

**CONNECT NEW MEXICO COUNCIL MEETING**

**Virtual via Zoom**

**Thursday, December 18, 2025, 1:30 p.m.**

**1. Welcome & Call to Order – Renee Narvaiz**

The meeting of the Connect New Mexico Council was called to order by Renee Narvaiz, at 1:34 pm, on Thursday, December 18, 2025, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ms. Narvaiz introduced herself and reviewed general rules and procedures regarding the meeting.

In the absence of Chair Reyes, Ms. Narvaiz asked Mr. Enjady or Ms. Waller if one of them would chair the meeting. Ms. Waller suggested Mr. Enjady would be the preferred choice.

There being no quorum as of 1:34 the meeting proceeded with item #3-Member Comments and item #4-Working Group Updates.

**Quorum was established after the Tribal Working Group update under item #4, as noted, with approval of the Agenda and the November minutes done at that point. The meeting then proceeded in order of the Agenda thereafter.**

**Members Present**

Godfrey Enjady  
Jason Clack  
Eli Guinnee  
Leonard Manzanares

Launa Waller  
Joseph Navarette  
Jim Ruybal

**Members Absent**

Luis Reyes, Chair  
Katherine Crociata  
Isaac Bush

Steve Grey  
Nora Sackett  
Mona Martinez

**Others Present**

Renee Narvaiz, DoIT, PIO  
Jeff Lopez, DoIT Director  
Natalie Runyan, GIS  
Andrew Wilder, Katherine Irvin, Bo Ford, Melanie Goodman, Mitch Hibbard, James Meyers, Manh Pham, Dan Morrison, Jerry Smith, Kitty Clemens, Jay Santillanes, Matejka Santillanes, Mike Moffett, Johnny Montoya, Dean Serna

**2. Approval of Meeting Agenda & November Minutes – Renee Narvaiz**

**MOTION** – Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the Agenda for today’s meeting. Ms. Waller so moved, seconded by Mr. Guinnee.

**VOTE-** There being no opposition the Agenda was approved.

**MOTION** - Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the November meeting. Ms. Waller so moved, seconded by Mr. Guinnee.

**VOTE-** There being no opposition the minutes were approved.

**3. Member Comments – Council Members**

Mr. Enjady as acting chair decided to proceed with Member Comments while awaiting sufficient members for Quorum.

Mr. Enjady wished everyone a Merry Christmas and expressed his hope for a great Christmas season for all. He also asked for prayers for the families of any individuals lost this past year who were connected to the broadband community.

#### 4. **Working Group Updates**

##### Digital Readiness and Adoption Working Group – Eli Guinee

Mr. Guinee stated that this group met in December with their primary focus being continued planning of the Abierta Digital Readiness and Adoption Summit, scheduled for 02/27/2026, in Las Cruces. He stated he would put a link in the Zoom Chat for information on this Summit, as well as a link for the interest form survey they are sending out to gather more information regarding topics of interest, sponsorship interest, etc., from Summit participants.

Mr. Enjady asked if the State Libraries group has adopted any AI policies. Mr. Guinee responded that they are following guidelines received from the State. Mr. Enjady asked if there were any specific plans for adopting AI for use in the State Libraries. Mr. Guinee stated that at this point there are no plans for this. Mr. Enjady commented that there is a great deal of information coming out regarding how adoption should be implemented and the issue of federal funds possibly being withheld if federal policies are not adopted. Mr. Enjady also mentioned the issue of digital equity funding that had been previously awarded to the State of New Mexico and then paused, and that some kind of response should be made to NTIA regarding this. Mr. Guinee stated that any updates regarding this would come from the Office of Broadband.

Mr. Enjady thanked Mr. Guinee for his report. Mr. Enjady called for any questions regarding this report. There were none.

##### Tribal Working Group – Godfrey Enjady

Mr. Enjady reported that they are looking at the evolution of grants being received, especially from TBCP, Round One. He stated that entities are finally coming out of the permitting phase and moving forward with actual construction, with development of business plans and the businesses themselves, with NTTA assisting in these areas. He reported that NTTA is working to make comments to NTIA regarding the funding initially awarded to tribes for broadband adoption under digital equity, as this has not been adequately addressed by NTIA, to ensure that tribes are able to use this funding.

