

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

**Moderator: Laura Spining
April 22nd, 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.

22:47

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.

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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.

28:22

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.

31:22

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.

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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?

53:51

Laura Spining: I apologize, I lost my screen. So, I'm not sure I'm hopeful that folks can hear and I guess even see me today or this afternoon.

54:04

Jean and Adam, I'm sorry. I had a little glitch

54:07

Right as Karen was finishing up and had me a little off kilter, I apologize.

54:15

Wonderful, well thanks everybody for those presentations today. We have a few questions from the chat box that I'm going to tee up for you guys today.

54:27

Let's see. Apologies. I didn't write them down.

54:33

First one was about the NEPA requirements. Adam as you are going over the NEPA requirements and this question came in asking, will the full NEPA requirements need to be submitted with the application?

Adam Geisler:

54:53

In relationship to the application, I guess we probably can't dive too far into that, until the NOFO comes out.

55:02

What I would share with you is that, with regards to NEPA, and the legislation and the statute within 905, there is no waiver of NEPA compliance.

55:14

And so, that there will need to be compliance with all federal historic preservation, environmental protection laws that are on the books to date.

Laura Spining:

55:25

Thank you, Adam.

55:26

Jean, anything you want to add?

Jean Rice:

55:30

I think you've handled it well, Adam. I think that we just feel that it's very important to do the environmental tests and the consultation on the cultural, and to have people that can conduct the review.

55:41

Laura Spining:

I will mention in these tight timeframes if Tribes look at their culture review staff and think that they might need to add, people to get it done on time, that's something to think about, because it is, there could be a lot of work needed to get it done on time. So, just, you know, when you're thinking about planning, not just doing, but also from the Tribal end, and what do you need to make sure it happens on time.

56:04

All right, thank you, Jean. Another question that came in is,

56:13

While you were talking about the funding, the question came in, was about how will the funds be distributed? Is it a formula or competitive or something else?

Adam Geisler:

56:26

Sure, great question. I'm going to apologize upfront because the NOFO isn't out, and we're going to sound like a little canned speech here, but we can't get to the details of how the funds are, or concept around how those may be distributed at this point. What I can say is that, in terms of eligible entities, and what you can spend those funds on, I would encourage you to go back and take a look at the statute.

56:58

This presentation will also be up, as well, if you just want to kind of go to a, to a quick sheet, as well. So, just keep that in mind. We really are painting a broad brush. The goal is to get to yes, not to no, the goal is to provide connectivity to Tribal communities, because that I, my own community, as well. I live on my reservation, that we all know that there's a need for this connectivity.

57:20

So, for what it's worth, and I apologize for dancing on the response, but we really do want to help meet you where you're at, and we are confident in the program that we've established, and we think you'll be happy.

57:32

We hope you'll be happy with it.

57:36

Karen Perry:

Laura, can I handle a couple of administrative ones before you go into more depth?

Laura Spining:

57:41

Sure, Go ahead, Karen.

57:43

Karen Perry:

A number of people asked whether how the webinars were going to roll out.

57:49

So, this webinar was a repeat of yesterday, the content was the same, but we're all here answering different questions live. But next month's webinar will be different. So, we've planned a series of webinars, and we will be providing different content each month with each webinar designed to give you information to support your grant application process, and we invite you to give us feedback if there are ways we can help you better.

58:22

A number of people also said, how can we reach you if we have questions or, if we have any more input for you?

58:31

And the way to reach us is to send us an e-mail to broadbandUSA@NTIA.gov, and that e-mail will be on the slides and I'll put it in the chat. So that's the best way to reach us, either, to give us feedback, or also to sign up for our newsletter. And that way, or too, for our push

notifications, we'll get information out to you. So those were just some of the administrative questions people asked.

58:58

Laura Spining:

Thank you, Karen. I appreciate you catching those.

59:03

All right, So I will say that Adam, no surprise

59:09

As you were talking about how the limitations on your ability to answer questions due to the fact that the NOFO is not out yet. Of course, a very intelligent person who's joined us today asked the question, so when will the rules and the NOFO be out?

59:27

Adam Geisler:

That's a great question, and we know a lot of you are wondering when it's going to happen or when it's going to be published. It's going through the clearance process right now.

