



Availability of and Needs for Broadband Adoption Programs in Sonoma County

Introduction

Sonoma County is a multifaceted mix of urban and rural communities and diverse populations. Still a Digital Divide exists in the County as a result of lack of access, skills, language barriers, and financial resources. Access to affordable broadband remains the major issue for rural communities. While affordable access is available in urban communities, computer skills, language barriers and financial resources issues continue. This report focusses on a survey of digital skills/literacy programs offered in the County. The report also focuses on the availability of free public access to computer and Wi-Fi as important resources for people who cannot afford computers, do not have access or have unreliable access.

Survey

The survey began with developing a list of non-profit and public agencies that provide social services, job training and health care. The main focus of the survey was organizations for youth, economic development groups, with additional focus on low-income/disadvantaged clients that are non-English speaking or do not have access to computers and the internet. Research included the organization's web site, phone calls and an on line survey. The survey request was sent 2 times to over 40 contacts. 12 surveys were collected utilizing the Survey Monkey tool. Online research and phone calls were used to survey public Wi-Fi access services in and surrounding communities.

Online research and combined survey responses show that a majority of the organizations that serve youth, seniors, workforce development and low income clients provide computer access and digital literacy classes. Some offer skills labs. Some of these organizations provide classes to non-English speakers. The survey responses indicate a strong desire for additional computer classes and funding being the biggest obstacle to providing them. Most of the organizations responding to the survey provide use of computers and free Wi Fi access to their clients.

Assessment of Availability

Digital literacy programs and access to the computers and Wi Fi is found throughout the County, mainly in cities of Santa Rosa and Petaluma. These services are available to all ages and populations for free or for a small cost. Some programs are available to non- English speaking communities. Most of the non-profit organizations work closely with local, state and federal

programs on literacy programs focused on skills training, tutoring and workforce and job development.

Classes: Santa Rosa Junior College offer computer classes at its campuses in Santa Rosa and Petaluma as well as on line. SRJC part time community classes are available in other communities and on line. Sonoma State University also offers classes at its campus and on line. All classes are for adults and require fees. Empire College, School of Business provides career training classes including computer classes. Most of the community senior centers also provide free or low cost digital learning classes.

River to Coast Children’s Services in Guerneville is conducting beginning computer training for children including non-English speaking children. The program is sponsored by the Russian River Rotary Club in partnership with Guerneville School and Santa Rosa Junior College.

Sonoma County Regional Library Programs: Regional Library branches provide classes on basic Internet and computers skills in small class settings and upon request at the reference desks. The Library will be expanding these classes over the next couple of years. This is a link to the page that lists offerings (<http://sonomalibrary.org/node/21951>).

The Library also hosts several college prep courses, such as Applying to CSU/UC: A Hands-On Group Workshop at the Sebastopol branch. Students at this class can the Library’s computer lab to work on real college applications.

The Library’s Adult Literacy Program (<http://sonomalibrary.org/locations/adult-literacy-program/adult-literacy-fags>) provides one on one tutoring during six month sessions. The goal for participants is unique and can be anything from learning to write a check, helping a child with his/her homework, reading an email, becoming a citizen, reading a map, writing a letter to the school or getting a better job.

AWE Early Literacy Computers (<http://sonomalibrary.org/node/22236>) at the Library’s Early Literacy Station™ (ELS) offers children a safe, standalone computer—loaded with over 70 educational software programs for kids ages 2-8—that is age-appropriate, engaging, and academically relevant for children. It is designed to support school readiness and early education while making learning exciting and engaging. AWE’s Early Literacy Station, the company’s flagship product, is found in over 40% of the public libraries across the United States as well as in many communities in Canada and abroad.

Sonoma County Library conducts 3D printing workshops. The Library has a MakerBot Replicator 2 which is used for classes on 3D design and is available to library patrons for 3D printing their own designs. The printer is shared amongst the library branches and people of all ages can schedule 2-hour sessions and bring in designs they have created with 3D modelling software to be printed at no cost (<http://sonomalibrary.org/search/3d%20printing>).

The Library’s Minecraft Coding Camp for Kids (<http://sonomalibrary.org/node/19082>) teach students in 6th through 9th grade to modify the game Minecraft through an introduction to the

programming language Java. The program introduces beginning programming skills and concepts to the participants, demonstrates development tools and environments, and teaches Java basics. Participants will leave the program with an increased knowledge of computer software, an understanding of how code is written and edited, and experience working in a collaborative environment to create content.

The Library houses an Online Foundation Directory (<http://sonomalibrary.org/library-collection/foundation-directory-online>). This resource contains the Foundation Directory that includes detailed profiles of all active U.S. foundations, as well as an extensive file of recent grants awarded by the nation's top funders. Additionally, **Foundation Grants to Individuals** provides users with access to funding for education including scholarships, fellowships, student loans, and research grants; locate support for artists and grants for special needs such as general welfare funding.

