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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2024

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State hits major milestone in broadband deployment program
Broadband Office can move forward on \$675 million in grants

ALBUQUERQUE—Today, the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) announced that the federal government has approved the results of the State’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Challenge Process, enabling OBAE to publish the map of areas where prospective applicants can bid for funding.

The state will be awarding \$675 million in grants through BEAD, the state’s largest broadband funding program, to build and expand broadband infrastructure in New Mexico. The program will help connect more than 31,000 unserved locations.

The Challenge Process is a key requirement for all 50 states participating in the BEAD program. The process allowed OBAE to develop a more accurate view of broadband availability across the state and to determine which locations will be eligible for BEAD funding. With the results cleared by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), OBAE will soon begin the competitive selection process to award grants to applicants.

New Mexico becomes the 25th state to be approved by NTIA.

Approval of the vital Challenge Process has also enabled OBAE to publish the final Project Area Units (PAUs), which are the regions across the state for which entities will bid for BEAD funding.

“We have now cleared the last hurdles before we can begin the next critical phase of the BEAD program,” said **Andrew Wilder, OBAE’s BEAD Coordinator**. “With the Challenge Process approved and the maps published, internet service providers and other entities have the tools to prepare their applications to bring broadband connectivity to New Mexican’s who need it.”

The final version of the PAUs comes after OBAE made extensive changes following public comments and suggestions. These changes resulted in a greater number of areas that better reflect existing network infrastructure, helping applicants to design successful BEAD projects.

The PAUs were designed using factors such as geographic boundaries, proximity to existing network infrastructure, economic and technical viability, and community needs. Tribal lands and high-cost areas designated by NTIA were assigned their own PAUs.

Prequalified internet service providers, tribal entities, nonprofits, cooperatives and other organizations will apply for BEAD grants.

Formal applications will start January 3.

At present, all states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories are taking part in the \$42.5 billion BEAD program which targets unserved locations.

“Unserved” locations receive less than 25mbps download and 3mbps upload speeds, while “underserved” receive between 25mbps/3mbps and up to 100mbps download and 20mbps uploads.

For more information about BEAD, [CLICK HERE](#).

To view OBAE’s Mapping Hub, [CLICK HERE](#).

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The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion is dedicated to serving New Mexico with a commitment to make high-speed broadband accessible to all New Mexicans. OBAE’s mission is to expand and improve high-speed internet service with passionate leadership that drives bold, equitable, affordable and inclusive broadband solutions. OBAE seeks results that honor the state’s rich heritage and elevate quality of life for all.