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Presentation to the Third Meeting of the
**Economic & Rural
Development & Policy
Committee**

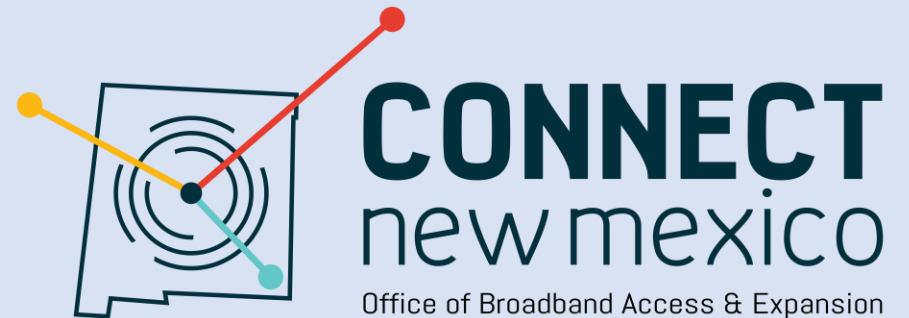
Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

Jeff Lopez, Director

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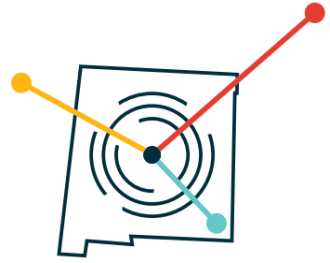
Jeff.Lopez@connect.nm.gov

August 11, 2025

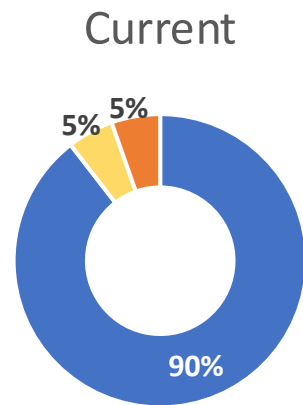
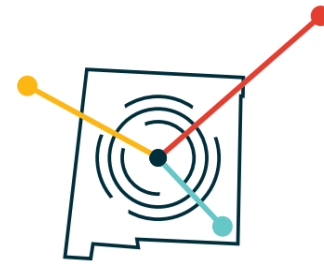


Content

- **Broadband Access in New Mexico**
- **Broadband and Rural Development**
- **Authorizing Legislation**
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- **Permitting and Rights of Way**
- **Statewide Education Network**

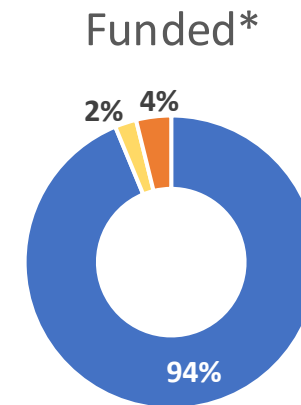
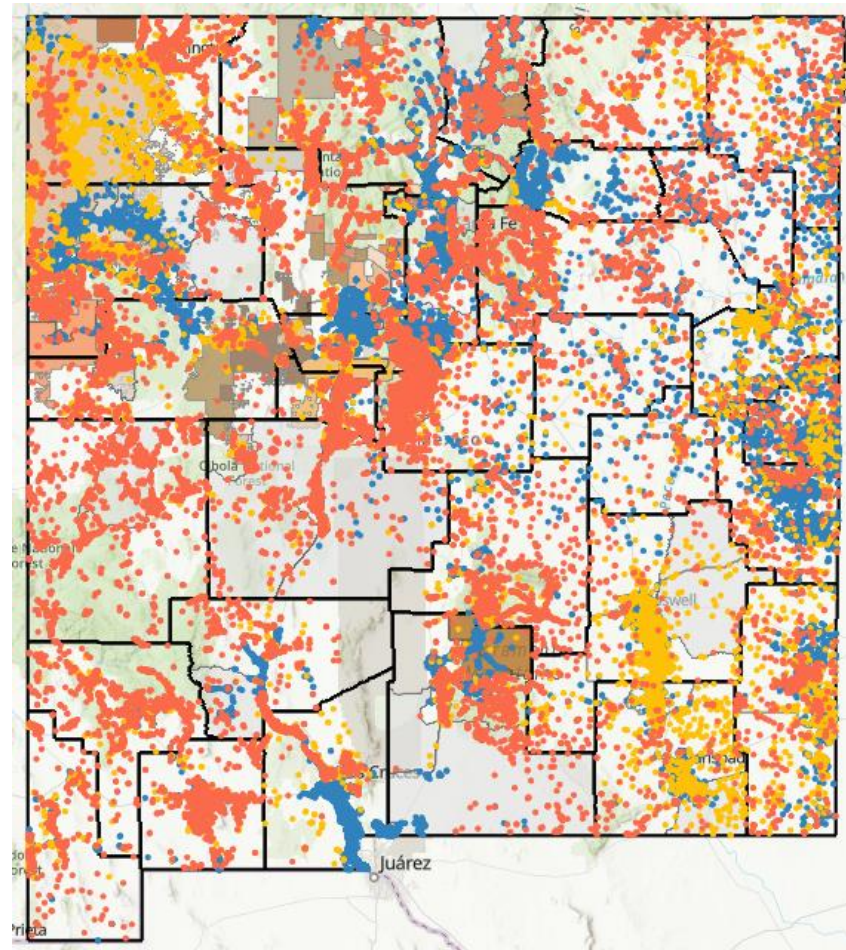


