



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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**Navajo Nation awarded \$53 million through E-Rate Program to
increase internet capacity for chapter houses and Head Start facilities**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are pleased to announce that the Navajo Nation secured \$53 million in funding through the Federal Communications Commission’s E-Rate Program, to install over 600 miles of fiber optic lines that will expand internet capacity for 90 chapter houses and 53 Head Start facilities on the Navajo Nation.

“We are elated by today’s announcement. This is a historic achievement that took years of coordination and planning as our administration works toward expanding and increasing internet capability and capacity within our communities. Through the coordination and persistence of many partners, we resolved longstanding issues that stemmed from previous administrations that stood in the way of progress. Now, that our administration has resolved those issues, many of our chapter houses and Head Start facilities will receive fiber optic lines that will provide enhanced internet service for officials and local residents who visit the chapter houses. Students and others will soon be able to use the internet service for school work and other tasks. We are very thankful to everyone who worked together to advance this monumental task,” said President Nez.

When the Nez-Lizer Administration took office in 2019, President Nez and Vice President Lizer developed a four-year strategy known as the “Nahata” plan, which is a document that tasked Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office Executive Director Christopher Becenti with resolving past issues to ensure compliance with FCC policies to move the E-Rate initiative forward.

In June 2020, President Nez and Vice President Lizer also issued letters to New Mexico and Arizona officials providing supporting information for the Navajo Nation’s application for E-Rate resources and funding.

“Through the coordination of the Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, Department of Diné Education, Telecommunications Utilities, Division of Community Development and support from the 24th Navajo Nation Council and New Mexico Department of Education and the state of Arizona, the Navajo Nation received notice on Thursday from Universal Service Administrative Co., which administers the E-Rate Program for the FCC, that the Navajo Nation was awarded \$53 million.

Much of the physical work applying for the E-Rate funding was provided by the Nation's E-Rate consultant, Infinity Communications & Consulting Inc. This was truly a collaborative effort," said Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office Executive Director Christopher Becenti.

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to coordinate with the FCC and state officials to secure additional funds through the E-Rate Program to increase internet capabilities for schools and libraries on the Navajo Nation. A second application for funding will be submitted in the next month to connect the remaining chapter houses and Head Start facilities that were not awarded in last year's application.

"With today's announcement, the Navajo Nation will increase its overall internet capacity that will benefit our communities and create new opportunities for our Navajo people. Internet service is a great tool for entrepreneurs, students, first responders, and many others. With so many businesses being created and expanded through online services and sales, this will serve as another tool for our Navajo people to empower themselves. My hope is that our Navajo businesses and entrepreneurs take advantage of the increased internet capacity through their creativity and ingenuity. Thank you to everyone who supported this effort for the past few years," said Vice President Lizer.

New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart also congratulated his colleagues and the Navajo Nation and spoke about the positive impacts that the funding will have for students.

"This is a thrilling development that will help get Navajo children the connectivity they need for the modern education they deserve. These are our kids – New Mexico kids -- and we have an obligation to meet their educational needs whether they go to public schools, tribal schools or Bureau of Indian Education schools," said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. "This announcement is only possible because of so much hard work by people in the Public Education Department, the Department of Information Technology and the Navajo Nation, and I want to congratulate them all."

On Friday, Feb. 12, President Nez will participate in a roundtable discussion regarding the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which will include FCC Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel and FCC Commissioners. Through the program, eligible households may receive a discount off the cost of broadband service and the cost of certain connected devices during an emergency period relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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