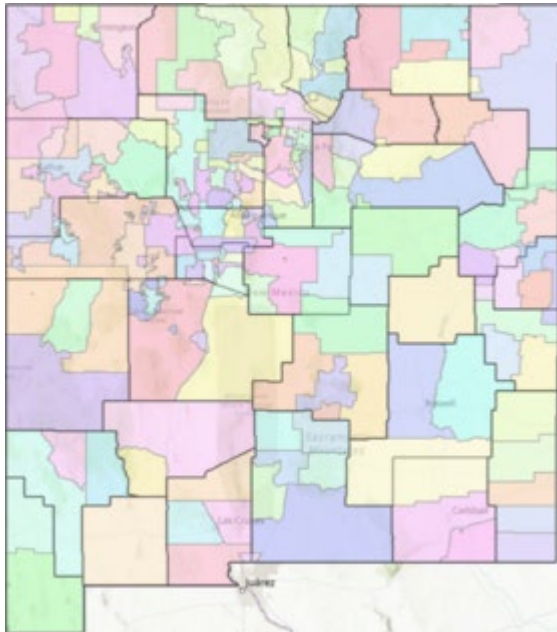




Public Comment Period to Open on Project Area Units in Federal BEAD Program



The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion has announced that it will seek public comments from September 1-30 in the next step of the federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program.

The public comments will center on draft Project Area Units (PAU), regions across the state for which stakeholders will bid for BEAD funding for broadband projects. PAUs were designed using existing administrative boundaries, including Tribal lands, school districts, census blocks and tracts, and high-cost areas defined by NTIA.

The public is encouraged to provide feedback on the PAUs.

Stakeholders and others can view the draft PAU boundaries and public comment materials on OBAE's [website](#). There, you'll be able to download documents, fill out forms and upload comments back to OBAE. OBAE wants to know if there are any issues in these PAUs that might deter applicants from applying or impede broadband deployment and how changing the PAU boundaries could resolve such issues.

Entities that plan to apply for BEAD projects are encouraged to participate in this public comment process; however, participation is non-binding and not a requirement to receive BEAD funds. Local governments, Tribal communities, non-profits, internet service providers, cooperatives and other entities are eligible to apply for BEAD grants to deploy infrastructure projects.

OBAE will conduct a webinar on Friday, August 30, from 10am-11am MST, to introduce this process to stakeholders and provide instruction on how to participate. Interested stakeholders can register for the webinar [here](#).

The PAUs will be finalized after the public comment period and after federal officials approve OBAE's BEAD Challenge Process results. OBAE tentatively plans to finalize the PAU design in mid-October.

Federal officials last month approved OBAE's BEAD Initial Proposal, clearing the way for the State to begin its process to award \$675 million for broadband projects. BEAD projects will provide broadband infrastructure to New Mexico's unserved areas.

If you have any questions, please contact OBAE at broadband@connect.nm.gov.
