



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-1007, **Version:** 2

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Economic Development Board

Staff Name and Phone Number: Sheba Person-Whitley (707) 565-7170

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Golden State Connect Authority JPA - Broadband

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution to approve and authorize the Chair to execute the Golden State Connect Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement and delegate authority to the County Administrator to take the necessary and appropriate actions needed to become a member of this statewide broadband JPA.

Executive Summary:

On August 18, 2021, the Board of Directors of Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) voted unanimously to approve the formation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), Golden State Connect Authority, for the purpose of expanding broadband access and quality in rural counties. Following approval by the RCRC Board, the next step in establishment of this entity is to provide the Golden State Connect Authority JPA to each RCRC Member County for review and approval by the Member County Boards of Supervisors. Counties that wish to join the Authority must submit executed documents no later than October 15th, 2021.

Discussion:

On June 8, 2021, the Board of Supervisors accepted the Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan, directed Economic Development Board (EDB) staff to evaluate governance models for broadband infrastructure development and ownership, and provided \$315,000 for the initial steps recommended in the Action Plan. EDB staff are currently conducting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a qualified consultant to assist with the execution of this work.

In parallel with the County's efforts, and over the past two years, RCRC has engaged in several initiatives aimed at promoting access to quality broadband. The recent enactment of California State Senate Bill 156 has introduced new opportunities to expand these efforts significantly.

To best take advantage of these opportunities, the RCRC Board of Directors has approved the formation of Golden State Connect Authority JPA. Activities within Golden State Connect Authority will focus exclusively on broadband. All RCRC member counties are welcome and encouraged to join. There is no financial impact associated with joining the JPA, and no obligation for individual member counties to provide funds to the Authority, absent a separate agreement to participate in one (or more) of the specific programs. As with both RCRC and affiliate entity Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA), the proposed new entity will be governed by delegate Supervisors from each member county, and day-to-day operations will be administered by RCRC staff.

The primary goals for the project structure are:

- to ensure that elected County Supervisors retain control of the program, with day-to-day administration provided by RCRC staff,
- to allow for partnership agreements between like-governmental entities for the operation and advancement of the program of work, and,
- to attract public and private investment in the program, as necessary and appropriate.

The Draft JPA was provided to member county staff in advance of the August 18, 2021 RCRC Board of Directors meeting. Comments and questions were invited and received.

Initial areas of focus for broadband work on behalf of member counties will include:

- Foundational Readiness: Ensure all member counties have broadband strategic plans
- Capacity Building: Equip rural counties with information and resources about innovative models and approaches to broadband deployment
- Demonstration Projects: Implement open-access municipal broadband projects

Adoption of this resolution would maximize options available to the County as it moves forward in evaluating optimal governance models for the development, ownership and management of broadband infrastructure critical to the provision of reliable broadband access to all residents in Sonoma County. Joining the RCRC JPA would be a parallel effort to Board direction given on June 8, 2021, and continued membership will be among options considered by County staff as the evaluation of governance models progresses.

Prior Board Actions:

June 8, 2021 - 1) Accepted the Economic Development department's Broadband Action Plan, and receive an update on next steps, 2) Directed department staff to evaluate optimum organizational/governance models for the execution of the Action Plan, 3) Adopted Budget Resolution to adjust the FY 2020-21 Economic Development department budget establishing appropriations for consultant, grants procurements, and legal services.

June 14, 2019 - Approved the creation of a new Broadband Analyst position at the Economic Development Board

FISCAL SUMMARY

| Expenditures | FY 21-22 Adopted | FY22-23 Projected | FY 23-24 Projected |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses | | | |
| Additional Appropriation Requested | | | |
| Total Expenditures | | | |
| Funding Sources | | | |
| General Fund/WA GF | | | |
| State/Federal | | | |
| Fees/Other | | | |
| Use of Fund Balance | | | |

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Contingencies | | | |
| Total Sources | | | |

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

None

| Staffing Impacts: | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Position Title (Payroll Classification) | Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step) | Additions (Number) | Deletions (Number) |
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Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None

Attachments:

Board Resolution
Joint Powers Authority agreement
RCRC Rural Broadband Initiative poster

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

None