

## **CONNECT NEW MEXICO COUNCIL MEETING**

### **Virtual Meeting**

**Thursday, December 19, 2024 1:30 – 3:30 PM**

#### **1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting of the Connect New Mexico Council was called to order by Shawna Rosales, at 1:37 p.m., on Thursday, December 19, 2024. Ms. Rosales introduced herself and reviewed general rules and procedures regarding the meeting, especially with respect to use of the Zoom application.

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT-**

Luis Reyes, Chair	Launa Waller
Jason Clack	Jim Ruybal
Eli Guinnee	Godfrey Enjady
Mona Martinez	Joseph Navarette

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT-**

Nora Sackett	Steve Grey
Leonard Manzanares	Isaac Bush
Katherine Crociata	

#### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Shawna Rosales, OBAE & Connect New Mexico Council Administrative Assistant  
Renee Narvaiz, DoIT, Public Information Manager  
Natalie Runyan, GIS  
Drew Lovelace, Acting Broadband Director  
Cass Brulotte, OBAE General Counsel  
Neala Krueger, Sandeep Taxali, Catherine Nicolau, Bo Ford, Dominique Macalinao, Phillip King, Robert Gomez, Victory Quintana, Mitch Hibbard, Matejka Santillanes, Jerry Smith, Melanie Goodman, Katherine Irvin, Richard Govea, Steph Poston

#### **2. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA AND MINUTES**

**MOTION** Ms. Rosales called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Clack so moved, seconded by Mr. Navarette. There being no opposition the Agenda was approved.

**MOTION:** Ms. Rosales called for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 19<sup>th</sup> and November 21<sup>st</sup> meetings. Ms. Waller so moved, seconded by Mr. Clack. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

#### **3. CHAIR UPDATES/COMMENTS – Luis Reyes**

Mr. Reyes thanked the OBAE staff, noting this has been a very good year for the advancement of rural broadband. He stated that there is good forward movement with respect to BEAD and Director Lovelace will speak more about this later in the meeting. He also commented about the addition of different technologies providing diversity to make sure everyone is served, which will be good for the state. He thanked Director Lovelace and his team for their work over the past year regarding this and expressed his hope that 2025 will continue to bring good results. He thanked the Council members for their continued participation through the ups and downs experienced due to Ms. Sekaquaptewa's health situation and stated that he hoped she will be back at 100% soon. He then wished everyone attending, and their families, happy holidays and Merry Christmas.

#### **4. Comprehensive Climate Action Plan: Robert Gomez & Phillip King**

Mr. King introduced himself, stating that he is the New Mexico Climate Action Plan coordinator for the Energy, Conservation and Management Division under EMNRD. He introduced Mr. Gomez, who is their sustainability officer. Mr. King stated he would be reviewing the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, or CCAP, and Mr. Gomez will be reviewing some of their tribal engagement plan.

Mr. King described the New Mexico Climate Action Plan, which is a joint effort between the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) and the New Mexico Environmental Department for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant or the CPRG, which is an EPA funded grant program through the Inflation Reduction Act, which aligns with the Governor's Executive Order 2019-03. He stated that there were two climate action plans, which were deliverables for the planning process or Phase 1 which was the Priority Climate Action Plan, which was finished in 2023, and that Phase 2 is implementation, for which New Mexico did not receive funding. However, the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan is part of the Phase 1 funding and is due in December 2025. He noted that many sovereign tribal nations applied for the EPA funding and he has heard that Sandia Pueblo did receive implementation funding.

Mr. King then reviewed a detailed PowerPoint presentation which described the goals of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, which will give New Mexico actionable plans for climate projects, policies and programs associated with greenhouse gas emission reduction. He stated that this will also provide an avenue for extensive community voice to map input from communities, sovereign tribal nations, low income and disadvantaged communities, black and indigenous populations and rural communities throughout the state. A list of recommendations for viable funding opportunities will also be comprised under each of the climate measures. The plan is currently in the contracting stage as well as outreach and engagement, which has been contracted through the Metro Group, and the outreach and engagement plan is being finalized. There is also a tribal engagement plan which will be starting soon, which Mr. Gomez will detail in his presentation. He stated that there will also be a workforce analysis for each plan, project, policy and program.

He then described how this relates to broadband, stating that connectivity and monitoring will be important factors in building capacity to meet the net zero emissions by 2050. This may provide opportunities for workforce development programs to address these needs and help build capacity in rural communities, along with viable action planning and implementation steps in the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, which aligns with the new Executive Order 2024-152, which incorporates at least 2,000 renewable energy jobs in collaboration with EMNRD, the New Mexico Environmental Department, the Department of Workforce Solutions and the Economic Development Department, along with other agencies. Mr. King then asked Mr. Gomez to speak about the tribal engagement plan.

