



## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

# AGENDA REQUEST & STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** July 26, 2023

**SUBJECT:** COIC Grant Application Request for Broadband Action Team Funding

**RECOMMENDED MOTIONS:**

1. Approve COIC applying for State funds for the Broadband Action Team on the County's behalf; and
2. Approve a regional approach to the application should partners at Jefferson and Crook counties also agree.

**BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

COIC has been overseeing a consultant team in the development of a Strategic Broadband Needs Assessment and Action Plan for Deschutes County since early 2022. They have convened a Broadband Action Team (BAT) to oversee the plan development process and to ensure that all relevant partners understand and embrace the findings, and are well-positioned to support implementation. BAT includes representatives from Deschutes County, COIC, EDCO, Regional Solutions, Internet Service Providers, Business Oregon, utility providers, chambers of commerce, education partners, health partners, and cities. COIC has also maintained regular engagement with statewide entities such as the State of Oregon Broadband Office, LinkOregon, and Oregon Economic Development Districts (OEDD) to ensure that Central Oregon's priorities are understood by key partners and to align their work with best practices happening across the state. This plan will assist COIC in determining the optimal systems that will serve the existing and future connection demands into and out of Deschutes County. The consultants have delivered a final draft of the Needs Assessment and Action Plan and COIC is in the process of reviewing it and providing final input. COIC anticipates a formal presentation of the report and its findings at the BOCC meeting near the end of the summer.

The next steps for COIC and the BAT are to begin firming up partnerships, preliminary design and engineering, and identifying infrastructure funding opportunities for priority projects that were identified through this process. The state of Oregon is working on final rules and guidelines for the Broadband Technical Assistance Program (BTAP), which will support COIC moving into this next phase through funding by:

- Keeping a Broadband Action Team going to oversee efforts, engage partners, etc.;
- "Preliminary design/engineering" work that is required to apply for specific grants to develop/extend new infrastructure; and

- Grant writing (in partnership with private ISPs, stakeholders/communities, etc.)

COIC has had some preliminary conversations with partners at all three counties in the region about submitting a regional application with COIC as the main applicant and has received feedback that there is interest. While final rules are still pending, COIC has received preliminary feedback that there is a preference for collaborative/regional applications. Additionally, each county can apply for up to \$150,000 through the program, a regional application would allow for a maximum ask/award of \$450,000.

**BUDGET IMPACTS:**

No budget impact is anticipated.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Tania Mahood, Deschutes County, IT Director  
Jen Patterson, Deschutes County, Strategic Initiatives Manager  
Scott Aycok, COIC, Community and Economic Development Director  
Shelby Knight, COIC, Resilience Planner