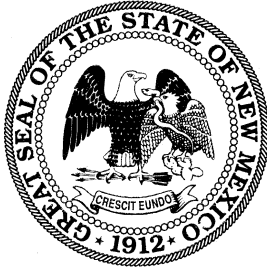


STATE OF NEW MEXICO
Department of Information Technology
New Mexico Broadband Program



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
RFI# 22-36100-04409

Technical Assistance Program for Broadband

Release Date: September 16, 2021

Due Date: October 17, 2021

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I. INTRODUCTION

The State of New Mexico Department of Information Technology (DoIT) applied for and received an EDA CARES Act (PWEAA2020) grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to fund a Technical Assistance Program (NM TAP) for broadband planning support services within the state. The EDA's grant program is intended for communities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the impacts of the pandemic.

In addition, the NM TAP will help meet the goals described in the State of [New Mexico Broadband Strategic Plan and Rural Assessment](#)¹ and in many of the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) or similar planning documents, primarily to improve the availability of adequate broadband service for as many New Mexico residents and businesses as possible. DoIT understands from prior research completed during preparation of the State of New Mexico Broadband Strategic Plan that there exist many government and private entities who are not able to explore broadband planning, deployment, or expansion efforts because the burden is too great.

Many companies are embracing work from home (WFH) and are promising to continue some type of remote work even after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. As a result, many workers have relocated or are seeking to relocate to remote areas. Students have been learning from home during the pandemic and, even before the pandemic, many students did not have connectivity for homework or other school activities.

The NM TAP seeks to provide services that will support studies and planning efforts to provide adequate broadband for residents, businesses, workers, and students. The services will also enable communities to effectively develop broadband plans that will provide new opportunities for businesses and employees to lift themselves out of economic crisis and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic with tools for business and employment response and resilience. Specifically, our project meets the following EDA investment priorities: Recovery and Resilience, Critical Infrastructure, and Opportunity Zones.

A. Purpose of this Request for Information (RFI)

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit and gather information from Communities about their needs for technical assistance for broadband planning in a target area and provide services to those Communities. The following entities are eligible for NM TAP services: local governments (counties, incorporated municipalities, villages, etc.), councils of governments, economic development districts, tribal governments, utility cooperatives, non-profit organizations, internet service providers, colonias, and land grants (collectively referred to as "Communities" in this RFI) who are planning the deployment or expansion of broadband infrastructure and/or services.

¹ https://www.doit.state.nm.us/broadband/reports/nmbbp_strategic20200616Rev2Final.pdf

DoIT proposes, through its agent and contractor, CTC Technology & Energy—a broadband consultancy which focuses on public sector and nonprofit clients and assisted DoIT in developing the [State of New Mexico Broadband Strategic Plan and Rural Broadband Assessment](#),²—to provide NM TAP services to eligible entities. DoIT believes the technical assistance support will cost-effectively produce the insights and data that the recipient Communities need to build their broadband planning and deployment capacity. In addition to spurring economic development and creating jobs, these efforts will have an enormous impact on alleviating current connectivity challenges and provide a foundation for resilience against future crises.

Subsequent sections describe the NM TAP and its related services.

C. NM TAP Objectives and Technical Assistance Services

1. Objectives

DoIT recognizes that each RFI respondent represents a unique community and will need varying levels of support to develop planning. The intent is to customize support accordingly. This support will be based on the recipient's response to this RFI. Factors may include technical and business capabilities, and an initial discussion designed to determine the best course of action for the area and communities they propose to serve. In addition, we are looking for needs statements from qualified entities for broadband planning services.

The following outlines the types of technical assistance DoIT will offer recipient organizations. Tasks include identifying broadband use and needs among the Communities' businesses (which includes home-based work), providing an overview of available e-connectivity services, and developing potential technical and business solutions that may form the basis for grant or loan applications and/or future public-private partnership planning. DoIT may also conduct statistically valid market research to provide organizations exploring broadband deployment or expansion with important metrics for determining competition, feasibility, and sustainability.

2. Technical Assistance Services

The technical assistance may include some or all of the following tasks, depending on the recipient's need:

- **Identify and engage key stakeholders and identify relevant assets:** Broadband's value and a sustainable broadband plan will be most impactful when it is integrated into a broader community development vision. To that end, a critical first step is for DoIT to engage key stakeholders from a variety of sectors (e.g., institutional partners like land-grant universities, community foundations, local business organizations) and identify physical resources as well as data, maps, and relevant documentation that can be leveraged to grow and support a long-range economic development strategy for the community.