Broadband Access in New Mexico



■ Served ■ Underserved ■ Unserved

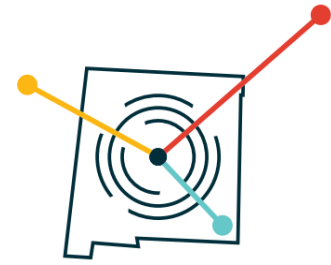
	Current	Funded*
Served	765,402	806,354
Underserved	43,612	20,404
Unserved	46,008	33,256



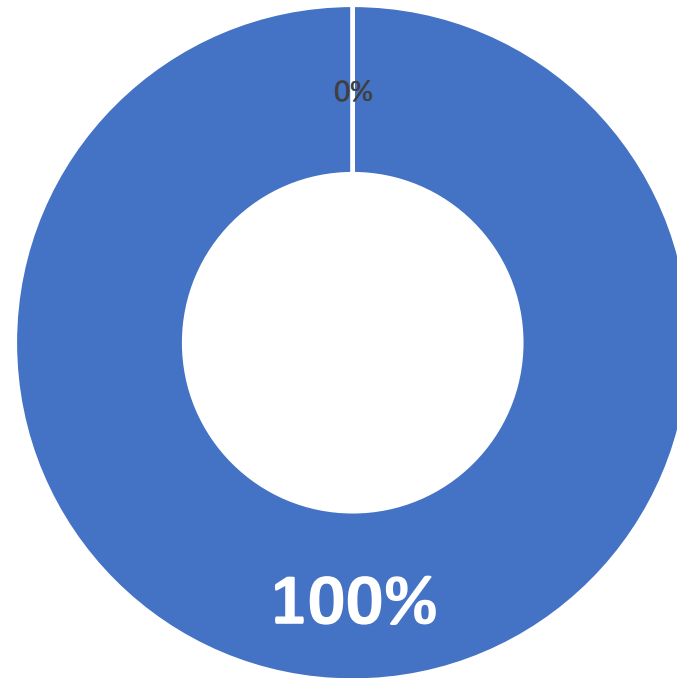
■ Served ■ Underserved ■ Unserved*

**Does not include \$675 million funding pending NTIA final approval*

Broadband Access Goal by 2026

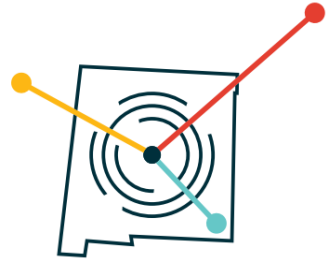


Goal



■ Served (Enforceable Commitments) ■ Underserved ■ Unserviced

Broadband Access and Rural Development

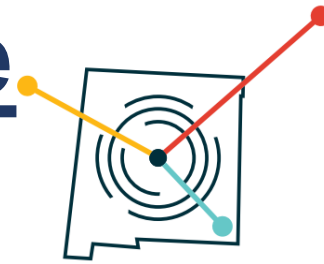


Compared to otherwise similar counties, rural counties with high broadband utilization have

- **Business growth** rates that are 213% higher
- **Self-employment** (opportunity entrepreneur) growth rates that are 10% higher
- Per capita **income growth** rates that are 18% higher
- **GDP growth** rates that are 44% higher

** Source: Center on Rural Innovation (CRI) "Beyond Connectivity: Broadband in Rural Economic Growth and Resilience"; September 2024.*

NM Broadband Legislation and Timeline



Source: Mark Montoya, Legislative Education Study Committee, November 2024

• **Senate Bill 159:** Created the Broadband Development and Connectivity Program and allowed expenditure of \$10 million in funding from 2014-2019 for schools to upgrade broadband infrastructure.

