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State broadband Office to use \$25 million to directly connect students

Funding will build infrastructure and provide receivers to connect students' homes in rural districts

SANTA FE—Today, the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) announced it will administer \$25 million in state funds to provide high-speed internet to rural students.

The “Student Connect” assistance program is designed to reach students in remote parts of the state.

The state money comes from OBAE’s Connect New Mexico Fund, a financial source appropriated by the legislature that designates \$25 million to go to public school projects. That Fund has also secured \$70 million for general broadband infrastructure and \$5 million for broadband grant writing, engineering and planning.

Since nearly all New Mexico public schools have fiber connections, OBAE will utilize the \$25 million by launching the “Student Connect” program to help rural students receive broadband connections.

“This investment reflects my administration’s commitment to ensuring that all public school and tribal students have access to broadband,” said **Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham**. “These funds will help students in rural areas get the vital internet service they need to succeed in school.”

“While rural schools have broadband, there’s often no internet for students once they return home,” said **OBAE Acting Director Drew Lovelace**. “We want to ensure that rural students and their households in the many hard-to-reach regions of the state have access to internet. These funds will allow that to happen.”

The funds will be issued through assistance grants and will be used to construct towers, build fixed wireless service and provide receivers for the designated student homes. Students and school staff participating in the program will also get three years of free internet.

Rural tribal communities are also eligible to receive these assistance grants for homes.

Schools and internet service providers that partner with schools can now apply for assistance grants as part of the \$25 million pool. OBAE will approve applications that meet certain criteria. The application process doesn’t have a deadline, but all projects must be completed by June 30, 2025.

Schools and partnerships interested in applying for these grants can visit:
<https://connect.nm.gov/student-connect.html>

The Connect New Mexico Fund was established in 2021 by the legislature through the Connect New Mexico Act.

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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.