Mr. Gomez thanked the Council for the invitation to present today. He stated that the CCAP outreach efforts to tribes in the state is intended to encourage the tribes, nations and pueblos to participate in the development and creation of strategic climate action strategies to reduce emissions pursuant to the Executive Orders. This outreach is also encouraging tribes to develop local and tribal climate action plans, and noted that not all New Mexico tribes received EPA planning funding, however, the CCAP outreach program provides a way to encourage and offer technical assistance for tribes which are interested in developing climate action plans. He noted that this outreach program is intended to include reoccurring meetings focused on engagement with tribal leaders, tribal consortia and local technical staff within the environmental and natural resource departments of the tribes. He added that this support

effort is not intended to initiate formal consultation with tribal governments by the State of New Mexico, but is an invitation to collaborate with tribal governments on state level planning for proactive climate change and help build the capacity with local and tribal governments to plan for climate action. He reported that the plan is to begin a series of virtual meetings in January 2025, which will continue through December 2025, noting that tribal partners are on a different timeline than the state, and they have until 2027 to submit a comprehensive climate action plan. He stated that he, Mr. Phillips and others in the office, the Climate Policy Bureau and the NMED Climate Change Bureau are available to offer assistance and support for tribes interested in developing those plans. He added that outreach will also consist of site visits to individual tribes and pueblos, and they are willing to present at any meeting they may be invited to, such as the All Pueblo Council of Governors, in order to raise awareness and encourage participation. The goal is to ensure that every tribe has access to information and the support they need to drive climate action forward, as well as to raise the level of climate awareness and ensure resiliency, which ties in well with the goals of this Council. He noted that staff from OBAE participated in some of the state agency workshops provided last year. He stated that the Climate Policy Bureau is working on a State Climate Resilience Plan, and that this is all part of the State Climate Action Response. He added that they would like to keep this Council informed and would be happy to attend a future meeting to report on their progress.

Mr. King noted that he had provided his and Mr. Gomez's email addresses, as well as the link to the Climate Policy Bureau Energy Conservation and Management landing page, in the Zoom chat for further contact and that the Current New Mexico Environmental Department just released the 2024 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories and he encouraged everyone to look at this as this will be very informative with respect to the issues of connectivity and the capacity for real time progress monitoring, which will rely on fast Internet and the ability to relay information in real time.

He stated that he also provided the original Executive Order 2019-03 in the chat, which is where the EPA grant was launched from, as well as the current Executive Order which is in collaboration with the Department of Workforce Solutions and the Economic Development Department for 2,000 more jobs in the renewable energy sector, which could be greater if greater capacity can be built through connectivity of rural communities.

He thanked the Council for allowing time for this presentation and encouraged anyone interested to reach out and connect.

Mr. Reyes asked if there were any questions or comment from Council members and there were none. Mr. Reyes thanked Mr. King and Mr. Gomez for their presentation and commended them on their work and approach relative to the connectivity issue. Mr. King and Mr. Gomez thanked Mr. Reyes for his comments.

## **5. Working Group Updates – Digital Equity and Inclusion – Eli Guinnee Mapping, Data & Evaluation – Natalie Runyan**

Digital Equity and Inclusion:

Mr. Guinnee stated that the Digital Equity and Inclusion Working Group continues to meet with meetings occurring now monthly on the second Thursday of the month. He stated he always puts a link in the chat to receive updates from this group, and currently there are 153 members registered to receive these updates, with 30-35 participants at each meeting of the working group and this working group has been active for about 2½ years now. He described the working group as an opportunity for different stakeholders working with digital equity to share information, build partnerships, build understanding and increase the holistic view of digital

equity. He noted how important this type of forum is for discussion and collaboration with respect to digital equity. He thanked Director Lovelace, Ms. Krueger and all other OBAE members who attend these meetings and provide updates. He stated that Ms. Krueger gave an excellent overview of the upcoming Piñon Grants, which OBAE will do, and the NOFO for this will be released on January 13<sup>th</sup> with the grant portal opening on the 21<sup>st</sup>, which will be a great opportunity for coalitions or members of the Committee to apply for federal funding. Mr. Guinnee stated that his co-chairs Bo Ford and Catherine Nicolau put together excellent agendas and gather resources to send out. He stated he would put a link in the Zoom chat to a new resource page Mr. Ford has developed, which is excellent. He commended Ms. Nicolau and Mr. Ford for all the effort and organization they put in to sustain this work. He noted that OBAE now maintains a digital equity landing page on [connectnm.gov](https://connectnm.gov), and this provides a means for tracking recent updates. Mr. Guinnee asked if Ms. Nicolau or Mr. Ford had anything they would like to add to this update.