² https://www.doit.state.nm.us/broadband/reports/nmbbp_strategic20200616Rev2Final.pdf

- **Educate community leaders:** While many community leaders understand that e-connectivity is critical, there is still a gap in understanding the technical, financial, and policy aspects of planning and executing a sustainable broadband strategy. DoIT will educate local leaders on these important considerations, the feasibility of different broadband deployment models, and lessons learned from other communities.
- **Assess the recipient Communities' current broadband infrastructure (assets) and market (services):** Drawing on the recipient Communities' and available statewide data, DoIT will seek to identify current broadband use among the recipient Communities' residents and businesses. Included will be a general overview of available services and, by extension, an understanding of the locations of the recipient Communities' unserved and underserved areas. DoIT will assess services that were in place prior to the pandemic and broadband services that have been quickly deployed to provide telehealth and facilitate online learning for students not having access or who cannot afford connectivity.
- **Evaluate current and future demand for broadband (needs assessment):** To develop a high-level understanding of demand based on qualitative data, DoIT will conduct on-site or teleconferenced discussion groups with representatives of the recipient Communities, the goal being to understand their broadband needs, constraints, and challenges. DoIT will meet with the Communities' local governments, educational institutions, local businesses, business organizations, healthcare providers, ISPs, and regional stakeholders. DoIT will ask specifically about the Community's response to the COVID-19 crisis, its efficacy, and gaps that can be filled by more or better e-connectivity. In addition, DoIT may conduct a statistically valid market study targeting demand using proven survey methods.
- **Prepare a high-level design and cost estimate for broadband deployment:** DoIT will develop a high-level candidate design and cost estimate for a network that might fill the broadband service gaps identified in previous tasks. DoIT will identify a cost-effective infrastructure appropriate to the terrain. The designs will also reflect best practices with respect to resilience and survivability to improve the likelihood that critical services such as telehealth and treatment programs for substance abuse are not disrupted. This system-level design would be suitable as the basis for a strong grant or loan application (federal or state) and a public-private partnership.

DoIT will not provide a blueprint-level network design or cost estimate. Rather, we will provide an analysis of existing infrastructure, a conceptual design, high-level maps, and a system-level overview of the potential infrastructure, which can become a roadmap for financial analysis, business modeling, and future decisions (e.g., detailed engineering and contracting with private sector service providers).

- **Evaluate funding options and develop strategic approaches to grant applications and public-private partnerships:** DoIT will evaluate funding options, develop a grant strategy, and evaluate partnership options in close consultation with the recipient Community. We will consider partnerships with public, private, and membership-owned companies inclusive of existing public and private networks within the recipient Communities. For each strategy, DoIT will consider, at a high level, issues related to risk,

Note: This is not a Request for Proposals. A contract will not be awarded based on submissions.

benefits, and control and will focus on determining what role the recipient community and private sector may play in addressing broadband needs. Our goal will be to evaluate partnership approaches that minimize a Community's costs and risks while achieving their broadband goals.

Regardless of selected tasks, DoIT will provide a **Broadband Strategic Planning Guidebook** to the recipient organization. This Guidebook will capture the results of chosen activities and provide an actionable roadmap of next steps.

C. NM TAP Outreach

To support outreach for the NM TAP, DoIT will be holding the following sessions:

- A comprehensive federal funding programs webinar for both ISPs and New Mexico broadband stakeholders
- Stakeholder and ISP webinars to share more detailed information about the NM TAP and answer questions

Information about the NM TAP and presentation materials and recordings of these sessions will be available at: [New Mexico Broadband Program - Technical Assistance Program \(state.nm.us\)](https://www.state.nm.us/broadband/).

D. RFI Point of Contact

DoIT has designated the following Points of Contact who are responsible for the conduct of this Request for Information whose names, addresses, and telephone numbers are listed below:

Point of Contact	Gar Clarke
Office address:	Department of Information Technology P.O. Box 22550 Santa Fe, NM 87502-2550
Office Phone#:	(505) 690-1661
Email Address:	George.Clarke@state.nm.us

II. CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE RFI

A. Sequence of Events

The primary RFI Point of Contact will make every effort to adhere to the following schedule:

Action	Responsible Party	Due Dates
1. Issue RFI	DoIT	9/16/21
2. Submission of Response	Respondents	10/17/21
3. Select Recipients (target)*	DoIT	11/5/21

*Date for selecting recipients is dependent on number of responses received.

