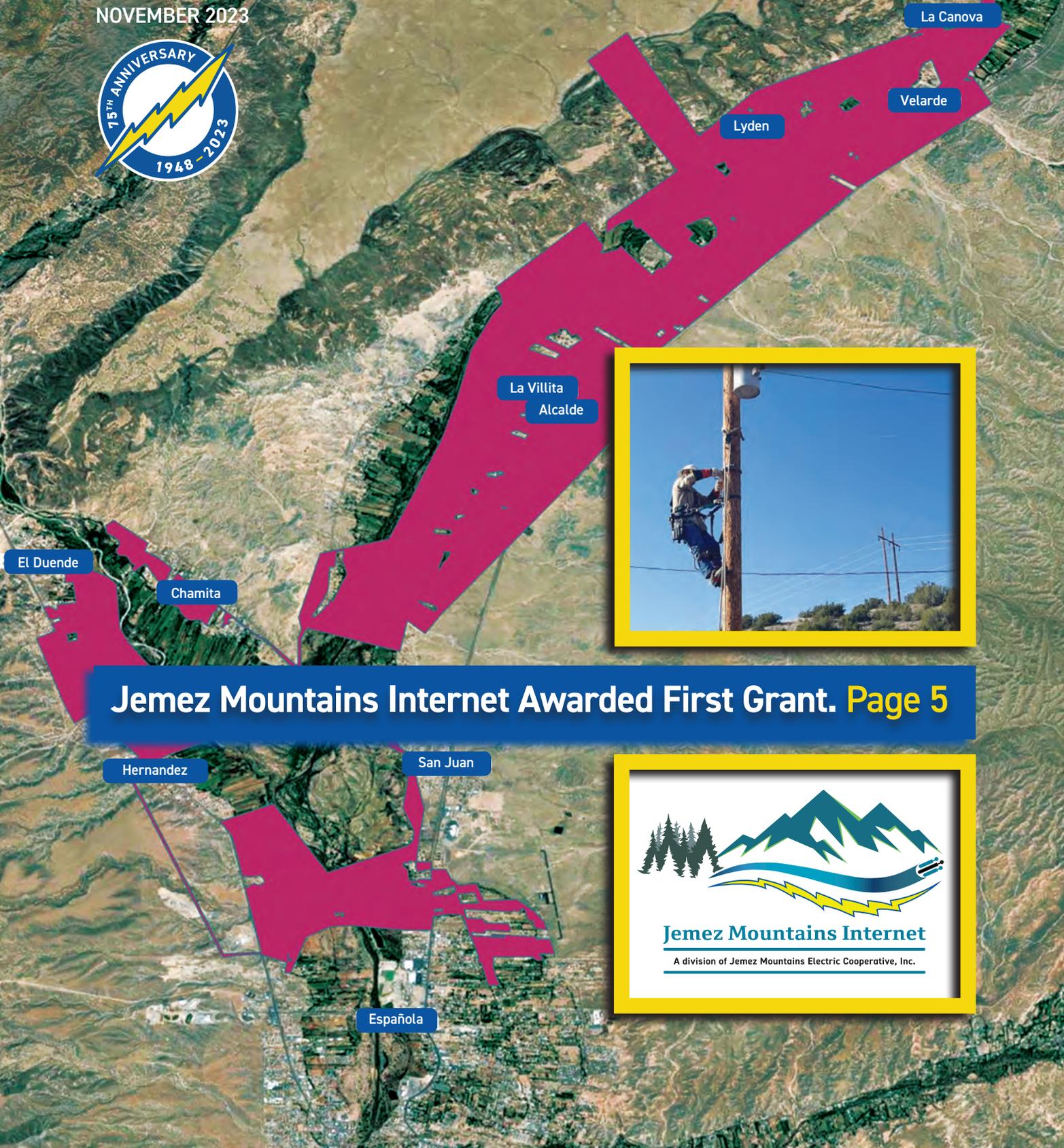


The Voice of New Mexico's
Rural Electric Cooperatives

enchantment

JEMEZ MOUNTAINS
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NOVEMBER 2023



Jemez Mountains Internet Awarded First Grant. [Page 5](#)





Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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2024 Youth Tour: An Amazing Trip for Member Students

A five-day, all-expense-paid, trip to Washington, D.C., awaits high school students – those who will be juniors and seniors in 2024 and who are children or dependents of active Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc., members – selected from applicants for the 2024 Government-In-Action Youth Tour.