59:36

And so, you know, we're hopeful here in the next couple of weeks that we'll have some good news for you.

59:41

Again, we're really wanting to get these dollars out there, and we know the importance of what this fund means to Tribal communities, and we are working this as fast as we can.

59:51

I will say, even for myself learning on how a NOFO

59:54

goes through the full federal process is a little overwhelming at times and probably not as expedient as we'd all like. But I appreciate everybody's patience as we make our way through this and again, for what it's worth, I think that many of you will be happy with the language that you see in a NOFO when it's final.

1:00:15

Laura Spining:

Thank you, Adam. Jean, anything you want to add?

1:00:18

Jean Rice:

I would just say when it comes out and you go through it, and obviously we will be having some webinars to go through it with you. But if you have questions, reach out to us.

1:00:26

Or if you have questions about, what are you thinking about in terms of what do you need for business plan, or what do you need for your planning process,

that you might do planning at the time, or if you're doing workforce development or use components. You have any questions on that.

1:00:43

You know, we're here to help out based on what we've heard, where we think there are great resources that you might want to think about are you, so you would be happy to work with you on this. And I know that a number of the Tribal associations also continually work on broadband as well and are great resources.

I think that our goal is to make sure that your questions are answered as, as you read through it, in detail. Because that, you know, there's so many questions, and then also we want to make sure that you have the resources and kind of the benefit of what people have learned over the years in these various areas.

1:01:22

As you put it in your own applications, they are going to be the most successful project as it goes forward because that's the goal of all of us is to have great successful projects that makes an impact to people's lives.

1:01:34

Thank you.

Adam Geisler:

1:01:35

Can I double down on that a little bit?

1:01:37

Because if we can't get into the details, as we said 15 times here, I want to echo what Jean said. Please think holistically, in terms of your application process.

1:01:49

If you're thinking infrastructure, if you're thinking workforce development, if you're thinking digital inclusion, it's OK to paint a very broad brush around the concepts that you want to explore. And to Jean's point, we're here to help you get through this process together.

1:02:03

We want to get to yes, and we want to see these networks deployed.

Laura Spining:

1:02:08

Thank you. And I like it when you double down. All right. We did have another question come in as you all were talking. What if a Tribe wants to create their own broadband service for its preservation, Tribal, community, and possibly outside of its communities? We have Comcast who covers the area now.

1:02:31

Will this exclude us from applying? We are a very rural community, approximately hundred miles from an urbanized area. I think these are from

USDA. Will this exclude us from applying? We are a rural community 100 miles from any urbanized area of 50,000 population or greater.

1:02:56

Our membership is less than 2000 people, both on and off reservation, so Jean, you want to start?

Jean Rice:

1:03:06

I'll start with that one. So, I think if you want to set your own Telecommunication's Group up within a Tribe in different kinds of options, that you can do. You want to run it through your IT department.

1:03:18

Another is to set up a separate authority.

1:03:21

And the third is, if you have an existing, let's say, utility, maybe have them do it, so, you have different ways you can set it up.

1:03:28

You can also set up with partners, whether partner might be a joint venture, or partner, might just be someone who comes in and gives you some specific expertise, or resource or an asset. So, those are things to think about. I know NTTA has a lot of experience with Tribal telecommunications authorities. And they have offered to provide people kind of background information needed. We have also worked with many, so that, that we can work with you on, if you're interested.

1:03:55

When it comes to the final eligibility, obviously, you're going to have to wait for the NOFO, but, you know, we do have a priority for serving places that don't have 25/3 with a good latency.

1:04:07

So, that's kind of the priorities. So, when you look at it, you know, if you've got that kind of mileage, you know, there may well be places throughout the area that don't have that kind of capacity. And so, you can well of about serving those. You'll have to wait until NOFO comes out.

1:04:24

But the goal is to think about how do you set up your process and organizational structure, what would work best? And then the next part is how do you fit in, and also, as Adam said, the first thing holistically. So, we don't only think about infrastructure, but also think about what kind of telehealth systems or equipment you need, or maybe connections to the health service that you might need that needs higher speeds and 25/3. You know, those kinds of things are kind of think through the whole piece.