Ms. Nicolau stated that there is a lot of energy and true need for this type of collaboration and they are excited to do this. She expressed that the work of the Council members is doing a lot of good in many areas, one of which is this Digital Equity Working Group. She commended Mr. Guinnee and Mr. Ford for their work, commenting that this is a great team and she looks forward to more great work moving forward into 2025

Mr. Guinnee thanked Ms. Nicolau for her comments and her work in this group.

Mr. Ford expressed his thanks to Ms. Nicolau, Mr. Guinnee, Director Lovelace and the OBAE staff for supporting this work. He also thanked all the working group members and that he is looking forward to getting New Mexicans connected to the services and resources needed to create economic mobility and adapt to technology. He noted that there is a lot of work to be done but he is excited to be part of this.

Mr. Guinnee thanked Mr. Ford for his comments and all of his work in this group.

Mr. Guinnee stated that members of this working group have formed coalitions to apply for the competitive grant and the capacity grants, now known as the Piñon Grants, and hopefully will be applying for the tribal funding as well.

Mr. Guinnee asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Enjady asked if this is state or federal funding, and if it is federal funding is there any chance it could be “clawed back”. Mr. Guinnee stated that the funds he was referring to are all federal funds and he does not know if these funds are at risk of being taken back. Mr. Guinnee acknowledged Director Lovelace, who could probably answer this question better. Director Lovelace stated that he did not have a definitive answer either, however, he explained that digital equity, as part of the bipartisan infrastructure law had a very specific call out, so the competitive grant is directly with NTIA, the tribal grant is directly with NTIA and the state capacity grant goes to the state and then flows out to sub-recipients. He reported that he has seen some conversations nationally, with respect to the incoming administration, and there has been interest expressed in trying to claw back on the ones that are directly with NTIA, so this would be the competitive grant as well as the tribal grant which was released along with the competitive grant, so there are questions about what will happen with those. With respect to the state grant, this has progressed a little further, and New Mexico is in a better position than many other states, as the New Mexico program was actually approved and the program timeline started December 1<sup>st</sup>, with the funds actually sitting in an account which can be drawn from through ASAF. He stated that basically this money has been budgeted, all documents

have been signed to obtain this, and New Mexico was approximately state #8 to get the digital equity grant approved, the state capacity grant approved, so New Mexico is in a really good position because the funds have been given to the state and obligated from the federal side to the state side. He noted that even though there are no contracts out yet, he has been in contact with NTIA about expediting the grant program and award process, but they responded that this would not be possible in the short term, during the current federal administration. In light of this he stated that the timing for this will be for a launch date in January with closure dates after the BEAD program also closes. He stated he did not think the state capacity grant will be clawed back due to how far the work has already progressed and would probably take an act of Congress to do so, however, the other programs do not have obligations to date, which makes it a little less difficult to claw those back.

Mr. Enjady thanked Director Lovelace for this clarification.

Mr. Guinnee stated that this additional context was very helpful.

Mr. Reyes thanked Mr. Guinnee for this update.

Mapping, Data and Evaluation:

Director Lovelace stated he had just received a text from General Counsel that the Albuquerque office just lost their Internet connection and noted the irony of the Office of Broadband without Internet. Director Lovelace commented that Mr. Hibbard was in the meeting and he is a member of this working group and might be able to give an update.

Mr. Hibbard stated that they had a demonstration of some new mapping tools at their last meeting, provided by Ms. Runyan, and she was working out some problems at that time. He stated that he has seen that it is now online and is active. He commented that this has been a great body of work and will be a tremendous resource moving through other funding and other designs. He encouraged everyone to check this out.

Mr. Reyes asked if there were any questions for Mr. Hibbard. There were none. Mr. Reyes expressed his appreciation to Mr.

## **6. Updates from OBAE – Drew Lovelace**

Director Lovelace thanked the Digital Equity Working Group for all the work they have put in over the past year.

