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Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

Michelle Lujan Grisham
New Mexico Governor

Jeff Lopez
Broadband Director

Aquiles Trujillo
Deputy Director

Contact:
Office of Broadband Access and Expansion
Kevin Hopper, kevin.hopper@connect.nm.gov; (505) 819-7586

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Broadband construction begins on Laguna Pueblo

1,400 Tribal homes and businesses getting fiber connections

SANTA FE – Tribal members on the Laguna Pueblo will soon have access to high-speed internet after a broadband fiber infrastructure project — paid for by two state broadband office grants and the Pueblo — began construction on July 29, marking a major milestone in New Mexico's largest active broadband grant project.

More than 100 miles of fiber is being installed to homes, businesses and Tribal community institutions on the Pueblo in Cibola County because of broadband grants totaling $13.9 million. The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) awarded the Pueblo a $9 million federal grant through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for last mile connections; the second, a $4.8 million state grant given by OBAE through the Connect NM Fund for middle mile infrastructure.

The Pueblo of Laguna has also contributed to these two projects on behalf of its members and the community with its own cash match totaling $12.1 million for a total project budget of $26 million.

"These Tribal projects will deliver high-speed internet to locations across the Pueblo and will transform the community," said **OBAE Tribal Coordinator and Liaison Victory Quintana.** "Tribal communities are among the most rural in our state, and the Laguna connections will mean access to education, telehealth and economic opportunities while helping the Pueblo empower their own community even more by closing the digital divide."

The federal funds are being used for a project called "6 Village Fiber-to-the-Home," which will provide both middle mile and connect last mile locations. The state grant, called the "Rio Puerco Middle Mile" project, will provide transport connectivity to those six villages on the Pueblo.

"The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how deeply the lack of reliable, high-speed internet affected our Pueblo, creating serious challenges for employment, education and healthcare," said **Harry A. Antonio Jr., Governor, Pueblo of Laguna.** "The Laguna Council was determined to address those challenges with long-term solutions. Its support, approval and financial commitment have helped move this fiber-to-the-premises project from design into construction."

The Pueblo of Laguna Council has determined that one of its own entities, K'awaika Hanu Internet (KHI), the current wireless internet service provider (ISP), will become the FTTP internet service provider for the Pueblo's fiber network once operational.

"As the ISP for the Pueblo of Laguna, K'awaika Hanu Internet experienced the ups and downs of internet service and its reliability in the Pueblo," said **Kamrin Aragon, KHI Business Manager**. "This is a milestone for KHI as the community will soon experience high speed internet with a reliable connection. As for the KHI staff, the dream they had long before 2014 to bring high-speed internet to the community, will come to fruition. A win for the entire Pueblo of Laguna community."

The ARPA-funded project is last mile fiber construction that will connect a total of 1,398 structures using 81 miles of fiber. They include:

- 1366 households
- 4 businesses
- 11 community anchor institutions, such as administrative buildings, community centers and firehouses

The Connect NM Fund state grant will connect nine locations using 22 miles of fiber. They include:

- 7 households
- One business
- One community anchor institution

The Laguna connections will go to unserved locations, which receive less than 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload speeds, while underserved receive between 25Mbps/3Mbps and up to 100Mbps download and 20Mbps uploads.

Both projects are expected to be complete at the end of the first quarter in 2027.

OBAE has awarded $58 million for 22 projects through the Connect NM Fund, which was established by the Legislature in 2021 through the Connect New Mexico Act.

OBAE has awarded $117 million in ARPA broadband grants to more than 20 entities, including Tribal communities, internet service providers and cooperatives.

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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.

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