



**Date:** March 7, 2026  
**To:** Community Representatives and Local Leaders  
**From:** RSG, Inc.  
**Subject:** District Formation Advisory Services – Project Update

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The County of Sonoma (“County”) engaged RSG, Inc. (“RSG”) to provide District Formation Advisory Services for unincorporated communities. This countywide initiative is intended to build a shared understanding of service needs in unincorporated areas, provide clear and practical information regarding available governance and service delivery tools, and support informed, community-driven dialogue about potential pathways forward. This memorandum provides an update on work completed to date and outlines the structure of the forthcoming final deliverables.

#### **Initial Outreach and Identification of Priority Areas**

Beginning in May 2025, County staff from the Strategic Initiatives Division worked with Supervisorial District offices to identify contacts within the Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs), Citizen Advisory Councils (CACs), and additional unincorporated community groups that had previously engaged with the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc. Outreach was conducted by phone and email to assess interest in participating and to determine whether active discussions were underway regarding service enhancements or governance changes.

The following communities were contacted as part of the initial outreach effort:

- North Sonoma Valley MAC
- Sonoma Valley CAC
- Springs MAC
- Unincorporated East Santa Rosa
- Penngrove
- Moorland
- Dry Creek CAC
- Geyserville Alexander Valley MAC
- Mark West Area MAC
- Lower Russian River MAC
- Sonoma Coast MAC
- Graton CSD
- Occidental CAC

As of August 1, 2025, Dry Creek CAC, Graton CSD, Lower Russian River MAC, Moorland, North Sonoma Valley MAC, Occidental CAC, and Penngrove expressed interest in introductory meetings and were designated as priority areas for focused engagement.

It is important to note that this effort was structured as a time-limited engagement with defined scope and budget parameters. As a result, the project team focused on communities that expressed interest and readiness within the study timeframe. Although engagement in any single community was limited in duration, the lessons and tools developed are intended to support other communities considering governance options in the future.

### **Community Engagement Approach**

Community engagement has been central to this initiative. The process was designed to elevate local perspectives and align potential governance strategies with each community's priorities and capacity to engage. Engagement began with conversations with local leaders to clarify service concerns, assess governance awareness, and identify appropriate next steps. Where interest and capacity existed, engagement progressed to more tailored technical support or focused educational discussions. Recognizing that each community is at a different stage, the approach was phased and responsive, balancing educational support with practical assessment of available governance options.

### **Work Completed to Date**

The following provides a summary of engagement activities undertaken to date within each priority area:

Dry Creek CAC - Initial engagement is pending.

Graton CSD- An initial priority meeting was held to discuss local service needs and identify the community's highest priorities at that time, which included garbage services, sidewalks and roads, parking, implementation of authorized Community Services District (CSD) powers, and assistance in identifying grant opportunities. At the request of the community, RSG provided technical support related to activating the CSD's preapproved Parks and Recreation services during a Board workshop on January 20.

Lower Russian River MAC/ Monte Rio Recreation & Parks District (MRRPD) - An initial meeting with the Lower Russian River MAC was held in July 2025, where participants emphasized a preference for more targeted, community-specific engagement. Based on those discussions, MRRPD was identified as a priority sub-area to explore potential reorganization from a Recreation and Park District to a Community Services District. An October 2025 meeting with MRRPD focused on service needs and governance considerations. At the District's request, the next step is to coordinate a broader community workshop.

Moorland - An initial priority meeting was held in July 2025 to discuss service concerns and governance awareness. No follow-up engagement has occurred to date due to limited responsiveness.

North Sonoma Valley MAC - An initial meeting was held in October 2025 to discuss the community's highest priorities at that time, including pedestrian safety, affordable housing, stronger local decision-making authority, and funding for improvements such as lighting and beautification. In response to those priorities, two working sessions were held on January 20 and January 27 to review governance options and procedural considerations associated with district formation.

Occidental CAC - Initial engagement is pending.

Penngrove - An initial priority meeting was held in August 2025 to discuss local service needs. Key concerns included traffic congestion, sidewalks, flood risk, aging water infrastructure, sewer capacity, and school and housing growth. At the community's request, a broader educational meeting is being considered to help residents better understand available governance options.

## **Final Deliverable**

The final deliverable for this project will consist of two phases.

### Phase 1: Governance Toolkit

The first phase is the Governance Toolkit, designed as a practical, resident-facing guide to understanding service delivery and governance options in unincorporated Sonoma County. The Toolkit will include:

- An overview of how municipal-type services are delivered in unincorporated areas
- Guidance on clarifying community needs and assessing readiness
- A spectrum of governance pathways, from strengthening existing institutions to forming a new special district
- An overview of special district types and statutory frameworks
- A summary of the district formation process and requirements
- Considerations for evaluating feasibility of governance options

The Toolkit is intended to help communities understand what options exist, what each option requires, and what tradeoffs may be involved before pursuing formal governance changes.

### Phase 2: Applied Insights from Priority Areas

The second phase will document applied insights from the priority communities engaged through this initiative. This section will capture practical lessons and strategies to inform future district formation or service enhancement efforts. This phase will include:

- A summary of each priority area's specific service needs and local conditions
- An assessment of each community's level of organization and capacity to pursue next steps
- Tailored recommendations and potential pathways based on local circumstances
- High-level reflections on implementation considerations, including financial, operational, and procedural factors
- Effective engagement strategies and lessons learned for future efforts

This section will serve as a practical reference by memorializing real-world applications of the Toolkit framework.

## **Next Steps**

Over the coming weeks, RSG will:

- Continue engagement with remaining priority areas, as appropriate;
- Finalize and refine the Governance Toolkit (Phase 1); and
- Develop the Phase 2 Applied Insights summary as priority area engagement concludes

RSG appreciates the opportunity to support the County and the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc throughout this initiative. We value the collaboration and engagement that have informed this work and look forward to completing the final deliverables and continuing to assist the County as it advances service delivery and governance efforts in unincorporated communities.