Funded by the Jemez Mountains Electric Foundation, six eligible students will be chosen to represent JMEC on the 2024 tour. Applications can be found on the JMEC website, <https://www.jemezcoop.org/youth-tour>, and are due Monday, January 8, 2024.

Created by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Youth Tour is a fun-filled, high-powered learning experience attended by students from all over the country who also are representing their electric cooperative.

“The purpose of the Government-in-Action

Applications can be found on the JMEC website, <https://www.jemezcoop.org/youth-tour> and are due Monday, January 8, 2024.

Youth Tour is to give students insight on the energy industry and the cooperative form of business and to develop leadership and speaking skills,” said Tina Trujillo Archuleta, JMEC’s manager of administration and external affairs. **“They get to meet their elected leaders, go to Capitol Hill and NRECA’s headquarters and visit many of D.C.’s most well-known sights and institutions. Some years’ outings have included a boat cruise on the Potomac or going to a Major League Baseball game. The tour is action-packed!”**

Tentative dates for the 2024 Youth Tour will have JMEC’s participating students visiting both the New Mexico Rural Electric Cooperative headquarters and the New Mexico State Capitol Building on Monday, June 17 and then traveling to and experiencing D.C., Tuesday, June 18 through Friday, June 21. The group would travel back to New Mexico on Saturday, June 22.

Next year will be the 60th anniversary of the NRECA’s Government-in-Action Youth Tour. It has been the opportunity of a lifetime for hundreds of students sent from JMEC and we encourage all eligible students to apply!



JMEC - IN THIS ISSUE



Pages 4 - 5

- 2024 Youth Tour
- Jemez Mountains Internet Awarded First Grant



Page 8

- Employee in the Spotlight: Katelyn Suazo-Duran



Page 25

- In Our Community: The Empty Stocking Fund
- Winter Moratorium Effective November 15



Page 28 - 29

- Jemez Mountains Internet Awarded First Grant
- Jemez Mountains Internet FAQ’s

Jemez Mountains Internet Awarded First Grant

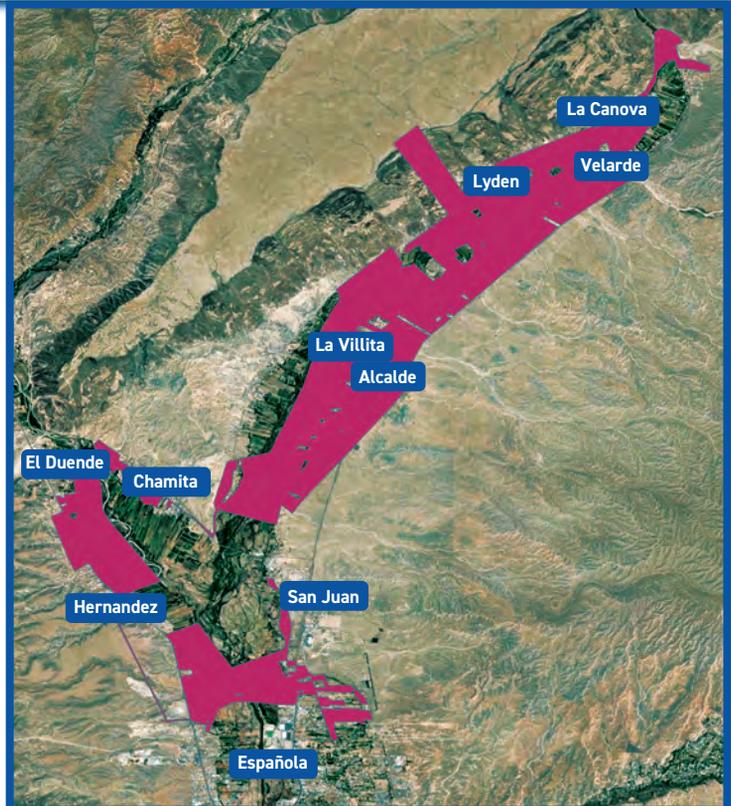


It was thrilling to get the news in September of the first grant award to Jemez Mountains Internet (JMI), a division of Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc., (JMEC) in the amount of \$5.9 million. JMI will match the grant, which came from the second wave of the Connect New Mexico Pilot Program, for a total of nearly \$12 million in funding to launch JMI's buildout of high-speed internet services.

FIRST GRANT

"This grant will enable JMI to begin construction on a total of 105 route miles of fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) covering about 13 square miles," said Tomas Barela, JMI broadband manager. "While there are too few households to cover the cost of this initial construction, the Connect New Mexico grant frees up the annual revenues generated by future customers of this high-speed internet service to cover the cost of its long-term operations."