Director Lovelace noted that there have been a couple of big changes in the last one to two months. First, Andrew Wilder, BEAD coordinator is extremely busy at this time going through some mapping tools and the pre-applicant process. He then gave an overview of this process. He recommended attending office hours for the BEAD program, with Mr. Wilder, for more detailed questions. He then reviewed his screen-share covering the challenge location data and the process involved with this and stated that final approval was received on December 12<sup>th</sup>, and the location data in the CSV file and the finalized project areas became available that Friday. He noted this was due largely to the hard work done by Mr. Wilder and Ms. Runyan, in preparation for the program and application launch on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. He reviewed the additional steps involved with regard to the mapping software and noted the tools now available, as previously mentioned by Mr. Hibbard. He then reviewed the process involved with the requirement to reduce the size of the project areas and the extra effort by Ms. Runyan in researching the additional wireline data needed as well as procurement efforts. He noted that the project areas have been finalized and gave some details regarding the changes made, specifically with respect to tribal areas.

With respect to the grant program he described the process used to determine a name for the grant and the role of the Digital Equity Working group in this effort which included a survey/poll that Ms. Nicolau helped get out, and that the name Promoting Internet Needs of New Mexicans Grant (Piñon Grant), was selected by the Digital Equity Working Group, and that this is now on the OBAE landing page. He added that there have been no changes to the grant programatically, just a new name for reference. He then asked Ms. Krueger to elaborate on the information that has been made available regarding this grant.

Ms. Krueger stated that the preliminary information on the Piñon Grant was released on December 9<sup>th</sup>, via news blast, and this is available on Connect New Mexico's Digital Equity page. She noted that this grant is funded with NTIA's \$8.67 million state digital equity capacity grant funds, for which OBAE is the administering entity. This grant will officially launch in January 2025, offering awards ranging from \$25,000-\$500,000, to support local communities and their digital inclusion efforts. The information already released is designed to help grant applicants prepare before the official notice is released. Ms. Krueger stated that she has already presented this information to the Tribal Working Group and the Digital Equity Working Group, and that this presentation included details regarding the type(s) of information OBAE will need in order to apply to NTIA on behalf of the sub-grantees.

Ms. Krueger asked Director Lovelace if there was anything else he would like her to speak about. He asked her to give additional closing date information, etc. Ms. Krueger stated that the NOFO and program materials are expected to be issued on January 13<sup>th</sup>, then the application portal will be opened on January 21<sup>st</sup>, through Submittable. She added that a NOFO and application webinar will also be held on January 21<sup>st</sup>, and then office hours will be scheduled for at least the following two Tuesdays, but that these office hours will also continue to be scheduled as needed. She stated that the application due date is March 21<sup>st</sup>, so this gives applicants 60 days to officially apply after the portal opens. She gave the reminder that all applicants must have their Unique Entity Identifier to apply for this grant, especially for the small non-profits who may apply or have an agent apply on their behalf. She stated that the sub-grantee selection process will begin after the due date of March 21<sup>st</sup>, with the hope of making award announcements in June or July, and then awarding provisional grant agreements. She added that the specific project list must be submitted to NTIA no later than 08/31/2025, which will be nine months from the award start date of 12/01/2024, and the hope is to be able to submit this early. Once this specific project list is approved then distribution of the BEAD funding can begin to move forward.

Director Lovelace thanked Ms. Krueger for her report. He noted that he put the link to sam.gov in the Zoom chat for those who need to apply for the Unique Entity Identifier.

Director Lovelace asked if there were any questions regarding Digital Equity. There were none.

Director Lovelace once again stated that he had put the link to the BEAD application page in the Zoom chat, which lists all the information applicants will need, however, the application portal will not open until January 3<sup>rd</sup>. He stated that he had spoken with Mr. Wilder earlier today and there are now 16 prequalified applicants with another 8 which have responded to the curing and these are expected to be finished in the next week or so. He added that there is a total of 42 applicants for the prequalified portion. He stated that Mr. Wilder asked him to remind applicants to submit the curing documents requested as soon as possible. He added that they are working to get all possible entities into prequalified status and once that process is complete a list will be released of all prequalified entities.

Director Lovelace reviewed a brief slide presentation about the satellite program and other things the office has been working on in preparation for the legislative session. He added that he has already presented this information to the Exchange Carrier Group. He reported that a request has been submitted to extend the timelines for the Connect New Mexico Fund infrastructure grants, the Grant Writing Engineering and Planning and the Student Connect Fund. He stated that a request was made of the LFC in November for an ACP replacement, the Accelerated Connect New Mexico Fund, which is the one involving satellite use, as well as additional broadband support funding. He noted in the request to the LFC it was emphasized that broadband infrastructure takes three to five years to make the programs fully functional in order to benefit New Mexico. He also reviewed the five year BEAD timeline, which runs through July 2030. He then reviewed the satellite program and the barriers to entry which include cost of the receiver, the monthly recurring cost and inability to self-install equipment. In order to offset these barriers the request to the LFC included a voucher program, a low income subsidy, and separate administrative portions to manage the low income subsidy and the installation part. He gave additional details regarding the funding cycle and competitive bid process for this which will probably require a two fiscal year approach.

