



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Kit Carson Electric Cooperative Awarded \$24 Million Grant for Rural Broadband Service Expansion Via U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service ReConnect Program**

*Grant will provide fiber broadband service and wireless broadband access to households, businesses, educational facilities, community facilities, and local emergency services in rural New Mexico*

Taos, New Mexico – Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, Inc (KCEC) today announced the acceptance of a recent grant application from the United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development team and its Rural Utilities Service ReConnect Program, for \$23,624,986. This significant grant will be used to deploy fiber-to-the-premises broadband service and wireless broadband access in rural New Mexico. The funded service area spans the Rio Arriba area and includes 3,078 customers including households, businesses, educational facilities, community facilities, and local emergency services.

Kit Carson Internet (KCI) began serving customers with broadband in 2000 and turned on its first fiber optic plant in 2015. Since that time, the organization has expanded its customer base and service area through fiber to the home delivery. Currently, KCI provides broadband service to 11,700 active customers in Taos, Rio Arriba and Colfax counties in New Mexico.

The community members served by this grant include individuals in need of high-speed internet options for learning, health, and business in addition to improvement of quality of life. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the need for school aged students to have access to broadband not only for distance education effort but also to be in line with their peers in terms of research opportunity, ability to complete homework, and ability to engage with classmates and teachers online. In addition, 19% of individuals in these tracts are over 65 years of age and 16% are disabled. Both of these populations are vulnerable to negative effects of low access to medical care and are poised to have significant increases in quality of life with access to telehealth services. Businesses in this area are very small and require adequate broadband access in order to promote products and diversify customer bases. All fiber connections will support 1 Gigabit (Gbps) speeds upstream/1Gbps downstream service and be priced under the current pricing model for KCI.

“KCEC understands our customer population and due to the rural nature of many of the homes and businesses in this area, coupled with the overall economic status of its residents, there is an

immediate need for an affordable fiber network. We are incredibly grateful to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for recognizing our commitment to deliver modern products and high speed services to those within our Northern New Mexico communities that are underserved,” said KCEC CEO Luis A. Reyes.

This project is expected to kick-off in late 2022 with an estimated completion date of late 2023 in to early 2024.

**About Kit Carson Electric Cooperative**

Formed in 1944, Kit Carson is a member owned electric distribution cooperative in northern New Mexico and is the second largest cooperative in the state. Kit Carson is one of 16 electric cooperatives that serve rural New Mexico communities, serving nearly 30,000 members in Taos, Colfax and Rio Arriba counties. To learn more about Kit Carson, visit [www.kitcarson.com](http://www.kitcarson.com).