B. Explanation of Events

1. Release of RFI

This RFI is being issued on the date indicated in the Sequence of Events, above, by the Department of Information Technology.

2. Response Deadline

Responses are due by 5:00 PM Mountain Time on the date indicated in the Sequence of Events, above.

3. Select Recipients

DoIT will notify respondents of selection.

C. General Requirements

Submission of a response constitutes acceptance of, and consent to, the following General Requirements:

1. No Obligation

This RFI in no manner obligates DoIT, the State of New Mexico, or any of its agencies to the issuance of an RFP or other solicitation or to the eventual provision of any services or equipment that may be described, implied, or proposed.

2. Governing Law

This RFI and any subsequent RFP that may be issued by DoIT, or any other agency of the State of New Mexico, shall be governed by the laws of the State of New Mexico.

3. Clarifications

All requests for clarifications must be directed to the RFI Point of Contact identified in Section I.D.

4. Response Preparation Cost

Any cost incurred by the respondent in the preparation, transmittal or presentation of any response or material submitted in response to this RFI will be borne solely by the respondent.

5. Use of Information

The State of New Mexico reserves all rights available to it by law. Respondents to this RFI are hereby notified that all information, documentation, and any specific content or approaches included in RFI responses will be analyzed, may appear in various reports, and may be used in any solicitation that may result from this RFI. Therefore, do not submit any proprietary or confidential information. The State of New Mexico cannot and does not guarantee the confidentiality of information submitted.

6. Eligibility to Participate in Subsequent Procurement

If the State of New Mexico decides to issue an RFP or other form of solicitation, those parties who choose to respond to this RFI, as well as those parties who choose not to respond to this RFI, will be eligible to participate in that solicitation.

7. Ownership of Materials

Ownership of all data, material, and documentation originated and submitted to the State of New Mexico, pursuant to the RFI, shall belong exclusively to the State of New Mexico and be subject to public inspection in accordance with the New Mexico Inspection of Public Records Act. No documents will be returned once submitted to the State.

8. Acceptance

The State of New Mexico reserves the right to reject responses that arrive late or otherwise do not meet all the specified requirements.

III. RESPONSE SUBMISSION AND ORGANIZATION

ALL RESPONSES ARE DUE BY 5:00 PM Mountain Time ON THE DATE INDICATED IN SECTION II.A, SEQUENCE OF EVENTS. LATE RESPONSES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

To respond to this RFI, please answer the questions listed in Section IV.

RFI responses shall be submitted in pdf format and e-mailed as an attachment to the RFI Point of Contact identified in Section I.D. Other supporting materials/documentation shall be submitted via email in an appropriate format. Please designate your response with the email subject line “NM DoIT Response to RFI for Technical Assistance for Local Broadband Planning”. Please contact the Point of Contact if other supporting materials are too large to submit via email.

Please feel free to share this RFI with other potential respondents.

Respondents are encouraged to use the map resource prepared by DoIT to identify target areas for broadband deployment planning and answer questions. The map can be found at the following link: [NM DoIT Technical Assistance Program RFI Map](#).

A list showing the available map layers can be turned on and off by clicking the Map Layers icon at the bottom of the map. Desired layers are displayed by “opening the eye” preceding the layer name. Note that many of the layers are within groups, designated by an arrow (▶) in the Map Layers list. Both the group and layer eyes must be open for the layer to be displayed.

To see the legend for the open Map Layer(s), click the Legend icon at the bottom of the map.

For more display and navigation guidance, click the Help (?) button at the bottom of the map.

The following describes each of the Map Layers.

- **Served Area** – An area or address is *served* with broadband if it can receive internet access with transmission speeds that, at a minimum and on a consistent and reliable basis, provide 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 megabits per second (Mbps) upload.³ Please use the DoIT [NMBBP Speed Tester](#) if needed.
- **Unserved Area** – An area or address is *unserved* with broadband if it cannot receive internet access with transmission speeds that, at a minimum and on a consistent and reliable basis, provide 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps per second upload, which aligns with federal rules.⁴

³ “2018 Broadband Deployment Report,” Federal Communications Commission, <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2018-broadband-deployment-report> (accessed May 17, 2019).

