

**DOC-NTIA-OTIA (US)
Tribal Transcript**

**Moderator: Laura Spining
April 21st, 2021**

Laura Spining:

0:50

Good morning or afternoon as the case may be, depending on where in the world you are joining us from today for the Broadband USA Webinar Series on NTIA's Broadband Grant Program. For today's program we'll focus on the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program that was passed under the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 back in December of 2020. To get started I'm going to walk you through a couple of housekeeping items.

1:19

To start with, we will take question and answer as a part of this webinar. We'll do that via the Q&A box as part of GoToWebinar. It's on the right-hand control panel of your screen.

1:35

We'll also be making this presentation, the recording from today, as well as the transcript available on our website at <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/past-event>.

1:47

We'll make it available within the week, so we'll definitely have it up by next Wednesday, April 28, and we'll make every effort to get it up before then.

2:04

We have a fantastic lineup of presenters today. All of them are my colleagues here at the Department of Commerce and NTIA. First up we'll hear from Douglas Kinkoph, he is the Associate Administrator for NTIA's Broadband Programs.

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The official name of our office is the Office of Telecommunications and Information Applications. Doug actually spent the better part of 2019 and 2020 serving as the administrator for NTIA and only in late 2020, came back to head up his role with our broadband offices.

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Doug also spent most of his career in the private sector with service providers, XO, you might have known them as NextLink and a good bit of his career at Sound Path Conferencing Services. We're thrilled to have Doug and his expertise on the NTIA team.

3:05

We also have Adam Geisler. Adam serves as the liaison to Tribal Nation for the First Responder Network Authority and, is really just on loan to NTIA,

helping us set up this Tribal broadband connectivity program, and has been just a wealth of knowledge and experience. I know he's worked with many of the folks who are interested in this program, so we're thrilled to have Adam with us today.

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We also have Jean Rice. Jean is a senior Broadband Program Specialist with NTIA. Jean spent the early part of her career, consulting with states and localities on their broadband plans and programs, advising on things like rights of way, and negotiating with service providers to take services to areas where it didn't exist.

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In Jean's time at NTIA, she's really been a champion of rural broadband on Tribal broadband programs, as well as leading the way on Smart Cities and Smart Communities.

4:12

Finally, we have Karen Archer Perry. Karen is a Senior Policy Analyst with NTIA, who started her career at Bell Labs, and Lucent Technologies. And spent, I think, 20 years there, before joining the Gates Foundation, where she really built a foundation of expertise in digital inclusion and working with libraries.

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Karen has, as of this month, been with NTIA, all of five years, and we are so thrilled to have her experience and expertise on the team.

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Finally, myself, I'll serve as your moderator today. I'm Laura Spining, and I serve as the Deputy Associate Administrator for the broadband programs at NTIA.

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All right. We've got a full agenda today. For our webinar, first, Doug Kinkoph, is going to share with us some insights on the Biden administration and broadband.

5:03

I'm sure that you've seen quite a bit in it in the news recently, as this administration has been very bold about ensuring that all Americans get access to affordable, reliable broadband.

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Then Adam Geisler is going to talk to us in a little bit more detail about the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and the Nation-to-Nation Consultations that we conducted in February and some of the insights that we learned from that consultation process.

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Then Jean Rice is going to share some perspective on allowable projects under the program, and things to consider in putting projects together, as well as best practices around planning for those projects.

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Finally, Karen Perry is going to share with us some of the planning resources that are available, both from the Broadband USA website, as well as other resources that are generally publicly available and at your disposal.

6:02

And of course, we'll wrap it up with some of the questions and answers that you'll put into the question-and-answer box via the GoToWebinar control panel. So, with that, I will turn it over to Doug, to kick us off. Doug,

Doug Kinkoph:

6:19

Thank you, Laura. Thank you for the introduction. As Laura said, I'm Doug Kinkoph, the Associate Administrator for NTIA's Broadband programs.

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Let me start off by just sharing a quote with you.

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I believe this quote is applicable to all types of infrastructure, but I truly believe it particularly underscores the importance of broadband and the need to connect to 100% of Americans.

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Connecting 100% of Americans to broadband is critical to ensure Americans have the opportunity to fully participate in the digital economy, whether that's utilizing distance learning, telehealth, launching home based businesses, or even helping communities attract new businesses.

7:05

NTIA has been working to connect America in one way or another, since its inception. In connecting all Americans, we need to first focus on those communities of greatest need.

7:16

Connecting all Americans will support job creation and workforce development by ensuring Americans have access, not only to broadband, but to devices and digital skills.

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To achieve these goals, though, it will require collaboration with many parties, states, Tribes, industry, and federal agencies. It will also require accurate data to inform these policies and investments.

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Millions of Americans lack access to reliable broadband, and that is why the administration is seeking \$100 billion to solve this problem. 17 million Americans do not have basic broadband speeds of 25/3 megabits per second, 21% of Tribal lands and 17% of rural living do not have speeds of 25 megabits download and three megabits per second upload.

8:10

While 95.6% of households have access to 25/3 megabits per second broadband, only 68.9% of households subscribe to that service at that level or above. The map to the right,

8:25

The areas in red show you those locations in the United States, based on the FCC benchmark speed of 25/3, that don't have access to that speed. So, I think this underscores the problem that the country is facing, based on ensuring that all Americans have access to reliable broadband.

8:46

Not only do millions of Americans lack access to reliable broadband, the option is uneven across the country. 65 million Americans do not use the internet at all. 10 million internet users rely solely on mobile data plans. Five million households not online identified cost as their main reason for not using the internet. Unconnected Americans are disproportionately likely to be low-income, nonwhite, Tribal, older, and differently abled.

9:22

It is a crosscutting issue that we need to address and it's these statistics that I've mentioned not only underscore the need for connecting all Americans, but the need is further underscored by the fact that 77% of all jobs require at least some technology skills.

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48% of hiring managers say that candidates lacked the skills needed to fill open jobs. 29% percent of students without basic digital skills say they won't consider post-secondary studies. More than 12 million households lack access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

10:04

The map on the right, I think, underscores the issue relative to the lack of devices in American households. So, this map basically demonstrates through the American Community Surveys, the darker the color, the greater number of households that do not have access to a computer, smartphone, or tablet.

10:27

And those that are the darkest brown, those homes at 30% or greater or the households in those counties do not have access to a computer or smartphone or tablet.

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Having said all of this, we know that the administration is looking to solve this problem, but NTIA was provided with three programs through the Consolidation Appropriations Act of 2021, that will help start addressing these problems.

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The first is a Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant. It's focused on providing access to infrastructure and adoption on Tribal lands, such as remote learning,

Telehealth and Telehealth resources. And we've been allocated one billion dollars to implement this program.

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The second program is the Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Grant Program. And it's focused on providing funding up to \$300 million to states or political subdivisions of the state and a provider of fixed broadband services. And it focuses on building infrastructure within those states to those of greatest need.

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Then the third program is Connecting Minority Communities Pilot programs. We were allocated \$285 million to focus on providing funding to HBCU's, TCU's, MSI's, HSI's, to purchase broadband Internet access, or eligible equipment, or to hire technology personnel to help implement the programs.

12:03

Now let me turn this back over to Laura Spining, who will introduce our next guest.

Laura Spining:

Thank you so much Doug, for that background on all the Biden Administration is doing for Broadband and ensuring that all Americans have access to high speed, affordable broadband, and reliable broadband.

12:23

Next up, we've got Adam Geisler. Adam is going to give us a little bit more detail around the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, as it was passed by Congress, back in December. Adam's also going to share some of the insights that we learned through the Tribal consultation process back in February. So, with that, over to you Adam.

12:41

Adam Geisler:

Thank you, so much, Laura, for that warm welcome and greeting. And I want to thank Mr. Kinkoph for the opportunity to share today.

12:47

Also, (*native language*) Miiyuyum Adam Geisler.

