2024 - 2026

A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BROADBAND

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

A DIVISION OF
THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE
NAPA COUNTY

BACKGROUND

The Napa County fire disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how essential the internet is for remote work, education, health care and e-commerce. Since these disasters and the pandemic, online services have remained essential. Now, tasks such as job hunting, banking, e-commerce, access to government services and civic participation, and the provision of news and entertainment are mostly done online. Landline telephone service has declined dramatically in favor of cell phones and Voice Over IP telephones over broadband connections. All of these are impossible without fast, reliable broadband internet service. In addition, studies have shown that broadband is an important engine of economic growth, with a high return on investment. For example, a 2018 Purdue University study on the impact of bringing broadband to rural Indiana estimates a total return of roughly $3.00 to $4.00 for every dollar spent.[i] The benefits accrue to consumers in the form of higher income, more and better jobs, reduced costs, improved access to healthcare, greater educational attainment, and more. Businesses benefit from higher revenues, reduced costs, and more efficient operations. Government at all levels benefits from lower costs to provide essential services, greater civic participation, and increased tax revenue from overall economic improvement. In order to achieve these benefits, the County of Napa desires to bring about the universal deployment and adoption of fast, reliable and affordable broadband internet services.

VISION AND MISSION

VISION

Empowering residents, businesses and governments within Napa County to better engage with the world using universal, affordable and reliable broadband internet service and the technologies that are enabled by it.

MISSION

Form strategic partnerships with Internet Service Providers (ISPs), federal, state and local government entities, non-profits and community organizations. Seek input and ideas from the business community, residents, community organizations and municipal governments within Napa County. Fund broadband deployment and adoption programs using grants to the greatest extent possible. Adopt "broadband-friendly" policies and best practices wherever possible. Encourage the implementation of broadband-enabled technologies.

KEY CHALLENGES

In order to achieve our mission, the following challenges must be addressed:

- **Limited accessibility**. Broadband access is limited by the high cost of deploying infrastructure, making areas of low population density unprofitable for Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

- **Affordability**. High infrastructure deployment costs result in high monthly service costs to consumers, which may be unaffordable for low-income and disadvantaged residents.

- **Barriers to Adoption**. There is limited public awareness of the benefits of broadband and the availability of low-cost service plans and subsidies. Some residents, especially the elderly, low-income, and disadvantaged, do not have the knowledge or skills needed to successfully navigate the internet and use the available services ("digital literacy"). Some residents fear computer viruses and the theft of their identity or misuse of their personal information.

STRATEGIC GOALS

THE THREE A's: ACCESSIBILITY, AFFORDABILITY AND ADOPTION

ACCESSIBILITY

Create universal broadband access by extending infrastructure to all communities within the county. Ensure that broadband services are reliable.

Objectives

- **Work with ISPs to extend broadband to all areas of the county and upgrade existing obsolete services** – Identify priority areas within the county. Develop strategic partnerships with ISPs for new deployment projects in those areas that are eligible for grant funding.
- **Implement broadband-friendly policies and practices** – Publish a Broadband Permitting Manual. Review existing policies and ordinances and, if warranted, make updates that encourage broadband deployment within Napa County. Adopt, where applicable, established best practices regarding broadband.
- **Coordinate Napa County's efforts with other local governments' broadband efforts** – Make Napa County more attractive for broadband investment by coordinating with municipalities to remove barriers to broadband deployment. Expand Napa County's participation in the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium (NBNCBC) to leverage grant funding opportunities and other resources.
- **Support multiple broadband technologies** – Speed deployment and encourage competition between ISPs by supporting all technologies that meet the established broadband criteria.
- **Enhance reliability of broadband services** – Encourage ISPs to harden their facilities against failures due to power outages and natural disasters. Work with federal and state legislators to establish a Carrier of Last Resort for broadband services.

AFFORDABILITY

Ensure that broadband services are affordable to all residents and businesses within Napa County.

Objectives

- **Encourage ISPs to offer low-cost service plans for qualified consumers** – Work with ISPs, community organizations, other local governments and legislators to encourage the availability of low-cost basic internet plans.
- **Advocate for lawmakers to create subsidies for low-income and disadvantaged consumers** – Work with federal and state legislators, other local governments, and community organizations to provide subsidies for low-income and disadvantaged residents.
- **Assist low-income and disadvantaged consumers, schools and community organizations in obtaining low-cost computers and devices** – Identify and support non-profit organizations that

refurbish devices and supply them to schools, community organizations and low-income households. Encourage device manufacturers to offer low-cost devices with discounts or subsidies for low-income and disadvantaged residents.

ADOPTION

Ensure universal adoption of broadband by all that can benefit from it.

