



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/3/2026

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Economic Development Collaborative

Staff Name and Phone Number: Ethan Brown, Katherine DiPasqua 565-4893

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Internet Subsidy Program - Site Expansion

Recommended Action:

Approve expanded list of affordable housing sites to be included in the County's Internet Subsidy Program, funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds previously allocated by the Board.

Executive Summary:

In September 2024, the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) conducted a [Digital Needs Assessment <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13903242&GUID=84134CD4-9ADD-47E1-9B49-14E81DFC218C>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13903242&GUID=84134CD4-9ADD-47E1-9B49-14E81DFC218C) to determine what barriers communities are facing to fully access and participate in the digital world. The survey showed that Sonoma County residents who live in low-income communities are experiencing a digital divide, either due to affordability, access to devices, or lack of training. To help address this need, the Board approved the creation of a time-limited Internet Subsidy Program funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The Board's action included authorization to enter into an agreement with Comcast to purchase subscriptions good for one year of free internet at a minimum speed of 100 MBPS download and 20 MBPS upload, including all fees and equipment costs. The Board also approved a list of fourteen affordable housing sites whose residents would be eligible to receive the subscriptions. The fourteen sites were selected due to their geographic distribution across the five County districts, a minimum of 20 units at each site, Comcast service availability, and absence of conflicting grants or obligations.

Since program approval, the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC), through efforts with Comcast, Human-I-T, Burbank Housing, and MidPen Housing, have distributed 188 internet subscriptions, achieving an average enrollment rate of 33%. To meet ARPA expenditure guidelines, the subscriptions need to be distributed and activated prior to December 31, 2026. To enable full distribution and utilization of the subscriptions by the ARPA deadline, staff is recommending the expansion of the eligible affordable housing sites to all properties that were initially identified as possible locations for the Internet Subsidy Program (Attachment 1).

Discussion:

As part of the agreement that EDC negotiated with Comcast for internet subscriptions, Comcast also agreed to donate 441 Chromebooks. Using existing grant funding from the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF)

as matching funds, EDC was able to purchase an additional 115 Chromebooks to contribute to the program, for a total of 556 Chromebooks. Now every resident who signs up for the program is eligible to receive a free laptop. Additionally, Comcast brought on a new partner, Human-I-T, to streamline the enrollment process, distribute the laptops, and provide direct assistance and digital skills training.

Over the past six months, EDC staff and involved parties have worked closely with each property to support enrollment. This included two to three in-person events at each site, phone calls, text messages, property manager outreach, site-sponsored meals, door hangers, and other materials to help spread the word. All materials were available in English and Spanish, and each in-person event had support for Spanish-speaking residents.

The Internet Subsidy Program has served many different types of households. However, enrollment data from participating properties show that the majority of participants have been seniors, single parents, people with disabilities, and adults without children. Feedback indicates that many families with school-age children felt the internet speeds offered were not strong enough for their needs, even at no cost. As a result, overall enrollment has been lower than the 550-plus expected, which is why EDC is recommending the Program be expanded to as many properties as possible.

To guide outreach and to stay consistent with how eligible sites were selected, EDC staff reviewed properties from the initial eligibility list along with several other additional properties, to determine where residents are most likely to need better internet access and technology. Staff used mapping tools and recent U.S. Census data to examine income levels, internet access, computer access, and use of public assistance in the neighborhoods around each site. The highest priority was given to whether households have reliable high-speed internet and access to computers, while also considering income levels, use of public assistance programs, and geographic distribution across the County.

Through this process, thirteen priority sites were identified. These sites were on the original eligibility list, with the exception of Bell Manor Apartments in Windsor and Cabernet Apartments in Sonoma. Those two sites are recommended for inclusion into the program due to their locations within low-income census tracts, to expand into high need areas, and in the case of Cabernet Apartments, proximity to another participating site allowing for easier in-person outreach. Residents of all properties listed in Attachment 1 may sign up for the Internet Subsidy Program at any time; however, because program capacity is limited, EDC staff will focus in-person outreach at the thirteen priority sites (listed below).

Property	City	District	Unit Count	Housing Type
Wilford Lane	Cotati	2	36	Family
Fitch Mountain Terrace II	Healdsburg	4	20	Senior
Monte Vina Apartments	Healdsburg	4	23	Family
The Arbors	Rohnert Park	3	56	Family
The Gardens at Santa Alicia	Rohnert Park	3	20	Family
Amorosa Village 1 & 2	Santa Rosa	3	150	Family + Supportive
Grays Meadow Apartments	Santa Rosa	3	52	Family

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Papago Court Apartments	Santa Rosa	5	48	Family
Rowan Court Apartments	Santa Rosa	4	62	Family + Supportive
West Avenue Apartments	Santa Rosa	3	40	Family
Village Green II	Sonoma	1	34	Senior
Bell Manor Apartments	Windsor	4	95	Senior
Cabernet Senior Apartments	Sonoma	1	7	Senior

Strategic Plan:

This item directly supports the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Resilient Infrastructure

Goal: Goal 4: Implement countywide technological solutions to promote resiliency and expand community access.

Objective: Objective 1: Leverage funding and seek grants to expand communications infrastructure within the community to improve equitable access to broadband, wireless, and cell phone services.

Pillar: Resilient Infrastructure

Goal: Goal 4: Implement countywide technological solutions to promote resiliency and expand community access.

Objective: Objective 2: Leverage existing fiber optic infrastructure and grant opportunities to expand wireless and broadband access across County.

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

3/11/25 - Internet Subsidy Program Site Recommendations

<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7249220&GUID=7F4BA06E-E553-47D6-BC12-F8B1D14BD2F9&Options=&Search=>>

12/3/24 - Broadband Update

<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7036319&GUID=753E31BA-D7C0-4FCC-8BD3-96191485FE8B&Options=&Search=>>

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$221,330		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$221,330		

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Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	\$199,826		
Fees/Other	\$21,504		
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$221,330		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

There are no new costs or allocations needed for this Item. The total cost of the Internet Subsidy Program is \$221,330. This includes \$199,826 for the Comcast internet subscriptions, paid with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds previously allocated by the Board, and \$21,504 for the County’s contribution towards the laptops, paid with California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) grant funds. All appropriations were included in the FY 2025-26 Adopted Budget.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Affordable Housing Sites (Original List)

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None