12:54

Good morning or good afternoon, no matter where you reside. I want to say hello to you in my traditional language of the Luiseño people and the Payomkowishum people.

13:01

Today I'm going to be providing an overview of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, and the Nation-to-Nation consultation that has occurred with the program to date. All right. So, a little bit about the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, also known as the \$1 billion dollar Fund, that I hear from many of you refer to it out there. We get a lot of questions around who can apply, what can we use the money for, when is the NOFO coming out, etc. And so, I just wanted to spend a quick second here to talk

about a couple of those items. So, number one, who's eligible to apply? This information has been pulled directly out of the statute, but Tribal governments, organizations, Tribal colleges, or universities, also known as TCU's, the Department of Hawaiian homelands on behalf of the Native Hawaiian community and Native corporations in reference to the Alaskan Village Corporations.

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Additionally, what can you spend the dollars on? You can use the funds to expand for broadband adoption and deployment on Tribal lands as well as to support distance learning and remote work and telehealth during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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So, when? NTIA anticipates accepting applications for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity program in the summer of 2021, So, keep your eyes open for when the NOFO comes out. So, let's talk a little bit more about where you can find the information related to eligible entities within the statute. So, you can find eligible entity information within section 905(a)(8) of the act where it stipulates the following eligible entities.

14:33

Tribal governments, Tribal colleges or universities, the Department of Hawaiian homelands on behalf of Native Hawaiian community, including Native American education programs, Tribal organizations, and native corporations as defined under Section three of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

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In addition to eligible entities, I also want to point you to Section 905(a)(13), of the Act, that also discusses eligible lands. As I know, many of you have curiosity about what lands you can deploy services on.

15:07

Any land located within the boundaries of, one, An Indian reservation, Pueblo or Rancheria, or two, A former reservation within Oklahoma, any land not located within the boundaries of an Indian reservation, Pueblo or Rancheria.

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Where the title to which is held in trust by the United States, for the benefit of an Indian Tribe, or an individual Indian, by an Indian Tribe, or an individual Indian subject, to restriction against alienation under the laws of the United States or by a dependent Indian community.

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Also, any land within a region established pursuant to Section 7(a) of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act, 43 U.S. Code 1606 (a). Also, Hawaiian homelands as defined in Section 801 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-determination Act, also known as NAHASDA of 1996 25 U.S. Code 4221.

16:03

I want you guys to pay attention to this. Those areas are communities designated by the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, of the Department of Interior, that are near, adjacent, or contiguous to reservations where financial assistance and social service programs are provided to Indians because of their status as Indians.

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In addition, let's talk a little bit about some of the key requirements of the Act. So, 180 days from award for grantee, you must commit those funds. In addition, one-year completion deadline is what we're talking about for digital inclusion, telehealth, education, and telework projects. Additionally, there's a one-year completion deadline for infrastructure projects with extensions that can be requested, and I want to highlight this with extensions that can be requested.

17:01

Lastly, I want to point out that only 2% allowed by the Act for an eligible entity will be allowed to be used for administrative expenses. Again, all of this information can be found within the Act and within the statute within 905.

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I also want to point out that eligible entities receiving funds, excuse me, eligible entities receiving awards for new construction of broadband infrastructure must prioritize projects to unserved households unserved by the definition of the Act is 25 down and three up.

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So, some clarification, the timeline for the project for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program grant projects. The Act provides for a one-year award period from the receipt of grant funds, extensions for infrastructure projects,

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The assistant secretary may extend the project period required for the expenditure of the funds under the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program for an eligible entity that proposes to use the grant funds for construction of broadband infrastructure.

18:07

If the eligible entity certifies that: one, the eligible entity has a plan for use of the grant funds, two: The construction project is underway or three: extenuating circumstances require an extension of the time to allow the project to be completed. Extensions are not available for broadband use and adoption projects.

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So, for those of you that are wondering, I want to highlight that again, if you're looking at non infrastructure, extensions are not available for broadband use and adoption projects. So, I'm really excited to put this out there publicly, for those of you that were wondering.

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And for those of you that provided feedback during the Tribal consultation process, we heard you, there is no match required for this program.

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So, just to recap, in addition to the information regarding the Act and the statute, within 905, we also at NTIA, conducted a Nation-to-nation consultation process where we embarked on three individual Tribal consultation dates on February 5th, February 10th, and February 12th of 2021.

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I want to point out that within this presentation, you will find it on the Broadband USA website, where the Tribal information is housed. And the link that you'll notice here, that is blue for February 5th, 10th, and 12th, will take you directly to the videos of the consultations that were conducted on those dates.

19:42

In addition, we received over 50 written comments during that consultation process, and we also have a link to the comments that were provided, as well, for those of you that would like to look at what others submitted for their responses.

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I'm really proud to say that, through robust dialog, the folks at NTIA and the team working on the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program are committed to building a program that meets Tribes where they are and on their path to connectivity for their communities.

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So, for those of you that may not have had an opportunity to participate during the Tribal consultation sessions that we held or submitted your comments in writing, I did want to share with you a little bit about some of the topic areas that we did consult upon as we developed the NOFO.

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Number one, we looked at what were the Tribal priorities that we heard through the consultative process. And we heard quite a bit of information in terms of what the needs were for priorities, everything ranging from infrastructure to affordability to digital inclusion.

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Second, we had a conversation about what does equitable distribution look like? We heard quite a bit of feedback from folks, wanting us to make sure that we understood that all Tribes are unique and different, and have unique and different needs from one another. So, we're really taking into consideration the need for an equitable distribution process as we look at the deployment of this program.

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Third, we had a conversation about the National Environmental Protection Act and how we're going to be working to protect cultural resources as we work towards the deployment of broadband infrastructure underneath this program.

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Fourth, we looked at unserved areas as defined under the statute and again, I want to point out that unserved is 25 down 3 up.

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I'm going to make this really simple. If you're not able to have a FaceTime conversation or edit a document live, you probably don't have 25 down or three up, and are likely falling within the categories of unserved areas.

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Fifth, we had a conversation with the Tribes and Tribal leaders about how we can make reporting simple and easy. As we recognize here at NTIA that many of you are still reeling through the effects of the pandemic within your communities and that we want to make sure that we're not providing an overly burdensome process around the reporting as you move forward and deploying to meet your community's needs around broadband.

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With that, it is my pleasure to go ahead and introduce Ms. Jean Rice, senior Broadband specialist with NTIA to carry us through the next conversation about the Tribal broadband connectivity program and do a deeper dive into concepts around eligible projects. Jean?

22:32

Jean Rice:

Great. Thanks so much, Adam. I appreciate that. I appreciate the work you did on all the Nation-to-Nation consultations as well. I'm honored to be here today and I'm so excited to be working on this grant program that is dedicated to Tribal broadband.

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I do want to say how much I appreciated the work that went into people's comments during the consultation process and in the comments that were delivered and sent to us.

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I very much appreciate the amount of work everyone put into it and the way that people expressed what the needs were, and what were kind of gaps and things that were problematic, so that we could kind of have a chance to think about them as we were working on the NOFO. So, we really appreciate that. We also appreciate the Tribal organizations who met with us.

23:21

Many of them NCAI, ATNI, NTTA, United Eastern Southern Tribes, Tribal Net, and a whole host of others, and kind of working with people who are, talking to people who are working on broadband daily and have worked on it over the years, has really helped us, as well, get more sense of what the needs

are. And I have to say that what was very clear through all of the comments and discussions was that there's such a great need in Indian Country.

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The one billion is terrific and obviously won't meet all the needs. But what it can help with is the kind of things we want to see when broadband happens, which is, you know, improved education, healthcare, economic development, and public safety...the whole host of things that Tribal governments are very concerned about. Also very important is kind of the inclusion and use side so that people actually can take well advantage of what's needed.