• **House Bill 10:** Established the Connect New Mexico Council to coordinate state agency broadband programs.

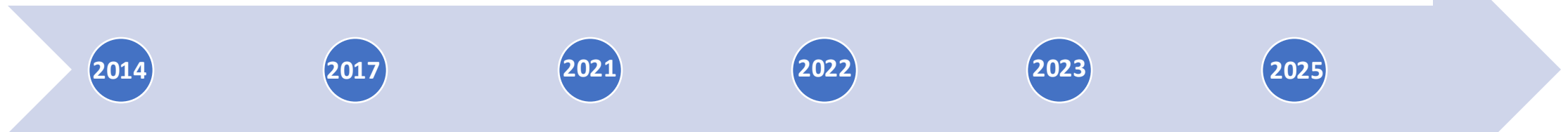
• **Senate Bill 93:** Established the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE).

• **House Bill 160:** Allows the State Transportation Commission to waive Rights of Way fees for broadband in underserved areas, aiding smaller internet service providers (ISPs).

• **House Bill 232:** Ensures confidentiality for certain grant materials to help OBAE during the grant process.

• **Senate Bill 401:** Transfers administration of the Statewide Education Network (SEN) from PSFA to OBAE.

• **Senate Bill 126:** Increases the PRC's Rural Universal Service Fund to \$40 million after 2026.



2014

2017

2021

2022

2023

2025

• **Senate Bill 64:** Removed the sunset period from SB159 (2014-2019), enabling continuous investment and support for broadband and technology upgrades.

• **Senate Bill 144:** Mandated Public School Capital Outlay Council (PSCOC) develop guidelines for a statewide infrastructure network, which became the SEN.

• **Senate Bill 377:** Allocated over \$105 million for broadband initiatives.

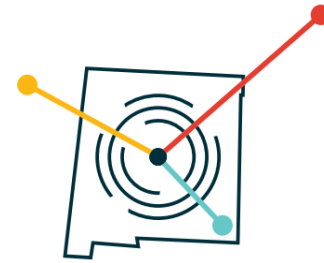
• **House Joint Resolution 1:** Amended the New Mexico Constitution by adding a new subsection that permits the use of state funds for essential household services, which include internet, energy, wastewater, or other services as provided by law.

• **House Bill 262:** Enables OBAE to use the Connect New Mexico Fund for broadband grants and transfers grant program responsibilities to OBAE.

• **Senate Bill 155:** Requires static rates for three years and increases the Rural Universal Service Fund to \$30 million after 2026.

• **Senate Bill 452:** Lets OBAE use established rates for broadband in underserved areas and requires semiannual reporting from providers with confidentiality.

Broadband Programs in NM



2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
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U.S. Treasury – Capital Projects Fund

N.M. Legislature - CNM	requested
N.M. Legislature - GWEP	requested
N.M. Legislature - Student	requested

U.S. Dept. Of Commerce - BEAD



Key:

