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Northern New Mexico Submits Round 2 Broadband Applications

Northern New Mexico submitted two applications for federal stimulus funding under Round 2 of the Broadband Opportunities Technology Program (BTOP) in the Department of Commerce and the Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) in the US Department of Agriculture. If funded, the applications will create a seamless, fiber optic broadband backbone infrastructure that connects four counties, two municipalities, six federally recognized tribes and over 300 community anchor institutions in Northern New Mexico.

The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District, the Council of Governments for Northern New Mexico, applied for \$10.5 million in BTOP funding for a middle-mile fiber network that covers Rio Arriba, Los Alamos and northern Santa Fe counties, the City of Española and the Pueblos of Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, and Tesuque. REDI Net includes partnerships with seven last-mile service providers, including Tewa Communications, which received a \$1.2 million award from the USDA Rural Utilities Service in the first round of broadband funding. Partners in the application who contributed to a \$4.5 million match include Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and Telecom, Rio Arriba County, Los Alamos County, the City of Española, Northern New Mexico College, and Los Alamos National Security, LLC, which provided a \$170,000 cash match. "For years, we've struggled to obtain adequate services for critical public safety needs," says Charlie Dorame, Government Affairs Liaison for the Pueblo of Tesuque. "This project will provide robust bandwidth at more affordable prices, and will allow us to realize our goal of developing a multi-jurisdictional training facility."

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and Telecom in Taos applied for approximately \$44 million in grants and \$18 million in loans from BIP for a fiber network to reach 29 communities including Taos, Taos Pueblo and Picuris Pueblos, comprising roughly 20,500 households, 3,600 businesses, and 183 critical community institutions. In addition to communications and other uses, the project will support smart metering, distributed generation and smart grid/green grid for Kit Carson Electric. "This project will also deploy a Cyber Security aspect to protect our Energy Supply and Smart System from Cyber attack," says Luis Reyes, CEO of Kit Carson Electric.

The applications have compelling benefits for economic development and education in Northern New Mexico. "We need to improve our broadband infrastructure in order to remain competitive in today's environment and to push forward the development of our economy for the future" says Los Alamos County Administrator Anthony Mortillaro. "Modern education, healthcare and public safety all require the greater bandwidth this network will provide. And crucially, it will support the industries that will bring well-paid, sustainable jobs to our region like technology and digital media."

The two applications and a fiber ring planned for Santa Fe by the Santa Fe Regional Telecom Coalition are known as "REDI Open Networks" and will 1) provide high-speed bandwidth to community anchor institutions and last-mile providers that is not currently available in the market; 2) offer multiple options for transport, and 3) allow last-mile providers to access new markets, increasing customer choice and affordability. As publically-owned open networks, the infrastructure and bandwidth will be available to all service providers, reducing costs for the consumer. Based upon 144 count fiber optical cable delivering Metro Ethernet services up to Gigabit Ethernet speeds, the networks are capable of supporting multiple applications and uses, including internet, communications, education and distance learning, telemedicine and Emergency Medical Records, next generation public safety and cyber security, economic development and the smart grid/green grid. "It's sad to say, but without this investment, Northern New Mexico will continue to lag behind the nation in education, economic development and income," says Lorenzo Valdez, former County Manager of Rio Arriba County. "These are long-term, robust investments that are essential to create new opportunities for future generations."

For more information, visit www.nnmredi.org or contact Monica Abeita of the Regional Development Corporation at m_abeita@msn.com.

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