



Board Report

File #: A 21-245, **Version:** 1

Response to Board Referral No. 2021.08

- a. Authorize the submission of a letter of support to Economic Development Representative, U.S. Department of Commerce that County of Monterey, wishes to express support for the Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA)'s Rural California Broadband Strategic Planning application to the U.S. Department of Commerce for the purpose of developing broadband strategic plans for each Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) member county; and
- b. Authorize the Director of Information Technology to sign the letter of support and related application documents, subject to County Counsel approval; and
- c. Authorize the Director of Information Technology to sign an upcoming Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RCRC's affiliate Golden State Finance Authority and Monterey County for participation in the broadband strategic plan, subject to County Counsel approval; and
- d. Authorize matching funds in the amount of \$25,000, establishment or involvement of an existing local Broadband Task Force for the development of County Broadband Strategic Plan, and official commitment of opting-in to the grant opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Authorize the submission of a letter of support to Economic Development Representative, U.S. Department of Commerce that County of Monterey, wishes to express support for the Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA)'s Rural California Broadband Strategic Planning application to the U.S. Department of Commerce for the purpose of developing broadband strategic plans for each Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) member county; and
- b. Authorize the Director of Information Technology to sign the letter of support and related application documents, subject to County Counsel approval; and
- c. Authorize the Director of Information Technology to sign an upcoming Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RCRC's affiliate Golden State Finance Authority and Monterey County for participation in the broadband strategic plan, subject to County Counsel approval; and
- d. Authorize matching funds in the amount of \$25,000, establishment or involvement of an existing local Broadband Task Force for the development of County Broadband Strategic Plan, and official commitment of opting-in to the grant opportunity.

SUMMARY:

It is critical that Monterey County expresses support for GSFA's Rural California Broadband Strategic Planning application to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration under funding made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act. The application outlines an important program of work that would establish "foundational readiness" for broadband investment and deployment across rural California.

DISCUSSION:

A time sensitive opportunity has presented itself as additional funding allocated to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that Monterey County would like to take advantage of.

EDA has received an additional \$3B ARPA allocation, most of which will be distributed via competitive grant

awards under their Economic Adjustment Program. This program is among the most inclusive in funding for projects ranging from planning grants to dollars for project implementation.

RCRC has proposed with EDA Representative support - that GSFA submit a single grant application on behalf of RCRC member counties for the purpose of developing broadband strategic plans for each county (and cities/towns therein). EDA would provide funding for 80% of the cost of each countywide broadband plan, with member counties committing the remaining 20%. For budget purposes, it is estimated that each county plan would cost approximately \$120,000. Therefore, each county that participates in the grant would be required to commit approximately \$25,000. The goal would be to have every one of our 37 member counties equipped with a plan at the end of the project period.

Having a County level broadband strategic plan would enable Monterey County to apply for broadband project implementation funds from various federal agencies - USDA Reconnect and EDA among them. It represents an outstanding opportunity to ensure that equity is achieved in the ability of all California residents to have access to broadband connectivity.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the letter of support.

FINANCING:

Sufficient appropriations to provide the grant application matching fund in the amount of \$25,000 are available in the FY 2021-22 recommended budget under department 1930, appropriation unit INF002.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

This letter of support for the broadband grant application support key objectives of Economic Development, Health and Human Services.

The pandemic has underscored the critical utility of broadband infrastructure. From the homework gap and workforce adaptation to essential healthcare services and e-commerce, broadband is now the keystone to our nation's response to the global pandemic and imperative to building resilient and future-ready communities. The lack of reliable broadband is a major economic barrier and a leading driver of socioeconomic inequality.

County's goal is to ensure that every resident in Monterey County, regardless of their circumstances, could access broadband. The ability to do so will pay dividends far beyond the current crisis we find ourselves in. Monterey County will benefit from the work proposed in Golden State Finance Authority's grant application. The development of a broadband strategic plan will provide important benefits for rural economies. The broadband strategic plan creates the foundation upon which investment and deployment of broadband infrastructure can and will occur. It will allow communities to strategically invite and direct broadband investment into unserved and under-served areas. It will provide the information needed for local elected officials to develop policies that encourage that investment; and lastly, it will open the door for rural communities to take advantage of federal funding opportunities that require (or strongly encourage) broadband strategic plans to be in place.

X Economic Development

__ Administration

X Health & Human Services

__ Infrastructure

__ Public Safety

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Approved by:

Eric A. Chatham, Director of Information Technology, 759-6928

Attachments:

RCRC grant application letter of support

Broadband JPA Referral