

Project Charter: Board Objective: Broadband Objective

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Project Sponsor: Steve Monaghan, CIO, Information and General Services

1. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Access to high-speed internet has become a near-universal need in order to accomplish daily tasks such as banking, educational activities, employment, online healthcare, and so much more. In our rural area, this need is even greater, especially for those whose ability to drive is limited. Since internet has not been federally regulated as a utility, any individual resident’s access to it is contingent upon whether an internet service provider has chosen to serve a particular household (which is contingent upon the profitability of doing so). In a rural area, with rugged terrain and low housing density, it is not uncommon for single households or whole neighborhoods to go unserved. Even if it is available, it may not be accessible, or affordable, for households. This results in significant inequities in access to employment, educational opportunities, and more, which hinders both quality of life and economic development.

The Board’s broadband objective acknowledges these challenges and establishes a mandate to address them. The County’ Broadband Workgroup is the team that carries out this work.

2. PROJECT SCOPE AND TIMELINE

The goal of the Broadband Workgroup is to implement the Board’s broadband objective and related annual initiatives. The broadband objective is to, “Equitably expand broadband to support economic development, distance-learning, telework, telemedicine, and general quality of life for all residents by championing the implementation of Nevada County Broadband Strategy Plan policies and last-mile infrastructure projects.”

The 2024 initiatives are:

- Continued Digital Equity outreach, including promoting the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) (pending federal renewal).
- Ongoing broadband advocacy with Sierra Business Council and the Gold Country Broadband Consortium.
- Ongoing California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) activity addressing Optimum customer service and performance issues.
- Launch Nevada County Last Mile Grant Program – Round Three, with the goal to make awards in summer 2024.
- Continue to pursue and support GSCA \$74M broadband last mile fiber project FAA grant application with CPUC, as well as other applications from local providers such as Nevada County Fiber.
- Broadband tower ordinance update – move from user permit to administrative permit, leveraging EIR.

3. WORKGROUP MEMBERS – ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Team Member Name	Department	Roles/Responsibility
Steve Monaghan	IGS	Team Lead
Carissa Cyr	BOS/COB	Group Manager / BOS Representative
Trisha Tillotson	CDA	CDA Lead
Brian Foss	Planning	Planning Lead
Caleb Dardick	CEO	CEO Lead
Jeffrey Thorsby	BOS/COB	BOS Representative
Kimberly Parker	CDA	Economic Development Lead
Elise Strickler	IGS	Fiscal support for grants / contracts
Landon Beard	IGS	IGS Representative

Taylor Wolfe	CEO	Communications Lead
Barry Anderson	CEO	Fiscal Lead
Amy Cobden	CEO	Grant prospecting
Kelly Carpenter	Town of Truckee (ToT)	ToT Representative
Kristin York	Sierra Business Council (SBC)	SBC Representative
Kari Sinoff	SBC	SBC Representative

The Workgroup meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 3:00-4:30 pm. Meetings serve as an opportunity to develop strategy, check in on initiative status, pose questions, concerns, challenges, discuss emerging issues, new opportunities, etc.

Each member of the group contributes, whether offering expertise from their field, or opinion based on accrued knowledge of broadband and serving the community.

Sierra Business Council holds a contract for advancing the County’s broadband objective and is responsible for:

- Serving as an active member of the Nevada County Broadband Workgroup and support the group’s objectives.
- Promoting and implementing Broadband Best Practices listed in the Broadband Strategy.
- Supporting and advancing broadband project readiness.
 - Producing a permitting toolkit, to support the broadband environmental impact report.
 - Participating in the development of a request for qualifications (RFQ), and participating in the process of vetting and selecting qualified applicants. Determining if a future RFQ is appropriate, based on the results of the initial round.
 - For the Golden State Connect Authority Project, helping the project team identify the best possible project area and leverage County relationships with internet service providers (ISPs) to fill any gaps in service areas.
 - Supporting the development and maintenance of productive partnerships and collaborations with the key partners listed in the Broadband Strategy, and any others who may be relevant, in the name of broadband expansion.
- Helping Nevada County and its internet service providers find out about and qualify for broadband funding opportunities and apply for them in a timely fashion.
 - Tracking funding opportunities.
 - Continuing to administer and identify improvements for the County’s last-mile grant program and any future County broadband grant programs.
- Supporting and promoting initiatives that advance digital equity and inclusion, including the programs listed in the Nevada County Broadband Strategy.
- As needed and appropriate, updating the Nevada County Broadband Strategy.
- Responding to residents’ general broadband inquiries.
- Support County and residents’ initiate service area mapping objections and challenges.

4. HIGH LEVEL REQUIREMENTS:

Major Stakeholders:

In addition to the workgroup members listed under item 3, other stakeholders are:

- Nevada County residents and visitors
- Nevada County business owners
- Internet service providers (ISPs)
- Educational institutions and other anchor institutions
- Economic Resource Council

- Community service providers, which may assist with ACP and digital equity activities

High Level Risks and Assumptions:

Because the broadband objective does not have a dedicated budget, and the County does not own or operate broadband networks, we are heavily dependent on funding from the state and federal government and on internet service providers for building out new networks. The Broadband Workgroup can and does take steps to attract funding and ISPs.

5. Communications Plan:

The Broadband Workgroup intends on undertaking the creation of a detailed communications plan to include a plan for the following components: create general presentation and talking points for Workgroup use, update the Nevada County broadband webpages, increase social media and newsletter activity around broadband initiatives, and map out a calendar of upcoming events to share with group members and stakeholders. The plan will also address avenues the Workgroup can use to engage the local media through the Nevada County PIO team on timely Broadband updates that should be communicated to the public.

6. Summary Budget:

The Broadband Workgroup, just like the broadband objective, does not have a dedicated budget. Staff time on this issue is covered by each team member's existing departmental budget. In addition, SBC's economic development professional service contract includes broadband support, last mile grant administration, digital equity, etc. Funding for certain initiatives, contingent upon Board adoption in FY24/25, is as follows:

1. Utilize \$1,000,000 from the ARPA allocation, which was previously designated for broadband in FY23/24, to launch Round 3 of the Nevada County Last Mile Grant Program.

2. Utilize \$250K in TOT economic development funds previously allocated to broadband, to launch Round 3 of the Nevada County Last Mile Grant Program and to be used on other local broadband efforts.

Approved by (Project Sponsor): _____ **Date:** _____