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Over the years I've been very impressed with the work done by the Tribal organizations, Tribal Broadband Champions and Tribes to work on broadband and it's such a difficult one, in areas where it is economically unfeasible unless you get outside funding to assist that. It is impressive to see how much work has been done and how many Tribes have been able to move forward or have plans to move forward or have ideas of where they want to go.

24:44

I'm also pleased to see that there were so many partnerships developed. Partnerships with state governments, economic development groups, other telecommunications, Tribal telecommunications authorities, private companies, and private providers. It's very impressive, as well as kind of the reactions during Covid which was so devastating.

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The Tribes had taken some, we're building out their 2.5 systems, so they could provide all the uses for healthcare and education. One Tribe actually did public Wi-Fi, so that people drive by and hand in a notebook and get their medical services in their car and drive past. The innovation and the dedication are very remarkable.

25:29

What I want to talk to you about today, is, kind of, what are some of the eligible projects that you can do, both on the infrastructure side, and on the use and inclusion side. So, I'm going start today with infrastructure. As you know, networks are complicated. Many of you have built them, and run them. Others are looking to run them, or work with other partners as they do so.

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And we'll be talking about last mile, middle mile, and submarine cable landings. Last miles where we'd like to start with, which is so important because it goes to the home.

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It's critical for students at home, for people who want to telework, especially now that there are more and more places that are going to be allowing

telework. As well as the whole host of Telehealth projects, but last mile to the home is very important.

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People are doing it through a number of ways. Some are building out. 2.5. gigahertz, others are going fiber to the home. Some places have to upgrade. They may be upgrading from 10/1 service. So, they might be upgrading from copper service, but the idea is that you're going to do last mile to the home.

26:31

When you're thinking about last mile also think about how you serve the institutions in your area? So, for example, you may have some great connectivity to your hospital, but do you have it to your health centers, you know, all the schools, let's see if we can have the schools participate at all levels, you know, even head start. Does head start need a connection?

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I think taking a look at, you know, how can we help the cultural area to go to the museum, can it go to the various community or Tribal sites that you think people like to congregate and meet at, because those are places that are going to be important for them to be able to have access.

27:09

So that is kind of, the key, is not only last mile to the home, but think about the extra capacity that will be needed to go to your institutions.

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Next, think about your businesses. You want to make sure they're well served, let's say you have a hotel that's a tourist area. You know, I've talked to a few hoteliers who will tell you in Tribal lands, they basically said, hey, you know, if people don't have their internet, we don't get as many people coming in. So, what is it that your businesses need? And it's always good to ask them, what kind of capacity they need.

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So, that's kind of the last mile of things to consider is kind of the business, the institutions, the homes. Then when it comes to middle mile, middle mile is the network connection between that kind of last mile network, and where there's a point of presence, where they have internet services that you can buy. And often, we will see, from what we've heard from a lot of comments, is that there's kind of a gap in the middle mile, in Indian country. What we don't see is, you know, sometimes we see like a big bottleneck. So, if you had a big pipe that came up and you could probably give big pipe surface on the end, but if you have a little pipe, you basically can't give robust broadband in the end.

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But we want to see is that there is affordable, high speed, very robust broadband that comes from the middle mile up. And when you're thinking about it, also think about, you know, who else might be able to fit in the

connection. So, if there are several Pueblos in a row, that might be able to use the same Middle Mile Connections, those are the kinds of things to consider.

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Obviously, in areas like Hawaii and other places, on Coast, the submarine landing stations might be an option for you for that kind of service as well. Ok, Next slide, please.

28:54

When we're looking at, you know, networks for now, and in the future, one of the things we want everybody to think about is scalability.

29:02

How do you have the capacity now and prepare yourself to scale, you know, whether it's residential business or institutions for the future, and also kind of wearing my Smart Cities hat from NTIA- some of you have already been thinking about and working on, working with me on Smart City in community and Tribal applications, and that's something to think about, because as you become more connected, these things become possible.

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So, for example, on smart Tribal lands, as people become more connected, you can think about more e-government services that could be provided. You can also take a look at, say, a one-year water system whether you want, and I know, in Alaska, there were a lot of comments about being able to do SCADA systems for water. Those are the kind of things that you'll want to kind of plan for.

29:47

Also, smart agriculture, there's been great improvements in the sensors and data analytics for agriculture, so I think that's an area to think about. If you're a farmer and you say hey, I want to make sure there's as little nitrogen in the land as possible. How do I sense I only to put nitrogen where it's absolutely needed in the field? Or, you might say hey, I am doing it, I have to say like the north-west Tribes to do for fisheries. You know, they've been doing sensing for years, but now there is new data analytics and AI that might help with giving you better decision making.

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Another thing to think about is manufacturing. Smart manufacturing, near and dear to the heart of commerce. So, if there is a manufacturing area, you know, that's something to consider, what kind of capacity do they need.

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Some Tribes run their own utilities and Smart Grid applications are very important to consider as you go forward, and then education and telemedicine, which we'll be getting into later. But those are all things to think about as you as you work on it, and how do we go through the whole scalability. What are we thinking about that we might do in the future?

31:01

Next slide, please. Then we want to go into just planning. You know, some folks have already done their planning. They are ready, they have been looking into all kinds of implementation components, but, if you haven't, this is something really to spend some time on.

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And the planning is, I think, critical to having a good network, and so I know my colleague Karen Perry will be talking about this in more detail later, but it is something for you to really consider. And that's where you think about who the partners might be that you would take on. It is through a whole host of, if you look through it, how do you engage your stakeholders? How do you know what they need? Those kind of key things as you go forward.

31:47

I just want to mention, you know, we have toolkits on our website, that are really helpful there. They're set up based on kind of the knowledge we gain working on the ground with the BTOP grants. There's one on planning, which is going to be updated. There is another one on the power of partnerships. Who should be the partners? If you have a partner? Where do you think about going through the RFP process? How do you, what do you put in a contract? Also, an implementation: what are the strategies, and what do you think about as you set up your implementation plan for these networks? And another is sustainability.

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I know there's a number of Tribes that are using it right now for 2.5 on sustainability, and the idea is, how do you make a plan that works?

32:32

Next slide, please.

32:33

And this is, one of the key things here at NTIA is we want these networks to be going on for the future and so it's very important as you go through, and you know, you go through your planning process, and you know where you are, or you have to update your planning process, and update your business plan.

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But really think about, you know, what do you need to do for your assessments? Do they have to be updated? How do you perform the market research? You need to know what kind of revenue will be coming in and determine what the demand is for the offerings you have. You know, those are very important things.

33:06

And they will fit back into kind of your long term, financial proformas, you will, the revenue becoming from Lifeline, will it be coming from the Tribe, will it be coming from institutions. You know, all of that would come from users. Those are the things you're going to be working through, as you're looking at your business planning your long-term sustainability.

33:27

Obviously, completing your environmental, cultural, and historic reviews are extremely important as you go forward, and you want to think about all your operational requirements. So, for example, are you going to have to have trucks? If you're a utility, can you use utility trucks? You know, just kind of just the nuts and bolts of running a network. And then, of course, the final one is your financial projections.

33:51

So those are very key ones, as far as I think, when you're thinking about business planning. Next slide, please. We have some, What I would say best practices, we've learned on infrastructure. One is asset inventories, you know, if you have asset inventories, it's very important to kind of see what your facilities are. You know, are there some public safety towers that have enough strength for you to add antennas? Has someone put in conduit along, say, State highways or other or Tribal lands that you can use or that you put in? You know, is there a water tower that could be used? So, the thing is, what are the assets that you can build on for broadband?

34:38

Look at it. Are they Tribal based ones? A lot of states have asset inventories and make them available.

34:44

And the federal government does. So, for example, the BIA schools have the have made their towers available for people to use. The GSA has a website that shows you every federal building, and they are also making it available for broadband use. So, this asset inventory, I think, is key and kind of helps as you go forward, knowing what's free and what the cost is.

