

Connect New Mexico Pilot Program Making Waves

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Launched in August 2022, the \$120 million [Connect New Mexico Pilot Program](#) closed the first wave of its three-wave funding round on September 23, 2022. The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) received 16 applications seeking nearly \$90 million in grant support and offering approximately \$60 million in non-state matching funds. The second wave is open through December 9, 2022, with wave three closing on February 27, 2023. Pilot Program grant awards are expected to be announced between waves, with all awards to be issued by Spring 2023.

As described in the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), the Pilot Program includes a merit review process whereby each application is subjected to expert scrutiny and competitive scoring based upon a rubric that weighs various project attributes including: project impact, community engagement, economic efficiency, organization qualifications, project readiness, project sustainability, adoption assistance programs, and marketing and services strategy.

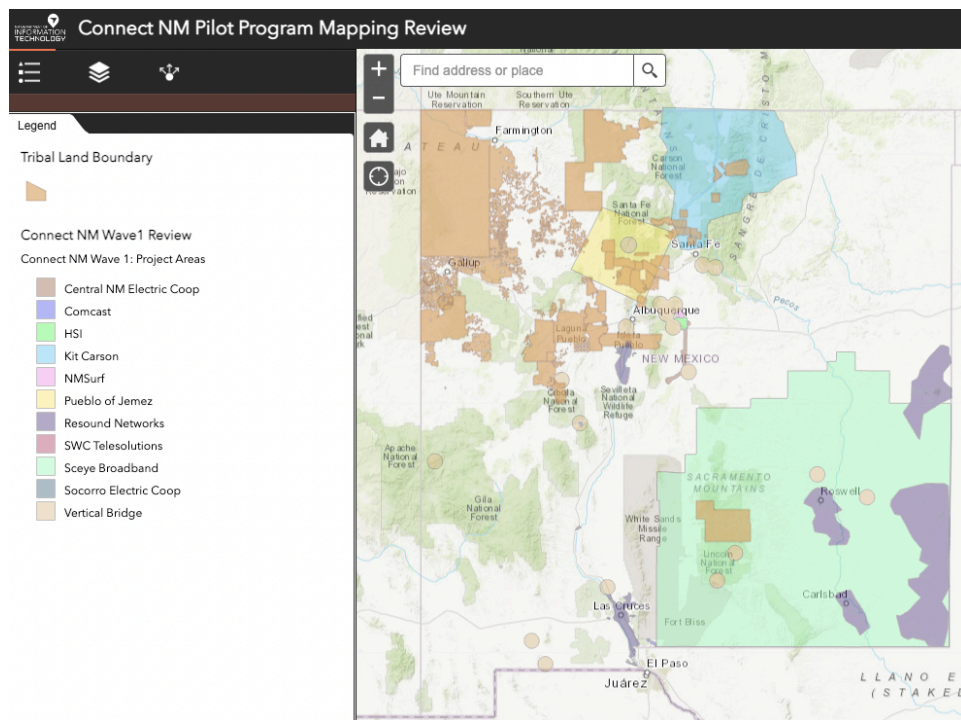
The scoring, review process, and Pilot Program all follow closely the statutory parameters of the Connect New Mexico Broadband Grant Program, established in state law via the [Connect New Mexico Act](#) and currently supported by a \$70 million state general revenue fund appropriation. Once established in administrative rule, this program will comprise the next full round of “Connect New Mexico” grantmaking—launched by a separate notice of funding, likely in Spring

2023.

The Pilot Program is supported by the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and in particular, the Capital Projects Fund administered by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Unlike past federal broadband funding opportunities, the Capital Projects Fund gives states great discretion over the use of the funding as long as projects:

- Target grant support to unserved or underserved areas lacking access to wireline broadband service of at least 25/3 Mbps or 100/20 Mbps, respectively;
- Support remote learning, healthcare monitoring, and workforce development uses; and
- Provide at least 100/100 Mbps service upon competition, unless the U.S. The Department of Treasury has approved extenuating circumstances.

To ensure that all Pilot Program projects are confined to unserved or underserved areas, OBAE is running a complementary mapping review process. This process will post all proposed Pilot Program project service areas in an interactive map, inviting feedback from incumbent broadband providers, fellow applicants, and other stakeholders—including the general public and potential customers—regarding the eligibility of all proposed projects.



Click [here](#) to view the map and send feedback to broadbandpilot@state.nm.us.

For more information regarding the Pilot Program, including its dual merit review and mapping review processes, please visit the [Connect New Mexico website](#).

From the Broadband Director's Desk

October has been a busy month for the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE). I visited several different regions across the state and heard about the unique challenges in deploying broadband, especially in small communities and in rural areas. I learn something from every community and tribe – and I look forward to paying your community a visit soon!



OBAE Director Kelly Schlegel connecting with rural New Mexico communities

Kelly Schlegel

Director

Office of Broadband Access and Expansion



October 3-7, 2022 was national [Digital Inclusion Week](#), an annual event in which organizations and individuals across the country host special events and campaigns to promote digital equity in their communities. This year’s theme was “Turning Our Moment into Movement,” signaling a turning point and time of action. This is especially true, as state digital equity planning will take place in the year ahead.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) celebrated National Digital Inclusion Week in a series of blog posts analyzing Internet Use Survey data on [the disparities around Internet adoption](#) and [how people view affordability](#).

