

Mapping, Data, and Connect New Mexico Pilot Program Awards!

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To: [REDACTED]

Date: Friday, November 11, 2022, 11:22 AM MST



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From the Broadband Director's Desk

This week marks a particularly exciting time for the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion. Yesterday, we announced the five awards in “wave one” of our Connect New Mexico Pilot Program that leverages federal Capital Projects Fund dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act.

On Election Day, New Mexico voters amended the State Constitution to pave the way for innovative public-private partnerships for broadband, including expanded eligibility for private broadband service providers to receive Connect New Mexico grants using state funds.

We're filing the state's initial feedback to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) “broadband serviceable locations”—the first step in a collaborative process to improve our



shared understanding of where homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions exist in New Mexico.

Director Schlegel in Elephant Butte, announcing the Pilot Program award for Ethos Broadband

Yesterday, the [FCC announced](#) that on November 18 it will unveil an initial version of new broadband maps and open the mapping challenge process. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) [then expects](#) to communicate the amount of federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding the state can expect to receive through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act on June 30, 2023.

Mapping will be critical to the success of the Connect New Mexico program and vision for universal broadband access statewide. Once we've submitted our initial feedback to the FCC, communities across the state should be prepared to help provide further clarification regarding the locations in their areas requiring access to reliable, affordable, high-performance broadband. State tuned for an update from the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion for ways you can contribute—and, in the meantime, take a close look at the mapping resources shared below.

Kelly Schlegel

Director

New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion

Wave One Awards

The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion launched New Mexico's most ambitious broadband expansion initiative ever with the \$120 million New Mexico Pilot Program. The office just announced the first five grant awards of \$38.6 million, which will be matched by \$28.3 million in nonstate funding for a total investment of \$66.9 million. These grants plan to expand access to more than 13,400 homes, businesses, farms, ranches, and community institutions across New Mexico.



Director Schlegel in Las Cruces, announcing Pilot Program awards for Comcast Corporation

The funds released through the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion align with its ambitious goal of universal broadband access statewide. The approach will leverage historic state and federal broadband investment to improve access through a best practice state matching grant program that pairs state and federal funding with local vision and experience – including from communities, tribes, and a wide variety of New Mexico broadband providers.

“The first wave of Connect New Mexico Pilot Program grants will expand broadband infrastructure to bring resources to communities that need it most, laying a foundation for continued economic growth,” said Kelly Schlegel. “Access to high-speed, reliable internet is essential for households and businesses across our state, and the Governor’s approach provides a roadmap for our state to build 21st century communities. Throughout this historic, multi-year build, the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion is committed to ensuring this program benefits those that need it most—boosting education, jobs, and economic opportunity for all of New Mexico in the process.”

To make the announcement, Director Schlegel was joined by her colleagues from the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion and the Connect New Mexico Council, as well as representatives from three wave one awardees: Central New Mexico Electric Cooperative; Ethos Broadband; Socorro Electric Cooperative; and Comcast.

Read More:

[Pilot program expands broadband access in Doña Ana County](#) (Las Cruces Sun-News)

[Internet expansion projects coming to Doña Ana County](#) (KFox14)

Constitutional Amendment Opens Door for Broadband Public-Private Partnerships

Tuesday's General Election ballot featured a proposed ballot measure that would amend the New Mexico Constitution to allow the Legislature to fund infrastructure for internet, energy, water, wastewater and other similar services. The measure, Constitutional Amendment 2, sought to create an exception to an existing prohibition on aid for individuals, associations, and public or private corporations. The measure passed by a wide margin and the Legislature can now specify the nature of various forms of public-private partnerships, including use of state general revenue fund dollars for grants to private broadband service providers. This would allow the Connect New Mexico Broadband Grant Program and its Connect New Mexico Fund to provide direct grant awards to broadband service providers, among other qualified entities ranging from local governments and schools to tribes and cooperatives.

More on Public-Private Partnerships:

[The Era of the Broadband Public-Private Partnership: New trends and opportunities in the wake of COVID-19](#) (The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society)

[Public Infrastructure/Private Service: A Shared-Risk Partnership Model for 21st Century Broadband Infrastructure](#) (The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society)

Get Involved and Help Improve Federal Broadband Maps

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's (IIJA) BEAD program creates an incredible opportunity for states to make investments in universal access. But BEAD formula funding is dependent on the accuracy of federal broadband data—not only locating unserved and underserved areas of need, but also actual locations—such as homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions—that historic maps may have overlooked.

As we process recent guidance on how and when to provide data to improve the maps, this much is known: (1) the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is now accepting feedback regarding “broadband serviceable locations;” (2) between now and January 13, 2023, the FCC will be seeking input regarding available service to these locations; and (3) local governments, community organizations, and the general public all have a role to play in providing accurate information.