State Funds
Federal Funds

U.S. F.C.C. - RDOF

U.S. Dept. of Commerce/NTIA – TBCP Round 1 and 2

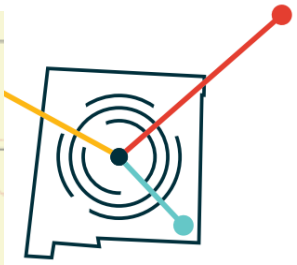
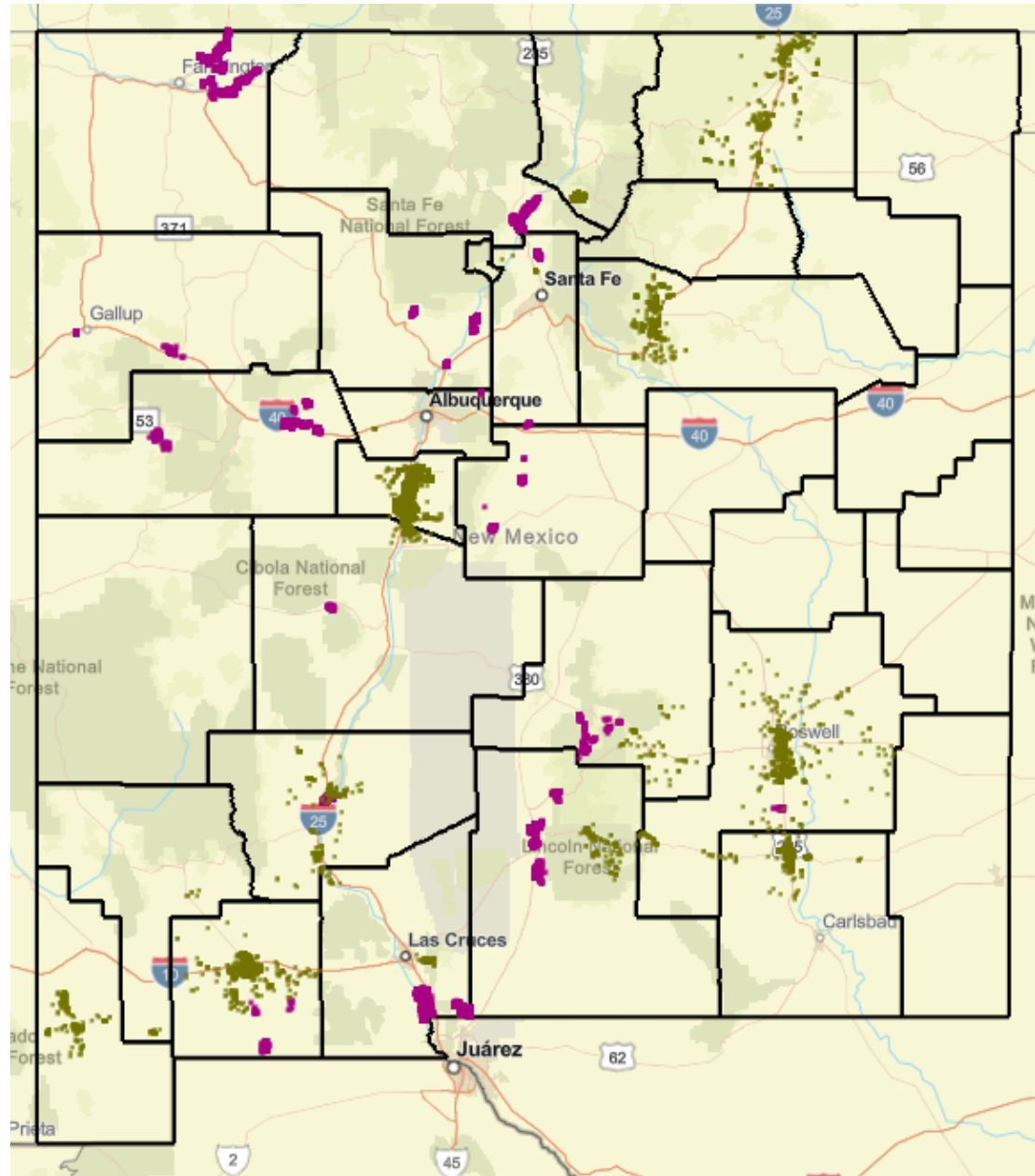
U.S. F.C.C. - Enhanced A-CAM (until 2038)

U.S.D.A. - Reconnect

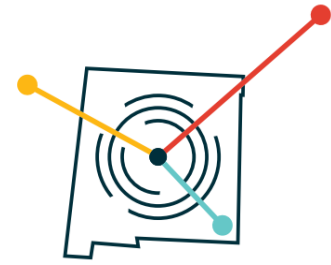
N.M. PRC - Broadband/Access Red. Support

Funded/Complete OBAE Projects

- Connect New Mexico Fund (State)
- ARPA Capital Projects Fund (Federal)

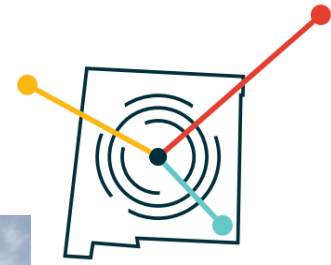


Broadband Project #1: Typical Fiber to the Home (Oso Internet)

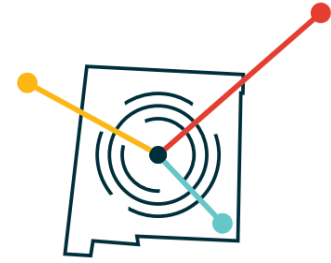


Burying the Fiber	Handhole Connection	NID on the House	Inside Connection	Network Operations
				

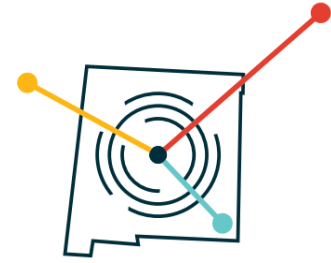
Broadband Project #2 – Plow and Laying Fiber (OSO Internet - Ramah Navajo Chapter Project)



