



NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: January 29, 2026
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Craig Griesbach, IGS Agency Director
SUBJECT: Board Objective on Broadband for 2026

RECOMMENDATION: For information only.

FUNDING: N/A

BACKGROUND: At the Board's workshop in January 2025, the Board set the following objective for Broadband:

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.

Throughout the year, staff continued to implement the Broadband workplan. Some highlights from 2025 include:

1. Continued educating, engaging, and informing the community about Broadband and Digital Equity efforts through library programs and local school partnerships.
2. Partnered with the Sierra Business Council to support and inform local Internet Service Providers of grant funding opportunities and improve project readiness.
3. Continued to leverage the County-wide Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to streamline the permitting process and incorporate innovative cost-effective opportunities as applicable.
4. Ongoing broadband advocacy with Sierra Business Council and the Gold Country Broadband Consortium.
5. The Planning Department completed a final draft of the amended Cell Tower Ordinance and circulated for public comment. It is expected that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will review this amended ordinance in early 2026.
6. Successful advocacy opposing Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) legislation ensuring residents retain land line connectivity and associated services.
7. Awarded the final round of Last Mile Broadband Program Grants for four projects totaling \$1,167,426 supporting a total of 936 connections.

Our primary role with Broadband as local government includes action through strong advocacy, engaging and educating the community, streamlining permitting where possible, and coordinating and

convening stakeholders. A major factor in our role is based on control and applicability of resources available to local government related to Broadband projects and initiatives. The vast majority of funding sources for broadband are not designed for local government to apply for and/or administer. These resources are applied for directly by Internet Service Providers (ISP's).

In 2026 it is anticipated that the federal Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program funding that is available directly to ISP's will be finally shaking loose after being stuck this past year. This includes over \$1 billion for projects in California with many of our larger ISP's applying for these funds in Nevada County. This gives us an opportunity to partner with service providers and facilitate streamlined permitting for those projects where possible. This could be through:

- Continuing to leverage our programmatic EIR
- Prioritizing expediting encroachment permits, grading permits, and environmental reviews
- Designating single points of contact for our service providers related to permitting
- Review opportunities for permitting standardization for broadband projects
- Support alternative deployment methods such as micro-trenching; and
- Leaning into the many synergies with the Economic Development Objective supporting our local economy and business community

Given our positive progress and momentum with this objective in the last several years as well as the nexus with the Economic Development objective there is an opportunity to fold the Broadband objective into the Economic Development objective. This allows these objectives to move forward efficiently, leverage synergies, and improve alignment of efforts.

Submitted/Approved: Craig Griesbach, IGS Agency Director

Submittal Date: January 6, 2026