



Legislation Text

File #: 2023-0453, **Version:** 2

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Economic Development Board
Staff Name and Phone Number: Ethan Brown (707) 565-7170
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Broadband Program Update

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution amending the Department Allocation list of the Economic Development Board to reflect the addition of 1.0 full-time equivalent Administrative Aide - Project.

Executive Summary:

Since approving the Economic Development Board's [Broadband Action Plan](https://sonomaedb.org/Microsites/Economic%20Development%20Board/Documents/Broadband/06_08_21_EDB_Access%20Sonoma%20Plan_ENGLISH%20ADA.pdf) <https://sonomaedb.org/Microsites/Economic%20Development%20Board/Documents/Broadband/06_08_21_EDB_Access%20Sonoma%20Plan_ENGLISH%20ADA.pdf> in June 2021, the Board of Supervisors has taken significant action to close the internet availability gap by directing staff to research options to expand broadband access. These efforts have been focused on infrastructure development and advancing utilization ("adoption") of existing resources, where barriers to connectivity are related to affordability rather than lack of infrastructure.

The Board's actions parallel recent state and federal grant programs that fund and facilitate broadband planning, infrastructure, and adoption, including the California Public Utility Commission's (CPUC) Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program, and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

This item requests the addition of an Administrative Aide - Project to the department employee allocation list to support the Board's broadband initiatives. The position will be funded in full by a department allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, from which a total of \$410,000 has been allocated for the term (36 months) of this project position. This position will support department broadband efforts with a primary focus on Digital Equity and Accessibility. If approved as recommended, the funding allocation will be included in FY 23-24 the Supplemental Recommended Budget, but staff are asking to add the position now so that recruitment can begin, thus maximizing the work that can be accomplished with this limited-term position.

Discussion:

ARPA Funding Allocation

On December 14, 2021, the Board of Supervisors set aside \$3 million in ARPA funding to support infrastructure and start-up costs for broadband deployment in Sonoma County, as outlined in the [Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan](https://sonomaedb.org/Microsites/Economic%20Development%20Board/Documents/Broadband/06_08_21_EDB_Access%20Sonoma%20Plan_ENGLISH%20ADA.pdf) <https://sonomaedb.org/Microsites/Economic%20Development%20Board/Documents/Broadband/06_08_21_EDB_Access%20Sonoma%20Plan_ENGLISH%20ADA.pdf>

[20Board/Documents/Broadband/06_08_21_EDB_Access%20Sonoma%20Plan_ENGLISH%20ADA.pdf](#) (“Plan”) approved by the Board of Supervisors in June 2021. As part of the Economic Development Board’s (EDB) continued broadband efforts, which also include the promotion of digital equity and accessibility in Sonoma County, staff is recommending dedicating and obligating \$410,000 from that ARPA fund allocation and \$40,000 from the recently awarded California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) to create a project position to support broadband adoption advancement as outlined by the Plan (page 29).

Through this item, staff is recommending a dedicated, full-time project position (allocated through 12/31/26) that would be responsible for undertaking advanced adoption initiatives. This includes execution of the comprehensive plan developed by the EDB to increase awareness of incentive program eligibility and benefits, and to provide guidance for enrollment in the ACP among eligible community members. While appropriations will be added in supplemental adjustments for inclusion in the FY 2023-24 Adopted budget, staff are recommending that the position be added with this item in order to allow for recruitment to begin. Because ARPA funding sets a hard deadline for use, this will allow the department to maximize the work that can be done by this position.

Strategic Plan:

Approval of this position allocation will support necessary staffing capacity to successfully utilize existing grants funds to promote and improve equitable access to broadband services in Sonoma County.

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.

Prior Board Actions:

4/18/2023 - Federal Communications Commission Affordable Connectivity Program Award ([Resolution No. 23-0182 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6165270&GUID=C6BEBB12-CB7B-42EB-9B2F-3A008E51DEEA&Options=&Search=>](#))

4/18/2023 - California Emerging Technology Fund Regional Broadband Leadership Consortium Grant Award ([Resolution No. 23-0184 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6165274&GUID=9256687B-5E44-4CB7-A943-1DC4C3B5CCB4&Options=&Search=>](#))

3/7/2023 - California Public Utilities Commission Grant for Broadband (Resolution No. 23-0107)

1/31/2023 - Informational Presentation from Golden State Connect Authority ([File No. 2023-0025 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6009129&GUID=0718EE8A-5091-49D0-BBCB-3173CC7DE63C&Options=&Search=>](#))

12/6/2022 - California Public Utilities Commission Grant and Broadband Update (Resolution No. 22-0494)

12/14/2021 - ARPA Funding Allocation ([File No. 2021-1386 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5351534&GUID=28CE5BAF-B7FA-4D8E-A7B2-94FE0D321E14&Options=&Search=>](#))

6/8/2021 - Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan (Resolution No. 21-0263)

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$150,000	\$150,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		\$150,000	\$150,000
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal		\$150,000	\$150,000
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$150,000	\$150,000

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The Administrative Aide - Project will be funded in full by a department allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, from which a total of \$410,000 has been allocated for the term (36 months) of this project position. If approved as recommended, the funding allocation will be included in FY 23-24 the Supplemental Recommended Budget.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
Administrative Aide - Project	\$4,939.52 - \$6,003.95	1.0	0.00

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

This position will support department broadband efforts with a primary focus on Digital Equity and Accessibility. Staff will work with Human Resources to conduct a recruitment prior to fiscal year end, with a start date of July 1, 2023. If approved as recommended, the position allocation will be included in FY 23-24 the Supplemental Recommended Budget.

Attachments:

Position Allocation Resolution

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None