⁴ “2018 Broadband Deployment Report,” Federal Communications Commission, <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2018-broadband-deployment-report> (accessed May 17, 2019).

- **Priority Areas**
 - **Land Grants** – Lands historically granted by the Spanish Government with many considered economically challenged.
 - **Colonia** – According to the NM Bureau of Business & Economic Research, “the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines colonias as rural communities in close proximity to the U.S-Mexico border, lacking access to basic services such as water, sewer, or housing. Official socioeconomic data on these communities has typically been scarce, making it difficult for government agencies to secure federal funding that could improve colonia infrastructure.”⁵
 - **EDA Designated Opportunity Zone** – Areas nominated by the State and approved by the U.S. Economic Development Administration comprising low-income census blocks that have been determined to be economically distressed and where new investments may be eligible for preferential tax treatment.⁶
 - **Strategic Plan Project** – Clusters of unserved addresses defined in the State of New Mexico Broadband Strategic Plan and Rural Broadband Assessment.⁷
 - **Tribal Land** – Land occupied by federally-recognized tribes.

- **Anchor Institutions**
 - **Library**
 - **Medical/HealthCare**
 - **Hospital**
 - **Health Center**
 - **Public Safety**
 - **Law Enforcement**
 - **Fire Station**
 - **Emergency Operations Center**
 - **Education**
 - **Public Schools**
 - **Higher Education**
 - **Early Childhood Facility**
 - **Government Facilities**

- **Telecom Resources**
 - **State Telecom Sites** – Telecommunication locations administrated by DoIT
 - **Other Telecom Sites** – Telecommunication locations inclusive of private and public sites. Note that this layer may not be complete; there are likely more.
 - **NMPBS Towers** – Public Broadcasting Station tower locations.

- **Other Map Layers**
 - **Cities and Urban Areas**
 - **Counties**
 - **Population (Census Tract)**

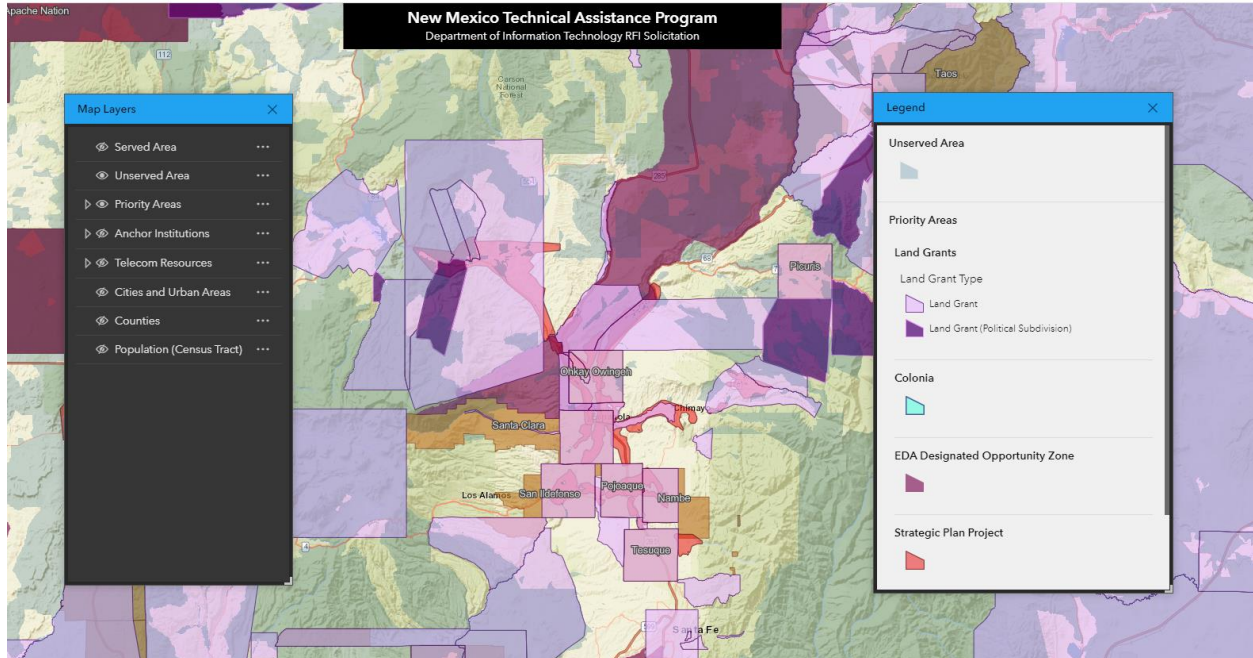
⁵ <https://bber.unm.edu/colonias> (accessed August 12, 2021)

