

Economic Development and Financing Corporation

Contract for Broadband Coordination Activities

Performance Report

Act as “County Manager” and Participate in North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium

Participated in Quarterly Consortium meetings

EDFC staff participated in 3 Consortium meetings in-person and by phone.

Regular communication with NBNCBC Coordinator Tom West

Tom West provided critical support to Mendocino County in both the development of the Strategic Plan and in the work plan for the CASF grant application. EDFC communicates regularly with Tom West on issues that face Mendocino County.

Participate in CPUC workshop April 29 in Sacramento

EDFC staff attended the CPUC workshop with other consortium members. Commissioner Martha Guzman presided over the workshop focusing on unserved and underserved rural areas. The critical issue of the inaccuracy of service coverage reporting data (due to some whole census tracts counted as served with only small portions actually served), was clearly verbalized by the Commissioner as an important issue. Other consortium members pointed out that there has been a shift in the attitudes of the CASF staff in the last year or so, showing stronger advocacy for communities.

NBNCBC/Mendocino County sign-on to advocate for passage of McGuire's SB 670 and Wood's corresponding AB 183

The Executive Office and Board Chair approved inclusion of Mendocino County in a letter to our state representatives supporting passage of two bills concerning reporting by service providers of telecommunication outages. These bills will require that the providers more quickly make available to the public "...information providing details and updates as to what efforts are being made by providers to repair their telecommunications infrastructure that sustained damage as a result of an emergency or natural disaster."

Complete Mendocino County 5 Year Strategic Plan

EDFC completed the Mendocino County Digital Infrastructure Plan 2019-2025 in December of 2019. The plan was presented to the Board of Supervisors and was adopted on February 26, 2019. Per the strategy, EDFC has presented this plan to the City of Fort Bragg who adopted the plan on April 22nd. EDFC has been working with the City of Willits and the City of Point Arena who are also interested in adopting the plan.

EDFC began implementing the plan on February 26, 2019.

Identify Projects & Funding Sources

EDFC has been working with local Wireless Internet Service Providers to identify “low hanging fruit” or high need/low-return-on-investment projects that do not provide enough private sector incentive without public

support. EDFC is exploring two main projects that will fill a critical need in which private providers have not been able or willing to serve.

Road 409 Project

This area was identified by one of the WISPs and we have verified that this is a hard to serve area in which private industry has no interest. EDFC is in the process of exploring the feasibility of this project utilizing county assets (real estate) and a combination of funding sources.

Round Valley Indian Health Center and Covelo

Covelo/Round Valley area lacks high speed internet. However, in comparison to other areas, it has even greater deficiencies, in particular, the Round Valley Indian Health Center which is currently operating off of an inconsistent T-1 line. EDFC has been and will continue to work with public, private, and non-profit partners to address this issue.

Leveraging EDFC Loan Funds

Most locally owned Wireless Internet Service Providers (WISPs) are operating on a “cash basis” meaning that they are only using their own financing to grow their networks. Most have noted that any network growth usually requires a short term return on investment. It also limits network growth to cash-on-hand. The EDFC Board voted to approve the use of the Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program (RMAP) loan fund to support loans to WISPs to expand their networks. These loans would be up to \$50,000 and would have a special low interest rate of 3%. While there has been some interest, we have not received any serious inquiries into this program.

Other Communities

In addition to the two projects noted above, EDFC has also received interest in support to develop higher speed service for Brooktrails and a recommendation to discuss potential service with the community of Yorkville. The CPUC also provided a recommendation based on the “best available GIS data” for a project in the Hopland area.

Apply for Grant Applications

CPUC – California Advanced Services Fund - Consortium grant application

EDFC participated in the NBN CBC development of the 3rd application to the CPUC CASF grant program that was that was submitted for consortium support. If awarded, this grant would give Mendocino County \$32,500 annually for 3 years for a total of \$97,500 for contractual Broadband Coordination. Grant activities will support the implementation of the Mendocino County Digital Infrastructure Strategic Plan.