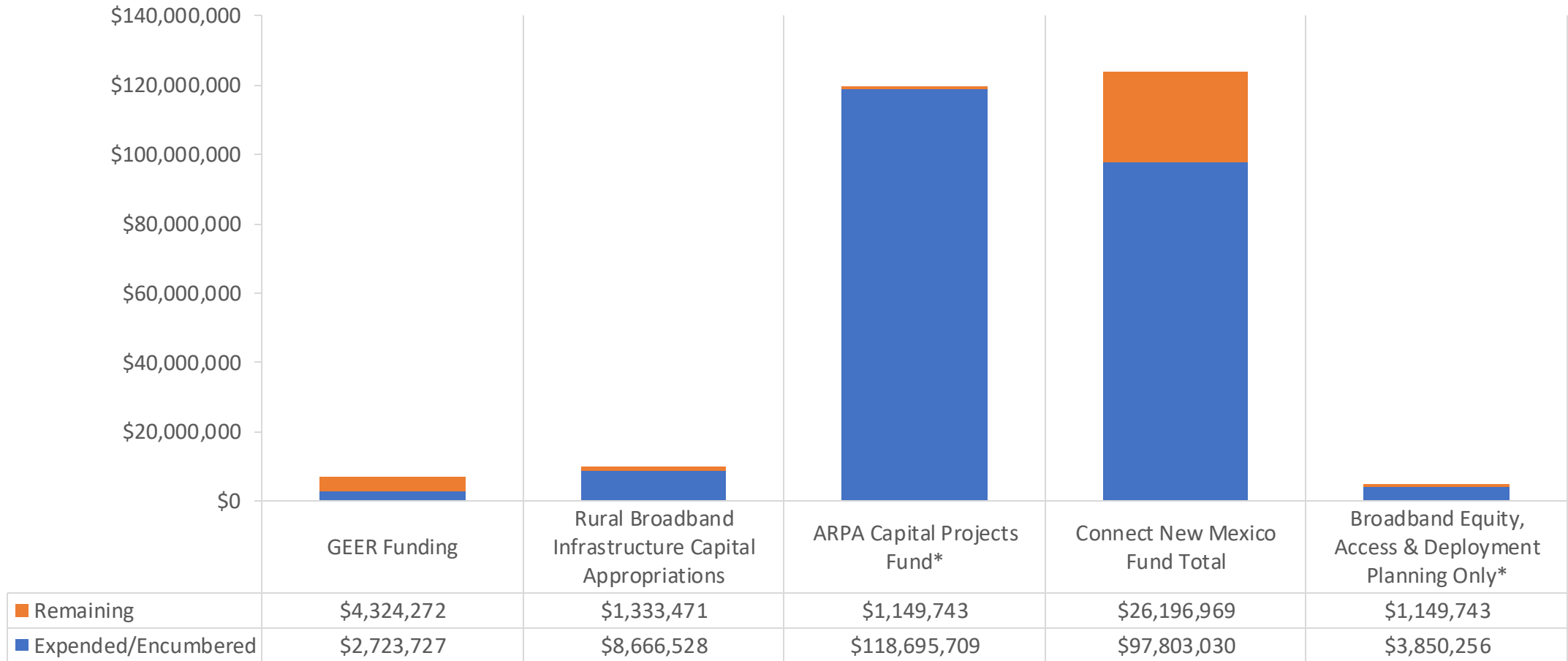
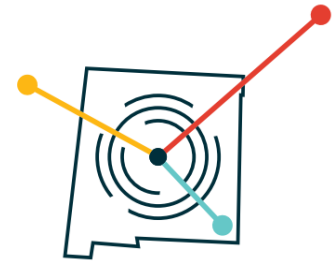
Broadband Project #3 – Trenching (Penasco Valley Telecom – Artesia Project)



Broadband Project #4 - Trenching (Tularosa Communications – Lincoln/Otero County Project)