He noted the recent interaction between the FCC and Senate Commerce Committee, with the question of whether the FCC is independent of the Administration or not, and the exchange between Senator Lujan and FCC Chairman Carr. He also commented that it appears as though Universal Service will be coming up for some kind of review in future. He added that many of these statutes are for voice services, but these need to be updated to include voice and broadband, and perhaps New Mexico statutes should be examined and possibly updated in this regard as well.

He reported that tribes are working hard to get their construction wrapped up and at Mescalero their new building has approximately 13,000 square feet, with a portion set aside for their data center, which should be coming online in March 2026, with a grand opening in April or May. He also stated that work is coming along on the middle mile project from Ruidoso/Mescalero to El Paso, with permitting near completion. The work on fiber ducts for this project is in progress with completion anticipated by the last quarter of 2026.

Mr. Enjady asked if Director Lopez or anyone from the Broadband Office had updates on broadband funding through the state office for tribes. Director Lopez asked if Mr. Enjady was asking for a general update on tribal sub-grant recipients or a specific program. Mr. Enjady stated either would be fine. Director Lopez stated that they continue to make awards on the Grant Writing, Engineering and Planning Grant, the \$100,000.00 available from the Connect New Mexico Fund for these purposes, noting that awards were made to Pojoaque Pueblo and Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, with funding still available for rural electric co-ops, tribal governments and local governments who need more support for grant writing, engineering and planning as it relates to broadband. He also reminded the Council that the Connect New Mexico Fund expires on 06/30/2026, and the Office is requesting a two-year extension for that fund, to allow more time particularly for completion of capital infrastructure projects, noting that the Office of Broadband has only been administering these programs and the fund for two years, with many capital infrastructure projects taking much longer than that to complete. He added that a total of four years will bring this in line with federal programs for the same purposes, though they are expecting most

projects to be complete by the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline, however, there are a few which will need more time, with many of these being tribal sub-grant recipients. He added that the ARPA capital projects fund expires in December 2026 and the Legislature does not have the authority to extend this as it is a federal grant program through the U.S. Treasury. He stated that there is some growing pressure on other state broadband offices which administer this program to request extensions, but it is unclear if the U.S. Treasury will be willing to grant an extension. He added that the Office is hopeful that all of the New Mexico ARPA projects will be complete by December 2026, and all appear to be on track to do so at this time.

With respect to BEAD, Director Lopez stated that they are still awaiting final approval, with one of the issues being a match waiver request which was denied, so negotiations are in progress with the preliminary awardees in those cases to see if they can provide the match or go to alternate providers in those locations. He added that NTIA has delayed this for about four weeks, which has put New Mexico behind other states and the hope is that now there is clarity about the denial, approval of the BEAD program will be given shortly.

Mr. Enjady had a question about requirements for the BEAD funding with respect to receiving USF funds. Director Lopez replied that this information has not been received directly from NTIA, this is a special award condition that some states have received. He stated that he believed Louisiana is the only state that has formally agreed to those terms, adding that other states have received this, including South Carolina, and are negotiating with NTIA, going through legal review on whether they can commit to that. He stated that he believed this requirement is still in play, but New Mexico is not directly involved yet. Mr. Enjady asked if this is only for the federal USF, and whether entities can apply through state USF funds where available. Director Lopez replied that this only applies to future federal assistance. Mr. Enjady thanked him for this clarification.

Mr. Enjady asked if Director Lopez had anything else to report regarding the federal grants. Director Lopez stated he had nothing else to share regarding those grants.

Mr. Enjady stated this was all he had to report regarding the tribal activity. He added though that it is important to take a stance to make sure tribes receive the funding promised and make sure things are moving forward not only for tribal entities but for all New Mexicans, especially with respect to the digital equity portion since the ACP program has ceased to exist at the federal level. He expressed his hope that New Mexico can address this in the future with some type of state ACP program. He voiced his appreciation for the outreach Director Lopez and the Office have demonstrated to the tribes, stating that he has not seen this level of outreach anywhere else across the country.

