

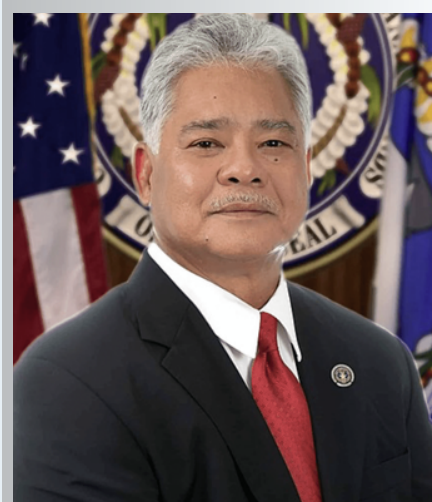
CNMI BROADBAND POLICY & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE CITIZEN-CENTRIC REPORT 2025



Message from the CNMI Broadband Policy & Development Office

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Broadband Policy and Development (BPD) Office is pleased to present this Citizen-Centric Report, as required by law. This document serves as a comprehensive account of our work since the office's establishment in April 2023 through the pivotal year of 2025. It is designed to be a transparent and accessible record of our mission, our progress, and our strategic path forward. The creation of the BPD office was a direct result of the foresight and leadership of the late Governor Arnold I. Palacios, who charged us with a clear directive: to secure funding, plan wisely, and construct the robust digital foundation upon which the CNMI's modern, resilient digital economy can flourish. We dedicate this report to his vision.

We invite every citizen to review our accomplishments and plans and to remain engaged as we transition from a phase of meticulous planning to one of concrete implementation. Your feedback is essential in shaping broadband investments that meet the specific needs of our islands.



In Loving Memory

About Us

The Broadband Policy and Development (BPD) Office, established within the Office of the Governor by Executive Directive 2023-003 on April 24, 2023, serves as the lead entity for broadband development in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Guided by this mandate, the BPD is dedicated to transforming the CNMI through universal access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet.

Our mission is to manage and lead the Commonwealth's efforts to secure and coordinate federal broadband funding, particularly the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, while developing a long-term strategy to improve internet access across all islands. By partnering with public and private sectors, we aim to strengthen infrastructure, expand the digital economy, and promote digital literacy and opportunity—ensuring every resident has the connectivity needed for education, healthcare, business, and daily life.

The Office is led by the Special Assistant to the Governor for Broadband Policy and Development and supported by a core team of eight full-time employees.

Vision Statement

The CNMI Broadband Policy and Development (BPD) Office's vision is to empower all CNMI residents with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet—fostering economic growth, expanding educational opportunities, and improving quality of life across the islands.



CITIZEN-CENTRIC REPORT 2025



Strategic Goals

- **Expand Broadband Infrastructure:** Prioritize deployment in unserved and underserved areas to ensure every home and business is connected.
- **Promote Digital Equity and Inclusion:** Ensure all residents have the skills and resources to participate fully in the digital age.
- **Implement Federal Programs:** Effectively and efficiently manage the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity Programs.
- **Collaborate with Stakeholders:** Work closely with public and private partners to develop a sustainable broadband strategy for the Commonwealth.
- **Deploy Last-Mile Fiber:** Target the deployment of last-mile fiber infrastructure to all unserved broadband serviceable locations.
- **Establish Internet Independence:** Secure direct landings of Trans-Pacific Cables to reduce latency and enhance connectivity.



Operational Structure

The BPD operates within the CNMI Office of the Governor. It is led by the Special Assistant to the Governor for Broadband Policy and Development and comprises a team of 8 full-time employees (FTEs).

Demographics Served

The CNMI Broadband Policy and Development (BPD) Office serves all residents of the CNMI.

Services and Activities

The CNMI Broadband Policy and Development (BPD) Office engages in the following services and activities:

- Broadband planning and policy development
- Infrastructure deployment and upgrade support
- Community outreach and education
- Grant writing, management and reporting





Progress Towards Strategic Goals

Between 2023 and 2024, the BPD achieved critical milestones that laid the groundwork for broadband expansion, securing over \$81 million through the BEAD Program. The BPD Office completed all 10 federal milestones and submitted a compliant proposal. In 2025, BPD shifted from planning to implementation, launching a transparent, competitive process to select subgrantees for 21 Project Funding Areas. Proposals featured diverse technologies, including fiber-optic, HFC, LEO satellite, and fixed wireless. Through a “Benefit of the Bargain” round, BPD saved more than \$50 million compared to initial estimates, with provisional awards of \$31.4 million allocated based on cost efficiency, performance, and resilience standards tailored to the CNMI.