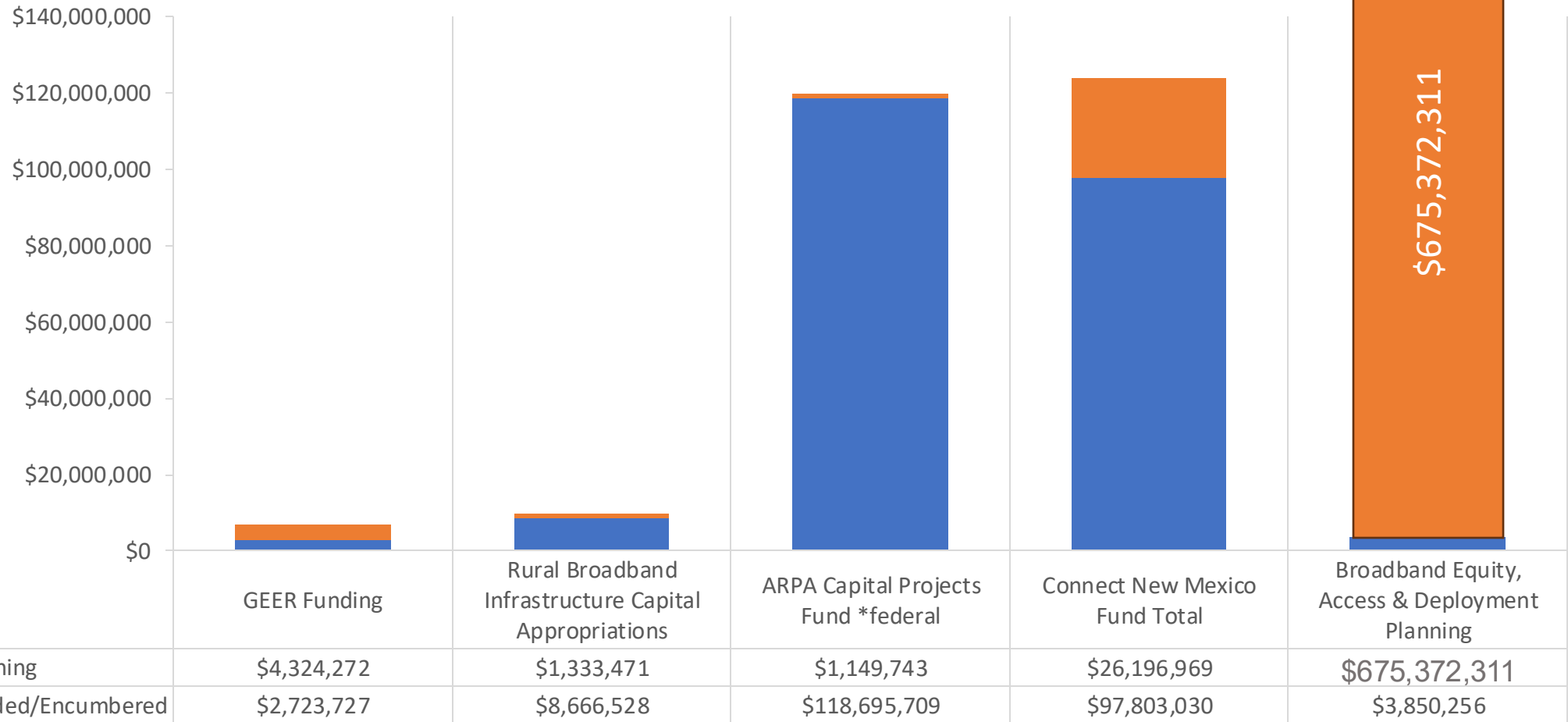


OBAE Administered Grants

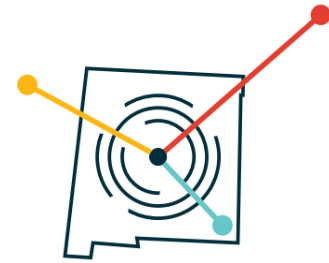


*denotes federal funding

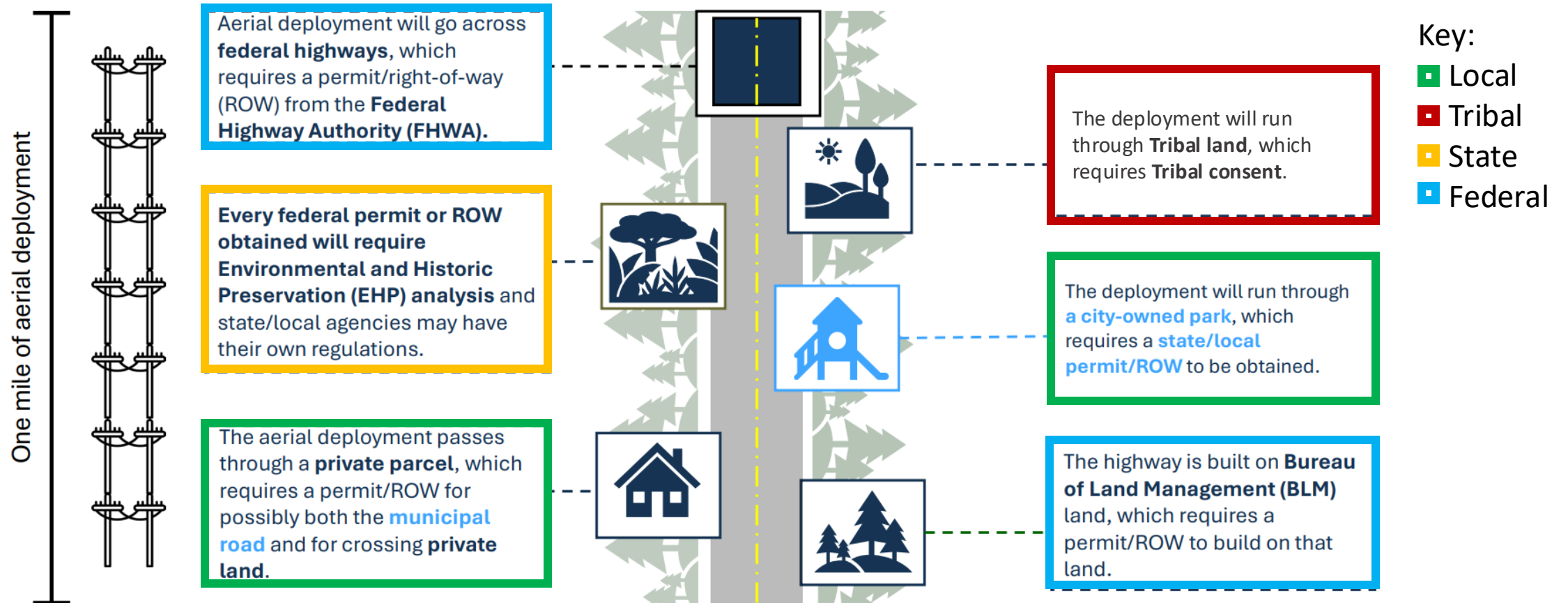
OBAE Administered Grants upon BEAD Approval



Permitting and Rights of Way

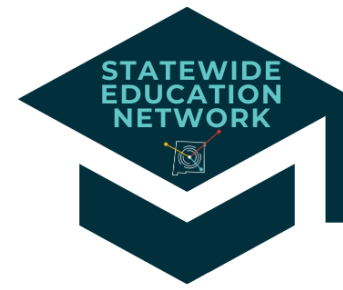


