



FCC Approves \$500,000 for New Mexico's Statewide Education Network

Funding Will Ease Financial Burden on State for School-Centric Broadband Network



The NM Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) has announced that the Federal Communications Commission has green-lighted more than \$500,000 to go toward operations of the Statewide Education Network (SEN).

The federal funding comes from the FCC's Schools & Libraries USF Program, known as the E-rate program, which helps schools obtain internet service.

SEN has begun connecting public schools in what will become a statewide broadband network, enabling students to share classes, resources and information and to access educational websites. About 50 schools have been connected since July 1.

"This funding is a tremendous financial shot in the arm," said Ovidiu Viorica, Statewide Education Network Technology Manager. "These federal dollars will help set this network on a path of sustainability for many years to come."

The FCC funds supplement approximately \$4 million in annual state funding for SEN operations. The state's financial responsibility will be reduced as future federal revenue is approved.

Each year OBAE applies for federal funds through the E-rate program for SEN to pay for internet service providers, maintain the broadband infrastructure and guarantee "last mile" broadband connections to schools. OBAE plans to apply for increased funding next year to help further defray state costs.

"SEN will also be using these federal monies to pay for all eligible services, maximizing funds received," said Viorica, "so public schools can do away with their costly internet administrative burden. It's a win-win for New Mexico public schools and the state. This list of eligible items may expand in the future to include cybersecurity--a necessary protection for our schools."

Viorica said the FCC funding will help provide broadband service and operations for up to 300 schools. SEN hopes to have 840 public schools connected to the network by 2027.