35:08

The other thing to look at is kind of permitting, you know, look at your own processes. Is it going to be quick enough? Do you need to add people, what are the processes for BIA lands, or if you're going through state, transportation departments, or cities? You look at the processes so that you know what's needed for each and to get the information to them in a timely basis. I was talking to one Tribe who has had a long-term plan, you know, just needs funding, and they said, "Hey, we have to go through a railroad crossing. What do you suggest?" And I said, "start now." So, I think in permitting, you can never start too early.

35:44

When it comes to environmental, cultural, and historic reviews, this is key. You have to work really hard to get the right information. I might mention, if you think you're going through an area either that or an easement, where there's a potential problem you think that it may not go through you know, think about you know putting through an alternative route that you could just have approved and so that if you have to use it, you can. The easements, that's always a hard one.

36:10

Who has an easement, who has easements to provide broadband, you know, maybe your utility has it, maybe on Tribal lands that can easily be granted? There's allottee approvals, you know, that takes a lot of time. So, you have to get that started immediately like roadway rights. But, if you look through all of these, and you think ahead and plan for it, we find in the long term that the outcomes are bright, they save money, which is good.

36:35

And construction gets done on time and, you know, obviously, at least, these days with Covid we want this up as soon as possible. So that's very important, OK? Well, that's enough on infrastructure. Let me move on to the uses.

36:49

And the various kinds of things that might be able to be done in the one year that you have to work on use and inclusion.

36:59

Next slide, we have many uses, which is the, you know, education, we have Telehealth. Telework is one, digital inclusion efforts, Workforce development, and Broadband adoption options. And so, there are so many potential uses. It's good to know what is it that your community needs the most?

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So, let me just take an idea. Let's take telehealth as an idea. Let's say that for your youth, you want to make sure that they have mental health.

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You know, I guess, telehealth available to them.

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So, one of the things that Kansas State found was that if you put the telehealth booth right next to the nurse, there's not the stigma. So, they say, Hey, I'm going to the nurse's office. It's not as if it has stigma so people are very much easier to use, and I think it's easier to use, go to where people are, you know? Kind of those simple things are important.

37:58

Let's say you have a visiting nurse's program, but to get back to put up their notes, they might have to drive 2 or 3 hours, do that electronically, and get the equipment set up. And train people in it. One of the projects that's been very successful with using people's phones, and kind of computer based.

38:20

I guess we would say, for diabetes control kind of weight, ways to help the nurses check in, and also monitor how people are, has been very successful, but it also takes training on how to do it in equipment.

38:34

So, CO-Bank, which has been funding some of these projects, has found that, in rural areas, that, actually, it improves people's health outcomes, and it reduces hospital costs. So, I mean, those are the kinds of things we'd love to see happen, and through this project, OK.

38:52

Next slide, please.

38:55

I think with the best practices, when it comes to digital inclusion and other components, you know, what we see is that, you know, devices are very important.

39:07

And I think Doug earlier on, was showing us a picture of, you know, how many devices are lacking? And you could see very clearly, a lot of devices are lacking in Indian country as well. And so, this is an opportunity to, to, to go forward on that. When it comes to this technical help and support, it's important to go where people are.

39:25

The Tribes that have done really well in this, you know, have either built centers for work with their community, with their Tribal or other colleges that are nearby, or they have set it up with the community in the community centers or in the computer center that's in the community center. That's been very helpful. Training community members is super important, and so, take, for example, if you know, a Tribe would like, say, pick the things that they want to reinforce. Let's say they want to learn or have more language skills, learned.

39:55

How can the digital skills training work through that need to come up with a great process and program? There's been a lot of work done in digital inclusion, So, there are, you know, a lot of, say, scripts on how you can handle training and your training methodologies, but you want to make sure it's tied to your community and what their interests and needs are.

40:20

Next slide, please. So, for example, if you are concerned about veterans getting their telehealth, getting all the services they need, the kinds of things you'll want to do is maybe think about like, a Digital Living Room like the Rural Broadband Association did for, for veterans. So, they have a comfortable place to come in, and be trained and learn how to use the equipment. These are all things that are key as you, as you go forward. And, you know, these are just some examples of projects that have worked well. What are the ones that are kind of, I've always enjoyed seeing the results of this, just public Wi-Fi on the buses.

40:54

So, if you have kids that have to be on an hour or 2-3 to get to schools, this is, you know, just amazing help to them as they go forward. You know, people

put in these laptop program so they can get refurbished computers to do it. They can get discount computers, but the idea is getting the laptops in the kids' hands or in the hands of people who are doing other kinds of workforce training.

41:17

So, if they're training for Cybersecurity, see at the, at the Tribal college, you know, how can they then have the equipment to make sure they could continue to study at home and work on it? You know, technical help and support, critical as you go forward, in terms of having it. A lot of youth enjoy being digital connectors and helping other people understand technology.

41:39

There's a whole host of methods that people are using that you should consider, and also, then, the digital skills training as you go forth. And let's say you're having a network.

41:47

You'll want to see if the workforce training can also support the network as it goes forward. So, I mean, I think there are a lot of great projects now in Indian country, and I think people are coming up with more. We hear as people are commenting and coming in to discuss what they're going to be working on in the future in our program.

42:06

We do just have a great breadth of eligible projects. And we really do hope that we can, as Adam said, kind of, meet each Tribe where they are, so that when you're looking at planning, or whether you're looking at putting in the network, or whether you want to do telehealth and one of the telehealth ideas that this program can be of service. So, anyway, I just wanted to close to say that we're delighted at NTIA to work on this and work with you on this. Let me now turn it over, next slide, to Karen Perry, who is a Senior Policy Analyst here at NTIA and my colleague.

42:45

Karen Perry: Thank you very much, Jean. At BroadbandUSA, we're very excited about the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant Program.

42:53

We've been working on supporting communities as they plan, fund, and implement infrastructure and digital inclusion grant programs for a number of years, and we've learned a lot from the communities that we've worked with.

43:08

We also work with federal agencies to support them as they develop and support broadband programs, and we've consolidated a lot of the information that they have on our website.

43:26

I would like to give you a quick tour of that information in the event that it might be useful to you as you develop your grant applications and build out your broadband programs.

43:40

I'd like to start by talking about the one stop shop for federal permitting information. You might be aware that the Federal Government manages or controls about a quarter of the land in the United States. Much of it in the western part of the United States, and much of it, close to it or on Tribal lands.

44:02

We've worked very hard to streamline the permitting process associated with that, and much of that is in order to support the buildout of telecom networks. In order to get information associated with that, you can go to our one stop shop for permitting information on our website, where you can get information on more than a half dozen departments and federal agencies, including access to a single form for applying for permitting information.

44:33

We continue to work with all of these agencies to further streamline these processes, and we're happy to share this information with you.

44:41

We also have a one stop shop for federal funding information. Although the Tribal Broadband Grant Program is a significant grant program, there might be need for additional funding information. The Broadband Funding Search is a searchable database with all federal funding that touches broadband.

44:58

We update this funding search every year, and we're right now in the process of reaching out to all federal agencies to find out what additional funding they might have available for broadband. So, within the next two months, we'll be further updating this database with additional funds that might be available for broadband.

45:16

We're very excited because we think there'll be new funds to add to our funding search.

45:21

I've also listed some additional publications here that I think might be interesting to you. We have a broadband glossary. We have information on what speed people need, and also information on broadband costs and the deck directory and the toolkit document that Jean mentioned earlier.

45:38

I didn't list all of the documents that we offer on our website, but please go to our BroadbandUSA Publications list and search through some of the publications that are there. It's really a plethora of documents and many of them might be useful to you as you're planning your networks.

45:57

The NTIA broadband planning roadmap includes a number of steps, and these are the steps that you're likely to go through as you're planning your network.

46:05

It does start with engaging stakeholders. And I'm sure that's something that you're already doing: assembling a team, identifying your community priorities, looking at data, accessing resources, engaging partners, looking at different types of solutions, both from a technology and a financial perspective.