Feasibility Study for Providing High Speed Internet to Low Income Families

EDFC, through Mendocino County, submitted an application for a Community Development Block Grant to conduct a feasibility study on how to provide high speed internet access to low income rural populations in Mendocino County. The application submitted was for \$75,000 and a response is expected in the fall of 2019.

Facebook Charitable Giving

EDFC applied for \$10,000 to support additional work on the CDBG project. No response time was provided.

Community Foundation Broadband Fund

Several years ago, the Community Foundation established a broadband specific fund through an anonymous donor. In the FY 18-19 fiscal year, the Community Foundation provided a small amount to EDFC to provide

administrative support to the Broadband Alliance of Mendocino County. However, in the coming year, EDFC plans to leverage the remaining funds, which are approximately \$30,000, to complete a local wireless deployment project. EDFC met with the Community Foundation and is in the process of assessing the feasibility of a project that will make use of these funds.

Coordination, Communication, and Partnerships

In addition to collaborating with the NBNCBC, EDFC has worked with the following partners in the county to develop and implement the strategic plan:

Coordination and Meeting with County and City Staff

EDFC has met with the Mendocino County Planning Director Brent Schultz and Deputy CEO Steve Dunncliff, IT Manager Cody Schneider, and CEO Carmel Angelo to discuss project development and to understand planning and zoning requirements for projects and critical issues that need to be addressed to allow the County to leverage resources and support the development of high speed internet. EDFC is continuing these conversations about ways to work together to support broadband implementation.

EDFC is holding ongoing conversations with the City of Fort Bragg and the City of Willits that include discussions about their specific needs, including how to streamline the process for network expansion and how to create detailed plans for their plan development.

Working with Local WISPs - Wireless Internet Providers

EDFC has made significant efforts to reach out to our local WISPs over the last year, offering support for potential grant applications and very low interest loans to expand infrastructure. We organized a meeting of four of the most active companies in early May to talk about potential collaboration. One outcome was the sharing of future deployment plans to ensure they don't waste resources in trying to provide service to the same areas. Secondly, two of the companies will be exploring more formal collaboration in the future, as they offer differing products that could be combined to improve services to new and expanding service areas. At their request, we will continue to schedule meetings for the WISPs every 6 months to keep communications open. They also requested that EDFC work with jurisdictions to help streamline the permit/approval process and clarity among projects.

Coordination with State and Federal Representatives

EDFC has met with staff from both state legislators' and our federal congressional representative's offices. Discussions have included legislation, sources of funds, and active projects.

Communication with CA State Parks

California State Parks has completed several fiber deployment projects to their coastal parks, in particular, Russian Gulch and McKerricher State Parks. There is a project proposed but currently not funded to deploy fiber-optic cable to the Mendocino Woodlands State Park. There is interest in collaboration, however, State Parks has been operating under the assumption that, if AT&T runs fiber to their facility, that they will deploy it to neighborhoods on the way. While this has not happened in the past, there is still potential to leverage these assets and expand service to some areas that are currently dark.

Broadband Alliance of Mendocino County (BAMC) Participation

EDFC participates as a member of the BAMC Steering Committee and oversees the administration of quarterly Public Outreach meetings. The goal of BAMC is to continue to maintain grassroots support throughout the county for improved broadband and to regularly and publicly communicate issues and improvements in the

local broadband status. EDFC will continue to engage in this role, as it is an important component of the CASF work to have community outreach and engagement.

CENIC Meeting

EDFC organized a meeting on April 17th with the state-wide non-profit Corporation for the Education Network Initiatives in California. CENIC operates the California Research and Education Network (CalREN), a high-capacity computer network with more than 8,000 miles of optical fiber. The network serves over 20 million users across California, including the vast majority of K-20 students together with educators, researchers, and individuals at other vital public-serving institutions (including some located in Mendocino County).

EDFC was connected with CENIC through the NBNBCB and they expressed an interest in supporting county-wide efforts to improve high speed internet access. The meeting was attended by representatives from

- Mendocino County IT, OES and PBS
- Mendocino County Office of Education
- IT staff from Ukiah, Fort Bragg, Willits, and Point Arena
- Round Valley Tribe and health clinic leadership
- Indian Health Service