City of
Mountain View

COUNCIL REPORT

DATE:	May 9, 2023
CATEGORY:	Consent
DEPT.:	City Manager's Office
TITLE:	**Scope of Services for a Broadband Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis Professional Services Request for Proposals**

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the scope of services for a broadband needs assessment and gap analysis Request for Proposals.

BACKGROUND

The Council's Fiscal Year 2021-2023 Work Plan includes as a priority project expanding access to broadband across communities. This project supports the Council Strategic Priority of a "Community for All."

Over the past two decades, technological advancements have altered the way communities learn, interact, and remain competitive. The City and our residents' dependence on information technology was never more apparent as when a COVID-19 State of Emergency was declared on March 4, 2020 by Governor Newsom, followed by shelter-in-place orders issued by the County of Santa Clara on March 16, 2020. These and other mitigation strategies introduced to address the COVID-19 pandemic propelled City operations, the business community, health-care providers, educational institutions, and other employers into almost exclusive virtual access for work, school, and other essential community activities. Broadband access is an important factor in ensuring equitable access to high-speed internet, which is key to participation in these and other online functions of daily life, lowering business costs, improving productivity, attracting businesses, retaining highly skilled residents, and creating sustainable jobs in economies fueled by entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity.

Projected population growth, housing development, business expansion, continued remote or hybrid work, and the advancement of internet-enabled devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, watches, and appliances) will increase the demand for high-speed internet in the next decade and beyond.

DISCUSSION

Broadband access, or digital equity, can encompass many different variables, some of which may be actionable by the City and others that may require leadership or support from Federal, State, and regional partners in both the public and private sector. One example that illustrates the range of potential broadband investment, policy adoption, and stakeholder engagement options can be seen in the efforts to adopt a Digital Equity Bill of Rights in California. The California Emerging Technology Fund describes digital equity as having the following 10 tenets:

To ensure digital equity for all, residents have the right to:

Broadband that Is Sufficient and Reliable: Speeds must be sufficient to meet the growing demand and reliance for access to education, government, public safety, economic prosperity, and health care via high-speed access to the internet. The determination of threshold speeds for high-speed internet infrastructure should be performance-based to support distance learning, telehealth, and remote working by a majority of households online simultaneously with an increasing need for symmetrical network speeds.

Broadband that Is Ubiquitous: Sufficient and reliable broadband access must be available everywhere in the State, from the most rural areas, including tribal lands, to the most populated urban areas, including all low-income neighborhoods. Public broadband investments should be prioritized to connect entire communities and address digital red-lining in historically unserved and underserved communities.

Broadband that Is Affordable: Internet service plans must be affordable for all Californians, regardless of geographic location or household income.

Broadband that Provides Educational Opportunities and Supports Digital Skills Proficiency: Residents must have access to opportunities to develop needed skills to thrive in a digital world.

Broadband that Ensures Public Safety and Maintains Peace of Mind: Residents need the peace of mind that comes with knowing they have reliable access to emergency response services and emergency alert systems in the event of emergencies or catastrophic disasters.

Broadband that Improves Quality of Life: Digital equity advances economic status with access to educational opportunities, new job opportunities, and health care to improve the overall quality of life.

Broadband that Supports Economic Prosperity: All workers and employers, businesses, and entrepreneurs, start-ups, and enterprises, small and large, including agriculture, need high-speed

internet access to optimize the value of their contribution to the economy to ensure global competitiveness.

Broadband that Attracts Capital Investment: Ubiquitous high-speed internet infrastructure is essential to ensure that California continues to attract its fair share of global capital investment to support and enhance economic prosperity.

Broadband that Supports Innovation and Research: High-speed fiber connects all research institutions to sustain world-class research and innovation to drive economic productivity.

Broadband that Empowers and Enables Participation in Democracy: All residents are connected to the internet with sufficient speeds to support participation in government, distance learning, and telehealth for quality of life and public safety.

Given the complexity of the issue, the myriad of ways to interpret and implement digital equity, and the potential range of options for defining the City's role, staff recommends that an initial broadband needs assessment and gap analysis be performed. As illustrated by the range of the aforementioned tenets, Council engagement in ensuring digital equity could take the form of stakeholder facilitator, policy implementor, financier, property acquirer, service provider, etc. With the information from the needs assessment and gap analysis, the City Council can then determine what role, if any, the City can effectively pursue.

