



Legislation Text

File #: 11-0957, **Version:** 1

Supervisor Santiago recommending the Board approve and authorize the Chair to sign a Letter of Support for the submittal of the Gold Country Broadband Consortium application requesting financial support from the California Public Utilities Commission California Advanced Services Fund by the Sierra Economic Development Corporation to serve as the Regional Consortium for the Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Grant program.

Gold Country Broadband Consortia covers a five-county area of the some five thousand seven hundred sixty five (5,765) square miles. The area can be characterized as consisting of three geographic sub-areas: the Sacramento Valley sub-area that includes the southwestern part of Placer County (primarily its cities of Roseville, Rocklin and Lincoln) and the western-most part of El Dorado County along the Highway 50 corridor (primarily the communities of El Dorado Hills); the western-slope sub-area that includes the foothill portions of the counties of El Dorado, Placer, Nevada and Sierra west of the crest of the Sierra Nevada mountains; and the eastern-slope sub-area that includes that part of the counties of Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado and Alpine that are east of the crest of the Sierra Nevada mountains including the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The membership of the Gold Country Broadband Consortium includes representation from key stakeholders in each of the Consortium counties with a vested interest in the expanded availability and adoption of broadband services. The key stakeholders fall into general categories including consumers (both residential and business), local government (both city and county), Native-American communities, libraries, education, health care, workforce development and economic development entities, accessibility advocates and Internet Service Providers (ISPs). The Sierra Economic Development Corporation (SEDCorp) serves the Consortium as manager and fiscal agent. The members of the Consortium serve as a committee-of-the-whole for approval of program content, participation in community meetings, infrastructure project proposal reviews and general direction of the Consortium project. Members of each stakeholder category also work as subject matter committee members for development of content to be conveyed and discussed at community meetings. ISPs serving the region are welcome members of the Consortium in a non-voting status and will also participate in community meetings to describe current service availability. All Consortium members are welcome and encouraged to provide information to local media about the progress of the project, service availability, future services to be made availability and other pertinent information.

The Gold Country Consortium project will take a **proven market-driven approach** to promote both rapid infrastructure expansion and high service adoption rates as new services become available. The project is designed to achieve success by “priming the pump” and “moving the bright line.” “Priming the pump” is about development and implementation of infrastructure project proposals through (1) the development of current substantive content on benefits available via broadband connections, (2) the conduct of dozens of community meetings throughout the region and using

those community meetings to make informed consumers of the residents and business owners in those communities, (3) capturing the commitment of the community members for adoption of broadband services in order to make the business case for attracting investment in infrastructure expansion projects, (4) working with ISPs to advise the design those infrastructure projects, (5) organizing the communities and Consortia members in support of the infrastructure projects, and (6) assisting in securing the capital support for the infrastructure projects. The “bright line” is the boundary between unserved and adequately served areas; “moving the bright line” is about expanding the areas that are adequately served by (7) facilitating the committed adoption of broadband services as they become available community-by-community, and (8) sustaining this process until broadband service is available to and adopted by all of the residents and businesses in the region. Instead of taking an open-ended “if you build it, they [might] come” approach, the project is designed to garner bankable adoption commitments that will make the business case for infrastructure project investments. The Consortium members are active participants throughout the project, continuing to invest their time and efforts until the goal of universal availability and adoption is met.

3. Expected Project Outcomes/Deliverables

- a. The coalition of subject matter stakeholders working together across a multi-county region to raise the overall quality of services available via broadband;
- b. Stakeholder organizations informed and improved by interaction with their peers and community feedback;
- c. Improved local policies and procedures that facilitate the expansion of broadband infrastructure;
- d. Motivated and community-supported ISPs aggressively working to bring broadband service to unserved and underserved areas;
- e. Clear identification and tracking of the expanding “bright line” defining the boundary between served and unserved areas;
- f. Development of investment-quality infrastructure expansion plans; and
- g. Continuing support to and advocacy for communities until broadband service has been delivered and adopted by every household and business.

4. Key Points Summary

Success of the project rests on five key points. First, it takes a market-driven approach, “proving” an informed, committed customer base to substantiate ISP revenue projections used to attract infrastructure expansion project investments. Second, it is sustained through on-going community and other public meetings that keep the residents, business owners, public officials and others informed about the progress towards universal broadband service availability and adoption. Third, it provides a forum for advancing the state of the art in stakeholder services available via the Internet

by supporting the ongoing collaboration of those stakeholders. Fourth, it provides direct support to ISPs to help them develop investment-quality project proposals and enjoy community-based support for funding those proposals. Fifth, it is driven by a Consortium membership with broad vested interests that will assure their continued participation through to the accomplishment of the overarching goal of universal service availability and adoption.

5. Proposed Budget

The project anticipates approximately \$228,600 per year in cash and in-kind revenues and expenses and the leveraging of up to an additional \$1 million per year in SEDCorp-controlled business loan funds to finance infrastructure expansion projects.