⁶ <http://www.statsamerica.org/opportunity/>

⁷ State of New Mexico Broadband Strategic Plan and Rural Broadband Assessment
https://www.doit.state.nm.us/broadband/reports/nmbbp_strategic20200616Rev2Final.pdf

Figure 1 is an example of a map view that may help answer some of the RFI questions. The map shows clusters of unserved addresses (from the Strategic Project Plan) and their relationship to Opportunity Zones and Tribal Land.

Figure 1: Example of Web Map Showing Clusters of Unserved Areas (from the Strategic Project Plan) and the Priority Areas



IV. QUESTIONS FOR SUBMISSION

If you wish to be considered applicants are requested to respond to all questions below in narrative form; there are no page limits. Additional supporting information such as maps, reports, or other relevant documentation may be provided as attachments and referenced from the narrative response as appropriate.

DoIT will evaluate each applicant's response to the following questions and determine which Communities will receive technical assistance.

1. What is the name of your entity or jurisdiction?
2. Who is the point of contact for this response?
3. What specific area/community would you like to target? Does the area include an Opportunity Zone, colonia, land grant, or Tribal land? Please provide a map outlining the boundary of your project area.
4. Which service category (served or unserved) does your project area fall within? (See map.)

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5. Will your project area connect anchor institutions such as schools, healthcare facilities, or government entities? If so, how many and what institutions will it connect?
6. What are your broadband needs or gaps, as you understand them?
 - a) Access, availability, lack of services in area
 - b) Affordability
 - c) Devices
 - d) Digital skills or literacy (the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills).⁸
7. The NM TAP is designed to help to close the broadband coverage gap in New Mexico. **Where there is broadband, there is opportunity – opportunity for better education, online work, access to healthcare, and better economic conditions.** Broadband provides access to more jobs and increases area job growth, enables individuals to start and grow a business, improves business efficiency (think online transactions vs. cash), brings local business to global markets, enables e-commerce to community members, offers new tools for farmers and ranchers, the list goes on... In addition, broadband may help to reduce the unemployment rate and raise earnings.

What business, economic, technical, and other objectives do you have for participating in this program? Please be specific regarding the targeted project area in your community.

- a) Job creation/enablement for specific disciplines
 - b) Recovery from the pandemic
 - c) Resilience against future crises
 - d) Supporting critical infrastructure
 - e) Work from home provisions
 - f) Distance learning – K-12, higher education, skills training
 - g) Other specific economic objectives
8. What is the estimated number of primary and secondary jobs that the deployment of broadband infrastructure in your project area would engender and what methodology did you use to calculate that estimation? Primary and secondary jobs are delineated as follows:

⁸ Digital Literacy”. *Welcome to ALA’s Literacy Clearinghouse*. 2017-01-19. Accessed 2021-06-10.

- a) Primary jobs are those created as a direct result of the deployment, such as jobs related to the construction of a network or to the continued operation of such a network.
 - b) Secondary jobs are those that the deployment would indirectly create, such as jobs in new or expanded industries—like education, telehealth, telework—and related economic impact.
9. What prior related studies or plans have you conducted, if any? Please attach them. Examples include:
- a) Needs assessment
 - b) Feasibility assessment
 - c) Network design
 - d) Strategic plan
 - e) Other (please specify)
10. Which of the technical support services being offered by this program would you be seeking and why?
- a) Identify and engage key stakeholders and identify relevant assets
 - b) Educate community leaders
 - c) Assess current broadband infrastructure (assets) and market (services) in the area
 - d) Evaluate current and future demand for broadband
 - e) Prepare a high-level design and cost estimate for broadband deployment
 - f) Evaluate funding options and develop strategic approaches to grant applications and public-private partnerships
11. The State prefers that there be a collaboration between a government and private entity with an interest in expanding broadband in the project area/community. Do you have any type of engagement in place or planned? If so, please provide details and any supporting documentation.
12. Is there anything else, not mentioned in this RFI, that you would like to share?