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State awards broadband provider $100,000 planning grant

SANTA FE – Three unincorporated communities in Rio Arriba County could eventually receive more high-speed internet after the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) awarded a $100,000 broadband planning grant to Kit Carson Electric Cooperative Inc.

Kit Carson received the funds through OBAE's Grant Writing, Engineering, and Planning Program (GWEP). The Cooperative will use the grant to evaluate broadband needs and address future high-speed internet deployment in Hernandez, Chamita and Alcalde — rural communities just north of Española.

"This planning grant will play a critical role in ensuring broadband infrastructure is reliable and sustainable in these rural, unincorporated areas," said **Jeff Lopez**, OBAE director. "We want to do everything possible to see that all hard-to-reach parts of the state are connected, and this grant will assist Kit Carson in getting vital information for needed future connectivity."

Kit Carson will use the grant to complete a broadband engineering, network feasibility and availability study for Hernandez, Chamita and Alcalde. The funds will be used to conduct broadband analysis of the areas, which includes identifying any broadband service gaps. Kit Carson's work will also establish a foundation for future broadband deployment and help position itself to pursue additional state and federal broadband funding opportunities.

This is Kit Carson's second GWEP grant; it received a separate $100,000 grant in the fall of 2025.

The state had allocated $5 million to the GWEP program to help cooperatives, Tribal communities and local governments get grants to help them provide broadband to unserved locations.

All GWEP grants are specifically used for broadband deployment planning. Funding expires June 30, 2027.

To date, OBAE has awarded 40 GWEP grants to entities, including 18 Tribal communities, 17 local governments and five rural electric and telephone cooperatives.

There is still $955,000 available in GWEP grants, and OBAE encourages entities to apply. The maximum amount allowed for each award under this state program is $100,000. No matching funds are required.

GWEP awards must be used in the planning of infrastructure projects — internet service providers are not eligible. Furthermore, the grants are not competitive; they are considered assistance grants aimed at spurring broadband infrastructure projects.

For more information and to apply for a GWEP grant, visit 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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