The Library recently adopted the Mango Languages application (<http://mangolanguages.com/>). This resource is a great resource for users wanting to learn any of over 60 languages.

Public Access:

Public Access to the Internet: Several of the larger cities and towns provide free public access to the internet at central, usually downtown locations. The Sonoma County Library system including its 15 branches provide free access to computer and the internet.

Adoption Rate:

The CPUC Broadband Availability maps have adoption rates for counties. Adoption rates and penetration rates for Sonoma County range from 45 to 89 per cent. Rates for large rural areas of the county cannot be determined because the mapping data is withheld.

Addressing Needs

According to a 2014 poll conducted by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) broadband adoption rates have stagnated over the past few years. The hardest to reach populations still lack essential tools to access educational, employment and civic engagement that lead to self-sufficiency. The poll shows that groups with the lowest adoption rates include non-citizens, low income households, Spanish speaking Latinos, people with disabilities, seniors and non-high school graduates. While a poll of Sonoma County has not been done the similar results are anticipated.

It is also difficult to assess specific adoption needs in Sonoma County because of the diversity of urban and rural communities and populations. In addition it is difficult to assess adoption rates in homes and businesses because data for adoption and penetration rates from the California Broadband Map are withheld as confidential data.

A majority of residents have cellular smart phone and use them for access to the internet. Our local broadband initiatives consider smart phone connectivity as adjunct to fixed broadband

connections. No county wide survey of mobile connectivity has been done however many rural areas are designated as “unserved or underserved” on the California Broadband Availability maps. Better coverage for mobile technology in these areas is needed to expand capabilities particularly for 911 and emergency services uses.

Generally access to computers and digital literacy programs is good in most of the cities. All schools are able to provide access to students as well as a wide variety of literacy and skills programs. While most households have computers high speed quality, households in rural areas are deficient. This is also holds true for businesses in remote and rural areas and directly impacts many agricultural operation/businesses.

The following is a list of a number of agencies providing computer training and literacy programs in the County. The list is categorized by function or focus population. A matrix of agencies and departments including program focus and contact information is attached.

Employment and Job Skills Training

Sonoma County Library System – Regional Branches

Community Action Partnership – Santa Rosa

COTS (Committee on the Shelterless) – Petaluma

Goodwill Industries – Santa Rosa

Graton Day Labor Center - Graton

Healdsburg Educational Foundation – Healdsburg

The Salvation Army – Santa Rosa

United Way of Sonoma County

Catholic Charities – Santa Rosa

Empire College – Santa Rosa

Santa Rosa Junior College – Santa Rosa, Petaluma

Sonoma State University – Rohnert Park

Sonoma Works – Santa Rosa

Sonoma County Job Link – Santa Rosa

North Bay Veterans Center

Sonoma County YWCA – Santa Rosa

Youth Education

Sonoma County Library – Regional Branches
Boys and Girls Clubs – Petaluma, Healdsburg, Santa Rosa
Californian Parenting Institute – Santa Rosa
Children’s Village of Sonoma County – Santa Rosa
Chops Teen Center – Santa Rosa
El Nido Teen Center – Sonoma
Extended Child Care – Santa Rosa
Healdsburg Education Foundation – Healdsburg
Social Advocates for Youth – Santa Rosa
Sonoma County YMCA – Santa Rosa
River to Coast Children’s Services - Guerneville

Seniors and Older Residents

Sonoma County Library System – Regional Branches
Cloverdale Multipurpose Senior Center
Russian River Community Senior Center
Healdsburg Senior Center
Oakmont Village
Petaluma Senior Center
Rohnert Park Senior Center
Santa Rosa Senior Center
Sebastopol Senior Center
Jerry Casson Sonoma Senior Center
Windsor Senior Center

Public Access Computer Wi-Fi

A majority of the agencies listed above provide free computer access to people who use their services, attend classes and also to the general public. The survey indicated that most responders have adequate computers available for client and public use and not strong need for additional computers, although funding is the largest obstacle to expanding programs and acquiring additional computers.

Comcast Internet Essentials

Comcast's Internet Essentials is in its fourth year and provides internet access and training program targeted to low income households. The program is available only in Comcast's service areas within the County. The program offers basic internet services, a low cost computer and free internet training for qualifying households. Households qualify with the following: 1. Have at least one child who is eligible for the National School Lunch Program; 2. Have not had Comcast internet service in the last 90 days; 3. Do not have any debt to Comcast. 2014 Comcast progress reports indicated adoption rates ranging from approximately 12.2% to over 44% for participating Sonoma County school districts. All school districts are encouraged to participate in the program except those not in the Comcast services area. This program includes low income families with children in elementary through high school. Data collected over the years shows a highly successful Internet Essentials adoption rate where governmental agencies, non-profits and schools are promoting the program.

Comcast recently announces that the Internet Essentials Program is expanding to include low income senior citizens in several targeted communities. It is not known when Sonoma County will be included in this program.

In a new program, Comcast is partnering with the Sonoma County Community Development Commission to develop broadband access for disadvantaged students in the Southwest Santa Rosa area.

