

## SBCAG STAFF REPORT

**SUBJECT:** Broadband Technical Assistance Application

**MEETING DATE:** July 21, 2022

**AGENDA ITEM:** 5

**STAFF CONTACT:** Marjie Kirn, Executive Director

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- A. Direct staff to apply for a Local Agency Technical Assistance grant to implement the Broadband Strategic Plan.
- B. Authorize the Executive Director to sign a notarized affidavit agreeing to comply with the terms of the grant.

**DISCUSSION:**

SBCAG, at the direction of the Board of Directors, and with the support of each of the region's local governments, is in the process of preparing a broadband strategic plan for the region. The work is being conducted by the Broadband Consortium Pacific Coast and managed by SBCAG staff. The Plan will be complete by the end of November.

The final Broadband Strategic Plan will position the region to capitalize on state and federal grants to improve the region's broadband network. It is expected to:

- 1. Identify the region's current broadband assets and gaps;
- 2. Assess gaps as compared to the region's disadvantaged communities;
- 3. Provide planning-level scopes of work for projects to build out the broadband network; and
- 4. Consider various governance scenarios to continue the work.

The next step is to begin the implementation of the Broadband Strategic Plan. A statewide funding program is available through the California Public Utilities (PUC) Commission offering Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grants. These grants are available to government agencies to facilitate broadband deployment. Each applicant is eligible for up to \$500,000. (Higher amounts can be requested but will need PUC Board approval.) All the member jurisdictions are eligible to apply for their own grant if that is needed on a local level. SBCAG proposes the attached work element as the basis for an application. Staff requests the Board's approval to apply for this funding source with the intent to continue to improve broadband access for our region. The main categories of tasks include:

- 1. Continue stakeholder outreach and engagement.
- 2. Support SBCAG Board and committees to build on policy framework
- 3. Form Joint Powers Authority for Broadband.
- 4. Provide support and capacity building for project implementation.
- 5. Obtain additional funding for project implementation and operations.
- 6. Coordinate education and outreach program to improve digital literacy.
- 7. Prepare yearly program evaluation and evolution

If funding is awarded, staff will come back to the board to amend the Overall Work Program and Budget and approve any funding agreements required by the state.

The County of Santa Barbara staff is also considering applying for a LATA grant to prepare a Programmatic EIR for broadband deployment. This work may also be delegated to SBCAG if requested by the County. Staff will update the Board at a future meeting if this grant is pursued by the County.

*The above recommended action is not a project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act guidelines section 15378.*

**ATTACHMENT:**

- A. Proposed SBCAG Broadband Implementation Work Element
- B. Draft Notarized Affidavit

# ATTACHMENT A

## SBCAG Broadband Implementation Work Element

**Objective:** Implement the goals and objectives identified in the Broadband Strategy.

### Previous Work:

Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategy- The Broadband Strategy identify our communities' needs and goals, started conversations with providers, evaluated options, and identified priority broadband infrastructure projects. The Broadband Strategy defined a baseline of broadband services currently provided in Santa Barbara County against which to measure progress.

### Tasks:

1. **Continue stakeholder outreach and engagement.** (Monthly)
  - SBCAG staff will continue to work to engage stakeholders at both the state, regional and local levels.
  - This includes participating in broadband task forces, as well as partnerships among state and regional agencies.
  - At the local level, it includes support for broadband committees and education of local stakeholders.
  - Develop and maintain relationships with private-sector internet service providers.
2. **Support SBCAG Board and committees to build on policy framework.** (Monthly)
  - SBCAG staff, with Board direction, will create and maintain a policy framework for broadband deployment by setting well-defined goals and a clear policy direction and/or tasking agencies to lead broadband programs.
  - Using the Broadband Strategy, SBCAG staff working with the local jurisdictions, will identify and address barriers to facilitate broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas.
  - We will work to connect broadband to other policy priorities, including economic development, transportation, health care, and agriculture, to build partnerships and leverage more funding for expansion efforts.
3. **Form Joint Powers Authority for Broadband.**
  - Hire consultant and/or legal services to facilitate the negotiation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for Broadband.
  - Facilitate the approval of the Broadband JPA by the member Jurisdictions.
4. **Provide support and capacity building for project implementation.** (Ongoing)
  - SBCAG will support local and regional planning efforts that help educate community members and build the local capacity necessary for successful broadband infrastructure projects.
  - SBCAG will provide the board with a yearly priority list of broadband projects, and if funded, work with the local jurisdictions to implement.
  - If a local entity doesn't have the capacity to take on the necessary broadband projects, SBCAG can provide the staffing with either in house staff or consultant services.
  - Provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions as they implement local projects.
5. **Obtain funding for project implementation and operations.** (Ongoing)
  - SBCAG will pursue funding to support broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas through grant programs that fund a portion of the cost of deployment in these communities.