1:04:55

But we definitely want to see the unserved people served, and we want to see the uses really well, I guess, accepted and part of the training that goes with it, that is so hard to come by. This program allows it to be utilized.

1:05:11

So, I think that there's a great opportunity there, but, until the NOFO comes out, you can go through exact pieces of it, and once it does come out, then we can be happy to talk to you about it.

Laura Spining:

1:05:22

Alright, Adam, anything you want to add? We do have a couple of additional questions.

1:05:28

Go ahead.

Adam Geisler:

1:05:31

David. I think you're the one that asked the question, I love where your head is at.

1:05:35

You know, I think that that's a great question to ask, and it's great to see that you're thinking about moving in that direction.

1:05:41

And, again, we're trying to meet Tribes where they're at. Some of you are looking for affordability solutions. Others of you are looking at telehealth solutions, others of you are looking at, creating your own ISP. And all of those are exciting things to be talking about and thinking about. I just, I guess I just want to compliment you on where your head's at because it fits nicely with where we're thinking.

Laura Spining:

1:06:05

And David says, thank you, guys. All right, so we also have, I'm just going to go to the next question that came in while we were having that discussion that reads: Can a broadband service provider partner with our Tribe for deployment using this, this grant program?

Jean Rice:

1:06:29

I'll start and I'll turn it over to Adam.

1:06:32

Yes, you can definitely have a partner there, the eligible entity has to be the one that comes in and applies, that's pretty clear. But didn't have many partners. They are probably be a sub grantee or some other method of putting them forward, but yes and I think many places do use other ISPs. They'll use the local telephone carrier. Now you know co-ops are getting much more into broadband so I think people are looking for co-ops as well.

1:06:56

So, I think that is definitely an area and in it just to be honest, you might have more than one partner. You might have a partner for Telehealth, and you might have a partner for your education work. And you might have another partner for your infrastructure. So, I think it's a great opportunity, and, yes, you can partner with people for resources, but the eligible entity has to be the one that is in control of the project and applies.

Laura Spining: 1:07:21
Thank you, Jean. Adam?

Adam Geisler: 1:07:24
Partner, partner, partner. I think that it's a billion dollars. It's a lot of money, but it's not a lot of money. And so, we know that part of the way this is going to be successful is through partnerships. So, can broadband service providers work with Tribes for broadband deployment? Yes. But I think the key in that question is working with the Tribes. Right. So, it does, to Jean's point, need to be Tribally led for one of the eligible entities in the submission.

1:07:51
So, Awesome, question. Thanks, Rhonda.

Laura Spining: 1:07:55
All right, so, another question and we actually had this question come up yesterday, but I don't think we got to it. Is public safety an eligible cost under this program. And so, Jean, you want to start us off?

Jean Rice: 1:08:14
Sure. So, when we look at these networks, we want to look at all needs, so that is telehealth, public safety, or whole component, so is a part of it. But the priority is for 25/3. They want to see that the homes are served.

1:08:30
But, you know, we want to see public safety, as part of it. It is critical in all communities, so that's key. I just want to say public safety also can play a good role in helping with the networks. Because you may have your own towers that are available. You might have some fiber connections that can be done. So, I think it is one of the critical components of what should happen on a network. And so, you know, definitely building public safety into your plans is great, and it can really help

1:09:07
The police, if they have, you know, in their cars, if they have the ability to be able to connect with the computer, so they can see what somebody's track record is, that sort of thing that will help them as they kind of go forward.

1:09:21
It just is, it's something that has proven effective where you have broadband.

1:09:27
And so, as you go forward looking at that as is key and of course, I have to hand it over to Adam because he's our FirstNet rep here and is our expert on public safety.

Adam Geisler: 1:09:38
Well, thanks, Jean and yeah, as you guys can see, I'm probably not immune to the at home work lifestyle here. So, I apologize. But at the same time, I'm not sorry, I love my children. And it's just part of what it is. On a public safety standpoint. I think at the end of the day are you talking about deploying service in areas that are unserved at speeds of 25/3 or greater?