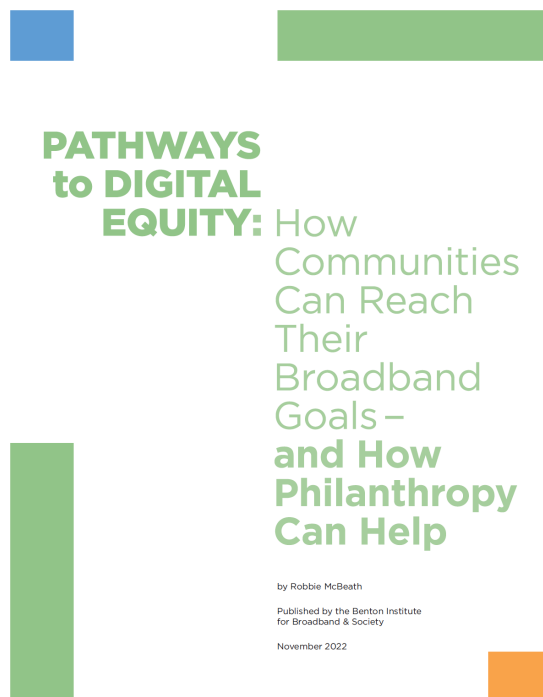
Recently, the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society supported a webinar featuring national perspectives on these federal mapping feedback processes. This [recording](#) and [summary](#) provide helpful information regarding the processes, what's at stake, and how various stakeholders can access the federal portals to view data and share feedback.

Additionally, Next Century Cities' Corian Zacher offers a helpful Q&A about the FCC's broadband

serviceable locations fabric [here](#).

Now is the time for local governments, community organizations, and the general public to get engaged. For instance, every local government and community organization with a stake in better broadband should compare the location fabric's portrayal of broadband serviceable locations against their understanding of where homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions actually exist in their areas. The federal fabric can be improved in various ways—for instance, communities can identify locations that are missing and locations that are misclassified (e.g. a single-family home is, in fact, a multi-dwelling unit), as well as identify locations on the map that do not exist.

Pathways to Digital Equity



This week, the Benton Institute released [*Pathways to Digital Equity: How Communities Can Reach Their Broadband Goals—and How Philanthropy Can Help*](#). For community leaders striving for digital equity, this guidebook will help communities evaluate and meet specific connectivity needs. The publication charts three pathways—Access, Adoption, and Use—that together offer a comprehensive approach to guide communities' digital equity planning and provide structure for implementing effective solutions.

[Read the Guidebook](#)

Just as every community has unique features and characteristics, so too do their connectivity challenges. With this in mind, communities are encouraged to follow a variety of steps and best practices as they participate in local and regional education and planning programs to build capacity, increase community engagement, and move toward a more equitable future.

Although this is a time of unprecedented federal broadband funding, this opportunity, this “Broadband Moment,” requires a lot of work and coordination. State broadband offices—many in their nascency—can increase their capacity through strategic partnerships. This is a place for philanthropy.

In addition to funding, philanthropic organizations have expertise, as well as important

connections to valuable stakeholders. Place-based philanthropies' deep local knowledge and commitment to strengthen communities can be critical in bringing together the diverse coalitions needed to make progress along any of this guidebook's pathways. Philanthropies with regional or national scope are well positioned to support coordination and share lessons across regions and the country. They can also push for accountability, working to ensure that federal investment meets its aims. This guidebook is filled with stories about how philanthropic efforts have enhanced the work of states and communities to expand broadband access, adoption, and opportunity.

News & Articles

Nov 9 | [Editorial: NM needs to make sure next \\$108M delivers broadband](#) (Albuquerque Journal)

Nov 3 | [How to Make Broadband a Priority in Affordable Rental Housing Development](#) (Pew Charitable Trusts)

Oct 31 | [\\$100M heading to rural NM for high-speed internet](#) (Albuquerque Journal)

Oct 30 | [Leveraging Libraries to Advance Digital Equity](#) (American Library Association)

Oct 25 | [A Consumer-Driven Broadband Label Design](#) (Benton Institute for Broadband & Society)

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Resources

[New Mexico Office of Broadband Access & Expansion](#)

[Connect New Mexico Broadband Grant Program Map](#)

[NM Broadband Speed & Quality Testing](#)

[Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\) Consumer FAQ](#)

[FCC Outreach Toolkit for ACP](#)

For questions, email nmbroadbandconnections@benton.org.

Looking for more broadband policy news? The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society offers a free, reliable, and non-partisan daily digest that curates and distributes news related to universal broadband. You can [subscribe to this service here](#) to learn how broadband delivers opportunities and strengthens communities.

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