

CONNECT NEW MEXICO COUNCIL MEETING

Virtual

Thursday, August 21, 2025, 1:30 pm

1. **Welcome & Call to Order – Renee Narvaiz**

The meeting of the Connect New Mexico Council was called to order by Renee Narvaiz, at 1:33 p.m., on Thursday, August 21, 2025, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ms. Narvaiz introduced herself and reviewed general rules and procedures regarding the meeting.

Members Present

Luis Reyes, Chair	Katherine Crociata
Jason Clack	Steve Grey
Eli Guinnee	Jim Ruybal
Godfrey Enjady	Launa Waller

Members Absent

Leonard Manzanares	Isaac Bush
Nora Sackett	Mona Martinez
Joseph Navarrete	

Others Present

Renee Narvaiz, DoIT, PIO
Jeff Lopez, OBAE Director
Alex Trujillo, OBAE Deputy Director
Sandeep Taxali, Monica Riehl, Jerry Smith, Bo Ford, Kelly O'Neill, Tamara Rosenberg, Samantha Schartman, Silas Goforth, Erica Mesker, Katherine Irvin

2. **Approval of Meeting Agenda/Previous Meeting Minutes – Renee Narvaiz**

MOTION – Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the Agenda for today's meeting. Mr. Guinnee so moved, seconded by Ms. Waller. There being no opposition the Agenda was approved.

MOTION – Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2025 meeting. Ms. Crociata so moved, seconded by Ms. Waller. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

3. **Chair Updates/Comments – Luis Reyes**

Chair Reyes welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked Director Lopez, Deputy Director Trujillo and all of the OBAE team for their work on getting the BEAD funding ready to disperse, and hoped Director Lopez could elaborate more on this in his report. He commented that on review of the resolution sent out by Ms. Narvaiz prior to the meeting he once again queried how the Council could be more involved in the overall broadband plan, with perhaps better opportunities for the Council to advise OBAE moving forward as well as being an active participant in the overall process of getting the rural areas of the State connected to broadband.

He again expressed his concern regarding the impediments to deployment of broadband, such as pole attachments, rights of way, etc., and with the BEAD fund awards and potential awards of other State funds he hoped that these issues will be addressed in order to connect rural areas of the State.

He again commended the Office of Broadband for their work getting the program to its current status, and how he would like to see this Council become more integral in this process, noting the talent reflected in the Council membership. He also thanked the Council members for their continued participation in the work of the Council.

4. Working Group Updates/Comments – Luis Reyes

Chair Reyes asked if any of the working groups have continued to meet recently and if any would like to report.

Digital Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Working Group – Eli Guinnee

Mr. Guinnee shared some links in the chat portion of Zoom. He reported that this group continues to meet monthly with good participation. After discussion within the group, including the Chair and Co-Chair, they would like to change the name of this group to “Digital Readiness and Adoption Working Group”, which will more closely follow national trends, and they will be submitting a request for this name change to the full Council at a future meeting.

He shared that October 6-10 is Digital Inclusion week and stated he would provide a link in the Chat for additional information on this.

He also reported that the group is working on a digital readiness and adoption conference or summit in the southern region of the State, most likely in Las Cruces. Potential dates for this will be in October and he will provide additional information as these plans are solidified.

Mr. Guinnee asked if Mr. Ford, chair of this working group, had any additional comments.

Mr. Ford stated he had nothing specific to add, but he had been in communication with other working group leaders about the direction of the working groups as a whole and what this may look like; meeting frequency, combining groups, etc.

Mr. Guinnee reported that with the help of a UFCA grant the group has procured statewide access to a program called “Get Set Up”, with access through a direct link he will put in the Chat. He added that this can also be accessed through local libraries. This program provides access to hundreds of synchronous and asynchronous trainings to learn about technology, how to use smart phones, etc. He reported that there has been a great deal of use just within the first couple of months of availability, which demonstrates the need for digital literacy training. This program can also provide very granular statistics regarding areas of interest for digital adoption, readiness, inclusion and equity, which will help with future planning.

Chair Reyes thanked Mr. Guinnee and Mr. Ford for their report and asked if there were any questions for them from the Council. There were no questions.

Tribal Working Group – Godfrey Enjady

Mr. Enjady reported that this working group met last week and the discussion centered around the status of tribes with respect to their TBCP grants, with many of them having already gotten through permitting, which is quite a long, arduous process. He commented that the work on middle mile projects which go off tribal lands, such as the one he is working on going down to El Paso, are especially difficult, but this particular middle mile project is now underway.

With respect to MATI specifically their data center is approximately 2/3 complete, and they will hopefully occupy the building in December or January.

