

Monterey Bay Economic Partnership Plays Pivotal Role in Securing \$45 Million for Broadband Expansion on Central Coast

As the Executive Director of the Central Coast Broadband Consortium, the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership advances collaboration to secure crucial investments.

MARINA, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, June 26, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Monterey Bay Economic Partnership](#) (MBEP), serving as the Executive

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*Tahra Goraya, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
President and CEO*

Director of the [Central Coast Broadband Consortium \(CCBC\)](#), is proud to announce that its collaborative efforts have led to the [California Public Utilities Commission \(CPUC\)](#) awarding a total of \$45 million in grant funding to three regional internet service providers (ISPs): Cruzio Media, Inc., Surfnet Communications, Inc., and LCB Communications LLC. With over half of the nearly \$73 million statewide pool from the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account awarded to the Central Coast region alone, this substantial funding will significantly enhance broadband infrastructure, addressing critical issues in the digital divide

in unserved and underserved rural and low-income communities.

As the leading force behind the CCBC, MBEP has been at the forefront of regional broadband initiatives to enhance ubiquitous broadband access and digital equity. MBEP provides comprehensive, project-specific support, from project conception through completion. This includes delivering detailed data analysis, technical expertise, and GIS mapping services during project formulation, guiding ISPs through the grant application process to ensure they maximize their projects' eligibility scores and resulting funding awarded, leveraging partnerships with CPUC officials and regional stakeholders to garner essential public and community support, and assisting with project management and progress reporting to ensure the successful deployment of broadband infrastructure projects.

Cruzio Media, Inc. - Equal Access Summits to the Sea (EAS2C) Project: The CPUC recently awarded Cruzio Media, Inc. up to \$5.65 million to expand middle-mile broadband infrastructure to 759 unserved locations in Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties in rural areas

frequently at risk of natural disasters. Using state-of-the-art fixed wireless hardware, Cruzio will rapidly deploy gigabit broadband to thousands of locations in this under-served region. And EAS2C's middle-mile infrastructure is "open access," meaning other ISPs can hop on board to offer speedier, more reliable services to residents across the Central Coast

"Our region has a problem." James Hackett, COO at Cruzio, explained. "We've got rural communities, farmers, low-income communities, then just a hop away we've got Silicon Valley, high-tech and bustling. With the Summits to the Sea project we're working to level the playing field and give everyone a fair shot."

Surfnet Communication, Inc. - Three County Fiber Project: Surfnet Communications, Inc. has been awarded \$10.08 million to deploy last-mile Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) broadband service to 465 eligible locations across Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Clara counties. This project aims to provide high-speed, reliable, and affordable broadband service, particularly to economically and socially vulnerable communities.

"We are thrilled to introduce the Three County Fiber project, a transformative initiative designed to provide high-speed, reliable, and affordable broadband to underserved regions within Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and San Luis Obispo counties. This transformative project is not just about bringing better internet; it is about bridging the digital divide, fostering economic development, and future-proofing our infrastructure to meet evolving needs," said Ken Nye, COO of Surfnet Communications, Inc. "We are eager to begin this crucial work to bring equitable digital access to our communities."

LCB Communications LLC - Aromas-San Juan Project: The CPUC has approved \$29.48 million in grant funding for LCB Communications LLC's project deploying a hybrid broadband network combining Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) and Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) to 1,101 unserved locations in San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties. The project includes constructing middle- and last-mile infrastructure, addressing the digital divide and accessibility challenges in remote and rugged terrains.

Monterey Bay Economic Partnership's Commitment to Digital Equity: Since 2016, MBEP has championed digital equity in the Monterey Bay region, convening stakeholders and advocating for policies that address the digital divide. As the executive director of the CCBC, MBEP is committed to ensuring 100 percent broadband access in our region through strategic initiatives and collaborative efforts.

MBEP works closely with the Commission, regional consortia, local officials, ISPs, stakeholders, and consumers to identify priority areas and devise cost-effective strategies to achieve broadband access goals. By proactively identifying potential CASF Infrastructure projects and other broadband deployment opportunities, MBEP supports ISPs and local agencies in developing robust business plans and successful grant applications.

Our comprehensive support extends from providing project-specific mapping, data analysis, and community engagement to offering technical guidance throughout the development, grant application processes, and project implementation. MBEP also leads outreach efforts to potential applicants and stakeholders, matching ISPs with suitable projects, and leveraging public assets to facilitate ubiquitous broadband deployment.

"Monterey Bay Economic Partnership celebrates the significant progress being made to eliminate barriers to digital equity, and we look forward to continued regional partnerships and collaborative solutions that will allow full participation for all in our digital economy," said MBEP President & CEO Tahra Goraya. "Kudos to our ISP partners and to the MBEP team working diligently to shepherd these proposals to fruition for unprecedented investments into the Monterey Bay region."

About Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP): Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) is a regional member-supported nonprofit organization consisting of public, private, and civic entities located throughout the counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz. Founded in 2015, our mission is to improve the economic health and quality of life in the region.

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