Key planning milestones achieved during this period include:

- **Comprehensive Planning:** The BPD developed a comprehensive Five-Year Action Plan for broadband development and a separate CNMI Digital Equity 5 Year Plan, both of which received approval from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).
- **Precise Mapping:** The BEAD Challenge Process was successfully completed, leading to the identification of nearly 11,000 unserved or underserved locations across the Commonwealth. This was a crucial step to ensure federal funding is directed to the areas of greatest need.
- **Infrastructure Resiliency:** The BPD collaborated with Google to secure three new subsea cables—the Proa, Hawaii Interlink, and TPU—which are poised to significantly enhance connectivity and reduce the high latency challenges historically faced by the CNMI due to its geographical isolation. In January of 2025, an MOU was signed between Google and the CNMI.
- **Immediate Access Solutions:** For residents in the Northern Islands, the BPD directly assisted the Mayor’s Office with a successful grant application to the Department of the Interior (DOI) for satellite connectivity. Additionally, the BPD successfully advocated for Starlink to expand its satellite internet coverage to the CNMI at a reduced rate, offering a practical, immediate solution for residents.
- **Subgrant Process:** Successfully conducted and completed the Subgrant selection process, with a provisional awardee chosen to serve all BSL locations across the CNMI.
- **BEAD Final Proposal:** Submitted the BEAD Final Proposal and are now awaiting approval from NTIA.
- **Governor’s Broadband Bootcamp (GBBC):** Collaborated with Northern Marianas College, Department of Labor, Northern Marianas Technical Institute, and Island Training Solutions to launch and complete the GBBC in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. A total of 269 participants graduated with fiber certifications. Each participant received a living stipend of up to \$6,000.
- **Digital Equity Grants:** Successfully closed out all Digital Equity Grants.
- **USDA BTA Grant Funding:** Secured \$500,000 from the USDA BTA Grant to hire an environmental firm to assist with BEAD program implementation.
- **Environmental Firm RFP:** Issued an RFP to secure an environmental firm to support BEAD program activities.
- **Public Awareness:** Continued efforts to enhance public awareness of broadband opportunities and resources throughout the CNMI.
- **Device Distribution Project:** Partnered with the Office on Aging and Veterans Affairs to provide laptops to citizens in need over the next year. This initiative aims to bridge the digital divide for our most vulnerable populations.
- **SafeSpace Privacy Pod Initiative:** In collaboration with community anchor institutions, we will provide up to 10 privacy pods to be made available for public use within the next year. This project will enhance privacy and foster secure, quiet spaces for personal or professional activities.

FINANCIAL DATA



Revenue Sources

The CNMI Broadband Policy & Development (BPD) Office receives 100% of its revenue from Federal Grants. Currently, the CNMI Broadband Policy & Development (BPD) Office secured funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA) Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, U.S. Treasury Capital Project Funds (CPF), and U.S. Department of Agriculture Broadband Technical Assistance Grant (BTA).

Additionally, the BPD Office secured two Digital Equity (DE) grants: \$2.1 million for the Capacity Grant, \$2.5 million for the Competitive Grant, and \$150,000 for planning. All awards have been terminated by the federal government, following a nationwide decision to discontinue the Digital Equity programs.

Costs for Services

- Personnel costs
- Infrastructure development
- Program implementation
- Administrative expenses

NTIA BEAD FUNDING

\$81 million

USDA BTA GRANT

\$500,000

US TREASURY CPF

\$14 million



PERFORMANCE REPORT



Future Challenges and Economic Outlook

- Ensuring timely and efficient implementation of BEAD-funded projects.
- Promoting sustainable broadband adoption and use among residents.
- Monitoring the impact of broadband expansion on the CNMI economy.
- Adapting to evolving technology and broadband needs.
- Implementing the strategies outlined in the Five-Year Action Plan to achieve universal broadband access by 2030.
- Working with internet service providers to shift the "edge" of the internet closer to the CNMI to reduce latency and improve internet speeds.
- Addressing the complexities of the CNMI's challenging geography and dispersed islands during broadband deployment.
- Overseeing the ongoing maintenance and upgrade requirements of the broadband network once it is established.
- Continuing negotiations for additional trans-Pacific submarine fiber optic cable landings in the CNMI.
- Assisting with implementing the comprehensive Cyber Security plan to enhance cybersecurity measures.
- Expanding digital literacy efforts to prepare residents for emerging technologies, with initiatives such as the Device Distribution Project and the SafeSpace Privacy Pod Initiative which will support workforce readiness and broaden access to economic opportunities.

