



For Immediate Release

October 01, 2018

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NTUA and NN Division of General Services find solution to vastly improve Internet Services to all Tribal Offices

FORT DEFIANCE, AZ – The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority and the Navajo Nation Division of General Services are proud to announce a partnership that will significantly improve the internet/broadband services for tribal offices throughout the Navajo Nation.

For years, the Navajo Nation government faced considerable challenges with broadband and telecommunications infrastructure, thereby creating a digital divide among Navajo Nation offices. Currently, an outside entity is providing broadband services to the Navajo Nation that it is not meeting the bandwidth needs that tribal offices require. The main tribal offices in Window Rock have good bandwidth; however, all satellite tribal offices outside Window Rock do not have good bandwidth service. NTUA and Navajo Nation Division of General Services have reached an agreement to improve the primary problem Navajo Nation offices experience - the lack of broadband bandwidth and its transport. The aim was to find a solution.

The agreement is a result of a short-term pilot program established last fall. The aim was to find a solution and take advantage of what is readily available – in this case – direct access to the vast 570-mile fiber optic broadband network built and operated by NTUA.

“We are very pleased with this development. Collaboration was key,” said NTUA General Manager Walter Haase. “This is why NTUA invested into building the fiber optic network in 2013. We knew that a broadband network would be needed to meet the growing technology needs of the Navajo Nation. This agreement is two-fold; providing better internet service and saving the NN money.”

The Navajo Nation Division of General Services oversees the Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology (NNDIT) and the Navajo Nation Telecommunication and Utilities departments (NNTU), which administer the broadband/internet network for tribal branches, divisions, departments, and offices. The agreement will allow NNDIT services to unite governmental offices across the Nation through technology because there will be enough bandwidth to offer additional internet, Video conferencing services, and VOIP (low-cost telephone services over internet).

Under the new agreement, the Navajo Nation Division of General Services will purchase bulk broadband from NTUA, allowing internal government offices to upgrade internet services, including public safety, fire department and chapter houses.

“The collaboration between Navajo Nation Division of General Service and NTUA to evaluate and truly understand the needs of the Navajo Nation government, both at the main government campus and agency offices is a priority set by Begaye-Nez Administration” Ms. Joelynn Ashley, Executive Director, Navajo Nation Division of General Services.

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A pilot program that led to this new agreement started last fall when NTUA, Navajo Nation Division of General Services, the Navajo Nation Department of Information Technology (NNDIT), and the Navajo Nation Telecommunications and Utilities (NNTU) representatives met to review the broadband width of the Navajo Nation information technology network. They agreed that tribal government must have sufficient bandwidth to operate in order to meet the current/future needs.

“We sat down to discuss a roadmap on how two IT entities – us and NNDIT - can work together to improve the bandwidth needs of the internal Navajo Nation government,” said NTUA Business Development engineer Monroe Keedo, adding that the meetings analyzed the overall condition of the Navajo Nation information system/network, including an overview of the constraints and resources.

Using a small focus group of tribal offices, NTUA amplified the bandwidth and the team gauged the results. NNDIT noted a 70% increase in system download speeds and update times. NNDIT also found that the Navajo Nation lacked a reliable transport network necessary to connect other Navajo governmental office access the Nation.

“Navajo Nation Division of General Services will continue to work on increasing the bandwidth speed to meet the present and future needs for both government and economic development,” said Ms. Ashley.

As the pilot program ended in March 2018, both entities realized that it was time to consider a change in the NNDIT network and expand the transport capacity across the Nation to other governmental locations.

“When we found a solution, we started looking at the cost,” Keedo said, adding that it was evident that purchasing in bulk made the most sound business sense for the Nation.

It was determined that the initial capital cost would be about \$2 million dollars and a yearly service agreement cost, saving the Nation 85% in capital and there would be a 66% cost saving in annual reoccurring cost.

“We also agreed to continue partnering on technical resources and expertise to test, learn and establish reliable service baseline for future growth and productivity,” he said, commending the Division of General Services management for securing long-term affordable solution that would benefit the tribal government network. “Without working together and forming partnerships, we would not have developed a sustainable solution for the Navajo Nation.”

The team believes that the establishment of this new service agreement will also open the doors to numerous telecom applications and present opportunities for the Navajo Nation to pursue sustainable economic development initiatives.