46:27

And then, later on, you'll be executing your strategies. As Jean mentioned, we do have a toolkit available on our website, and we will be updating that toolkit again in the next couple of months. But do download the current toolkit, and see how much it can help you, and look at that model. And think about the steps as you go through your process.

46:48

One way that we're updating the roadmap is to increase the focus on digital inclusion. While there's still an asset inventory step, whether you're looking at infrastructure or digital inclusion, you look at different assets when you're looking at digital inclusion.

47:02

The asset inventory for infrastructure involves poles and towers, and water towers. But the asset inventory, you look at, when you're looking at digital inclusion involves public libraries and broadband discount programs and public computer centers. So, the assets are different. So, the steps are really very much the same, but the things that you're looking at are very different. So, you'll see that in the upcoming toolkit when the revision comes out.

47:35

The other thing I wanted to highlight is the State Broadband Leaders Network. Again, this is searchable tool that's on our website. Our State Broadband Leaders are available in almost every state, and they're a wonderful resource to you. Sometimes state broadband leaders have their own grant programs. They oftentimes have technical assistance, sometimes a broadband mapping program. And these people can be a wonderful asset to you in your work.

48:03

If you would like to find out if there is a state broadband leader available in your state or in your area, you can go to the map on our website and click your state, and if one is available to you, you'll be able to pull down that information and get the details, including contact information.

48:23

We also have searchable information on digital inclusion resources. Our map only contains information on state and federal digital inclusion programs, but we have a wonderful archive of digital inclusion programs that we've run through our webinar series. Most recently, we did one on workforce

development and also one on educational programs. If you're planning a digital inclusion program for your community, some of these programs include wonderful case studies and contacts with people that you might consider modeling from.

48:59

I mentioned data a couple of times. We think data is an important resource as you're looking at your business plan and at your grant program.

49:09

And we've had a couple of excellent webinars on broadband data. We believe that federal data is a great place to jumpstart your broadband planning, but it's not the place to end your broadband planning. It's very important to add your own local wisdom. As you know, the broadband data is not always the end of the story. It's important to add your own insight, and to tell your own story from that data, and to add that wisdom into it.

49:37

Two webinars we've done recently, I think, provide some wonderful information to add to that. The one we did on February 17th highlights a couple of tools that you can use to download data, and also highlights some of the speed tests that you can use, one being M-Lab and the other one Ookla.

50:01

And then the one before that, in June of 2020, highlights the NTIA Internet use tools as well as the American Community Surveys. And both of them include demos by experts.

50:14

And the information is available on our website with links to the PowerPoints and wonderful information that you can use to build from.

50:26

Before we go to questions and answers, I want to leave you with one more thing, and that's a series of tools that you can use to access data, both to use for your business planning and for your grant application.

50:41

There's a number of tools listed on this slide. Some of them are Federal tools, and some of them are non-federal tools. The non-federal tools are listed with an asterisk.

50:52

NTIA does not endorse those tools, but we've listed them here for you, because we want to make sure that we give you a full set of tools. And some of these, I think, are very useful, even though they're not federal tools, and they're used oftentimes by people in the field. I just want to highlight a few of them for you.

51:10

And we've provided links for all of them, and they'll be available in your handouts.

51:15

I wanted to highlight quick facts. Quick Facts is a very easy way to get quick access to kind of a snapshot of consumer data on your community.

51:29

It gives you access to the American Community Survey data on your community. The American Community Survey is the largest random sample survey of information on communities, and it gives very detailed information on your community. So, you just have to put in the name of your community, and you'll get quick facts on your community.

51:52

You can put in your town or your county or your Tribal area, and you will get that information. Broadband now, also, you can put in zip code information and get profile information.

52:05

I wanted to highlight the two speed tests that are there, Ookla and M-Lab. Of course, you can't run the speed test if you don't have broadband. And also, you don't get very good speed test results if you have very high latency, but if you do run speed tests, you get good information that can complement and augment some of the federal data. So, it's a great way to complement the information from the federal dataset.

52:31

And I also wanted to highlight the I3 Connectivity Explorer. The nice thing about the I3 Connectivity Explorer, is it gives you a lot of other data in one place. It gives you access to the American Community Survey, the FCC Form 477 data, as well as a number of other datasets, all in one place, and it gives it to you in a community centric view.

52:55

So, you can filter it by a county, or a Tribal land, or a place, or a town.

53:01

So, all of these tools are available for you to use. Next slide, which is going to take question and answer, and I will hand it back to Laura Spining.

53:11

Laura?

Laura Spining:

53:15

Thank you, Karen. OK, I have you guys. Hopefully, I do, sorry.

53:23

I've been trying to address as many questions in the question-and-answer box, as I can, and there's a lot of questions. Hopefully, I've, I've tried to get through

quite a number of them, and I would just invite our panelists to come back on with me and try to address them.

53:54

Adam, can you hear me?

54:01

Adam Geisler: I can, Laura. Can you hear me alright?

54:04

Laura Spining: I'm curious if maybe Jean and Karen are having issues. But we'll go ahead and get started, because a lot of them are. Welcome, Karen. to Laura. Hello. Can you see me?

54:18

Karen Perry: I don't see you, but maybe that's just managing, but we can't see yet, OK.

54:25

Laura Spining: Maybe it's longer. OK, thank you. All right, so I'm trying to keep the questions up on my screen and ask them. I also made some notes. So, I'll just start at the top of those that I wrote down as they came, and this one Adam is for you.

54:47

And the question is, the concept came in a couple of times, but it gets to how will you verify the level of need or that there is need in specific communities for this program?

55:03

Adam Geisler: Sure. I think that that's a, that's a great question, and I appreciate all the comments that we're seeing.

55:08

And the question back, essentially what we're looking at and how we're defining need, I would point you back into what we're looking at in terms of unserved areas.

55:19

So, if you can demonstrate, or you're in a position right now where your services, even if you have service today, and it's not at a bare minimum, not at 25/3, Then I would say that you definitely qualify in terms of an area that has needs.

55:35

Um, here's the disclaimer: We all know that the NOFO is not out, and I apologize if you see us all dance around some of your questions, because we unfortunately can't be as direct as we'd like to, based on where the NOFO is at, hopefully, it'll be up pretty quick.

55:50

So, with that being said, I would encourage you to think about as you identify areas of need that you do think about things holistically, that you do think about key areas of your community as it relates to telehealth, as it relates to

anchor institutions in your communities, like Tribal administration buildings and those types of things, and really evaluate what does have connectivity and at the speeds that we're talking about, 25/3.

56:17

So, I guess that's probably where I'd put a period on it for now, Laura. Hopefully that helped to answer your questions a little bit. But at the end of the day, need really is going to come back to do you have the speeds or not?

If you don't, then it sounds like you're in need of better speeds.

56:34

Laura Spining:

Thank you, Adam. I do want to just be clear about a couple of things, there were a lot of, kind of administrative questions. So, I think I just want to acknowledge that I heard from a few people that a few folks had audio issues. So, we'll try to address those. There are also a lot of questions about availability of the presentation, and so I just want to repeat that. We will be making a presentation available on our website.

57:02

At the most one week from today, so next Wednesday, April 28. But we will make every effort to get it up sooner than that.

57:10

And then a related question about tomorrow's webinar. Tomorrow's webinar will primarily be the same content from today. We will have a separate Q and A section, and it's really just to try to make the content available to people who maybe have schedule conflicts on a given day, but it will be the same content for the month.

57:34

Also, to clarify, next month's webinar on the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program will be new and different content. But we will also offer it twice. So, I just wanted to add that clarification, because those questions came in just so often that I couldn't type fast enough to respond to them, so I wanted to make sure that I address that for everybody.

57:58

All right, back to a substantive question and Jean this one is for you. And the question came in about a couple of different forums, but basically about the eligibility of planning projects, but funding for planning, So Jean, can you address that?