He stated that the working group’s focus has been to get tribes acclimated to being more open to new companies and what this will involve; business plans and capital expenditure funding that tribes will need to get started. The working group has also done an update from Washington to address some of the issues and impacts that tribes are receiving, and the FCC “Delete-Delete” portion which refers to the weakening of EPA regulations on towers, with tribes usually relying on these regulations to get information. He commented that the changes in these regulations is making things more accessible and will make permitting much easier, and many of the THPO offices have been engaged in this process

He reported that attendance for this working group has been between 18-25, and there will be an event with OBAE in Albuquerque on 08/22/2025, which he plans to attend. NTTA will also be holding a tribal broadband conference in Ruidoso at the Inn of the Mountain Gods in November.

Mr. Enjady thanked Mr. Reyes for his leadership on this Council and the overall broadband effort. He recounted a recent event that occurred in a meeting with the Anthony, NM, town council which involved a request for a permit through the town in order to reach El Paso, where it became evident that the Council members knew very little about broadband or BEAD. He asked if OBAE or another entity could do a presentation to inform them about BEAD, noting how this shows that many areas of the State do not know about this work or these programs.

Chair Reyes asked how many pueblos and tribes in the State are currently engaged in broadband. Mr. Enjady replied that he believes almost every tribe and pueblo in the State is engaged to some degree, with many of them receiving planning grants in round 1 and many having applied for infrastructure funds in round 2 of TBCP, however, much of that has not taken place yet. He has heard from NTIA that the plan is to hopefully distribute this at some point, but the rule and policy changes on the NTIA side have been tremendous, however, the tribes have been able to comply and continue moving forward.

Chair Reyes responded that this is good news that all the tribes and pueblos are participating. He then asked if there were any questions for Mr. Enjady. There were none.

Regional Planning and Community Engagement Working Group – Jerry Smith

Mr. Smith introduced himself, noting that he had been the broadband manager for Los Alamos County for the last 3½ years, and during most of this time he has been leading this working group. He reported that this working group has been meeting monthly with an average of eight participants. In recent meetings they have had presentations by vendors demonstrating the progress of their broadband projects across the State. He also reported that OBAE staff regularly attend these meetings and provide pertinent updates. He thanked these vendors and OBAE staff who have attended and presented, providing meaningful content. He stated that in their regular monthly meeting held yesterday they got a BEAD update from BEAD coordinator, Andrew Wilder. Another major topic discussed at yesterday's meeting was the purpose and mission of this work and at that time he shared what had been discussed at last month's Council meeting with regard to the purpose of the work groups and exploring needed adjustments. He stated that he shared with the working group that he is ready to rotate off as leader of the group, beginning next month, but was unsure what action needed to be taken. He also noted his thoughts related to the ongoing value of this working group specifically, and he believes this group has met the primary need that existed three years ago when it first started. From his point of view there does not seem to be as much need for this working group given the staffing that has taken place within OBAE, specifically the regional project managers. He added that his inclination would be to pause this group and explore whether it is still needed, could be merged with another group or repurposed in some way so that the value of monthly meetings is worth the time invested by its members. He stated that he had shared his thoughts with the working group in their meeting and told them he would bring these forward at today's meeting. He noted that Tamara Rosenberg, an active member of this group, is in attendance today and might have additional comments. Ms. Rosenberg thanked Mr. Smith for the opportunity to speak but had no additional comments.

Chair Reyes called for any questions or additional comments. There were none.

Chair Reyes noted that Mr. Smith had made a good point with respect to determining what groups are necessary to support OBAE as well as the New Mexico broadband plan. He added that things have moved along well with addressing the needs of New Mexicans but noted the incident previously noted by Mr. Enjady where there are parts of the State that are still uninformed. He then queried what support OBAE feels they need which could give guidance to restructuring the work groups. He asked Director Lopez if he had any comments or ideas.

Director Lopez stated that he is fully supportive of the working groups as well as the efforts to update their titles and missions. He added that a working group specific to tribal engagement is critical. With respect to the digital equity group, however, digital opportunity and affordability could be the focus of the group moving forward. He suggested expanding the scope of the pole attachments group to include permitting in general, which has previously been part of the discussion. Director Lopez offered for OBAE to prepare a formal proposal with regard to other working groups that might be helpful moving forward. Chair Reyes replied that this would be very helpful to the Council as it strives to be supportive of OBAE in its mission.

Chair Reyes asked if there were comments from other Council members on this topic, noting that continued engagement from the Council and support from the industry will facilitate success for OBAE and the State's broadband plan. He added that he would rather address tough issues in this setting rather than in the Legislature.