**Quorum was established at this point and the Agenda and Minutes were approved as noted above. The meeting then proceeded per the Agenda.**

#### Mapping & Data Working Group – Launa Waller

Ms. Waller stated that since this is such a new group they have not met as of yet, but hope to start right after the first of the year.

Mr. Enjady asked Ms. Waller what her vision is for this group. Ms. Waller shared that as she recalled being on this working group previously, it was a type of think-tank for sharing issues or problems, and asking others in the group if they knew of any work-arounds, etc., basically a problem solving group, bringing ideas together to make these processes better. She asked if others have input or ideas to please share those with her.

Mr. Enjady shared that in the conversation yesterday between Senator Sullivan from Alaska and FCC Chairman Carr, it was mentioned that there was a village in Alaska that was “lost” or overlooked, as it was not on any of the maps. He queried whether every small community in New Mexico has been identified. Ms. Waller noted that Ms. Runyan is in the meeting and she is probably the most knowledgeable about the maps and how they were constituted. Ms. Waller noted that there are many small communities in her area and they have made sure they are recognized. She asked Ms. Runyan

if she had any further input regarding this. Ms. Runyan said she would add this to the list of agenda items carried over from the last working group meeting, and that she and Ms. Waller will be meeting after the first of the year so Ms. Runyan can hand off the information from the previous work of this group. Ms. Runyan stated she did not think the question of “are we missing anyone” has been directly addressed and it would be good to take this up first thing, noting how important it is for the map challenges to continue. She suggested reaching out to local jurisdictions to compare data such as her office is currently doing with Dona Ana County, looking at their building footprints data. She added that the next due date for map challenges should be March 1<sup>st</sup>, and would be a good date to target for the mapping and data working group. Mr. Enjady agreed that this would be a good plan and he is sure Ms. Waller and this group will do great work in this regard. Ms. Waller agreed, stating she thinks they will get a good group together working on this.

#### **5. Update from OBAE - Jeff Lopez**

Director Lopez reported that the Office has a \$1.9 million grant from the U.S. Dept. of Labor for Broadband Workforce Development. The plan is to roll this out early next year, and classes are scheduled with BICSI, the national fiber certification organization, and they will be doing training throughout rural New Mexico, with the first class beginning in February, but there are no details for location and times yet; these will be shared with the Council as soon as they are available. This \$1.9 million will support approximately 200 certifications, with the emphasis being outside of the urban centers of New Mexico, reaching out to local communities. The original plan was for a workforce training trailer, but this has been dropped and they will be looking for local schools and universities to host the classes. He stated that these will be approximately one week courses, ending with BICSI certification which is critical for not only broadband but a lot of the long-haul, quantum and AI work that the State is looking to do.

With regard to mapping, Director Lopez stated that a full mapping challenge process was done before BEAD, with Ms. Runyan being the expert on these previous efforts. These have not currently been changed while going through the BEAD award process to not change the playing field while taking bids and actively awarding locations to service providers. However, after BEAD final approval the Office will certainly be looking to identify any problems with the maps, go through another challenge process, making sure to verify connectivity in areas that providers may not actually be able to serve. This will likely occur in the second quarter of 2026, but the goal is to have a clear picture of connectivity in New Mexico post-BEAD awards. He added that there will, most likely, be holes to fill and the challenge will be to find ways to fill those.

Regarding permitting, Director Lopez stated that the Office added a new staff member about a month ago, Lane Camfield, who is their Permitting Coordinator, who is working with Andrew Wilder, and the policy and programs team, as well as the mapping team with Ms. Runyan, and project managers, to make sure there is a process in place to get through State permitting, federal permitting, etc. Director Lopez noted that BEAD is the highest priority, however, the Office does offer technical assistance for programs outside of those funded projects, so they are available to assist anyone in New Mexico having issues regarding broadband permitting.

Director Lopez reported that they will be getting one BEAD waiver cleared up this week and hopefully that will be the last barrier to final approval by NTIA. Once this occurs they will be in a position to enter into grant agreements with what have been preliminary awardees and make them awardees, which will likely occur in January 2026.