Summary

In a study conducted by California Connects in 2013, Sonoma County's broadband adoption rate is of 75.2% slightly above the statewide rate of 74.3%. The study also found that computer ownership in the County of 82.5%, is higher than the State average of 81.7%. While this is good news Sonoma County's rural populations still suffer from the absence of adequate broadband infrastructure.

Sonoma County Digital Learning Programs and Free WiFi Access
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Employment and Job Skills Training	Web Site/Location	Classes Training	Non-English Speaker Classes	Computer Access for Clients and Students
Community Action Partnership – Santa Rosa	www.capsonoma.org	X	X	X
California Human Development Corporation - Santa Rosa	www.cahumandevelopment.org	X		X
COTS (Committee on the Shelterless) – Petaluma	www.cots-homeless.org	X		X
Goodwill Industries – Santa Rosa	www.gire.org	X		X
Graton Day Labor Center - Graton	www.gratondaylabor.org	X	X	
Healdsburg Educational Foundation – Healdsburg	www.healdsburgeducationalfoundation.com	X		X
The Salvation Army – Santa Rosa	www.salvationarmysantarosa.org	X		X
United Way of Sonoma County	www.unitedwaywinecountry.org	X		X
Catholic Charities – Santa Rosa	www.srcharities.org	X		X
Empire College – Santa Rosa	www.empcol.edu	X		X
Santa Rosa Junior College – Santa Rosa, Petaluma	www.santarosa.edu	X		X
Sonoma State University – Rohnert Park	www.sonoma.edu	X		X
Sonoma Works – Santa Rosa	www.sonomaworks.org	X	X	X
Sonoma County Job Link – Santa Rosa	www.joblinksonomacounty.com	X	X	X
Sonoma County Library System - All Branch Libraries	www.sonomalibrary.org	X	X	X
North Bay Veterans Center	www.vietbet.org/nbvrc	X		X
Sonoma County YWCA – Santa Rosa	www.scfymca.org	X		X
Youth Education				
Boys and Girls Clubs – Petaluma, Healdsburg, Santa Rosa	www.bgccsc.org	X		X
Californian Parenting Institute – Santa Rosa	www.calparents.org	X		X
Children’s Village of Sonoma County – Santa Rosa	www.socokids.org	X		X
Chops Teen Club – Santa Rosa	www.chopsonline.com	X		X
El Nido Teen Center – Sonoma	www.teenservicessonoma.org	X	X	X
Extended Child Care – Santa Rosa	www.extcc.org	X		X
Healdsburg Education Foundation – Healdsburg	www.healdsburgeducationalfoundation.com	X		X
Social Advocates for Youth – Santa Rosa	www.saysc.org	X		X
Sonoma County YMCA – Santa Rosa	www.scfymca.org	X		X
Sonoma County Library System - All Branch Libraries	www.sonomalibrary.org	X	X	X
Seniors and Older Residents				
Cloverdale Multipurpose Senior Center	www.cloverdaleseniorcenter.com	X		X
Russian River Community Senior Center	www.cfsa-sonoma.org/russian-river-senior-resource-center	X		X
Healdsburg Senior Center	www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/440/Senior-Center	X		X
Oakmont Village	www.oakmontvillage.com/club/oakmont-computer-learning-center	X		X
Petaluma Senior Center	www.cityofpetaluma.net/parksnrec/senior.com	X		X
Rohnert Park Senior Center	www.ci.rohnert-park.ca.us	X		X
Santa Rosa Senior Center	www.ci.santa-rosa.ca.us/departements/recreationandparks	X		X
Sebastopol Senior Center	www.sebastopolseniocenter.org	X		X

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Jerry Casson Vintage House Sonoma Senior Center	www.vintagehouse.org	X		X
Windsor Senior Center	www.ci.windsor.ca.us	X		X
Sonoma County Library System - All Branch Libraries	www.sonomalibrary.org	X	X	X
<u>Free WiFi Access - City/Community</u>	<u>Location</u>			
Cloverdale				
Healdsburg	Downtown, City Hall, Police Dept., the Villa, Swim Center, Community Center			
Windsor	Downtown, Town Green, Town Hall			
Santa Rosa	Downtown, City Hall, Railroad Square, Finley Community Park, Bennett Valley Golfcourse Clubhouse, SRJC			
Rohnert Park	Raley's Town Center			
Cotati				
Petaluma	City Hall, Community Center, Library, Senior Center			
Sonoma				
<u>Unincorporated Communities</u>				
Geyserville				
Graton	Sebastopol Regional Library			
Guerneville	Guerneville Regional Library			
Occidental	Howards Café, El Mariachi Café			
Forestville	Red's Full Throttel Coffee, Sunshine Coffee Roasters, Tiny Town Café			
Larkfield Wikiup				
Kenwood	Café Citti,			
Glen Ellen				
Springs Sonoma Valley	cafeMac			
Cazadero				