58:16

Jean Rice:

Yeah, basically, whatever it takes to get a network going and provide services what we're looking at for general eligible costs. So, we're seeing that and as Adam and Karen said very well, it's important to do that planning. And I have to say that if you do need to update it over time, same way with your business plans, your implementation plans. So, even if you haven't done already, that's great. But if you, but if you need planning, that's the kind of thing that helps with this whole network development.

Laura Spining: 58:51
Very good! Thank you, Jean.

58:54
Alright. Adam, this is one that an issue that you raised with me early on that and I think will continue to be a difficult issue.

59:07
So, this tough one's for you. But basically, in terms of eligible lands, how are we going to deal with checkerboard situations and or, you know, the need to traverse lands that maybe have different ownership rights or that are different

59:28
Underlying ownership?

Adam Geisler: 59:32
Sure.

59:33
I think the way that I'll answer this question is, is by just getting to what the goal is that we have here.

59:40
At the end of the day, we have made it clear that we are looking at Middle Mile and last Mile Connections, as critical elements to the connectivity that's needed to light up Tribal communities and provide that level of access.

59:52
And so, again, the NOFO is not out, so I'm going to dance a little bit and I apologize in advance.

59:58
But what I will say is that we recognize that a number of you are looking at how you connect either to middle mile or long-haul connections that are out there, and that that is a cornerstone to your ability to be able to provide that level of service that you're looking for, for your Tribes.

1:00:15
So, again, without stepping in it too far, I guess what I would say is that we are really approaching this with a lot of flexibility to make sure that we can get to yes.

1:00:26
And again, I apologize for the government speak, but I guess that's how I'll word it. We are here to try to help Tribes, get connectivity, not find ways to get to no. And so, I think you'll be happy to see what the details look like, and how we've approached that in the NOFO once it drops. That was a very, that was a very fed answer. Like I said, I apologize. Complex.

Laura Spining: 1:00:55
Thank you, Adam, for attempting to answer that.

1:00:58

To be responsive, to the folks who tuned in today, and understanding that there are limitations to what we can communicate, given that the NOFO hasn't gone out yet. That being the question that came up, I think, the most often, in the question box, and I'll follow the government speak, kind of, way of addressing that, which is, we don't know right now. We are making every effort to get it out as soon as possible. And I have encouraged folks to sign up to receive updates. You can do that on our website, or just to check back on the website. As soon as we're able to do that, we will be publishing it there. So, understand that, and believe maybe we'd like to get it published as much as you'd like for us to get it published. But we do is, we're making every effort to make that as soon as possible. So, thank you for those questions. And we're sorry, we can't answer that. Adam, are you going to add something to that?

Adam Geisler: I was, yeah, just to put a clarification. You're referencing the NOFO and when that is going to be published right? Correct.

1:02:03

I also, just as a follow up from the previous question, if I could, just to layer on a little bit more governments be. I would also, for those of you who are wondering about eligible lands or where service can be deployed.

1:02:17

Laura Spining: You know, I really would point you back to the statute, in particular, at 905 of our legislation, because it does point out eligible lands for service. And we are, again, taking a very broad approach on how we're viewing that, because the goal is to provide connectivity to your communities, So thanks, Laura. Just figured out that around that out, a little bit.

No worries, Jean? I've got another one for you, which is really about how the funds can be used, and the question was about it. The ability to use these funds for public safety.

1:02:55

Jean Rice: I think public safety is a big part of any network if you want it to be so I think you should build in plans. Clearly.

1:03:03

Your service to homes is a big priority, and we've done that through the legislation. Although, Adam, I don't know, quite the number, it is, but for the legislature, for the legislation. But it is a big piece that, you know, public safety, you know, kind of smart communities. Those kind of applications on what you would build into your network, or at least get your network to the point that it can scale to, So, I think those are pieces on public safety.

1:03:29

You know, it's also your network might be able to use existing public safety towers if you're doing wireless or fiber connections. So, then it can work both ways as well.

1:03:41
Back to you Laura.

Karen Perry: 1:03:43
Let me squeeze one in, Laura. I put it in the chat when you, say, sign up to get information.

1:03:48
The way people can sign up is by sending an e-mail to BroadbandUSA@NTIA.gov and our last slide is also going to have that, that information on it, but that's how you sign up.

1:04:02
You can go to our website, but the address is BroadbandUSA@NTIA.gov and I did put it in the chat.

1:04:10
Because a number of people did say, how do I, how do I communicate with you? That's how you do it.

1:04:20
You're on mute.

Laura Spining: 1:04:31
Apologies.

1:04:32
Alright. Let's see. I did have another question for you, Adam. Do Tribal governments need to be federally recognized in order to apply for these funds?

Adam Geisler: 1:04:45
The answer is yes.

1:04:47
In the answer, you will find that in the statute in particular. But what I would, I would encourage you, because I this is probably around the state recognized question that comes up every now and then, it doesn't prohibit you from partnering.

1:05:00
And so that's one of the things that I am really going to encourage everybody, that if you're a state recognized Tribe, or you have a non-federal recognized status that I would work with, I would work with and think about consortium approaches in your application processes that moves forward.

1:05:16
So, unfortunately, we are looking at the federally recognized Tribes as it relates to the statute, and how that's been called out.

1:05:25
But, again, we also recognize that there are some of you that are creative, and I would encourage you to look at consortiums of partnerships with yours, sister Tribes, or, or health providers, or others that you're working with in order to consider that in your application.

Laura Spining: 1:05:43
Thank you, Adam.

1:05:46
Alright, Jean, one more for you that I wrote down, and then I'm trying to scan the number of them that I was not able to answer by writing, but is about application costs, and can application costs be covered as part of that grant program?

Jean Rice: 1:06:06
Now I'm dancing on a pin. I'm afraid we have to wait till we get through all the legal reviews before we can say that.

1:06:13
Clearly, we're trying to be as flexible as possible and make it as possible for Tribes to put it in there really good quality proposals, but, until it gets through that process, I don't think.

Laura Spining: 1:06:28
OK, thank you, Jean.

1:06:31
And, Karen, I know that you've been looking at the question box as much as I have, and I just haven't been able to read as fast as I would like to much less type as fast as I would like to. Were there's some that you noticed that you wanted to tee up?

Karen Perry: 1:06:48
Well, there's one that came in that I know I can answer, and there's a few that I think I can tee up for other work.

1:06:55
And I know you're quicker than I am.

1:06:57
There's one I can answer, besides NTIA, what other agencies have broadband authority and can offer grants to local jurisdictions to meet their various broadband needs? So, I can answer that one. One is, remember that we do have that Broadband funding search on our website.

1:07:18
And I'm happy to say that we're calling out to 26 different federal agencies right now to get an update on their funding availability.

1:07:29
So, there'll be an update pretty soon, but the specific agencies that do provide local funding, primarily are USDA and EDA, but more recently, other Federal agencies have increased their funding. So, we're getting a little bit from the Department of Education as well. And even a little bit from HUD. But the primary ones are USDA, and EDA, and the funding is more diverse than it used to be, so USDA does both infrastructure funding through programs like Reconnect.

1:08:06

And also, application type funding, like through distance learning and EDA, does both planning grants and infrastructure funding. And then Department of Ed has been pretty flexible with their funding more recently. So, those are some of the places that you can look.

1:08:24

And that information, even though we're in the process of updating our funding search, a lot of that just means more funding for some of the same programs. So still good place to look.

1:08:35

Let me just check my list and I'll be back to you.

1:08:39

Jean Rice:

The DOI has a planning grant program, that I know the number of Tribes applied to and some were some received last year.

1:08:50

Karen Perry:

We did get some advice from some of our participants with regard to the state programs.

1:08:59

One of our participants noted that the California Tribal Assistance Organization is one of the programs that you can look to when you look to states for information and for support.

1:09:16

Laura Spining:

Thanks for pointing that out. And they're not the only state.

1:09:20

Jean Rice:

Certainly, Washington and Oregon are very active in working with their Tribes, 2.5 and other planning grants funding as well.

