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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2025

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Broadband office notifying providers about new federal rules
*Federal policy change prompts restructuring of state's \$675 million
broadband program*

SANTA FE – The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) is notifying broadband providers about a restructuring of the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, a move that is changing the application process for the state's \$675 million federal grant program for broadband infrastructure.

Changes to the program guidance by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), announced June 6, mean OBAE must now comply with new requirements to expand and deploy broadband infrastructure.

The federal changes affect all 50 states and 6 territories, and they have until September 4 to implement the new guidance and submit their final proposals to NTIA. NTIA has committed to review and approve all final broadband infrastructure proposals within 90 days of receipt.

OBAE has been developing the BEAD program for New Mexico over the past two years in accordance with all federal requirements. When NTIA issued new requirements last month, OBAE was in the final steps of reviewing sub-grantee applications for the \$675 million grant program. The new guidance requires all states and territories to conduct at least one additional grant application round for all eligible locations, regardless of where the state was in its sub-grantee selection process.

OBAE remains committed to working with local internet providers to navigate this process and plans to open the additional application round from July 7 to July 18.

“The New Mexico Exchange Carrier Group (NMECG) has been working closely with the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) on the implementation of NTIA’s BEAD Restructuring Policy program. We appreciate the Office’s proactive efforts to keep broadband providers informed as we navigate these changes together. Our ten member companies have a long history of serving rural communities and remain deeply committed to delivering reliable broadband service to customers across rural New Mexico,” **said Matejka Santillanes**, Executive Director of the NMECG.

“The BEAD program is vital to getting broadband out to underserved and unserved areas, many of which are Tribal areas. It is time to put this money to work to provide this vital service to all New Mexicans,” **said Godfrey Enjady**, President of the National Tribal Telecommunications Association and General Manager of the Mescalero Apache Telecom, Inc.

“NMSurf is proud to work alongside OBAE to connect rural unserved and underserved New Mexicans. As a locally owned New Mexico provider, we know firsthand how critical reliable broadband is for rural communities. The BEAD updates give providers like us the flexibility to deploy the best mix of technologies — including fixed wireless and fiber — to deliver fast, reliable internet where it’s needed most,” **said Albert Catanach**, President and CEO of NMSurf.

“This change represents a significant shift in the structure and priorities of the BEAD program, but we are steadfast in our commitment to deliver positive outcomes,” **said Jeff Lopez**, Director of the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion. “We will continue to work with providers that serve families across New Mexico. At the end of the day, our mission is unchanged: universal connectivity for all New Mexicans.”

The restructuring means the state must rescind any preliminary and provisional selections and notify prospective awardees of the new application process.

All previously submitted applications must be rescored and selected based on the new guidance, not the state’s previously approved selection criteria. Local governments, Tribal communities, nonprofits, internet service providers, cooperatives and other entities are eligible to apply for BEAD funding. Grants will be awarded in all parts of New Mexico.

The federal changes also require all states and territories to revise their maps of BEAD-eligible locations.

As a result of the updates to federal guidelines, New Mexico now has approximately 40,000 unserved and underserved locations eligible for BEAD funding as the final round gets underway July 7.

The NTIA’s latest Policy Notice on the BEAD program includes the following changes:

- **Technology Neutrality:** allows all broadband technologies to compete equally, removing previous restrictions that favored fiber deployments.
- **Streamlined Sub-grantee Selection:** states and territories must conduct an additional application round for broadband solutions.
- **Elimination of Regulatory Burdens:** previous administrative requirements related to rate regulation, labor, climate, and government-owned networks have been removed.

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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.