1:10:01

And so, as long as we're talking in that context and we're talking about deployment in the context of eligible locations for deployment under the statute, then, there really isn't a problem. Again, we're going to meet you where you're at, if your focus is public safety right now.

1:10:17

Public Safety, communications. Absolutely.

1:10:20

I will also say that we are talking with our other federal partners, about the fact that these dollars are available. And so, we're starting to raise more and more awareness around Tribes that may have an interest in partnering with carriers or looking to deploy devices or equipment that meet their public safety needs. And so, we are, again, sharing that information across with our partners. And we really look forward to seeing what some of the solution sets are that you're thinking about for your public safety needs.

1:10:51

So, 25/3 unserved, eligible areas. Absolutely.

1:10:57

Jean Rice: I just want to mention the 25/3 is the kind of a threshold to get the funds. You can obviously do much higher capacity in it. Once you have the funds, we obviously encourage higher capacity in builds.

1:11:11

Laura Spining: All right, I've got one, I'm going to go ahead and move to David Wagner, he had a follow-up question.

1:11:19

So, I'm going to go with that and come back to the other one, a question regarding ISP coverage. Is the FCC broadband coverage a problem, Adam, I believe, I remember the FCC broadband Grant a couple months ago? I'm just thinking ISP covers this area and has the rights when the FCC broadband bandwidth might be an issue, or a point of contention.

1:11:46

Adam, this is directed at you.

1:11:49

Adam Geisler: Well, I really wish we had the NOFO published. I don't think you'll be disappointed, as I guess, what I'm going to say to that.

1:11:56

We realize that there are concerns.

1:11:58

We heard that through the consultation process, about duplication, about 477 data accuracy.

1:12:07

And we heard you, and I guess that's probably as far as I can take it. Laura, Jean, or Karen, I'm not sure if you have anything else you wanted to add?

Karen Perry:

I think I can comment on that, because NTIA has always said that the FCC is an important dataset, but it's not the only dataset.

1:12:24

We've always encouraged people to look at multiple datasets in order to develop their own case for what's relevant and true for broadband in their community. So, we recommend that people look at the FCC form 477 data.

1:12:43

That they look at the American community survey data. And they look at the broadband adoption data in that dataset, which is track level data. We recommend that they run speed tests, and that they bring in that their own community level wisdom.

1:12:59

And when you pull all of that together, you can come up with a picture that's much more relevant, and that's what makes a picture of what's relevant around broadband in your community.

1:13:12

One data set by itself doesn't tell a story.

1:13:16

You can say that the FCC data has holes, but every data set has holes.

1:13:22

And so, you need to put a picture together that tells the story that you think is true in your community and then we'll do our best job of evaluating it.

1:13:34

Laura Spining:

So, David says: Thank you so much to Adam and Karen. That was very helpful.

1:13:38

Karen Perry:

I haven't read the NOFO. So that's just a traditional NTIA response.

1:13:50

Laura Spining:

Virtual laughing, I love it. I have to meet David Wagner at some point. It sounds like I maybe have met him before.

1:13:59

OK, now that we have a discussion going, lots of questions coming in, OK, does the staff have examples of language or strategy outlined to partner with a company?

1:14:14

What should Tribes look for to have a transparent and successful partner?

1:14:21

Regarding the non-Tribal phone companies on Reservations

1:14:26

Who are competing for coverage and/or are the only service provider? OK, so there's the first question, which is, do we have sample partner agreements that we can share, or resources for where they might get those?

1:14:45

So, let's go with that question, because there's multiple questions in there, so let's start with that one. And, Jean, do you have suggestions?

1:14:52

Jean Rice: Yeah. On partnerships, go to our website under Resources and look at one that says, the power of partnerships, and that's on broadband partnerships.

1:15:01

It gives great detail on how people have partnered in the past with others so that you can see what are the parameters that have actually worked. Also, it will tell you what do you would put in an RFP? It's the startup, right? And what should be in your document, once you formulize your partnership. One of the key things in partnerships is that you partner with somebody who has similar values, and you keep ongoing communications going, because, you know, things change over time. You've got to be able to react and have all parties react. But the partnership is very important as we look at partnerships.

