

Beginning in the summer of 2010, **Fast Forward New Mexico (FFNM)**, a three-year, grant-funded program, partners with 16 of New Mexico's public and tribal libraries to bring free Internet training, information, and awareness to the state's residents.



### **The Program**

The mission of *Fast Forward New Mexico* is to increase statewide broadband adoption and promote computer literacy and Internet use in rural, Hispanic, and Native American populations in order to better prepare the state's citizens to participate in economic development and educational opportunities. The initiative will also reach out to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

### **Internet Access, Skills, and Relevancy**

There is a documented link between broadband deployment, jobs, and output growth. Many New Mexicans remain underserved or unserved in the areas of Internet access and proficiency. As a result, New Mexico ranks 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation for percentage of the population that uses the Internet, and 36<sup>th</sup> in availability of broadband telecommunications. There is no doubt that New Mexico's lack of broadband access, affordable rates, and Internet skills is hindering opportunities.

### **Role of the Public and Tribal Libraries**

New Mexico's public and tribal libraries are in a unique position to help alleviate these issues. Over recent years, libraries have become the sole source for Internet access and training for tens of thousands of New Mexicans. By offering free computer and Internet skills training at the libraries, FFNM offers a way for citizens to increase their skills in using the Internet for job, health, information and social needs. Libraries and communities participating in the FFNM project include Aztec, Gallup, Raton, Rio Rancho, Taos, Socorro, Silver City, Zuni, Ohkay Owingeh, Roswell, Clovis, Las Cruces, Carlsbad, Hobbs, Columbus, and the Alamosa and South Broadway Library branches in Albuquerque (in Spanish).

### **Community Involvement**

FFNM is designed to fit into the lives of each community. We begin by cultivating relationships with community members through meetings with individuals, library patrons, small business owners, local broadband providers, and community leaders. Based on community priorities, we bring Internet-related awareness events to the communities to discuss the relevancy of the Internet, how to choose a broadband provider, provide information about our training classes, and share community-based success stories.

### **Free Internet Proficiency Training**

FFNM offers 64 hours of free computer and Internet training in each community. We provide two Levels of training. Level I offers basic computer and Internet skills and teaches participants how to select, install, and maintain a computer. Level 1 also includes a class that introduces online learning and teaches participants how to become successful online students. Level II is geared towards entrepreneurs and small businesses. Level II courses focus on using Internet tools to decrease business costs and increase sales through e-commerce, e-marketing, and social media.