On the issue of affordability, Director Lopez stated that the Office of Broadband has drafted legislation with the Governor’s Office being part of the process. They do not have a legislative sponsor yet and are in the process of socializing this bill, having shared it with a couple of groups. He stated he would be happy to provide text to Council members upon request or to the Legislation Working Group and would be happy to respond to requests for more details about this. He then screen-shared this draft and reviewed it in detail, noting that fundamentally they are looking to modernize some of the existing statutes that are restricted to voice lines/telephones, as mentioned previously by Mr. Enjady. He added that the low income telephone assistance program, as it exists today, is one of those outdated areas in

state statute. This draft legislation would modernize language changing the wording to “low income telecommunications assistance program” at \$10 million/year. He then gave details regarding demonstration of the viability of a state affordability program and eligible households. This draft legislation also includes eligibility for households identified by the Public Education Department as a Martinez-Yazzie II household and they have been working with PED to identify where broadband programs can plug into their processes going through the State Action Plan. The Office of Broadband is now mentioned on four items in the Public Action Plan, with affordability being one of them, working with the PRC, PED and the Office of Broadband to try to develop a plan to make sure these low income households around the state can access and afford broadband connectivity. He noted that participation in the draft bill is limited to eligible telecommunications carriers, which is again, along the same lines as Lifeline, and the federal Universal Service Fund programs, and the importance for the stewardship of the program to have telecommunication providers that are dedicated to stay open to review and audit, making sure they are meeting the needs of this program. Details of the subsidy will be determined by the PRC. This draft does not set out a dollar amount per month, but final legislation could set this amount. He stated that the legislation does adopt service standards, either from the FCC or the Office of Broadband, as it relates to fixed and mobile broadband. The New Mexico Office of Broadband does not have service standards for mobile broadband and it adopted the service standards for fixed broadband pursuant to the BEAD program and the capital projects fund from the U.S. Treasury, so 120 for fixed and then the FCC standards for mobile. This maintains the current broadband program at \$30 million/year and then caps the overall fund at \$40 million, which is the existing cap. He stated that the New Mexico Legislature could strike that cap, but in this draft legislation they wanted to keep the status quo and require the PRC to stand up an affordability program at \$10 million. As many of the definitions are outdated this draft legislation updates definitions to align with the 2021 and 2023 legislation. He noted that this is a fairly straightforward bill, leaving a lot of the debate and discussion to an open docket at the PRC to determine the details, but this would require use of the State Rural Universal Service Fund for a New Mexico affordability program.

He again offered to share the text of the legislation with Council members or the Working Group.

Mr. Enjady stated that this is great and this is an item which was brought up at the FCC oversight hearing, working on USF reforms with respect to affordability and sustainability, which will be very important in the coming years. He commented that he is in full support of this. Director Lopez responded that it is promising that this conversation is still happening at the federal level and he thinks the State of New Mexico is well positioned with the State Rural Universal Service Fund to have an affordability program using state resources for the people of New Mexico, and that he hopes this can be accomplished in the next legislative session. Mr. Enjady voiced his appreciation for the work the Office of Broadband is doing, especially going into the upcoming legislative session.

Mr. Enjady called for any questions for Director Lopez. Mr. Enjady asked Director Lopez if this concluded his report. Director Lopez affirmed that this concluded his report and stated he is always happy to answer questions outside the Council meeting.

Ms. Narvaiz asked if Director Lopez could share the legislation information with Ms. Crociata, as she is Chair of the Legislative & Policy Working Group. Director Lopez stated he would certainly do so.

## **6. Public Comment – Renee Narvaiz**

Mr. Enjady asked if Mr. Meyers or Mr. Hibbard would like to comment.

Mr. Meyers noted that he has been on several calls lately which have touched on many of the issues noted regarding USF, BEAD, NTIA and the special award conditions and there seem to be no definite answers regarding any of these, especially in terms of the high cost category.