Construction of a simple one-mile broadband deployment can require various local, Tribal, state, and/or federal permits. Deployment that runs through local land will require coordination with state/local governments to obtain permits.



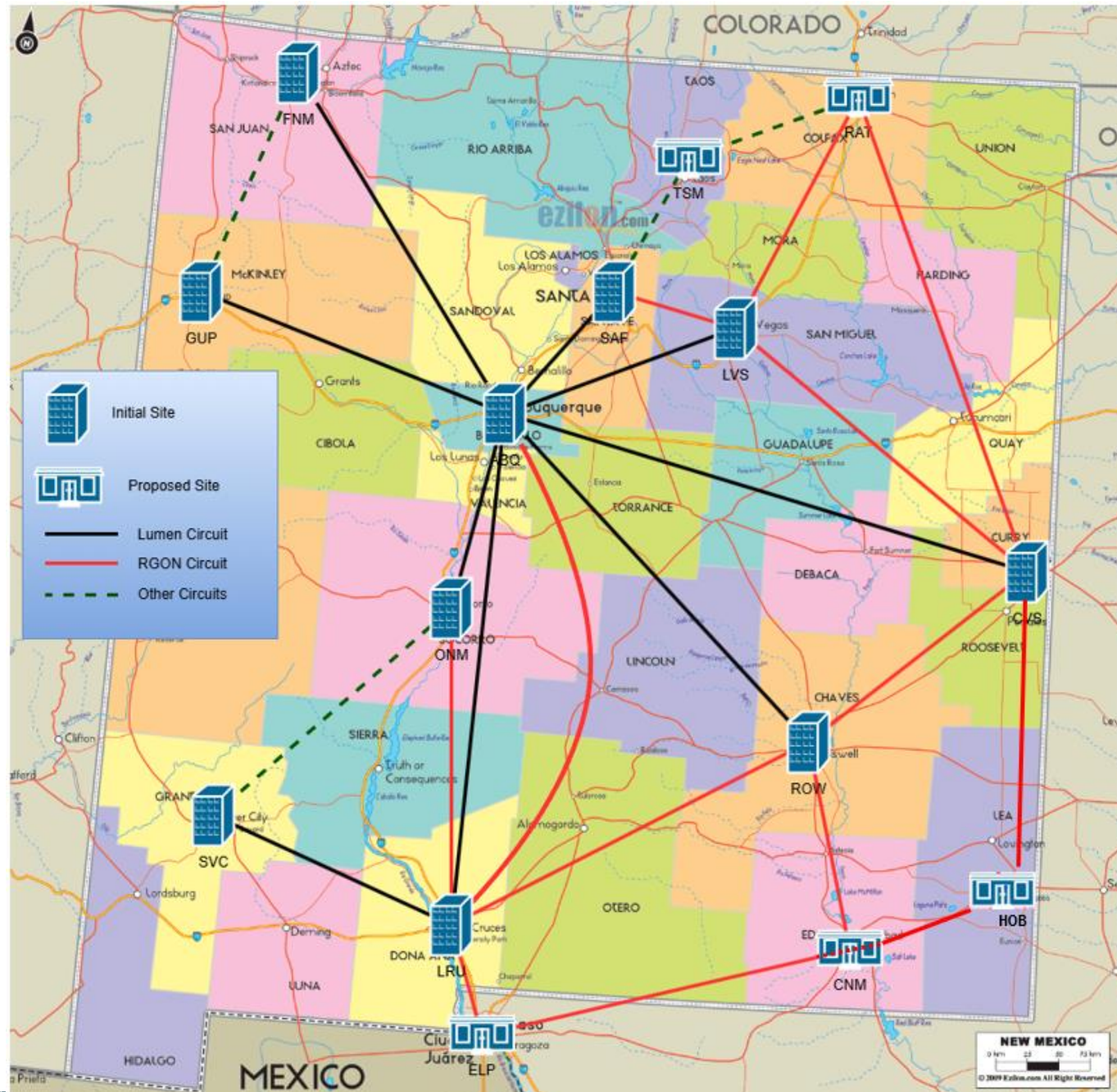
Source: NTIA, Local Permitting Importance, Challenges, and Strategies; August 2024

