



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

VACANT
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: May 23, 2023

28

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

AMEND AT&T WIFI SERVICES AND ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE GRANT FUNDS FOR EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On October 25, 2021, County Library was awarded \$4.3 million, from the Federal Communications Commission's Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) program, in order to provide equipment and wireless internet service to patrons who have limited access to devices and the internet. Of that \$4.3 million, \$1.4 million was designated and used to purchase 7,000 AT&T Wi-Fi hotspot devices and data services. The remaining amount was used to purchase 7,000 Google Chromebooks. The County Library bundled the 7,000 Google Chromebooks and 7,000 AT&T Wi-Fi hotspots into what the Library called, "Tech Connect" kits for distribution. Devices were made available to members of the public with a library card to check out free of charge for up to one year. The ECF program is one of many ways the County is focused on closing the digital divide.

Distribution of the Tech Connect kits began on June 15, 2022, throughout the 33 County branch library locations. In order to ensure that the Tech Connect kits are distributed equitably amongst communities that have no access or limited access to internet-enabled devices and broadband services, the County Library and its respective branches have collaborated with more than 100 community-based organizations, tribal reservations, and county-wide partners such as Aging & Independence Services, Department of Child Support Services, and Library High School, where adults can earn their high school diploma online. County residents can also check-out Tech Connect kits at their local County branch library. The County Library closely monitors the check-out data of the Tech Connect kits and adjusts distribution accordingly. As of April 30, 2023, 92% (6444 Chromebooks and Wi-Fi devices) of Tech Connect kits have been checked out, and 56% of those individuals were new library card users. With the success of our Tech Connect kits, County Library was awarded an additional \$1.32-million one-time only funding to continue providing data services to the families who received the Tech Connect Kits. These funds will also allow County Library to purchase an additional 2,000 Wi-Fi hotspots and provide data services this year. The Wi-Fi hotspot services are currently provided by AT&T through a National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) cooperative purchasing contract between AT&T and the State of

**SUBJECT: AMEND AT&T WIFI SERVICES AND ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE
GRANT FUNDS FOR EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

Utah. NASPO facilitates public procurement solicitations and agreements using a lead-state model. This \$1.3 million in grant funding would be received by the County Library in a form of reimbursement. County Library will purchase the Wi-Fi hotspots using Library funds and once received will be invoiced by the vendor. Library will pay the vendor and once payment is cleared, the Library files for reimbursement with the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC), which administers the E-Rate program for the FCC. The reimbursement process for the data plan services differs in that the County Library files for reimbursement after the coverage dates expires. Once the payments are made, the County Library files for reimbursement with USAC. The coverage period for reimbursement is January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024. County Library would be funding January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, and July 1, 2024, through August 11, 2024, which would not be covered by the ECF program funding.

Today's request is to accept and appropriate \$1,317,400 in one-time only grant funds from the Emergency Connectivity Fund. approve the procurement of an additional 2,000 Wi-Fi hotspots with unlimited data services; and amend the AT&T contract to increase funding for continuing the data services for the Tech Connect kits. The grant funds are in two parts: \$373,180 for the procurement of 2,000 Wi-Fi hotspots, and \$945,000 for unlimited data services for the 2,000 Wi-Fi hotspots, and continued data services for the existing 7,000 Tech Connect kits. County Library estimates the total of expenditures for the entire program to be \$6 million by the expiration of the Emergency Connectivity Fund grant funding on December 31, 2023.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. In accordance with Board Policy A-87, Competitive Procurement, approve an increase in the AT&T contract award funding and authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to amend the contract with AT&T for Wi-Fi hotspot data services and equipment by an estimated increase of \$4.2 million dollars in cost for the remainder of the contract terms.
2. Authorize the Library to accept \$1,317,400 in grant funds from the Federal Communications Commission's Emergency Connectivity Fund.
3. Establish appropriations of \$1,317,400 in the Library Fund Services & Supplies for the purchase of additional Wi-Fi hotspots, and data services, based on grant funds from the Federal Communications Commission's Emergency Connectivity Fund. **(4 VOTES)**

