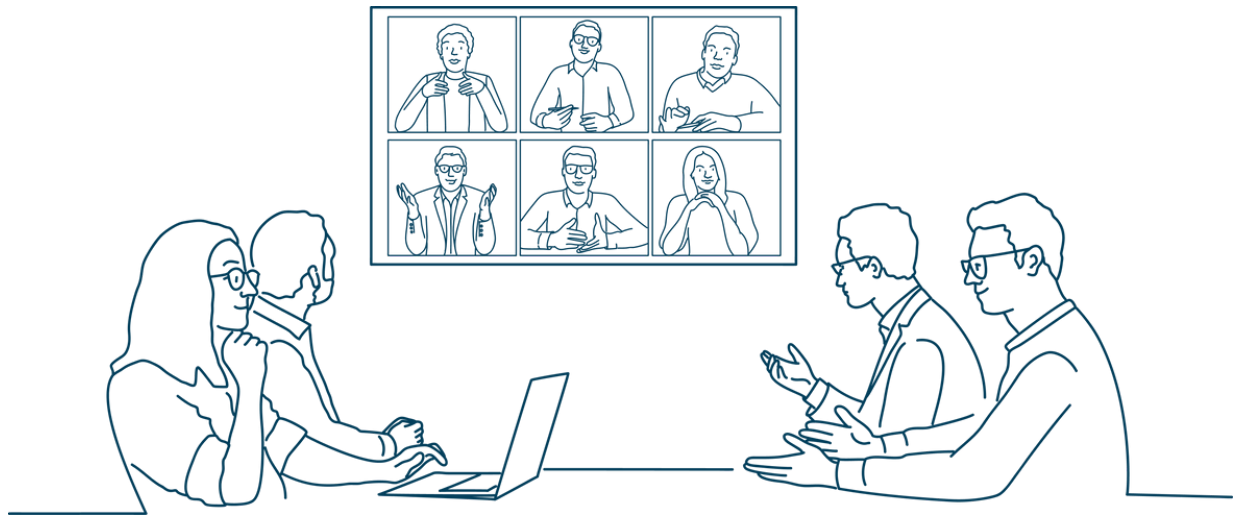


How The State Of California is Leveraging Authorium to Increase Access to Broadband

In July 2021, Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 156 into law to bring equitable high-speed broadband service to more Californians. The law leveraged over \$3B in federal American Rescue Plan funding, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to bring internet connectivity to millions of homes, businesses, and community organizations across California who don't have access to high-speed, reliable internet. In 2020, two million California households (15%) – many in low-income, rural, and tribal communities – did not have broadband access. The State's Department of Technology, which has an annual budget of \$500 million was tasked with creating a team, workflows, and oversight to effectively manage this enormous influx of funding to ultimately lay over 1,500 miles of fiber optic cable underground.



In addition to the huge investment into broadband internet as a utility, the Department had to work fast. Their federal funding, allocated by Congress to provide relief to address the continued impact of COVID-19, stipulated that all dollars must be committed by December 2024, with all projects completed by December 2026.

ASSEMBLING THE TEAM TO MANAGE THE PROJECT

To manage this special project, a team of 10 State employees were assembled. They took an agile approach to the work – moving quickly and iterating on their efforts. Together they created and published 35 contracts to move construction forward on the project, but as the breadth of their work increased and they found their work growing exponentially, the team recognized that **they needed a better system of action around the complex documents** that are the heart of any procurement system.

The team still had 35 more contracts to publish and award, they had permits to pull, and once the contracts were awarded, staff needed a way to track how the funding was being used by the awardees, how much had been spent, and if they were on track to meet their goals and deadlines. Furthermore, any new processes they put into place must satisfy digital audits and other compliance measures.

The State team urgently needed government-tested, standardized processes that could be implemented fast. The group **turned to Authorium and Document Process Automation™ to help achieve these goals.**



UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE AND VALUE OF MIDDLE-MILE BROADBAND

California is the most populous US state – over 39 million people – and the third largest state by area. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the importance of internet connectivity to enable people to receive healthcare, do work, and access education. Some Californians still don't have internet access and many others don't have fast enough internet access to manage the tasks of their daily lives.