1:09:31

Adam Geisler:

We also saw, for what it's worth, just talk a little bit about state funding.

1:09:35

Again, we're not promoting anyone state over the other. But just in terms of pointing folks what's out there for the Tribes and the Pueblos that are on from New Mexico, there's also we were made aware of a pot of funds over there. So, I think it's important to think about in your, as you're thinking about putting your applications together and how you're going to partner.

1:09:53

And, as you're looking at your resources, that yes, absolutely, explore the federal resources that you see out there, but I would also encourage you to take a look at some of the state resources that are out there. There's a lot of money currently available for feasibility and planning processes.

1:10:08

So, you know, weigh that out. Think about what your options are as you start to build your team and build your concepts around meeting a need.

1:10:16

Karen Perry:

There was another question, which I think you might end up dancing on. But it was a question about whether or not it was required that you partner.

1:10:28

Jean Rice:

Oh, I could take that one.

1:10:29

So, it's not required to partner.

1:10:33

Obviously, there are a number of entities that are eligible to apply, and any one of eligible entities can partner. So, there's no restrictions on partner.

1:10:42

So, I think it's important to take a look, because partners, they look at, when you need a partner, if you look at the resources that you need, as they're funding you need, is their expertise.

1:10:52

You need and kind of look at those three areas, and if you find gaps are, those areas, you want to pursue your partners. That partnership toolkit I mentioned before, that will help you think about, how do you look at the gaps. And then where the resources they are, and how they contribute over the long term.

1:11:11

How do you set up a partnership so that it works? and that you find a partner that shares your values, you know? Which is really key as you go forward? And so, there are a number of Tribes of partnered very well, and have a great partnership stories, and we want to learn from the successes.

1:11:30

Karen Perry:

There were a few people that asked for repeats and one of them I'd like to indulge and one of them I will partially indulge.

1:11:38

one asked for repeat, and the question was: Is there a match required?

1:11:46

Adam Geisler:

Got this one: I think we're proud to report. There is no match required for this program. We recognize that the source of funds, and really what the intent was related in part to Covid.

1:11:58

And so, we don't want to be creating an additional fiscal burden on top of the Tribes as you're all going through your recovery processes and re-opening your governments and addressing your educational needs. Why? We didn't want to layer one more thing on top of that. So, no, there's no match requirement. We're really excited to be able to say that. So, as we said earlier, we heard you loud and clear, no match, no match, underline, highlight bold. No match, exciting to say.

1:12:24
Karen Perry: The one I'd like to only partially indulge is someone asked, that we review the eligibility requirements. That was a lot of slides, and they were rather detailed, so I'd like to let you know that those slides will be available within a week. But is there a way that you could just summarize them very, very briefly, Adam?

1:12:47
Adam Geisler: Yes.

1:12:49
In terms of the eligible lands or eligible entities, what was the question?

1:12:54
Karen Perry: I think it was eligible, entities eligible.

1:12:57
Adam Geisler: Sure, so for those of you that are, that that are looking, or dig into the statute, I'm going point you to Section 905(a)(8).

1:13:07
Where it identifies the eligible entities, which are Tribal governments, Tribal colleges, and universities, the Department of Hawaiian homeland's, on behalf of the Native American, Native Hawaiian community, including the Native Hawaiian education programs, Tribal organizations, and native corporations is defined under Section three of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

1:13:30
That's right off the slide.

1:13:31
And right out of the statute, again.

Laura Spining: There's been a number of questions, too, about, will IRU's use be allowed. Can we build a NOC with the funds? All questions that I think you're going dance around, but I'll try to try to run through the questions and throw some of those different types of questions to you, and Jean, as well, which doesn't have to jump to IRU's, how will fiber be treated. Can we use it to build NOC facilities?

1:14:05
Those kinds of similar types of questions about allowability.

1:14:10
So, if you want to comment, and then Jean?

1:14:13
Adam Geisler: Sure. So, I think that the IRU's side, I'm excited for you to be able to read the NOFO, I'll word it like that. So, I think that you'll just be in, I'll encourage you

to, when you do your word search on the NOFO in your PDF, type in IRU, and see what pops up in the docs.

1:14:32

So, on the Network Operations Center, when you're saying, NOC, again, we're here to try to get you to the next stage, or next stages, on where you're at in your pursuit for, for broadband connectivity for your community.

1:14:48

So, I would say, in a, with a broad brush, keep in mind that we are here to try to meet you where you are and where, where your needs are at, and if a network operations center is part of that mix, then make sure you address that in your application process.

Karen Perry:

1:15:02

All right.

1:15:05

Look at two more out of the questions, if you don't mind.

Laura Spining:

1:15:09

Can I add one related to this before you do that?

1:15:15

Which is, I really wanted to toss to Jean, specifics around questions about the 2.5 licenses. There are a few questions about that.

Jean Rice:

1:15:28

2.5, I just want to say, as we thought it was a great opportunity, that the FCC gave Tribes to have this licensing. Because those of you who have networks that are just using the publicly available spectrum realized that when you take the map and see what you can do, 2.5, you can go much broader.

1:15:45

So, it, I think it's a really wonderful spectrum to use, and we were delighted so many Tribes took advantage of it. At NTIA, we were really happy to run a multi sector collaborative group to kind of support that with Tribe states, Tribal organizations, mile providers, and others to try to get resources.

1:16:05

So, it's a wireless group and wireless, you know that going to be able to fund those through this project. So, it's one of those areas where we know there's a great need, because the FCC has very short timeframes for builds. Which also, you know, obviously, the short timeframes for our program as well. So that is, is a match. As I said, that 2.5 is, if that is where your community has put its efforts.

1:16:32

Now, I might mention, if you have not built a 2.5, it's eligible, but let's say you got half of it built, but your funding ran out?

1:16:41

If you want to build the next half of it for the people who are unserved that's also available to you under this program, so it's not just there, because resources are tight. And I know that not every time you build, you can build everyone that needs it, so that, that's how you build on resources like Adam was talking about. Your work with your state monies, work with federal funds. And so, I think that's the way. So, it's definitely something we're really concerned about, because we want to see these networks built and be sustainable over time.

1:17:09

OK, Laura.

1:17:10

Laura Spining:

Thank you, Jean. And Karen, go ahead and you said there were some questions you wanted to tee up.

1:17:14

Karen Perry:

Just one, because I think the other ones, we're really going to have to wait for the NOFO and I think this one might be OK.

1:17:21

Is there a percentage of the funds that's pre-allocated for infrastructure?

1:17:28

Is there a percentage of the billion that's allocated for infrastructure versus inclusion and training?

1:17:38

Adam Geisler:

You take it! no, I'm happy to take that on in terms of allocation. I'm going to point everybody back to the eligible use section of the funding.

1:17:50

Infrastructure is absolutely a component of eligible use as well as telehealth, digital inclusion, et cetera.

1:17:59

So, again, I'm going sound like a broken record. We're really here to meet you where you're at. If your Tribe is focused on infrastructure, be thinking infrastructure. If your Tribe is focused on digital inclusion, be thinking about digital inclusion.

1:18:12

Your Tribe is thinking about all the above under the sun.

1:18:15

Put it all under the sun.

1:18:16

I think that one thing I really want to encourage everybody to think about in this entire process is, we really want to understand where your broadband

needs are, and we're going to do everything we can to meet you where you're at.

1:18:29

But we also want to understand what the full need is in the event that these funds are not enough, as well.

1:18:35

So, we can start to quantify what the true demand and need is, and so keep that in mind, as you guys are thinking through this process. It's OK to be aggressive.

1:18:43

We actually are going to encourage you to throw out what your needs and demands are for your communities, because this is a critical component of your economies, of your education, of your health systems, and frankly, the ability to pursue and maximize your Tribal sovereignty in this new space.

1:19:00

And so, we're here to help do that.

1:19:03

And again, sorry for the very fed answer, but that's the answer until the NOFO drops. I'm not sure if you had anything else you wanted to add Jean.