The grant award covers territory in the unserved and



Proposed Boundary NM Pilot Grant - Wave 2

underserved unincorporated areas of Hernandez, Ohkay Owingeh, Chamita, Alcalde, El Duende, La Villita, Los Luceros, Lyden, Canova, Velarde in Rio Arriba County and part of the unserved and underserved areas of northern Española. An estimated 7,500 people live in the area which includes 3,171 households, 34 businesses, 17 community institutions and 12 farms.

"The funded area met all the stringent criteria for the Wave2 grant and then some," said Barela. "Nearly all in JMEC's service territory would be described as unserved or underserved as it relates to access to high-speed internet and, in this area, many are socio-economically distressed as well."

The grant criteria were strict. The application review team commissioned by the state of New Mexico's Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) applied scoring guidelines that considered eight major categories and 25 factors including level of need, financial sustainability, pricing affordability, programs to drive adoption, community support and budget reasonableness.

Story continues on page 28.



Participants in the broadband grant award celebration on Thursday, September 14, 2023, at the Ohkay Casino and Resort in Ohkay Owingeh, New Mexico, included (left to right), Eric Chavez, office of U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján; Manuel Bustos, JMEC trustee; José Bentancourt Blazer and Richard Govea, OBAE project managers; Dolores McCoy, JMEC trustee; Kelly Schlegel, director, and Sandeep Taxali, broadband program advisor, OBAE; Michael Hastings, JMEC CEO and general manager; Elías Coriz, JMEC trustee; Jerrold Baca, general manager of Redinet.

Employee in the Spotlight: Katelyn Suazo-Duran



Katelyn Suazo-Duran said that on her first day as a JMEC work order clerk in the Cuba office, senior work order clerk Bobbie Jo Chavez sat her down to review the details of what the job entails. “We went through the ‘work order bible,’ which is Bobbie Jo’s notebook of detailed notes and examples – the guide to everything about work orders,” she said. “When we were done, Bobbie Jo said, ‘I hope you come back tomorrow!’ She’s the best. I’m not sure if she was serious but I couldn’t wait to come back!”

Suazo-Duran, who previously worked at the motor vehicle department, said attention to detail is critical. “Closing work orders is really about making sure we have a thorough description of the work completed for the member and that any resulting invoice/refund is accurate,” she said.

Good member service skills also are needed as, whether the work order is for recent work or part of the catch up on a backlog of work orders, the clerk needs to be knowledgeable and patient to explain to members what work occurred, what may have arisen during the work to alter the order and how that informed the final cost.

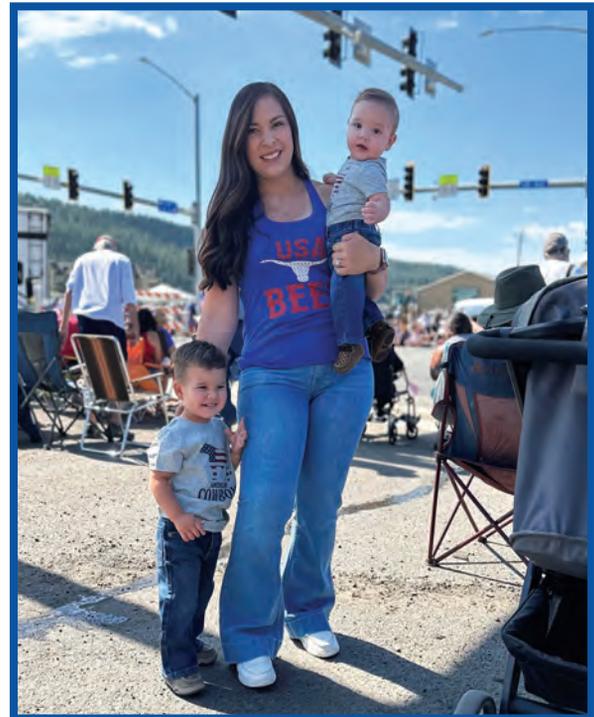
“We are doing our best to do well for members,” Suazo-Duran added. “We spend the time necessary in closing each work order to make sure that what the member receives is accurate. And when a member calls, we appreciate that there may have been a time lag between the work and the invoice, or that there may have been unexpected issues that arose in the work, so we want to do everything we can to answer all the member’s questions.”