To see a list of some of the events that happened across the country, head on over to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance’s [DIW 2022 page](#), or view the Twitter feed, [#DIW2022](#).

Watch the DIW 2022 Video

New Mexico Broadband Collective Hosts Virtual Summit

On Friday, September 30, nearly 70 broadband equity leaders from across the state of New Mexico joined the New Mexico Broadband Collective's fourth virtual Summit. In New Mexico, approximately 196,000 homes and businesses do not have broadband which prevents them from accessing employment, healthcare, education, and other opportunities. This Broadband Collective Summit brought together individuals and organizations engaging in work to address these important broadband service and digital literacy gaps for a morning of learning, sharing, and discussion. With the support of the New Mexico Foundation, several communities were able to host live watch parties for broadband champions in their area to participate in the Summit.

The Summit featured presentations from three Broadband Equity Fund grantee partners: True Kids 1, Pueblo of Laguna Utility Authority, and Colores United. These organizations shared information about their broadband equity projects, their successes, challenges, and lessons learned to date. To learn more about the Equity Fund Grantee Partners, please visit the [New Mexico Foundation's website](#).

Throughout the Summit, attendees also heard from several presenters including Broadband Collective Co-chair and SFIS Chief Technology Director Kimball Sekaquaptewa, New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion Director Kelly Schlegal, and President of CTC Technology and Energy Joanne Hovis.

The Summit closed out with a discussion moderated by Broadband Collective Co-Chair and President & CEO of the New Mexico Foundation JoAnn Melchor and Groundworks New Mexico Manager of Strategic Programs and Partnerships Danielle LaJoie. This discussion surfaced community needs, opportunities for future engagement, and next steps for the Broadband Collective's work.



Groundworks New Mexico is grateful for the support of the New Mexico Broadband Collective partners in creating and presenting the summit.

The Broadband Collective was established to support a statewide approach to ensuring broadband services for all New Mexicans, especially in rural communities, Native communities, and other "hard-to-connect" communities most impacted by the lack of broadband connectivity. With backbone support from Groundworks New Mexico, the Collective is managed by a steering committee and includes representatives from foundations, nonprofits, and government.

City of Albuquerque Hosts Internet Resources Fair

On Saturday, October 8, the Albuquerque Broadband Office invited the public to learn more about the various broadband providers serving the area – and how residents can potentially save on high-speed internet. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), through its Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), provides up to \$30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households. This benefit is \$75 per month for qualifying households on tribal lands.

Albuquerque area providers participating in ACP include AT&T, Comcast Xfinity, CenturyLink / Lumen, DirectTV, T-Mobile Home Internet, Verizon, Versus, and Viasat. Providers were on-site to help residents apply for the ACP benefit. More information on the Albuquerque Broadband Office and its recent Internet Resources Fair is available [here](#).



Albuquerque Broadband Program Manager Catherine Nicolaou

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) made considerable progress enrolling qualifying households of school-aged children in ACP throughout the 2021-2022 school year. The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion looks forward to building on this momentum through concerted activity, including an awareness campaign, local coordination, and an expanded “Help Desk” that will provide direct assistance for New Mexicans who want to learn more about ACP and apply for the pioneering federal benefit that makes at-home broadband

services more affordable.

Office of Broadband Access & Expansion is Hiring!

The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) is staffing up this fall.

After Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed Director Kelly Schlagle in July, OBAE hired Dianne Lindstrom as Deputy Director and Drew Lovelace as the Operations Manager. Drew Started September 19, 2022, and Dianne started October 3, 2022.

OBAE continues to staff up with three job postings this month. OBAE has partnered with the State Personnel Office (SPO) to pilot a Speed Hire program from October 16—20, 2022. All applicants who meet the minimum qualification will be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted October 21, 24, and 25, 2022.

- Compliance Manager (Program Coordinator II)
- Grants Manager (Program Coordinator I)
- Broadband Project Manager (IT Project Manager III)

The job posting can be found [here](#) from October 16 - 20, 2022.

“We are excited to partner with SPO and get our positions filled,” Drew commented on the upcoming hire. “OBAE has a mission to connect every home, school, and business with broadband, and we need onboard new employees who are excited about serving New Mexico to do the work and achieve our mission.”

News & Articles

Oct 7 | [Wisconsin Broadband Infrastructure Projects Get a Boost from American Rescue Plan](#) (Benton Institute)

Oct 5 | [What's Our Vision of Digital Equity?](#) (Benton Institute)

Sept 26 | [A Proposal to Create the Foundation for Digital Equity](#) (Benton Institute). U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) joined colleagues in [introducing](#) the [Digital Equity Foundation Act of 2022](#).

Sept 24 | [Black Churches 4 Digital Equity Connects Communities to the Affordable Connectivity Program](#) (Benton Institute)

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Resources

[New Mexico Office of Broadband Access & Expansion](#)
[Connect New Mexico Broadband Grant Program Map](#)

[Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\) Consumer FAQ](#)
[FCC Outreach Toolkit for ACP](#)

For questions, email nmbroadbandconnections@benton.org.

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