



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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RDC Vice Chair Johnson celebrates Multi-State BEAD awards for high-speed internet infrastructure



RDC Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson (center) is joined by officials from the Navajo Nation Broadband Office and the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion.

SANTA FE, N.M. — On February 12, during New Mexico's Legislative Session Broadband Day, Resources and Development Committee (RDC) Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson celebrated the Navajo Nation's \$111 million Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) award alongside the Navajo Nation Broadband Office (NNBO) and New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) officials.

The secured grant funds will help to build the Nation's \$373 million BEAD Program, which is part of the Navajo Nation Broadband Plan. The BEAD program will connect thousands of Navajo households to high-speed internet by building infrastructure the tribe will own. Much of the funding comes from BEAD Program, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

"This is the largest funding ever awarded to a tribal nation in terms of building broadband infrastructure for our Navajo people," said Vice Chair Johnson. "This means more access to high-speed internet for our people through the building of our own broadband infrastructure, including in our most rural communities."

BEAD provides federal funds to states who subsequently funded applications from service providers and other entities to connect household and community anchor institutions that previously were unconnected or marginally connected to the internet. The Navajo Nation is

the BEAD applicant and subgrantee, not the internet service provider. Networks will be built and operated by qualified service providers selected through a competitive process or direct partnership

New Mexico received approval for its \$382 million from the NTIA for its statewide broadband infrastructure proposal, and the Navajo Nation was the state's largest subrecipient. With plans to connect about 11,000 homes on the New Mexico portion of the Nation, it was natural for OBAE to award NNBO with its BEAD funds.

"Through your broadband office and your collaboration with industry, the mix of technology you're using — fiber, licensed fixed wireless, and lower-orbit satellite — really mirrors what we're doing as a state and what the federal government envisions. It is a very good project that meets the moment," said Jeffrey Lopez, OBAE Executive Director.

The Navajo Nation also received BEAD awards from Arizona and Utah. According to NNBO Executive Director Sonia Nez, Arizona awarded \$140 million and Utah granted \$26 million to the Navajo Nation Broadband Office. Collectively, the Navajo Nation has received roughly \$285 million in BEAD funding.

Expanded broadband access enables Navajo citizens to pursue remote work, attend school online, and access improved physical and mental-health services via telehealth, Nez said.

Building this infrastructure also strengthens the Navajo Nation's position to diversify its economy and increases options for internet and wireless service providers.

"NNBO has secured the funding to deploy this broadband plan, which will introduce much-needed service choices across the Navajo Nation," Nez said. "Increased competition is the most effective path to improving affordability, service quality, and long-term benefits for our people."

In addition to pursuing BEAD funding, the RDC, NNBO, and Connect Diné are advancing multiple initiatives to expand connectivity to chapters, strengthen infrastructure to implement 5G across the nation, and support institutional projects such as ERATE and other programs. Together, these coordinated efforts form a comprehensive strategy to improve broadband access and digital opportunity across the Navajo Nation.

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