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State teamwork could lead to millions in federal Tribal grants

SANTA FE – Four New Mexico Pueblos have applied for millions in broadband grants after receiving technical and other support from three state government departments and the University of New Mexico.

The four Pueblos were recently given guidance on how to apply for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA) State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program for Native Entities. Each Pueblo could receive up to \$2 million through this federal grant.

The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE), the Indian Affairs Department, the Department of Finance and Administration and the University of New Mexico worked with Pueblo representatives at a hands-on grant writing workshop where the representatives focused on the intricacies of funding, the application process and building budgets that accurately expressed their digital equity plans.

“This workshop truly demonstrated the state’s commitment to assist Tribal communities in getting much-needed funding for broadband programs,” said **Victory Quintana**, OBAE’s Tribal coordinator and liaison. “Experts from the four state entities provided invaluable information and services to prepare these Pueblos to receive vital broadband funding.”

The four Pueblo communities that submitted grant applications to NTIA are:

- Jemez Pueblo in Sandoval County.
- Laguna Pueblo in Bernalillo, Cibola, Sandoval and Valencia counties.
- San Ildefonso Pueblo in Santa Fe County
- Zia Pueblo in Sandoval County.

"The University of New Mexico is proud to be a collaborator in the advancement of digital equity and broadband access," said **Cinnamon Blair**, chief marketing and communications officer at UNM. "By providing technical expertise and hands-on support during the grant application process, we aim to empower Tribal communities to achieve their connectivity goals and foster long-term opportunities for education, economic development, and cultural preservation."

Millions of federal dollars are available in grants for Tribes to seek funding for digital devices, build culturally appropriate digital literacy programs, and provide low-cost to free high-speed internet access for their communities and more.

The Tribal communities that participated stressed the two-day grant workshop was a great opportunity to brainstorm with expert grant writers, draft strong applications, and network with other Native communities about broadband needs.

"We really appreciated having two days to sit down and dedicate ourselves fully to this application. The support from the state and UNM is truly appreciated. This kind of cooperation and dedication will really help our Tribal communities," said **Monica Braine**, Amerind and grant writer for Laguna Pueblo.

The timeline for award announcements is still to be determined.

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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.