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Valley Awarded $3.57M to bring Fiber Internet to Columbus & surrounding areas

Columbus, NM - The NM Department of Information Technology, through its Connect New Mexico Pilot Program, awarded Valley funding in its second wave of awards. The purpose of the program is to bridge the digital divide in unserved and underserved communities across New Mexico.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity was issued on August 10, 2022, providing $123M in funds with a maximum of $10M grant award per application. The source of funding came from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund and was Authorized by New Mexico House Bill 2. The application window was opened in 3 waves with dues dates of September 23, 2022, December 9, 2022, and an upcoming deadline of February 27, 2023.

Valley submitted its application for $3,704,815 in December to qualify for the second wave of funding. Valley's project totals $5,699,716 to build 49.25 miles of fiber Internet with Valley offering 35% matching funds in the amount of $1,994,901.

The project is wholly located in Luna County, covering 4 areas to the North of Columbus, NM. The project will connect 822 premises with fiber Internet providing speeds up to 1 Gig. (map provided)

Valley expects that the Columbus community will benefit directly and indirectly from the availability of reliable high-speed broadband. Subscribers to the new service will have immediate access to online services including remote learning, telehealth, and work-from-home opportunities. The high-speed service will be a conduit to improved physical and mental health, and higher education. Members of the community will also be able to access federal, state, and local government websites for job search activities and program registration purposes. Indirectly, VTC expects that economic opportunities will improve as businesses gain access to rural jobseekers, providing opportunity for higher-paying jobs.

"Since 1962, Valley's sole mission has been to enhance the quality of life in rural communities by connecting them to the communications network. Connecting our rural communities to high-speed fiber internet is not just about access to technology, it's about access to opportunity. By investing in infrastructure that brings reliable and affordable internet to those in poverty-stricken areas, we are opening doors to education, healthcare, and economic growth that were previously closed. This is not just a technological advancement, it's a step towards equality and progress for all. "said, Steve Metts, CEO of Valley TeleCom Group.

Local Community Support

Christine Ann Harvey, Executive Director of the - Greater Luna County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. shared her perspective in a support letter for the project, saying: **"**This grant directly speaks to

Deming Luna County Community and Economic Development's mission to build and maintain a flourishing community by growing from withing. Creating opportunities for our diverse population is our priority. This project is consistent with the goal of enabling economic business vitality and community development in communities like Columbus."

Mayor Salas, Village of Columbus shared, "As the Village grows, Valley Telephone plays an important role in economic development. The Columbus Regions project is essential and will provide additional connectivity for our local workforce and will continue to spur economic development in Luna County."
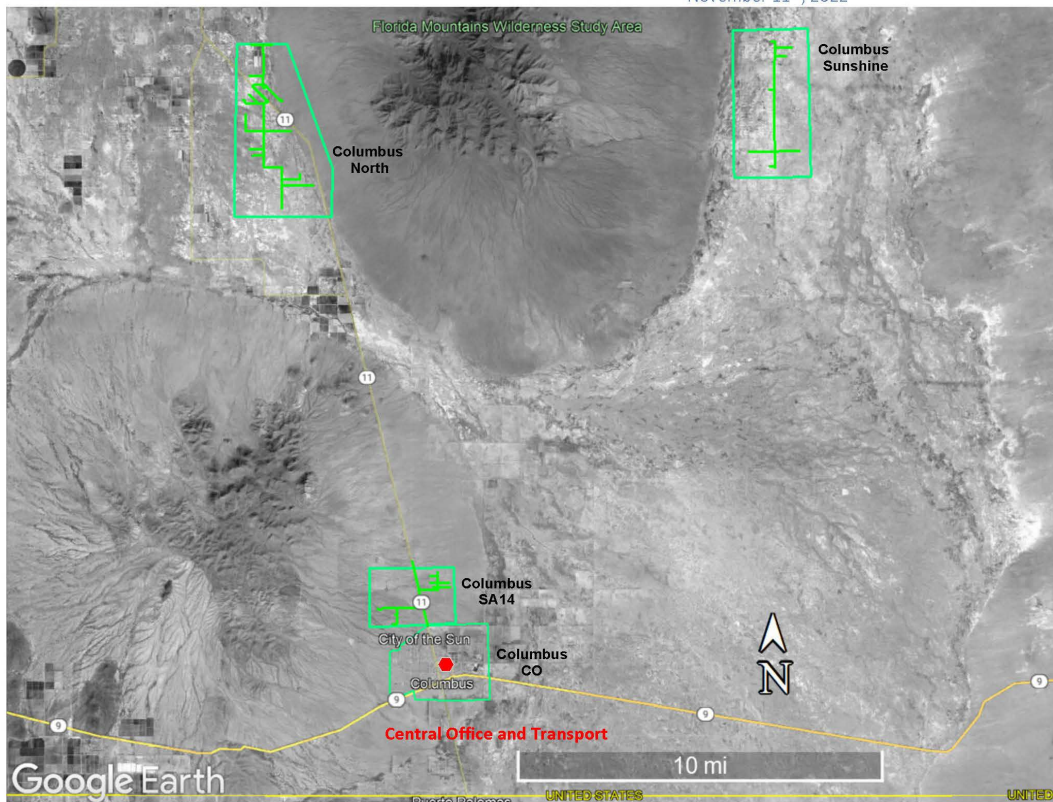
The project will be built out within 3 years of the grant award, Valley provides regular updates on project construction at www/vtc.net/fiber.

About Valley TeleCom Group
Valley TeleCom Group is a local telecommunications company that provides high-speed Internet, phone and business solutions to southeast Arizona and southwest New Mexico. Valley has offices in Clifton, AZ; Safford, AZ; and Willcox, AZ and have been providing services since 1962. www.vtc.net

Fiber Investment for Columbus New Mexico Areas
Proposed Service Area Project Map
November 11th, 2022

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