

#ConnectNM campaign seeks to expand broadband access to all New Mexicans



LAS CRUCES - According to data collected by NMSU's Center for Community Analysis, 41 percent of households earning less than \$20,000 a year are without internet access in the Las Cruces Public School District. That number only increases when looking at Doña Ana's surrounding more rural districts, according to a news release from the SUCCESS Partnership. In the Gadsden Independent School District, 58% of households in that income bracket lack broadband connectivity; in Hatch Valley Public Schools, it's 70%.

These staggering pre-pandemic numbers convey the historical account of inequitable conditions in our community, the organization stated.

In the wake of COVID-19, these already astounding disparities have been

amplified. However, so has the opportunity to highlight the urgency to our policymakers and generate the collective voice needed to do something about it. Cost estimates to ensure broadband connectivity statewide are anywhere from \$2-\$5 billion, but residents have the opportunity to ensure at least \$1 billion becomes available to approach this critical need in New Mexico in the upcoming legislative session.

More from the SUCCESS Partnership: [SUCCESS Snapshot: Infusing equity into the fabric of our education system](#)

As stated in the Education Context Report compiled by CCA: "Inequitable access to the internet and technology, otherwise known as the 'digital divide,' has long signaled one of the great inequities in education."

In early 2020, the SUCCESS Partnership and school districts across the state began to see the resounding need for access to technology surface in a way that the organization believes could not be ignored. In a July work session, the Leaders Circle — a group of more than 30 community leaders that govern the SUCCESS Partnership — invited members of the K-12 community to share their concerns and decided to make access to broadband a priority.

"In light of the pandemic's devastating impact on student access to education, the Leaders Circle of the SUCCESS Partnership strategized around the best way they could use their voices to advocate for students' and educators' needs, and broadband access was the clear choice," said Lori Martinez, Executive Director of Ngage New Mexico.

Here are a few ways the SUCCESS Partnership suggests residents can help to bring statewide broadband to New Mexico.

1. **Sign the letter:** Ask Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham with overwhelming community support to allocate the \$200 million in capital outlay funds that will allow our state to qualify for federal funding

resulting in \$1billion for statewide connectivity. Find the letter online at SUCCESSdac.org/ConnectNM.

2. **Share and get the word out:** Ask your networks to sign on to this letter. The potential impact of our collective reach is abundant, the organization stated in a news release.
3. **Submit a video or text testimonial:** How would broadband elevate this community? Or How is the lack of broadband affecting education, health care, access to job opportunities, or anything else? This can be a short 30 second or less video or just a few sentences.
4. **Write an op-ed:** Write a piece supporting these efforts to be published in newspapers and online outlets throughout the state.
5. **Share/follow #ConnectNM on social media:** Using the hashtag #ConnectNM and tagging the Governor's office builds on this initiative's history and highlights the current efforts "through our respective pages and outlets," the release stated.

Read more:

[Education in the pandemic: New Mexico still addressing gaps in technology](#)

[Education lawsuit demands internet for New Mexico students](#)

[Opinion: Broadband is an essential public utility and New Mexicans need access](#)