**COUNTY OF SISKIYOU**

**STAFF REPORT**

**MEETING DATE:** January 2, 2024

**TO:** Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Elizabeth Nielsen, Deputy County Administrator

**SUBJECT:**  County Broadband Strategic Plan Presentation

1. **INTRODUCTION**

With the unanimous passage of SB 156 by the California Legislature and formal signing of the Bill by the Governor in July 2021, not only was a historic $6 billion in funding dedicated to broadband infrastructure across California set in motion, but for the first time in Statute, counties are allowed to own, operate, and maintain broadband infrastructure. Counties are now permitted to play a bigger role in directing and developing this critical piece of community infrastructure.

To aid Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) member counties in their new role as active participants in the conversations and future direction of broadband infrastructure development in their communities, the RCRC Board of Directors provided direction to staff to seek funding for the development of county broadband strategic plans. The intended benefit of the broadband strategic plan was to serve as a compendium of information about broadband systems – existing and future, broadband policies and programs, Smart Community applications, and other key areas, thus serving as a resource to RCRC member counties in this new role.

1. **BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY**

In September 2021, RCRC affiliate Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) submitted a grant proposal to the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the purpose of requesting grant funding to complete countywide broadband strategic plans for those member counties that opted-in to the grant opportunity. Siskiyou County voted to participate in this opportunity and via execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between the County and Golden State Finance Authority, was included in the grant.

On August 23, 2022, GSFA was notified that the grant had been awarded. Included in the approved grant was funding for the completion of twenty-five countywide broadband strategic plans. Each countywide plan was approved for $125,000, eighty percent (80%) of which would be funded by the EDA grant and twenty percent (20%) would be provided in the form of cash match. GSFA would serve as the grant administrator and contract manager on behalf of the member counties included in the grant.

In December 2022, a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Contract Services for the development of countywide broadband strategic plans was issued by GSFA. Siskiyou County had the opportunity to review the RFP prior to issuance and participate in the proposal review process. Eight proposals were submitted in response to the RFP. Upon review and rating, Tilson Technology was selected to be the consultant on the project.

The scope of work under the grant called for the following components in each countywide broadband strategic plan:

* Broadband Benefits – Discuss value that broadband contributes to:
  + Local Governments
    - Enhancement of Public Services - Efficiencies and Cost Reduction
    - Public Health and Safety
  + Economic Development
  + Addressing Community Needs
  + Digital Inclusion
* Needs Assessment – Current and Future
  + Government
  + Businesses
  + Residents
  + Current and Future Providers and Network Administrators
  + Education
  + Military Installations
* Analysis of Current Broadband Market and Infrastructure\*
  + Availability and Quality of Existing Broadband
    - Identify providers and speeds – advertised and actual (if speed testing information is available)
    - Identify existing fiber locations by provider

\*In cases where locational data is used, please use FCC Fabric Data

* + Conduct Business Broadband Survey
  + Provide Gap Analysis on Findings
* Broadband Policies and Programs for Consideration – Federal and State
  + Fiber
  + Fixed Wireless/5G
  + Satellite
  + Hybrid (fixed wireless between towers connected to fiber)
* SMART Community Applications, including but not limited to:
  + Traffic Signalization & Safety
  + Wildfire Alert
  + Public Wi-Fi
  + Smart Parking & Wayfinding
  + ZEV Charging Infrastructure
  + SMART Community Policy Development
* Asset Inventory
  + Identification of Community Assets that Advance Broadband Deployment
  + Identification of Anchor Institutions
  + Development Policies Incorporating Broadband Deployment
    - Existing Policy and/or Recommendation for New Policy
  + Identification of Potential Partnership Opportunities That May Extend and/or Enhance Existing Infrastructure

1. **RECCOMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS**
   1. Among other recommendations, include recommendation of potential broadband deployment project areas, associated method of service delivery, and estimated costs. (Conducted in cooperation with development of network design for priority unserved/underserved areas made possible by CPUC Local Agency Technical Assistance grants for each county)
   2. Provide strategy recommendations for deployment of county-owned assets and/or public-private partnerships dependent on county need.

The draft Siskiyou County Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan is attached for your review and comment. A member of the Project Team from Tilson Technology will present an overview of the document.

EDA does not require that formal action be taken by the Board of Supervisors. This is an informational item.