1:15:38

Really look at where are the gaps? Assets that might be available from a company. They may have expertise, they may have resources, or you do, but wherever the gaps are, so that's where you find partnerships. And as we mentioned before, you might have a different partnership for infrastructure. For the hospital one, you may take a group that does kind of diabetes work, or it does work on other kinds of health

1:16:01

Issues you want, that they're already working on. Borrow their expertise, and they can help you set this up. And then when it comes to the agreements, once you talk to us, and we can find out exactly which one you're interested in, then we can really work with you to set up and to talk to people who actually have set up the partnerships in other places. In our experience they've been very helpful in sharing partnership agreements, and other things like that, but that we can use if we have one that's particularly well for you. We can always share that.

1:16:36

So that's, that. Adam, do you have anything you can add on that?

1:16:40

Adam Geisler: I just think, as you explore partnerships, keep in mind that we realize maybe not all the relationships out there are where you'd like them to be.

1:16:50

And we really are looking at this program as a vehicle to hopefully bridge new relationships.

1:16:57

Connect people together, no pun intended, and really, kind of start to solve the issues that we know have been pending out there that we've heard through the consultative process.

1:17:06

So, you know, be transparent about what your needs are, and do your assessment on whether or not you think that partner is the right partner for you. At the end of the day, this is a Tribal focus program for Tribal communities. And you're all going to have different needs and what you're looking for in relationships with who you partner and why.

1:17:25

So, that's a fed response, so I'm sorry for that. But, that's really where we're at this point, you know.

1:17:32

Choose your partners wisely. Be honest with yourselves about what you're looking for in your community, and then, you know, do your own assessment of whether or not it's the right fit.

1:17:44

Laura Spining:

Thank you, Adam and Jean. I think we answered all the parts of that question in your comments.

1:17:52

And so, I'm going to move back to what I skipped earlier, which was about application costs and of those that are incurred now, and are those eligible?

1:18:10

So, if I were to start working on this today, would those costs be eligible for this program?

1:18:22

Adam Geisler:

Man, that's a great question, actually. We're definitely going have to add that into the FAQ. What I would direct you to is to take a look at the NOFO. There is language around expenditures for application preparation. We do address that in the NOFO. So, I'm sorry again, but for what it's worth, you're going have to wait to see the NOFO drop for the answer.

Laura Spining:

1:18:46

I think I am going step in here based on at least what I know traditionally about application expenses, and that they can only be reimbursed back to the date of the release of the NOFO. That is what I have traditionally seen.

1:19:05

And so, I would warn or hesitate against expenditures that you incur ahead of that. But certainly, it isn't unusual for application costs to be covered, but not

before the NOFO is released, and that's the one I was. I think that's what this question is, getting at.

1:19:30

I wanted to be a little bit clearer about warning folks about spending money before the NOFO comes out, that would likely not be covered.

1:19:41

Oh, yes, and Rob made a good point, which is, the costs are only covered if the program, if the project is awarded.

1:19:54

So, if you aren't awarded a grant, then there are no grant funds that are awarded.

1:20:04

Anyway, I'll come back to Adam's comments about that, our intention is to get to yes with most applications that are submitted, but Adam, it sounded like you were going to add something.

1:20:15

Adam Geisler: Thank you for highlighting that, Laura, in terms of the timing of when you start to accrue expenses related to your application process and what you're collecting right now, you know, so be mindful about that.

1:20:29

I would also say that when the NOFO comes out, there is specific things that you're going to want to pay attention to in terms of who you need to work with in order to be able to submit that application.

1:20:42

And so, for all the eligible entities, we have some parameters in there that you need to be mindful of.

1:20:48

And so, I know everybody's excited, we're going to say hurry up and wait, for just hopefully soon, we will have this thing out.

1:20:58

But in the meantime, it's great to have your planning in place. I would be mindful about expenditures until the NOFO drops.

1:21:07

We can't wait till the NOFO drops.

Laura Spining: All right, I think that covers the questions in the box, and, you know, we've only got about nine minutes before the top of the hour, so I want to take it as an opportunity.

1:21:23

Oh, wait, I will say, David just asked one more question. Which was, the FAQs that come after be continually updated with new questions. Yes. We

will be continuing to update FAQs throughout the application process, and likely beyond recipients of the grant funds.