This funding seeks to connect the global internet networks to the local carriers that provide broadband internet access to homes, businesses, and community institutions, in what's known as the "Middle-Mile." The "Middle-Mile" is essentially the long lengths of cable that will ensure local carriers will be able to provide high-quality internet access to people in the mountains, near deserts, on tribal lands, and in other unserved or under-served locations. Just as these Californians have the right to electricity and other public utilities, the State is working to deliver high quality broadband internet access.

Completing the "Middle-Mile" is a gargantuan task when it comes to procurement and project management. The State is mandated to move quickly when investing dollars, so they don't lose their federal funding, and they have a responsibility to ensure that once the funds are awarded, that the construction management is organized, strong, and accessible to program staff throughout the multi-year effort.

LEVERAGING AUTHORIUM TECHNOLOGY AND SKILLED GOVERNMENT EXPERTISE

When the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI) team initially met with Authorium, they discussed the challenges of publishing 35 contracts and their need to publish 35 more. These contracts provide for personnel services for construction workers, maintenance and operations, goods – such as the actual conduit and fiber cable, and more.

MMBI felt the hardship of not having a standardized Statement of Work (SOW) with common language. They encountered contract types that they hadn't created before and had to make them on the fly – to keep the project on schedule. And any documents that they created needed to satisfy the needs not only of their own team, but of their many partners.

Every day, the MMBI team collaborates with one another, and they also engage with adjacent California Department of Technology teams, other related agencies, cities, municipalities, and counties – each requiring their own agreements. In just a single contract, there are many moving pieces, and with the added pressures of working on a compressed timeline with a small, dedicated team, there was a very real fear of how a contract might get published without all of the associated documents. The team was **losing time by having to republish amendments and make updates**, as they attempted to avoid details slipping through the cracks.

The Initiative's staff had a vision for a better system and no time to waste. Having seen Authorium's work with other State programs, they enlisted Authorium's consultants to collaborate on a better path forward to simplify and streamline their work. Together, the teams identified several critical changes to the existing processes.

LAUNCHING A SIMPLIFIED APPROACH TO A MEGA PROCUREMENT PROJECT

First, the team knew that they needed to put all of their documents in one place and leverage the existing work that had already been done. To do this, they used Document Builder, part of Authorium's advanced platform for Document Process Automation, which enables MMBI to upload existing contracts into the system and create new contracts and solicitations. The team **saves time and improves their work accuracy** by pulling data from existing documents or borrowing the organizational structure from similar templates.

In a matter of weeks, the MMBI team had access to intelligent templates, took part in a short training, and were able to create new solicitations on their own.



For example, if several contracts serve a similar goal, but apply to different regions of the state, the team is able to work from an existing contract, update the geography and award amount, modify associated supporting documents, and publish, in far less time than creating, editing, and emailing around Word documents from scratch.

Procurements that previously took several months to complete now take only 2-3 weeks.

Next, as they worked with the system, the team discovered that they also needed a place to store associated permits for the projects. Authorium's consultants helped customize a workflow to make it easier and faster for staff to store the permits – for instance, a permit granting construction access near a railway – alongside other associated procurement materials. The new repository is intended to be leveraged by program staff when building solicitations and serves as an on-demand reference library as well.



This project leverages Authorium consultants and products including:

- Document Builder
- Evaluation Builder
- Project Oversight

THE ROAD AHEAD

Now, with a structured workflow in place, the broadband team **for the first time is able to focus on analytics and procurement management.** They're looking to Authorium's advanced platform for Document Process Automation to tell them at any given moment how much of the funds are encumbered in contracts, and what remaining funding must be invested before the fast-approaching deadline, to avoid being forfeited back to the U.S. Treasury.

MMBI continues to work through their project milestones. For example, if a vendor is awarded to lay fiber in a certain area, the small procurement team may monitor the vendor's work authorizations, ongoing invoices, and timesheets. As the program marches forward – to expand broadband access to more people – Authorium will continue to support the MMBI team every step of the way.

To learn more about how Authorium can help teams manage complex government projects, [request a demo.](#)