- Working with the local jurisdictions, we will ensure accountability by requiring that providers demonstrate they are providing the service they were funded to deliver while also providing the region with the data needed to evaluate the program and progress toward defined goals.
- 6. **Coordinate education and outreach program to improve digital literacy.** (Ongoing)
  - SBCAG will work with partner agencies and non-profit agencies to implement a community-based outreach and education program to bridge the gap of digital equity.
  - SBCAG will pursue grant opportunities to fund these activities.
- 7. **Prepare yearly program evaluation and evolution.** (June)
  - SBCAG will ensure future planning efforts and infrastructure projects are evaluating the performance of these efforts and incorporating lessons learned via a year-end report.
  - We will continue to update program goals and activities as their programs mature, addressing broadband adoption and working to help communities make full use of their broadband infrastructure.

**Products:**

- Committee meeting agendas/minutes/staff reports Monthly
- Approved Joint Powers Authority Agreement June, 2023
- Yearly list of priority projects Yearly
- Funding grant applications As Needed
- Year-end report June of every year

**Staff time:** 12 person months

**Direct costs:** \$200,000  
**Travel** \$3,000

**Funding:** \$500,000- LATA Grant

# ATTACHMENT B

## Notarized Affidavit

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I am \_\_\_\_\_ [Title] of  
\_\_\_\_\_ [Name of Organization to receive grant].

My personal knowledge of the facts stated herein has been derived from my employment with  
\_\_\_\_\_ [Name of Organization to receive grant].

I swear or affirm that I have personal knowledge of the facts stated in this Application for a Local Agency Technical Assistance Grant under the provisions of Decision (D.) 22-02-026, as authorized by the Legislature and the California Public Utilities Commission, I am competent to testify to them, and I have the authority to make this Application on behalf of and to bind the Organization.

I further swear or affirm that \_\_\_\_\_ [Name of Organization to receive grant] agrees to comply with all federal and state statutes, rules, and regulations, including the California Advanced Services Funds program rules the Commission establishes, covering broadband services and state contractual rules and regulations, if granted a Local Agency Technical Assistance grant.

I further swear or affirm that \_\_\_\_\_ [Name of Organization to receive grant] agrees to comply with the terms, conditions and requirements of the grant and thus submits to the jurisdiction of the Commission with regard to the disbursement and administration of the grant if granted a Local Agency Technical Assistance grant.

I swear or affirm that I agree to comply with Rules 1.11 and 2.2 of the California Public Utilities Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.

I swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury, and under Rule 1.1 of the California Public Utilities Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, that, to the best of my knowledge, all of the statements and representations made in this Application are true and correct.

If \_\_\_\_\_ [Grantee Name] violates the terms and conditions of this award or other program and project compliance requirements, it shall be subject to Public Utilities Code Sections 2108 and 2111. The Commission may impose the maximum penalties allowed under Public Utilities Code sections 2108 and 2111 for failure to meet the program and project compliance requirements, as determined by the Commission.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature and title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Type or print name and title

**SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN** before me on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_.

Notary Public In and For the State of \_\_\_\_\_

My Commission expires \_\_\_\_\_