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Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

Michelle Lujan Grisham
New Mexico Governor

Jeff Lopez
Broadband Director

Aquiles Trujillo
Deputy Director

Contact: Office of Broadband Access and Expansion
Mike Curtis, Michael.curtis@connect.nm.gov; (505) 231-4477

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New Wi-Fi projects to serve millions across 17 NM counties

State broadband office grants awarded to local and state governments

ALBUQUERQUE – More than four million annual visitors, students and residents in New Mexico will soon have public Wi-Fi access at city parks, state parks, public housing, civic spaces, community centers and senior centers after the state's broadband office awarded nearly $6 million in grants.

The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) has approved nine Wi-Fi grants through its ARPA Community Wi-Fi Project, a newly launched program designed to help municipal, county and regional governments and state agencies expand Wi-Fi service. OBAE is partnering with the local governments to focus on public places with poor levels of connectivity and digital inclusion.

"As more people rely on broadband for work, education and everyday health monitoring, having reliable access outside the home is essential," said **OBAE Policy and Programs Bureau Chief Andrew Wilder**. "These public Wi-Fi projects will give communities the dependable connectivity they need and help close the digital divide across New Mexico."

State and local parks are the center of many New Mexico communities. They support work, education, and health monitoring by hosting student classes, promoting healthy living, and providing a free venue for trainings and gatherings.

OBAE awarded local and state governments grants totaling $5,941,326. These funds were available from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Capital Projects Fund.

Here are the government entities receiving the public Wi-Fi grants for projects:

NM Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department

Bluewater Lake	Living Desert Zoo & Gardens
Bottomless Lakes	Manzano Mountains
Brantley Lake	Mesilla Valley
Caballo Lake	Morphy Lake
Cerrillos Hills	Navajo Lake
Cimarron Canyon	Oasis
City of Rocks	Oliver Lee
Clayton Lake	Pancho Villa
Conchas Lake	Pecos Canyon
Coyote Creek	Percha Dam
Eagle Nest Lake	Rockhound
Elephant Butte	Santa Rosa Lake
El Vado Lake	Storrie Lake
Fenton Lake	Sugarite Canyon
Heron Lake	Sumner Lake
Hyde Memorial	Ute Lake
Leasburg Dam	Villanueva
Total	**$3,722,166**

The City of Albuquerque

North Domingo Baca Park	$415,327
Mesa Verde Park	$200,737
Phil Chacon Park	$167,327
Tiguex Park	$167,327
Old Town Plaza	$151,327
Total	**$1,102,045**

Santa Fe County

Santa Cruz Section in Santa Fe	**$508,762**

NM Dept. of Workforce Solutions

Southern NM workforce access	**$432,558**

Valencia County

Fairgrounds/Las Maravillas Park	**$175,794**

“Beyond Wi-Fi, this grant is about opportunity,” said **City of Albuquerque Systems Engineer Russ Bennett**. “Broadband has become essential infrastructure, and with this investment we can offer high-speed access right where people live, gather and learn. The partnership between OBAE and the City of Albuquerque shows what we can accomplish when state resources and local expertise come together around a shared goal: making Albuquerque a more connected, equitable city.”

“Having reliable Wi-Fi access will greatly enhance the visitor experience at New Mexico State Parks,” said **EMNRD Acting Secretary Erin Taylor**. “Visitors will be able to get up-to-date information about park amenities as well as those offered in surrounding communities. We thank the state Office of Broadband Access and Expansion for bringing this infrastructure to our parks.”

“People need reliable public Wi-Fi to look for jobs, participate in training, and understand all the resources we have to help people get to work,” said **NMDWS Secretary Sarita Nair**. “Expanded connectivity in southern New Mexico will help job seekers access online training, apply for employment, connect with workforce services, and build the digital skills needed in today’s economy.”

The approved projects target disproportionately unserved public locations and communities, including low-income areas, parks in high poverty neighborhoods and job-seeker hubs. The projects also zero in on providing Wi-Fi to rural and Tribal populations adjacent to state parks.

All the approved proposals must be designed to deliver broadband service with a minimum speed performance of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload. All grant recipients must also have a cybersecurity risk management plan in place or one ready to be implemented upon providing the Wi-Fi service.

“The strong participation by local governments and state agencies shows the critical statewide need for more digital opportunity projects, including public Wi-Fi expansion,” said **Wilder**.

As required by the U.S. Treasury all the selected projects funded through ARPA must directly support work, education, health monitoring and must address issues exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

All awardees must complete the Wi-Fi projects by December 31, 2026.

If additional state or federal funding becomes available, OBAE may consider allocating the money toward additional public Wi-Fi investments.

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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.