Santa Clara County Digital Equity Strategy

In 2022, the County of Santa Clara conducted an initial analysis Countywide to identify the sources of digital inequity and to begin the development of a digital equity plan. The County released its Digital Equity Strategy Analysis Report in August 2022, which identified that the highest rates of households in Santa Clara County without an internet connection are found in East San Jose, South San Jose, and South County (Morgan Hill, San Martin, and Gilroy). See Attachment 1 to this Council report. In fall 2022, staff reached out to the County to learn more and identify opportunities for potential collaboration. At this time, the County will be prioritizing the geographic areas identified above for the development and deployment of strategies to close the digital divide within Santa Clara County. City staff will continue to engage with the County on this issue and look for opportunities for collaboration if the County considers expanding its digital equity efforts to Mountain View.

ANALYSIS

Staff will engage a consultant through the City's Request for Proposals (RFP) process and will evaluate applicants based on their subject-area expertise and experience working with other jurisdictions to develop similar needs assessments and gap analysis. Staff has developed a scope

of services, including objectives, tasks, and deliverables, to be included in the RFP for professional services.

Scope of Services

Consultant Objectives to Be Achieved

• Assess community needs and identify gaps in City policies related to broadband infrastructure, services, and access.

• Present a range of options for the City to address broadband needs and gaps.

Identification of Policy Options

Task 1: Needs Assessment

Identify both met and unmet broadband infrastructure, service, and access needs for the City's operations and for the community. This objective includes public-access needs, such as the identification of underserved residential areas as well as funding opportunities from State and Federal stakeholders to expand low-cost, high-speed internet options.

The City expects this assessment will require the following steps:

1. Review of research, analysis, and planning previously completed by the City;

2. Collaboration with City staff to access documentation;

3. Engagement of the community and service providers to gather feedback on gaps in service, affordability, costs for broadband connection and speed, priority locations, and current and future broadband needs. The engagement process will include a range of stakeholders and a variety of methods such as workshops, online surveys, etc.;

4. Identification of trends within Mountain View that will shape broadband use and demand in the coming decades, including an assessment of the needs of schools, businesses, and other user groups that have a need for improved broadband service;

5. Comparison of models for municipal provision of broadband service (e.g., City-owned fiber internet, public-private partnerships, etc.) and best practices for how local governments facilitate and support private models. This will include assessment of the ongoing network resources required to meet the needs and recommendations for utilizing and further

developing City-owned or third-party resources. This assessment will include both wireless and wire-line technologies;

6.   Identification of current and future broadband needs related to City operations, which may include, but not be limited to: fiber internet to all City buildings, including City-owned parks, community centers, aquatics, gymnastics and sports facilities; smart city initiatives; traffic and safety applications; IoT (Internet of Things) applications; autonomous vehicle support; wireless field support for mobile workers and fixed installations; and advanced high-speed network operations and wholesale access (large bandwidth connection providing high-speed internet or data service delivered over fiber-optic lines used by telecommunication businesses or services) to high-capacity internet bandwidth; and

7.   Evaluation of the resiliency of current and future resources, in light of the City's need to maintain critical services during disasters and other emergencies and its need to maintain a high level of service availability in normal circumstances.

The deliverable for Task 1 will be a report developed in close consultation with City staff that will establish broadband needs for public use, economic development, and City operations purposes, supported by primary market and stakeholder research data and consistent with the City's policy priorities and strategic goals.

Task 2: Gap Analysis

Following completion of the needs assessment, the next step is to conduct a gap analysis to determine if broadband needs identified in Task 1 are being met, and if not, what steps could be taken to meet them.

Specifically, the analysis will include:

1.   Assessment of existing broadband resources and City of Mountain View policy to meet potential broadband needs identified in Task 1;

2.   Identification of resources and policies that are sufficient for the purpose of attaining immediate and long-term broadband needs;

3.   Identification of resource and policy gaps that constrain or inhibit attainment of those needs; and

4.   Identification of existing resources and policies that are currently sufficient for the purpose of addressing identified broadband needs but that could be optimized or improved.

The deliverable for Task 2 will be a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) matrix, with supporting information, assessing existing resources and options available for City Council consideration to prioritize unmet broadband needs, address digital equity, and determine next steps.

NEXT STEPS

If Council approves the recommendation, staff will issue an RFP seeking responses from qualified consultants to assist the City in conducting a broadband needs assessment and gap analysis. At the conclusion of the RFP process, staff will return to Council in Q3 2023 for approval to enter into a professional services agreement.

FISCAL IMPACT

In the Fiscal 2022-23 Adopted Budget, Council approved $100,000 through designated Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to hire a broadband consultant.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not approve the scope of services for a broadband infrastructure needs assessment and gap analysis Request for Proposals.

2. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

The Council meeting agenda and Council report have been posted on the City's website and announced on Channel 26 cable television.

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Attachment: 1.   2022 Santa Clara County Digital Equity Analysis Report