Suazo-Duran said she loves her job. “Every day is different,” she said. “Every work order is different. I get

to work with all three districts, with everyone from the warehouse to the stakers and linemen who also have helped me learn about different pieces of equipment. Knowing, for example, what different materials are helps me with the work orders and, in talking to members.”

Some of the comments on Suazo-Duran’s nomination forms include, “She is a very big help when we have been short staffed, helping with the registers and phones. There isn’t anything she isn’t willing to learn and she helps where she can. She is always happy and in a good mood.” Another comment was about her support at the annual meeting. “Katelyn was extremely helpful during the annual meeting. She was willing to take on several different tasks without any complaint. Katelyn is clearly a team player who is always willing to lend a helping hand.”

When not at work Suazo-Duran is taking care of her boys, Landon, 2 and Noah, 10 months, where they live in La Jara and doing what she can to help out with the family’s cow/calf operation. “I grew up on a small ranching operation in Abiquiu and married into another one with my husband, Adriano’s, family business. It’s a busy life!”



Katelyn Suazo-Duran, JMEC’s November Employee in the Spotlight, with her sons Landon and Noah.

In Our Community: The Empty Stocking Fund



The Empty Stock Fund helps meet the needs of people in Northern New Mexico's Santa Fe

and Rio Arriba counties experiencing emergency financial challenges during the holidays. Many Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc., members have benefitted over the years from this program which serves those within a 50-mile radius of Santa Fe.

The Fund was established by and is a project of the Santa Fe New Mexican which, with community partners, takes on all the program's administrative costs. Applications are accepted from November 1st to the 30th.

"The Empty Stocking Fund is a hand up rather than a handout," said Susan Cahoon, the Santa Fe New Mexican human resources director. "It is a means to help people get beyond an emergency and is one of the fastest ways to get help to our population of any program out there. We can turn an emergency situation around very quickly."

Cahoon said that funds have been used to help with mortgage, rent, utility, medical, tuition, even car repair financial emergencies with the maximum household amount paid out averaging \$2,500. Any request over that amount is reviewed by a committee.

"We have to be really careful with our donors' money," she added. "We have volunteers who help us review applications and do site visits as we try to meet in person with every applicant. For our donors, we follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for the Fund. All donations go through the Santa Fe Community Foundation, which recognizes each donor and forwards money to the Fund's banking partners to distribute the money."

Funds are sent to the entity owed the money, not the applicant. An exception to this policy is when the emergency is related to food insecurity. The Empty Stocking Fund has issued grocery store cards in this instance. Applicants must provide proof of who they are (examples - social security card, car title, lease document) and proof of their need (examples - bills, overdue notices).

To donate or learn more about how to apply, go to the Empty Stocking Fund website: https://www.santafenewmexican.com/empty_stocking/

Winter Moratorium Effective November 15

Protection from winter shut off begins Wednesday, November 15, 2023, per a New Mexico Public Regulation Commission rule.

A JMEC member's electric service will not be disconnected (Nov. 15, 2023 - March 15, 2024) if the member meets qualifications of Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), have no past due amounts or remains current on any settlement/installment agreement for amounts due as of Nov. 15, 2023.

Avoid disconnection! Please contact one of these numbers for LIHEAP eligibility information:

1.800.283.4465

New Mexico Human Services Department

1.888.755.2105

JMEC toll-free number or website,

<https://www.jemezcoop.org/winter-moratorium-protection>

1.505.753.2105

JMEC Española office

1.575.289.3241

JMEC Cuba office

1.575.829.3550

JMEC Jemez Springs office

1.888.427.5772

New Mexico tribes or pueblos members for help with translation or other matters



Jemez Mountains Internet Awarded First Grant

Story continued from page 5.

TIMING, FUTURE GRANTS AND PHASES

Barela said that following engineering of the area funded by the Connect New Mexico Pilot Program grant, JMI could be stringing fiber by late in the first quarter of 2024 and could be accepting customer sign ups sometime during the second quarter of next year.

JMI currently is in the process of preparing to apply for more grant funding, this from the coming round of broadband monies offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Reconnect Loan and Grant Program. News of whether JMI is selected as one of the program's funding recipients will come sometime next year.

While a feasibility study showed that JMI can make it cost effective to offer internet services without grants, securing its share of this kind of funding is just good business. In a February 2022 news release announcing JMEC board approval of a broadband study, Elias Coriz, chair of the JMEC broadband committee, made that point about federal and state grants, "These kinds of subsidies provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for JMEC to assist with this vital function for members."