Ms. Crociata commented that it will still be important for the Council to remain engaged in legislative proposals that affect Connect New Mexico and funding related to these programs. She added that she would like to see consideration for a group which was not issue specific, but with a more broad scope, perhaps with a focus on legislation and policies which could affect the Council. Chair Reyes expressed his appreciation for Ms. Crociata's comments and gave some examples of how this could be of benefit to the overall work of the Council.

Chair Reyes asked if there were any further comments and stated that he would like to be in a more proactive role with funding deadlines and the next legislative session coming up.

Ms. Waller commented that one of the biggest impediments to getting broadband projects completed is the permitting and cultural, NEPA/SHPO type issues. She would like to see this group return as a working group as this is one of the biggest complaints within the industry. She added that this working group may not be able to solve these issues but could serve as an information and contact sharing platform. Chair Reyes asked if Ms. Waller felt this group should include DOT. Ms. Waller agreed that it should.

Chair Reyes asked if there were any other comments from the Council. There were none.

Chair Reyes asked Ms. Narvaiz if the resolution she shared prior to the meeting was something that should be deliberated today for action at the next meeting. Ms. Narvaiz stated this was not included on today's Agenda and would need to be addressed at the next meeting, and she had shared it so Council members would have adequate time to review and have possible informal discussions prior to next meeting. Ms. Narvaiz stated she could screen share this if needed. Chair Reyes asked her to do so, especially with respect to the working group updates discussion. Ms. Narvaiz prepared the screen share.

Mr. Enjady also asked if the issue regarding current service terms of Council members had been resolved. Chair Reyes stated that Ms. Narvaiz had been working on this. Ms. Narvaiz responded that she is working with the Governor's Office to be sure the roster is up-to-date, and she has reached out to the Indian Affairs Department and is awaiting the designees to be assigned for that department. Chair Reyes asked if all other positions were in order. Ms. Narvaiz stated she is awaiting the response from the Governor's Office, which is pending the designees from IAD, but it appears that all others are in place. Mr. Enjady thanked Ms. Narvaiz for this update.

Chair Reyes asked Council members to review this resolution which Ms. Narvaiz had screen-shared, and prepare to deliberate, discuss and take action at the September meeting.

Mr. Clack offered to review the proposed changes. Chair Reyes asked him to do so. Mr. Clack reviewed these; the first is to update the Council's mandate to match the changes in the legislative language, the next one would allow for more flexibility in the establishment and/or disbanding of

working groups, and then removing the list of working groups in the resolution, so that the Council is not bound by this and would eliminate the need to amend the resolution as working groups are established or disbanded.

Chair Reyes thanked Mr. Clack for this review and asked if there were any questions. There were no other questions. Chair Reyes asked if changes could be requested at the next meeting that were not published prior to the meeting. Mr. Clack stated that for the next meeting he can incorporate the current proposed changes and publish this with the meeting notice and place this on the Agenda. If those changes are approved at the next meeting they can then be implemented, however, any additional changes proposed at the next meeting would have to be incorporated and re-published for a subsequent meeting. Chair Reyes asked if other proposed changes could be incorporated and published prior to the September meeting. Mr. Clack responded yes, that could be done as long as the changes are posted along with the public meeting notice.

Chair Reyes asked if there were any other questions from the Council on this topic. There were none.

5. Updates from OBAE – Director Jeff Lopez

Director Lopez reported that he has just returned from a meeting with NTIA in Chicago, for special award conditions and is happy to report that NTIA has cleared New Mexico's special award conditions, which allows moving into public comment. This means that some of the preliminary awards for BEAD can be finalized and he can report some of the top lines, with the final proposal to be published next week along with all of the preliminary awards for public comment. The public comment period will be open for one week, which will be from August 26th through September 2nd. At that point the final proposal will be submitted to NTIA by September 4th. This is a very quick timeline to finalize the BEAD program, which is the \$675 million primarily for rural broadband. He added that he cannot report the details of the preliminary awards, but these will be public as soon as early next week, however, he can report some of the top lines. It is expected that \$400 million of the BEAD program will be committed, which means there will likely be non-deployment funds which they were not expecting after the first round conducted late last year. There are awards to around 20 entities for a higher number of preliminary awards, which again will be public early next week. Approximately 65% of the funding will be for fiber to the premises, which is 40% of the locations, and approximately 25% of the funding will go toward licensed-by-rule terrestrial fixed wireless locations, which is approximately 20% of the locations. The remaining 11-12% will be a mix of unlicensed fixed wireless and non-geostationary satellite/low Earth orbit satellite, for only 12% of funding and approximately 30% of locations; again, these are currently being finalized. He stated he would give his best attempt to answer any questions, but he would like to focus on the timeline as he cannot give any details at this time. He added that this is a significant milestone to have approval from NTIA in order to move toward public comment. He announced there will be a briefing regarding the public comment, schedule to be determined, but wanted to be sure everyone on the Council receives an invitation to this, and asked the Chair if he would like to call a formal meeting of the Council for this, albeit on short notice, if not he would like to make sure everyone is included in the invitations.

