

## **Fitting Ongoing Rural Broadband Development into the State's Emerging Broadband Deployment Plan: Lea County Case Model**

—David Jimenez, Chief Executive Officer, Leaco Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Progress toward digital equity and digital inclusion in rural areas:

### Fiber Expansion projects - ACCESS

- Leaco FTTH in Lea County (Map 1)
- Reconnect 2 (Map 1)
- Reconnect 3 (Map 1)
- Hobbs to Monument, Eunice, and Jal Transport (Map 2)
- Monument and Jal FTTH (Map 2)

### Inclusion Strategies - ADOPTION

- Develop strategies around existing and planned infrastructure and market conditions
  - ex: Calix Edge system that puts the user in control
- Programmatic efforts focused on education (at home or school)
  - ex: Lovington Schools student home internet project
- P3 Intensive participation
  - Ex: For Reconnect 2 - Lea County EDC, State DoIT, Federal Grant, Leaco Matching funds, and The Maddox Foundation.
- Founding member of NMFN (New Mexico Fiber Network) – bringing 1st-mile access to the State of NM via an existing and robust Middle Mile network (Map 4, 5, and Slide 6)

How can the State of NM Leverage NMFN's Middle Mile?

### Open Access Circuits

- NMFN can offer open access to a fully redundant 400G circuit throughout our Middle Mile network, with access into and out of each of our existing hub locations located throughout the State of NM.
- The 400G access circuit would operate exactly as might a “Virtual Dark Fiber” insofar as there are no limitations to what traffic traverses the circuit. It would operate just like dark fiber in terms of scalable access.

#### Other Benefits of NMFN Middle Mile Open Access Circuit

- the State of NM would not have to maintain or operate any of the physical fiber build itself. (i.e. respond to fiber cuts within an hour, monitor the system for any instability and resolve, perform maintenance, etc....)
- NMFN has a robust system of support that counts on Eleven (11) full member Telecommunication Cooperatives that have been in the business of just that – since about the 1950's or earlier.
- Instead of building over the existing Middle Mile network – the State can use those same funds to concentrate on helping fund last mile projects throughout the State of New Mexico and truly help bridge the digital divide.

#### How can the State of NM help Rural Access?

- Leverage the existing infrastructure of the physical Middle Mile as presented for the benefit of the State of New Mexico.
  - **The State has shown a deep documented need for access.** The efforts to resolve that are well understood – the infrastructure ready to help today is poorly understood. **Let Us Help.**
- Leverage the existing complex system of support and expertise present in each of NMFN's Eleven-member Rural Telecommunications Cooperatives that are seeking to Serve not just their communities – but the State of New Mexico as well.
  - **The State has shown a critical need for expertise in Broadband and Broadband served projects and programs.** The significant influx of investment that would be required to over-build existing fiber doesn't stop there – it will become an Ongoing expense to fund a network that spans the entire State of New Mexico and be able to Operate, Adminstrate, and Maintain – let alone respond to any emergencies like cuts or massive power failures or security breaches. Your Rural Cooperatives already do all that for their networks and the NMFN Middle Mile. **Let Us Help.**
- Prioritize and focus funding on critical last mile projects that have deep roots in existing under-served and unserved communities with P3 backing.