Engineering and other work has been underway since July on an initial phase unrelated to the Connect New Mexico grant. JMI has completed all the field data collection, pole inspection, equipment placement strategy and most of the design for the area and is in the process of speaking with entities about easements and right of ways affecting this build. The Connect funding comes with strict milestones and deadline requirements so the need to meet those conditions, availability of labor and supply chain issues will dictate whether or not the two phases can be done concurrently.

KEEPING UP AND SERVICE OFFERINGS

Seen as a best practice among electric cooperatives, JMEC will be working on adding dedicated JMI pages to its website. In the meantime, Michael Hastings, JMEC CEO and general manager, will be giving updates during his appearances on KDCE's "Coffee Break" 950 AM, 100.7 FM and broadband news will be shared regularly on JMEC's social media channels.

While a median service offering and monthly price is still to be determined, JMI committed to these maximum and minimum speeds to customer locations, and pricing in the Connect New Mexico grant application:

Other Project Details		
Service Offerings	Service Offering (download/upload)	Monthly Price
Maximum Speed to Customer Location	Residential - 1000Mbps/1000Mbps Business - 1000Mbps/1000Mbps	Residential - \$89.95 Business - \$89.95
Minimum Speed to Customer Location	Residential - 50Mbps/50Mbps Business - 50Mbps/50Mbps	Residential - \$39.95 Business - \$39.95

There also is financial assistance for those who qualify through the New Mexico Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which among other things offers up to \$30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for eligible households located on tribal lands. JMI plans to have a Help Desk set up at JMEC to assist people complete the ACP process.

"Jemez Mountains Internet is coming to serve the thousands of unserved and underserved households in the JMEC service territory and we are bringing a more reliable, higher quality product than has been available to these communities before. We are very excited to be this close to signing up our first customer."



Left to right: Juan Duran holds the documentation showing his completion of training to be certified as a fiber optic specialist. Ben Sanchez trains on completing pole attachments needed for stringing fiber.

Jemez Mountains Internet Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How can Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative afford to bring high-speed internet services to all its service territory?

A: The high-speed internet service buildout and operations will pay for itself.

- Under New Mexico law, electric cooperatives cannot subsidize broadband business with revenues from the electric business.
- If any JMEC personnel help on the broadband business, their time is logged and billed to Jemez Mountains Internet.
- Like most electric cooperatives providing broadband business, Jemez Mountains Internet will finance this service offering with a mix of grant funding, debt and JMI subscriber revenues.

Q: I thought the broadband cost per route mile was much higher than what is shown for the Proposed Funded Area that received the Connect New Mexico grant.

A: There are so many variables that factor into the cost per mile – type of fiber, density, terrain, equipment, existing infrastructure, permitting and more.

- For the Wave 2 grant, the engineering and estimated \$12 million cost to serve the 105 fiber miles in the Proposed Funded Service Area was done with input from and was vetted by the state of New Mexico's Office of Broadband Access and Expansion.

Q: How does JMEC have the experience required to build and operate a broadband business successfully?

A: The key personnel who have worked to develop Jemez Mountains Internet's business model and initial build out are well experienced in this industry, including:

- Tomás Barela, JMI general manager, has nearly 20 years of experience in digital communications most recently helping bring fiber to the homes in Grants, N.M., as a subcontractor for Continental Divide Electric Cooperative.

- Deborah Madrid, accounting, has years of experience in broadband accounting from when she was with Kit Carson Electric Cooperative.
- Matthew Casados, IT, served as Los Alamos County representative on the Redi-Net board; he also served as the Redi-Net director for Rio Arriba County.
- Michael Hastings, JMEC CEO and general manager, launched and oversaw one of the first broadband businesses initiated by an electric cooperative in the U.S.
- Dennis Astley, JMEC assistant GM and professional engineer, has years of experience in the broadband business at other electric cooperatives.

Q: Why did JMEC get into the broadband business?

A: JMEC entered the broadband business after much study and to respond to member demand.

- In a survey to JMEC members, 95 percent of respondents asked the cooperative to enter this business.
- For more than 20 years, existing providers have failed to provide quality high-speed internet to our service territory.
- Española has the third lowest internet speeds of any small city of its size in the United States. In addition, other smaller communities within JMEC's service area experience even lower speeds!
- Our more rural areas have slow internet speeds and are defined by federal authorities as "unserved" or "underserved."
- More than 200 electric cooperatives throughout the United States, including Continental Divide Electric Cooperative and Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, have successfully entered the high-speed internet business.
- The model is proven and JMEC's broadband division, Jemez Mountains Internet, can execute on that model.