

Six tribal libraries and two schools in north-central New Mexico aggregated their demand for broadband and built two tribally-owned and -operated, 60-mile fiber-optic networks. The first tribal projects of their kind since the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) launched the E-rate modernization in 2014, and the largest E-rate award in the state of New Mexico in 2016—the high-speed broadband networks deliver superior speeds at significantly lower costs, with an ability to scale their usage to meet future broadband

reside at the heart of their communities in every sense—from their central location within their pueblos, to their core functions of language preservation and learning. They played a key role in building trust among their tribal leadership and educating leaders about the value of connectivity for their communities. With the complexities, challenges, and duration of these E-rate projects, tribal libraries provided a collective voice on the importance of broadband, and they continue to play a vital role in digital inclusion and digital literacy efforts, bridging

generational divides and integrating new technologies to support their traditional communities.

Even though most tribal libraries have temporarily closed in response to Covid-19, they have remained a gateway for connectivity. As a result, community members continue to access the signals from library park. Connectivity has been more critical than ever for access to education, health resources, and connect socially.

As with the development of all library broadband networks, no one person or organization bore sole responsibility for the creation of these networks. Making them a reality required leadership, cooperation, and coordination across federal, state, and tribal levels. Reaching agreement on a shared vision and

learning about the new E-rate rules and application process to adhering to E-rate require-

By working together to build the infrastructure, the tribes gained many benefits. Applying as a consortium yielded far greater results than operating alone. The tribes were able to share resources, such as IT expertise, as well as allocate rights-of-way and codify their legal agreements as necessary. The tribes also were able to plan their network— # A A o



