

READ AND CONSIDERED

DATE 8/26/2021 BY B

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Broadband Access in Sonoma County

Report Date: June 20, 2021

Response by: Sheba Person-Whitney Title: Executive Director

Agency/Department Name: Sonoma County Economic Development Board

FINDINGS: F9, F10, F14

I (we) agree with the findings numbered **F9, F14**

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: **F10**

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS: R4, R5, R9

Recommendations numbered: _____ have been implemented.

(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

Recommendations numbered: **R4, R5** have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

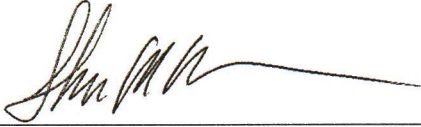
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

Recommendations numbered: **R9** require(s) further analysis.

(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.)

Recommendations numbered: _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 8/19/2021 Signed: 

Number of pages attached: **none**

(See attached Civil Grand Jury Response Requirements)

Required Responses

F10. Access Broadband Sonoma has been given the task of implementing broadband expansion in Sonoma County but it lacks the funding, staffing level, or authority to accomplish this goal

We partially disagree with F10 as Access Sonoma Broadband (ASB) is an informal advisory group to the Director of the Economic Development Board. The EDB has been given the authority to expand ASB into the official governing body responsible for broadband development, should an appropriate structure be identified. On June 8, 2021, the Board of Supervisors allocated \$315,000 to the initial exploratory steps needed to create such a body, which includes a comprehensive business plan for start-up costs, ongoing staffing, and development of infrastructure.

R4. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Economic Development Board assemble an interdepartmental group to coordinate and oversee efforts in Broadband expansion by November 30, 2021. (F9, F10)

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be in the future. Access Sonoma Broadband, as an informal advisory body to the Director of the Economic Development Board, recently completed a Broadband Action Plan, which was subsequently presented to the Board of Supervisors on June 8, 2021. The plan calls for the creation of a governing structure yet to be determined, though inclusive of County/City departments and other regional stakeholders, to facilitate broadband expansion projects through the public development and ownership of infrastructure. The Action Plan was approved by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, which also allocated \$315,000 for the initial stages of this work (consulting service, legal services, and grant management).

An RFP for consulting services related to this effort is currently in development, with a release planned for late July 2021. The scope includes comprehensive research of potential governing structures and the creation of a business plan for the recommended structure. It is anticipated that a contract will be awarded in September 2021, with a governance structure and partnerships identified in late 2021.

R5. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Economic Development Board consider the establishment of a broadband Joint Powers Agreement that includes Sonoma County, Mendocino County, and possibly other neighboring counties by November 30, 2021. (F9)

A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) is one of the structures recommended by the Broadband Action Plan, and will be considered as part of the scope of work outlined in the response to R4. Neighboring counties, including Mendocino, are currently members of the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium (NBNCBC), and the county plans to consult the organization during the information finding component of the work described in the response to R4. As a part of the analysis described in the response to R4 the County will consider if a regional model is an appropriate tool for deploying broadband infrastructure in Sonoma County.

R9. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Economic Development Board, and Access Sonoma Broadband include in the implementation of any broadband plan a clear requirement for the download and upload speeds of 100/20 proposed in State of California Executive Order N-73-20 to be the minimal acceptable level of service by September 30, 2021. (F14)

This recommendation requires further analysis. Though download/upload speeds of 100/20 have been recommended by the state as well as identified by NBNCBC as a target, it is unlikely that formal adoption

of any particular speed recommendation will be made locally before a governing structure and business plan are identified and created.