Statewide Education Network (SEN)

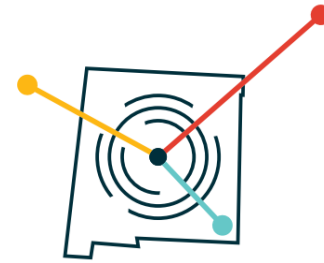


223 schools and 96,000 students connected

- **Cybersecurity:** Risk reduction.
- **Educational:** Supports EdTech to allow sharing of instructional and professional resources between all the participants.
- **Administrative:** Reduce burden of planning, procurement, contracting, E-rate paperwork, billing.
- **Cost reduction:** Reduction or elimination of schools' share (after E-rate). Economies of scale.
- **Technical support:** Provide specialized resources to small districts.



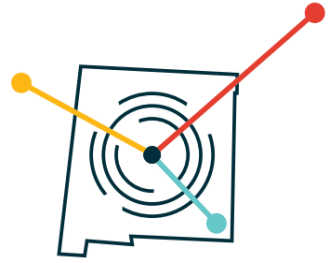
Completing the New Mexico Broadband Highway



Statewide Education Network (SEN) integrates regional hubs and supports the installation and maintenance of critical education technology infrastructure.

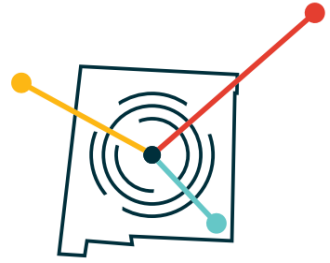
The SEN went live in July 2024.

Challenges



- Declining federal support for digital equity for rural areas
 - In May 2025, US Dept. of Commerce terminated OBAE's legal grant agreement for \$8.7M
 - Prior to federal termination of the funds, OBAE received 39 applications for over \$14M to support digital literacy, digital opportunity, and devices
 - These projects were legally required to support **aging individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, low literacy populations, and rural families**
- Sustainable programs for broadband affordability
- Procurement, rights of way, and project management

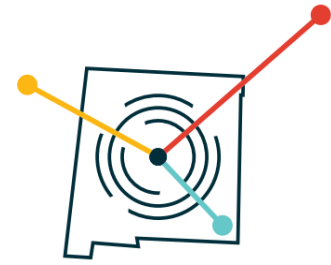
Questions?



Jeffrey Lopez is Director of the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion. He brings over 12 years of federal experience in support of New Mexicans. Prior to this appointment, Lopez served as senior policy advisor and state staff to U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján. Lopez managed the Senator's role as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband and worked directly on legislation that created the federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program, through which New Mexico is receiving \$675 million to connect unserved and underserved households across the state.



Additional Resources



OBAE Homepage

<https://connect.nm.gov/>

Mapping

<https://connect.nm.gov/nm-broadband-mapping.html>

Broadband Project Video

https://youtu.be/Altg8BOP-Ww?si=v5v_nMbZDfGwAJwm

