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Applications begin for \$675 million in broadband infrastructure grants

Nearly 30 entities may bid for awards in the state's largest broadband funding program

SANTA FE—Today, the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) announced that 29 entities may begin submitting applications for projects in the state's largest funding program for broadband infrastructure.

The state will be awarding \$675 million in grants through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program. The federal government allocated the funds to New Mexico in 2023.

The program will help connect more than 31,000 unserved locations in the state. Fiber connectivity is a priority under the BEAD program, but other broadband technologies may be considered depending on location, terrain, costs and other factors.

The 29 entities can now submit applications after being approved by OBAE. They include one nonprofit, six tribal or tribal-affiliated organizations, seven cooperatives, and 15 other companies and internet service providers.

Grants will be awarded in all parts of New Mexico. Local governments, tribal communities, nonprofits, internet service providers, cooperatives and other entities were eligible to apply for BEAD funding.

“We are thrilled by the number and variety of applicants that came to the table for this program,” said **Andrew Wilder**, BEAD Coordinator at OBAE. “These grants will change lives, providing vital internet service to households and businesses that lack connectivity. The BEAD program is a massive undertaking that will help bridge the digital divide in our state.”

All BEAD applicants had to go through a prequalification process, proving to the state that they had technical capability and financial stability to deploy broadband and meet all federal and state requirements. Entities also had to show they had managerial and operational capabilities, met legal requirements and other regulatory obligations.

The application process comes after OBAE cleared many federal and state hurdles, including broadband initial proposals, mapping plans, public comments and a formal Challenge Process to ensure proposed areas for broadband expansion or construction were eligible.

Both the state and the federal government must approve the final applications.

Federal and state data show that 16% of New Mexico’s 873,797 serviceable locations are unserved or underserved.

Unserved locations receive less than 25mbps download and 3mbps upload speeds, while underserved receive between 25mbps/3mbps and up to 100mbps download and 20mbps uploads.

At present, all states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories are taking part in the \$42.5 billion BEAD program.

For more information about BEAD, visit: <https://connect.nm.gov/bead.html>

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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.