Chair Reyes asked what happens to the difference between the entity awards versus the award to the State of New Mexico. Director Lopez stated that the difference between the \$675 million total allocation and what BEAD would use for deployment is what is considered non-deployment funds and explained that some states estimated that they had non-deployment funds at the very beginning and now with the benefit of the bargain round for the first time the State is now required to consider how to use those funds. He added that there are a number of statutory eligible uses of the non-deployment funds detailed in the original NOFO, however, this is now defunct as with the June 6th updates the current administration has paused all non-deployment use of funds, so OBAE is awaiting guidance from NTIA on exactly how these funds can be used. Previously, per the statute, these funds could be used for community anchor institutions, some digital opportunity uses and, most importantly, whatever the NTIA administrator determines to be an eligible use of these non-deployment funds. OBAE is required to submit a budget for the non-deployment funds on September 4th, but not necessarily the details on exactly how they will be used, but the Office is now in a place to consider this. Chair Reyes asked if this constitutes a plan to make full use of these funds. Director Lopez replied that yes, there is a plan

and there certainly is a lot of need in New Mexico. He noted again that approximately 25-30% of locations will be served by either unlicensed wireless or low Earth orbit satellite, so some of those locations will not necessarily have back-haul or critical infrastructure needs to facilitate future connectivity. He added that the demand for the middle-mile program in NTIA is very high in New Mexico, so certainly there will be critical uses for this funding.

Chair Reyes asked if there were any other questions from the Council. There were none.

Chair Reyes asked Director Lopez to repeat the timeline schedule. Director Lopez stated that the Final Proposal for public comment will be published by either the following Monday or Tuesday, August 25th or 26th, and the public comment period will be open for seven days, from August 26th to September 2nd. At that point the public comments will be incorporated and the Final Proposal will be submitted to NTIA on September 4th. NTIA has committed to reviewing and giving final word on this proposal within 90 days. The hope is that they will move faster than that, but per their timeline OBAE will be in a position to sign grant agreements with the preliminary awardees by the end of the year. At this time, with the public comment period process, the preliminary awards will remain preliminary, will be reviewed by NTIA after submission of the Final Proposal, and once NTIA approves, OBAE can finalize those grant agreements and the awards will be final at that point.

Chair Reyes again called for any questions. There were none.

6. Public Comment – Luis Reyes

Chair Reyes recognized Ms. Samantha Schartman. Ms. Schartman introduced herself as the Director of Philanthropic Programs at Connect Humanity. She stated that they learned about this Council meeting from the Grant County Beat, an online publication, and wanted to attend and let the Council know that her organization, in partnership with Hawk Networks, is focusing on leading the broadband planning process in the Pinos Altos area. She shared their announcement and explained that this is a broadband technical assistance grant under the USDA, with funding to engage with the community and local stakeholders to better understand their connectivity needs, as well as digital opportunity desires, with the goal of making sure all members of the Pinos Altos community, as well as the broader Silver City residents, are meaningfully and affordably connect to broadband internet and have the support for skills and devices needed to achieve this. She added that they are hoping to set up some meetings to introduce themselves to the community(ies). She introduced two of her colleagues in attendance today, Silas Goforth and Erica Mesker, and asked if they would like to introduce themselves. Ms. Goforth introduced himself stating he is the field operations specialist with Hawk Networks, and that he looks forward to the opportunity to become more familiar with the Pinos Altos community and its needs, noting that this is the kind of network that his organization specializes in building. He commented that it is encouraging to hear about the work of this Council and thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak. Ms. Mesker introduced herself and that she is part of Connect Humanity, currently based in California, but she lived in Silver City briefly in 2020 and is happy to be re-engaging with the community she fell in love with there.

Chair Reyes thanked Ms. Schartman, Mr. Goforth and Ms. Mesker for attending today and introducing themselves to the Council. Chair Reyes asked if Ms. Schartman had anything further to share. Ms. Schartman replied that she did not, however, she would share her email in the Chat if there are questions or anyone would like further information about this project. Chair Reyes thanked her for this.

Chair Reyes asked if there were any further requests for public comment. There were none.

7. Adjournment – Renee Narvaiz

MOTION – Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Waller so moved, seconded by Mr. Grey. There being no opposition and no further business before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 2:27 p.m.