He reported that the Student Connect Program came to life after the launch of the state education network on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and there was a \$25 million portion of the Connect New Mexico fund to examine how to use this for students and student projects given that E-rate is a very clear program and all but two schools have been connected at this time, using fiber. He added that by leveraging the state education network they were able to do assistance business grants using the rules from the Connect New Mexico Council resulting in just under \$25 million going directly through the state education network to schools in order to provide student connectivity in rural communities and that the announcement has just been made for \$13.5 million of the \$25 million which will connect up to 38,000 students with free internet for three years. He specified that this is being supplied directly to the students through the state education network and does not supplant the BEAD program in actually getting connectivity to the home, so the student is being targeted through the state education network versus the household, so the BEAD program is moving forward looking for connectivity to the house.

Mr. Reyes asked if Council members had any questions for Director Lovelace.

Mr. Enjady asked how the LEO services requested will be administered; will there be a help desk for things such as problems connecting to Wi-Fi inside the home, etc. Also, will T-Mobile be part of this package, as they are planning to launch a T-Mobile type of service for mobile wireless services as opposed to more fixed LEO service. Director Lovelace replied that he has not spoken with T-Mobile about their mobile service, which is something to be considered. He stated that what he has described are broad programmatic designs for funding requests. He added that more nuanced details can be considered in the future and he would be happy to discuss this further with Mr. Enjady in a separate meeting. He also stated that 5G is something that has been included in the strategic plan, but the majority of the efforts from the office pertain to the BEAD program and connectivity at this time. He expressed interest in considering this and asked Mr. Enjady to bring other satellite tools he is aware of to his attention for discussion. Mr. Enjady stated that the T-Mobile service would be satellite service, and he believed this would be working off Starlink. Mr. Enjady asked again about a help desk and Director Lovelace replied that the installation support is meant to do this, but there are no plans at this time to set up an IT support desk for personal equipment, however, this could be explored in the future. Mr. Enjady thanked Director Lovelace for this information.

Mr. Reyes thanked Director Lovelace for this report and asked if there were any further questions from the Council. There were none. Mr. Reyes asked Director Lovelace to convey the Council's gratitude to his staff for all the work they have done. Director Lovelace wished a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all the Council members and expressed his appreciation for all of the offline conversations, the work within the workgroups and the ongoing interest and collaboration by all of the Council members.

**7. Public Comment – Luis Reyes**

There was no public comment offered.

Mr. Reyes asked if Council members had any comments to share.

Mr. Enjady shared that \$275 million in NTIA TBCP awards were announced last week with three or four New Mexico pueblos receiving awards. He added that he was in Washington, D.C., last week, speaking with Alan Davidson, who stated he would be leaving NTIA by January 20<sup>th</sup>, so they are trying to get the last \$950 million left in round two of the TBCP out before that date. This could mean more tribes will receive funding from the round two of TBCP.

Mr. Enjady stated that he met with RA West Administrator Burke, who is also leaving on January 20<sup>th</sup>, and Mr. Burke had stated that those applying for BEAD funding can get a loan from RA West to pay for the 25% funding.

Mr. Guinnee asked if there was any update on the MOU approved at the last meeting. Mr. Reyes stated he believed this is now with OBAE and asked Director Lovelace if he had any update on this. Director Lovelace stated he would be happy to update that but first gave the award information for New Mexico tribes; Jemez Pueblo \$2.4 million, Picuris Pueblo \$1.5 million and San Felipe Pueblo \$18.6 million. With respect to the MOU he stated that OBAE has reviewed it and recently signed a separate MOU with DoIT about how their administrative attachment works, and that there were a couple of things in the MOU between OBAE and the Council for which he had questions about how they would work together, so these need to be addressed with DoIT and meetings are scheduled for early January. This will be brought back to the Council after that. Mr. Guinnee thanked Director Lovelace for his reply and stated the anticipation of another version of the MOU with amendments. Director Lovelace replied yes, this should happen at the Council meeting in January.

**8. Adjournment – Shawna Rosales**

**MOTION:** Ms. Rosales called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Clack so moved, seconded by Mr. Enjady. There being no opposition and no further business before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 2:47 p.m.