Mr. Hibbard asked if Director Lopez had any information on the special conditions that will be attached to BEAD, other than the USF. Director Lopez replied that he will try to get the text that other states have received, but he has heard that NTIA is putting special award conditions in place that would limit

BEAD locations from future federal support, however, this does not define a lot of the words being used, which leaves much open to interpretation. He added that since New Mexico has not received these conditions directly he is hesitant to share information that may not be correct.

Mr. Wilder shared in the Chat that some answers may be found in the latest NTIA FAQs, and posted this text along with a link to the FAQs.

Director Lopez commented that President Trump issued an Executive Order on Artificial Intelligence, which contains a provision giving NTIA and Administrator Roth 90 days to issue a new policy notice related to BEAD, restricting States' access to non-deployment funds if the State has any AI laws on their State books. The Office is waiting to see what NTIA does with regard to this policy notice, however, this is a separate issue from the future federal support for these locations. He added that the Government Accountability Office also issued a finding that the June 6<sup>th</sup> Policy Notice is subject to the Congressional Review Act and this is still being interpreted as to what it means for New Mexico programs and they will continue as planned for the time being, but the GAO found the June 6<sup>th</sup> Policy Notice to not be valid since NTIA did not submit that to Congress for review under the Congressional Review Act. Director Lopez stated he did not think this would impact the work of OBAAE directly, but there is a lot of high level movement related to BEAD that they are processing. He highlighted that Senators Fischer and Lujan got a total of 14 bipartisan Senators on a letter to NTIA asking NTIA to approve State use of nondeployment funds, this is outside of the deployment programs, but is specific to \$232 million in New Mexico which can be used for community anchor institutions, apartment buildings and condos, for digital opportunity and workforce development, as well as what they are seeking to do with middle mile and 5G connectivity. He reiterated that they are still processing these developments and will share any text they can confirm regarding the NTIA special award conditions related to future federal funding for BEAD locations.

Mr. Enjady noted that there is a timeline once the award is accepted and asked if there were any extensions available for that. Director Lopez replied that NTIA is giving States 30 days to approve the special award conditions, which some states are now approaching, with only Louisiana having approved those. He stated that once that information is received it will definitely be socialized with the Governor's Office, the Attorney General and this Council, as the ones being impacted, to make sure there is awareness of what is being asked before committing to it. Mr. Enjady stated his reason for asking was in relation to the BABA compliance and the shortage of U.S. made fiber. Mr. Enjady asked Mr. Meyers or Mr. Hibbard if they had any additional input about this, noting that he has heard Corning is not currently taking orders. Mr. Hibbard responded that CommScope meets BABA compliance. Mr. Enjady replied that this is good to hear. Director Lopez noted that Andrew Wilder is in the meeting and asked Mr. Wilder if he had any additional information on BABA related to BEAD. Mr. Wilder responded that the Dept. of Commerce issued a limited programmatic waiver of non-availability for the BABA requirements that he can share in the Chat, which does apply to certain elements of fiber cables, as well as other components necessary for these deployments. Mr. Enjady noted that the BABA waivers will be important in the process of acquiring materials. Mr. Enjady thanked Mr. Wilder for providing this information in the Chat. He also wondered if a newsletter would be beneficial for sharing this type of information, and whether it should come for this Council or OBAAE, noting that he appreciates the updates provided on the tribal information, and if this information could be posted on the OBAAE website.

Mr. Enjady called for any additional questions.

Ms. Goodman from Senator Lujan's office noted that she posted information in the Chat regarding Senator Lujan's meeting with Senator Fischer. Mr. Enjady thanked her for this and asked her to convey his thanks to Senator Lujan for his work in this effort.

Mr. Enjady reminded everyone to be cognizant of the increasing fire danger due to the dry conditions across the state and the increasing winter winds, as well as the need for EBOT (Emergency Broadband Operations Team) which was set up previously during the wildfires in the Ruidoso/Mescalero area.

7. **Adjournment** – Renee Narvaiz

**MOTION** - There being no further comments or business before the Council Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Waller so moved, seconded by Mr. Guinnee.

**VOTE** – There being no opposition the meeting was adjourned at 2:22 p.m.