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Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OBAE offers grants to implement school wireless device policy

Partnership with PED to address student distractions on campuses

SANTA FE – School districts and charter schools across the state can now apply for grants to help them implement policies designed to limit students from using phones and other personal wireless communication devices during the school day.

The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) are partnering in the Wireless Communication Device Policy Implementation Grant Program, an effort aimed at helping kids focus at school by limiting screen time.

OBAE is providing $1 million in grants to help PED support the 89 school districts and 100 charter schools that have already implemented the new policy.

“Every student deserves a learning environment where they can focus, engage with their teachers and classmates and reach their full potential free from unnecessary distractions,” said **Mariana Padilla,** secretary of the New Mexico Public Education Department. “This funding will help school districts and charter schools implement thoughtful, locally developed policies that support student learning, improve school safety, and promote healthier, more meaningful connections throughout the school day.”

In 2024, the Surgeon General of the United States warned that social media is associated with significant mental health harms for teens, and in May 2026 recommended schools establish rules requiring students refrain from using personal devices during the school day. In studies conducted nationwide, restricting the use of these devices has been shown to support anti-bullying efforts and promote social emotional health amongst students.

In April 2025, Governor Lujan Grisham signed the school anti-distraction policy bill. Under the law, every school district and charter must develop and enforce their rules. There are exceptions which include student medical needs and emergencies.

Once a policy is in place, schools may apply for OBAE funding.

“Part of OBAE’s mission is to ensure every school and student has access to the internet and the digital tools to be successful,” said **Jeff Lopez**, OBAE director. “Today, that means balancing access with tools to limit distractions and mitigate social media’s harms to mental health. It’s not fair to teachers or students, who should be focused on teaching and learning. We at OBAE want to help schools and students succeed in their missions.”

The money would go toward network firewalls, lockers to store phones or locking bags that block Wi-Fi signals. All schools must submit the funding application by **August 14, 2026**, to be considered. The funding is limited, and applications will be processed and funded on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Should applications exceed the amount of funding available, they will be rolled over to the following fiscal year. OBAE will oversee the grant application and selection process. PED is administering the Wireless Communication Device Policy and requirements for the schools.

OBAE established the grant program under its statutory mission to support school connectivity.

The agency is aware of the distracting prevalence of personal wireless communication devices in schools and aims to ensure that students have access to safe, high-quality education without personal online disruptions.

Schools may apply for an OBAE grant 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.

The New Mexico Public Education Department partners with educators, communities and families to ensure that all students are healthy, secure in their identity and holistically prepared for college, career and life. Currently, the PED serves about 320,000 students in 189 districts and charter schools. Find an abundance of resources for administrators, educators, families and students at New Mexico Public Education Department (state.nm.us) or follow the PED on Facebook and Instagram.

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