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Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# State broadband office approves $6.7M in grants for public Wi-Fi

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) today announced six grants to implement or expand public Wi-Fi service across New Mexico.

Two cities, two counties, a university, and an internet service provider received awards through OBAE's *Community Connect Grant Program*, designed to expand free Wi-Fi in public places, such as plazas, parks, and municipal buildings.

"Public Wi-Fi is essential for providing accessibility and convenience in communities across New Mexico," said **Neala Krueger**, OBAE state grants senior program manager. "It provides communications in emergencies, helps travelers and remote workers, and enables New Mexicans to access the internet in public locations. This Wi-Fi access will help close the state's digital divide."

The *Community Connect Grant Program* provides grants to roll out or expand Wi-Fi in public places, focusing on areas with poor connectivity or lacking digital inclusion.

"These Wi-Fi projects will complement the enormous fiscal investment the state has made in building broadband infrastructure to homes, businesses and farms," said **Andrew Wilder**, OBAE's policy & programs bureau chief.

OBAE had $7.19 million budgeted for the public Wi-Fi grants.

The six awardees receiving a total of $6.72 million in *Community Connect* grants include:

Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell - $2,162,229

SWC Telesolutions, Inc. - $2,040,951

City of Las Cruces - $1,427,361

Dona Ana County - $515,912

Luna County - $328,767

City of Raton - $250,000

Right now, about $460,00 is available, and OBAE is working with a seventh entity on an application to use those remaining funds.

The response to OBAE's *Community Connect Grant Program* was tremendous: the Office received 29 applications for the public Wi-Fi grants, totaling nearly $14 million.

Funding for the *Community Connect Grant Program* comes from OBAE's $70 million Connect New Mexico Fund appropriated by the legislature. That fund was established in 2021 through the *Connect New Mexico Act*.

Grantees must provide for maintenance and operation of the Public Wi-Fi network for a minimum of three years after project completion. A 100 Mbps download / 20 Mbps upload speed is required for all approved Wi-Fi projects.

You can find more details about the grants 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.

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