Objectives

- **Improve public awareness of benefits and programs through an outreach program** – Collaborate with the Countywide Communications department to develop a public outreach program to raise awareness of broadband's benefits, availability, and affordability programs using social media, web, and traditional media such as print, radio and television. Have a presence at selected community events and use them as a platform for broadband awareness. Use the Broadband pages of the County's web site as a repository of important broadband information and news.
- **Engage the community through the Napa County Broadband Partnership working group** – Leverage existing relationships with municipalities, business and community groups to facilitate tactical planning and prioritization of broadband projects.
- **Expand programs offered by the Napa County Library and community organizations for digital equity, digital literacy and personal cybersecurity** – Develop programs to increase digital literacy, particularly among the elderly, low-income and disadvantaged communities. Ensure that important topics such as personal cybersecurity, social media and artificial intelligence awareness are part of the curriculum. Provide resources to help internet users protect their identities and personal information from scammers and malware. Leverage Napa County Library resources to provide digital literacy training and disseminate information.
- **Encourage businesses and governments to adopt broadband-enabled technology** - Encourage government and businesses to adopt new broadband-enabled technologies to increase disaster preparedness, lower costs, improve efficiency, conserve resources and provide superior services. Continue to expand County online services.

TIMELINE

2024:

- **Strategic and Administrative Tasks:**
    - Fill the Broadband Project Manager position. [COMPLETED]
    - Approve the Strategic Plan for Broadband.
    - Join and participate in the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium (NBNCBC) [COMPLETED].
    - Re-start the Napa County Broadband Partnership working group (NCBP) meetings.
- **Accessibility Tasks:**
    - Develop a slate of shovel-ready deployment projects that are eligible for grant funding. [COMPLETED]

- o Work with the Planning, Building & Environmental Services and Public Works departments to develop and publish a Broadband Permitting Manual.
  - o Engage with the ISP(s) receiving the first round of grant funding to prepare for construction work.
  - o Work with the NBNCBC to develop additional grant-funded deployment projects.
  - o Prepare for the second round of broadband grant funding.
  - o Work with the Housing and Homeless Services Department to provide broadband access for three Farmworker Centers in the Napa Valley.
- **Affordability Tasks:**
  - o Identify non-profit organizations that refurbish computer equipment and provide it to schools and low-income and disadvantaged households.
  - o Work with organizations such as the California Emerging Technologies Fund (CETF) to support legislation re-authorizing the Affordable Connectivity Program or a similar subsidy for low-income and disadvantaged households.
  - o Identify programs offered by manufacturers to provide computers and devices to eligible schools and community organizations.
- **Adoption Tasks**
  - o Revise and expand the Broadband section of the Napa County web site to become a repository of important broadband news and information. Update the web pages at least every calendar quarter.
  - o Work with the County Communications department to develop a written Public Outreach Plan, with a priority on elderly, low-income and disadvantaged communities within Napa County.

2025:

- **Strategic and Administrative Tasks:**
  - o Continue to participate in the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium.
  - o Continue to work with the NCBP to identify and prioritize potential new broadband deployment and adoption projects.
- **Accessibility Tasks:**
  - o Engage with the ISP(s) receiving the second round of grant funding to prepare for construction work.
  - o Perform a comprehensive review of County policies and ordinances affecting broadband deployment and recommend updates, if warranted.
  - o Work with the Lake Berryessa Improvement Districts (NBRID and LBRID) to provide broadband internet access to two water treatment plants.
  - o Work with the Napa County Library to expand wi-fi access at all four library locations.
  - o Prepare for additional rounds of grant funding.
- **Affordability Tasks:**
  - o In collaboration with the NCBP, identify potential subsidies and grant-funding opportunities for deployment of broadband-enabled technologies.
  - o Continue to work with organizations such as the CETF to identify low-cost internet plans and subsidies for low-income and disadvantaged households.
- **Adoption Tasks**
  - o In collaboration with the County Communications department, execute the Public Outreach Plan

- o Work with the Napa County Library and community groups to develop an optimal digital literacy curriculum, to include cybersecurity, social media and artificial intelligence. Adopt this curriculum at the Napa County Library and encourage its adoption elsewhere.
- o Work with the NCBP to identify the broadband-enabled-technologies having the greatest potential impact on residents and businesses within Napa County.

2026:

- **Strategic and Administrative Tasks:**
  - o Review the Strategic Plan for Broadband and update it for the years 2027 – 2029.
  - o Continue to work with the NCBP to identify and prioritize potential new broadband deployment and adoption projects.
- **Accessibility Tasks:**
  - o Engage with the ISP(s) receiving the third round of grant funding to prepare for construction work.
  - o Continue to identify grant funding opportunities for deployment projects.
  - o Completion of the first round of grant-funded projects.
  - o Collaborate with the Health & Human Services and Housing & Homeless Services departments to identify additional deployment projects internal to Napa County.
- **Affordability Tasks:**
  - o Continue to work with ISPs and organizations such as the CETF to identify low-cost internet plans and support subsidies for low-income and disadvantaged households.
- **Adoption Tasks**
  - o Continue the execution of the Public Outreach Plan.

Note: This timeline is approximate and may be amended as conditions warrant.

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[i] Alison Grant, Wallace E. Tyner, Larry DeBoer, "Research and Policy Insights: Estimation of the Net Benefits of Indiana Statewide Adoption of Rural Broadband", Publication 006, Purdue University Center for Regional Development, August 2018.