



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Panhandle Telephone Cooperative Brings Connectivity to Northeastern New Mexico with \$43.4 Million Federal Funding**

Panhandle Telephone Cooperative Inc. will be expanding its reach beyond its previous boundaries to establish high-speed internet services for residents in the northeastern part of New Mexico, thanks to the \$43.4 million federal funding announced last Monday. These awards are made possible through the \$65 billion authorized by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This initiative aligns with the commitment of the USDA and the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion to promote economic growth in rural New Mexico.

Union County, located in Northeast New Mexico, is poised to reap significant benefits from this investment. The improved connectivity will grant residents and businesses in the region better access to telehealth services, distance learning opportunities, and e-commerce platforms. Moreover, the enhanced broadband infrastructure will attract new businesses, foster entrepreneurship, and generate job opportunities, thus stimulating the local economy.

The newly implemented broadband services are designed to be affordable. Panhandle Telephone Co-op participates in federal programs that provide internet service discounts to low-income communities. Individuals utilizing Medicaid, SNAP, or tribal assistance programs may qualify for monthly bill discounts ranging from \$30 to \$75.

Kelly Schlegel, Director for the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion, commented, "The USDA's decision to allocate these funds demonstrates a commitment to bridging the digital divide and fostering the growth of underserved communities. This substantial investment will facilitate the expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure, enabling individuals and businesses in Union County to thrive in the digital age."

In today's world, reliable and fast internet connectivity has become an essential component for economic development and community empowerment. The funding received by the Oklahoma internet company will support the construction of critical broadband infrastructure in Union County, unlocking new possibilities for education, healthcare, commerce, and innovation.

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