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County Library provides equitable access to educational classes, opportunities to develop literacy, study materials, and recreational reading at no cost to the communities and customers we serve. The County Library also provides access to broadband internet and computers so that customers can access the digital services they need to meet their goals of learning, connecting, job seeking, and acquiring safety-net services. This amendment to the contract will enable the County

SUBJECT: AMEND AT&T WIFI SERVICES AND ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE
GRANT FUNDS FOR EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND
(DISTRICTS: ALL)

Library to extend free digital infrastructure from library branches into the households of residents in need of this digital access. This program is an opportunity to provide resources for the over 7,400 households impacted by the digital divide in the County Library service area.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today's request to amend the contract with AT&T for Wi-Fi data services supports the County of San Diego's sustainability initiative of providing just and equitable access to broadband services to all county residents and supports sustainable communities by providing resilience to the internet services available to the public at the 7,400 households impacted by the digital divide in the County Library service area.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Operational Plan for the San Diego County Library (SDCL). If approved, this request will result in an increase of \$1,317,400 million in cost for the purchase of additional Wi-Fi hotspots and data services. The overall cost of the contract amendment will be estimated at \$5.6 million dollars due to an increase of expenditures of \$4.2 million for the remainder of the contract terms expiring on August 11, 2024. The funding source is a grant from the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund. There will be no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years. Any future costs for this contract will be included in future Operational Plans.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

On August 13, 2021, County Library applied for \$4.3 million in grant funding from the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) for the purchase of 7,000 Chromebooks and mobile internet hotspots. The purpose of the ECF is to provide funding to schools and libraries for the costs of \$400 per laptop and \$250 per Wi-Fi hotspot of eligible equipment and services that can be provided to students, teachers, and library patrons who lack connected devices, such as laptops or desktop computers, and /or lack broadband access during the pandemic. On October 25, 2021, County Library were notified by the FCC that the grant in the amount of \$4.3 million for Chromebooks and mobile internet hotspots with internet content filtering meeting the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requirements was awarded to the Library.

In order to procure the Wi-Fi hotspots and data services, the County Library established a contract with AT&T via a piggyback on a National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) contract between AT&T, and the State of Utah through August 11, 2024. This contract currently provides Wi-Fi connectivity for the Tech Connect kit for County Library customers. The use of this contract allowed County Library to accelerate the procurement process without having to initiate the competitive bidding process and lose significant months that would be eligible for reimbursement. The County Library is now requesting the Board of Supervisors to grant

**SUBJECT: AMEND AT&T WIFI SERVICES AND ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE
GRANT FUNDS FOR EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

permission to amend the contract in the amount of \$4.2 million dollars for the remainder of the AT&T contract expiring on August 11, 2024. This will give a new total contract value of \$5.6 million.

On November 16, 2022, SDCL was awarded two additional grant funds from the FCC, via the Emergency Connectivity Fund, totaling \$1,317,400 - \$373,180 for the purchase of 2,000 Wi-Fi hotspots and \$945,00 for data services. The grant funds will allow County Library to continue providing Wi-Fi hotspot service to the 7,000 Tech Connect kits and procure 2,000 Wi-Fi hotspots with unlimited data plans for customers to check-out. Nationally, many library systems offer Wi-Fi hotspots for checkout and during the Tech Connect kit program, the County Library received comments from customers who just needed access to data services and did not need a device to connect to the internet, i.e., a laptop or a tablet. The County Library qualifies for the E-Rate program, which allows the Library to receive discounted pricing through its contract with AT&T. This discounted pricing is considered one of the lowest in the nation as reported by the USAC's Open Data portal. The ECF FCC Form 471 dataset from this portal includes applicant entity, services requested, the quantity of service requested and service provider, connection type, and monthly recurring unit cost, to name a few.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed actions to amend the AT&T contract for Wi-Fi broadband access supports the Sustainable Environments/Thriving and Operational Excellence Strategic Initiatives within the County of San Diego's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan by providing library resources for residents that enrich the lives of all people and, allow residents to be engaged within their community.

Respectfully submitted,



SARAH E. AGHASSI
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A