About Us

The CNMI Broadband Policy and Development (BPD) Office, established by Governor Arnold I. Palacios in April 2023, works to improve internet access across the Commonwealth. Our mission is to develop a strategy for reliable, affordable high-speed internet for all residents. By partnering with public and private sectors, we aim to enhance infrastructure, expand the digital economy, and promote digital equity, ensuring everyone has the technology access needed for education, healthcare, and daily life.

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, educational opportunities, and improved quality of life.**

Strategic Goals

- Expand broadband infrastructure throughout the CNMI, especially in unserved and underserved areas.
- Promote digital equity and inclusion, ensuring all residents have the skills and resources to thrive in the digital age.
- Implement the BEAD and Digital Equity Programs effectively and efficiently.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to develop and implement a sustainable broadband strategy for the CNMI.
- Achieve the CNMI's vision of universal broadband access by 2030, as outlined in the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan.
- Deploy last-mile fiber infrastructure to all unserved broadband serviceable locations in the CNMI.
- Establish Internet Independence via direct landings of Trans-Pacific Cables.

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 6 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
- Digital equity programs and initiatives
- Community outreach and education
- Grant writing, management and reporting

BPD | CNMI OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
BROADBAND
POLICY & DEVELOPMENT
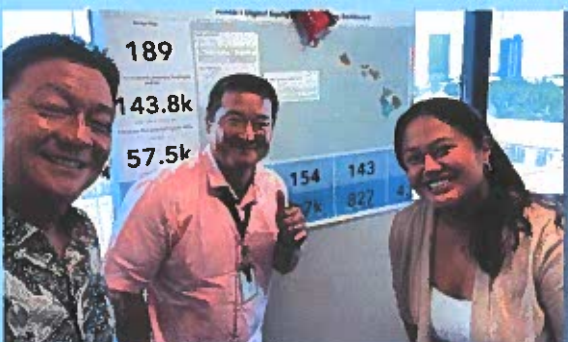
Progress Towards Strategic Goals

- Developed a comprehensive Five-Year Action Plan for broadband development, outlining strategies for infrastructure deployment, digital equity, and adoption.
- Identified key challenges to broadband deployment, including high latency due to the CNMI's geographical location, and developed strategies to mitigate these challenges.
- Conducted a thorough Existing Broadband Funding analysis to identify and leverage available resources.
- Secured a significant increase in federal broadband funding to accelerate infrastructure enhancements and internet accessibility.
- Secured $81 million in federal funding for broadband deployment through the BEAD Program.
- Secured $150,000 in federal funding for digital equity planning through the Digital Equity Planning Grant.
- Established a detailed definition of Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) and conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to ensure their connectivity requirements are addressed.
- Developed the CNMI Digital Equity 5 Year Plan and received NTIA approval.
- Developed the CNMI BEAD Initial Proposal, outlining broadband projects for funding consideration and received NTIA approval.
- Successfully completed the BEAD Challenge Process, identifying nearly 11,000 unserved or underserved locations and received NTIA approval.
- Established partnerships with numerous community organizations to promote broadband adoption and use.
- Collaborated with Google on securing three new subsea cables – the Proa, Hawaii Interlink and TPU – that will significantly enhance broadband connectivity in the CNMI.
- Launched the Governor's Broadband Bootcamp in partnership with Northern Marianas College, Northern Marianas Technical Institue, Island Training Solutions, and the CNMI Department of Labor to train local workers in fiber optic technology.
- Successfully advocated for Starlink to expand its satellite internet coverage to the CNMI at a reduced rate.
- Directly assisted the Northern Islands Mayor's Office with a successful DOI TAP grant application for funding needed for Satellite connectivity in the Northern Islands.
- Led the nationwide BEAD Planning effort, achieving 10 out of 10 planning milestones and beginning BEAD program implementation.
- Worked closely with OIT and HSEM to develop and received approval for a comprehensive Cyber Security plan from the federal government.
- Enhanced public awareness of broadband opportunities and resources.

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 and the Digital Equity Program.

NTIA's BEAD funding for **broadband deployment** in the CNMI.

$81m

$150,000

NTIA's Digital Equity funding for **digital equity planning** in the CNMI.

Costs for Services

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

PERFORMANCE REPORT

Future Challenges and Economic Outlook

- Ensuring timely and efficient implementation of BEAD-funded projects.
- Addressing workforce development needs to support broadband deployment and maintenance.
- 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.
- Implementing workforce development programs to train residents for high-paying tech sector jobs related to fiber network deployment and maintenance.
- Launching digital literacy and digital equity programs to ensure residents can take full advantage of new digital developments.