1:19:14

Jean Rice: So, the act does prioritize service to unserved areas, but they did not say how much would have to go to each area.

1:19:21

So, we have, as we're trying to do throughout, we have the flexibility, I think, to try to have each Tribe work from wherever they are at the moment, and kind of go that next level.

1:19:33

As you can, whether it's a network, where it's planning or it's different kind of covered response for uses.

1:19:41

Laura Spining: Very good, I am going to go ahead and toss this topic out because it's come up a couple of times.

1:19:50

First, in the form of raising that, I guess, there is a Tribe that indicated they are using Starlink for the primary connections.

1:20:05

And another asking about, you know, satellite generally and then a third question that's more generally about, can funds be used to subsidize connections individually? I'll throw that out and understand that there are limitations on what you can address. That topic seems to come up in a, in a number of different ways.

1:20:31

So, Adam, do you want start or Jean?

1:20:35

Jean Rice: All right, I'll take this one. So, I think what we want people to do is look at what technology is best for them.

1:20:41

I mean, there are some places that are very remote, and their middle mile connection is going to be satellites if you're so far remote. The thing for us to think about with satellites, even these are low orbiting ones, is latency in how much legacy there is, going to be critical to whether you can do a lot of the telehealth ones, especially if they're kind of hospital-based telehealth issues. So, those are pieces to kind of look at.

1:21:09

I think the whole areas that you could look at are where they would fit in, our app does say that we can provide some affordability funding. But there are also new programs at the FCC for that. What's unique about this program, as it's more flexible on the training component than many, so, some places you get education equipment, but you can't train anyone, or you can get a telehealth equipment, but you can train people. That's one of the this has made open unavailable to it.

1:21:43

So, it's an area that we're really excited, because there are a lot of new technologies out there that can be implemented. And we'd like to see people take advantage of those. Especially when they can give you higher capacity. So, as Laura started out the kind of, once we get the NOFO out we can talk in more detail about it, but generally I think you just have to look at was the best technology given where you are.

1:22:16

You have terrible terrain to go through in many cases the water, you, the mounds, if you name it and it makes it very difficult.

1:22:24

So that's why you have to start with kind of look at all the technologies.

1:22:27

You know, you may have a program that has every technology involved, you never know depending on what your needs are and I'm not going through it.

1:22:35

Adam Geisler: I think you covered it. You know, if we haven't said it five times, we'll say at six. We really want to meet you where you're at in, your, in your connectivity solutions, and think holistically about that.

1:22:48

Think about what it means to bring a connection to your household. Think about what it means to bring a connection to your students, or your health

centers, or your admin facilities. And then also think about what it's going to take to maintain those speeds again, 25/3 is the is the target. And so, be thinking through holistically what that looks like.

1:23:06

You know, some instances fiber may work, and, in other instances, fiber may not, and you may be all one reservation, and so you may need a hybrid approach. And that's OK to be thinking about.

Laura Spining:

1:23:19

Very good, we've got just about five minutes left before the top of the hour, and there is one other question that I picked up on it. It's also related to timing.

1:23:33

And Adam, you've done a good job of pointing people to sections of the statute, where some of this stuff is spelled out, but the question here is this time not about what's the date that the NOFO will be published, but about what will the timeframe be for applications, and getting applications in?

Adam Geisler:

1:23:55

Sure.

1:23:56

So, Laura, maybe you can correct me if I'm wrong, or Jean, but to my understanding is, from the day that NOFO drops, we have a 90-day window to start doing the submissions to our team. And then, once we receive those applications, we'll go through those applications, and then we're going to start to issue awards.

1:24:16

And as those awards come out, you have 180 days from the date of your award to start moving. And then you have a one-year completion date that's also associated with that.

1:24:28

So, we also realize, because we've heard that we've heard the buzz guys, we realize that nobody builds networks or anything in a one-year timeframe. I think we, we all kind of saw that and scratched our head a little bit when the legislation came out.

1:24:43

But, nonetheless, I do want to remind everybody, as we talk timeline, for those of you that are thinking infrastructure, get the project to where it needs to be.

1:24:54

If there's a need for an extension, we're going to have a process in place to be able to submit that request and work with you.

1:25:03

Again, and I know this is a weird thing to say, it's crazy, right? This program is very flexible, it's unique, but it's also, we're not here to get to no, or to take the money away from people.

1:25:14

We're here to light up Indian country, how we can, and if that means you have a big, lofty project that needs a little bit more time, we're going to have a process for you to identify that, share that with us, and for us to work together to solve the problem.

Laura Spining:

1:25:29

Thank you, Adam. So, now that we've just got a couple of minutes, I'll just open it up to see, Jean. If you have anything else you want to share with the participants today before we wrap.

Jean Rice:

1:25:43

I would just say, put your best minds on this. Just really spend some time on it. If you happen to have a time a meeting of all the institutions in the community. Have it. Start talking about it.

1:25:59

If you needed partners, start talking to them, you know, if you have the toughest permitting or an easement issue. Go ahead start out if you have the staff for it, because timing helps. So, I just, my thought, is you, you will have 90 days when the NOFO comes out, so you'll have some time. I just think it's an incredibly short window.

1:26:20

So, if you get to it right away, and you kind of pull in everybody you can think of that can help you get together with what is the best project for now, how do we scale it for the future, and how do we make sure that the needs of your Tribe are met.

1:26:37

I think that will be kind of what, I would say, it would be the important first step.

Laura Spining:

1:26:44

Thank you, Jean.

1:26:45

Karen, do you have anything else for the, for the good of all of the participants who joined us today?

Karen Perry:

1:26:52

Well, Laura mentioned that we have three more webinars that really designed to support you in this process, and they are designed to be during the grant program to support you in developing your grant applications.

1:27:08

And, we put our address in the chat, it is broadbandUSA@NTIA.gov.

1:27:17

If there's something particular that we can offer to you during those webinars, and you want to give us advice, please feel free to tell us that in your e-mail as well, and we will build the programming around you.

1:27:31

Laura Spining:

Thank you, Karen, I really appreciate you highlighting that. So, Adam, I'm going to turn to mute because of a noisy teenager in the background. I'm going to go on mute and let you wrap us up.

1:27:44

Adam Geisler:

Well, thank you, Laura.

1:27:45

And, and for all the folks that joined the call today, and obviously that the panelists here, and everybody at NTIA. I think what I would just want to share with you, is that in closing. Number one, I saw a question about, is it going to be the same show tomorrow? The answer is yes, maybe some different questions, but same show, you know? So, if you want to come back again, or you want to think through your questions, and you have some more tomorrow, feel free to join us.

1:28:13

But I did want to leave you with one thought. And I'd be remiss as a former Tribal leader, myself, but I didn't make one comment about your thought process, which is the workforce development piece of this, as well.

1:28:23

Right.

1:28:24

So, as you're thinking through your applications, and what you're doing, all of our communities are going to have networks, which is so exciting, that we're going to want to take care of, and we're going to want to improve upon. And it's always great to think about how our own members in our community can support those activities.

1:28:43

So, I'm going to encourage you, also, as Jean said, think.

1:28:48

Bring your good minds together. But think holistically about this. Think about what you need from an infrastructure standpoint.

1:28:54

Think about what you need from an education standpoint, and a health standpoint. But also, think about it from a workforce development standpoint, because there's a lot of money that's going to be going out the doors for you to think about the jobs of tomorrow for your people. And we definitely don't want to miss that as part of an opportunity with this program. And so, with

that, Laura, I guess that'll be my, my final comment for today, and I just want to thank everybody for their time.

1:29:19

Jean Rice: Thanks everybody for joining us.

1:29:21

Laura Spining: Yes, thank-you everybody. Have a wonderful afternoon or rest of your morning, if it's that early for you. We hope to see you back next month, based on the series that we have lined up for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. Thanks so much.

END TRANSCRIPT.