



PRESS RELEASE

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OBAE is Advancing Digital Equity Statewide

Seventh Annual Digital Inclusion Week to Be Celebrated Nationwide October 2-6

Santa Fe, NM – Embracing a unique opportunity to bridge America's digital divide, the seventh annual Digital Inclusion Week, orchestrated by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), is urging organizations, communities, and policymakers to focus on the theme of "building connected communities" in 2023.

The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) spearheaded the seventh annual Digital Inclusion Week by hosting a Digital Equity Summit in collaboration with the Connect New Mexico Council at UNM Taos. Jennifer Nevarez, Digital Equity Advisor for OBAE, expressed, "This summit provides an excellent opportunity for organizations and policymakers working with underserved populations to strategize and explore ways to bridge the digital gap in their community."

Additionally, OBAE conducted a tribal consultation with the Pueblo of Zuni, empowering their tribal government to voice ideas and plans for future broadband projects. Currently, Continental Divide Electric Cooperative, a Grants-based electric co-op, has outlined a multimillion-dollar project aimed at providing broadband access to residents of the Pueblo of Zuni.

In the spirit of 'Building Connected Communities,' the International District library in Albuquerque played an active role in Digital Inclusion Week by conducting digital navigation intake and promoting ACP sign-ups at the library. These initiatives are making digital access a reality for those who need it most.

Furthermore, the New Mexico Technology Council organized a rural digital inclusion webinar. The Jemez Pueblo hosted 'Traditions and Technology,' where JNET (the ISP of Jemez Pueblo) provided ACP information, Digital Navigator program details, and distributed gently used monitors and computers. Jemez IT offered insights into internet safety and online security,

while the Natural Resources department shared information on virtual fences. The Jemez Vocational Rehab department also contributed by conducting job search outreach programs.

“This week serves as an opportunity to celebrate the progress made, raise awareness, and extend our reach within the community,” said Drew Lovelace, Acting Director of OBAE. “States, including ours, are in the process of creating digital equity plans, thanks to the funding opportunities provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). While the funding prospects are exciting, Digital Inclusion Week emphasizes the ongoing, community-based work that is fundamental to digital equity.”

OBAE extends an invitation to advocates, policymakers, community leaders, educators, researchers, and all those committed to digital equity, to join hands and make this Digital Inclusion Week a pivotal moment in our ongoing endeavors to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, income, or background, has the digital resources necessary to fully participate in society.

Nearly 30,000 New Mexicans say they cannot afford high-speed internet. Bridging the digital divide requires the physical infrastructure, digital skills, and education to use the internet and devices and it requires access to affordable internet. The Affordable Connectivity Program offers low-income households a \$30 to \$75 credit on monthly internet bills. Families can check to see if they qualify at [ACP Enrollment Assistant \(getacp.org\)](https://getacp.org)

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About National Digital Inclusion Alliance: NDIA advances digital equity by supporting community programs and equipping policymakers to act. Working collaboratively with more than 1,400 digital inclusion practitioners, NDIA advocates for equitable broadband access, tech devices, digital skills training, and tech support. For more information, visit digitalinclusion.org.

Get involved and stay connected:

- Register for the Connect New Mexico mailing list and newsletter <https://connect.nm.gov>
- Follow OBAE on social media at facebook.com/NMOBAE
- Sign up to receive invites and info from the Digital Equity Working Group <https://connect.nm.gov/cnm-working-groups>
- Visit the Connect New Mexico website to learn more at <https://connect.nm.gov>