1:21:46

But I want to give an opportunity to each of you to share any final words of wisdom, or just benefit of the order.

1:21:57

Comments before we wrap for today? Jean, would you like to start?

1:22:00

Jean Rice:

Yeah, I would just say that this is, I think, a great opportunity. We have money specifically set aside for Tribes, which is terrific. And it's an opportunity.

1:22:14

Look at what your needs are. And see how broadband is not for tech's sake. It's for how we can improve people's lives.

1:22:22

So, if you think about the issues that you have in the community, you think, whether it's health, whether it's serving veterans, whether it's working with youth, all of those pieces with its workforce development, how it will fit in to this overall broadband strategy. And how can you utilize these funds to kind of, get at the core things?

1:22:40

I know many of you can hit just so hard with Covid.

1:22:44

And so, it's come up very clearly in our kids can't work from home for schooling and the driver to the library, you know, two hours away, or they're not even open. You know, those are problems.

1:22:56

And so how do we address that, as well as how we get that tech support that is so needed for people so that they can learn how to use it because if you haven't had broadband before, really. It's a whole new ballgame. And so, it's important that the technical training and I do think that there's a great role for all the community institutions like Tribal colleges to be resources within the community as they go forward.

1:23:22

So, I guess my last thought is this is an opportunity to think forward and get some of your best teams working on it, and meet with stakeholders if you need to, meet with businesses. So, you really do know what is the latest need that they have. And, and this is an opportunity, and I just think that there's so many great ideas out in Indian Country on how to use, you have so many great examples of infrastructure projects, and inclusion projects and use projects that have been done, that you can kind of build on those successes.

Laura Spining: 1:24:03
Thank you, Jean.

1:24:03
Sorry, I put it on mute because my teenage son came home. Not as cute as Adam's young daughter. But Karen Perry, please do share some insights with our attendees today.

Karen Perry: 1:24:17
I'm feeling a lot like an old Bell Labs engineer right now.

1:24:21
The joke about Bell Labs engineers was always, you're really going to like it when you get it. And I feel like that's kind of how I feel about our website right now. We're always updating it. And it's really going to be great when we finally get it done. There's a huge amount of great material on it, but it'll be a lot better when we get that website update done.

1:24:43
I think that the search engine isn't as good as I'd like it to be, so it's not as easy to find the material on the website as I'd like it to be. So, the two places I would directly direct you to our publications page, there are some good resources there. And Jean directed you to a few of them, and so did I.

1:25:05
And the other one is the past events page.

1:25:09
You're going to be, maybe doing some things that you weren't doing before, because you now have funding to do them.

1:25:16
So, if you just browse through those pages, you might find some resources from experts that could inform your work. And so, I would recommend that you look through those pages and browse through those pieces. Or just send an e-mail to broadbandUSA@ntia.gov and say, just tell me the link and make my life a little easier. And we'll try to help you. And there might be some resources that would help you in your work, and we'll do our best to point you to the ones that would be most appropriate.

Laura Spining: 1:25:53
Well, thank you, Karen. So, Adam, I'm going to give you the closing words.

Adam Geisler: 1:25:58
Well, thank you.

1:25:58
Um, well I guess first and foremost, as a former Tribal leader myself from my own Tribe, the La Jolla Band of Indians.

1:26:09
I kind of think about this program is as a really unique opportunity that Indian Country has never seen before.

1:26:15

And I think about it in the context of what it means for my own community, my own family, my neighbor Tribes, sister Tribes that we have next door, and this really is an incredible thing that we've never seen before, come to our doorsteps.

1:26:30

So, I want to encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity. For some of you that this is a new space and it feels a little intimidating, we're here to help you with that.

1:26:40

And I really want to impress that upon you, because I've talked to enough Tribal leaders in the broadband space that they feel like sometimes there is some intimidation around new things related to tech because of the terminology.

1:26:53

But the infrastructure is the same that we're used to seeing out there. So don't be afraid to reach out for help. We're here to do that here, to help you think about building your team now. Don't take any invoices on that yet apparently. And, you know, the other thing that I really want to want to encourage you to think about, as we've talked about this holistic approach.

1:27:15

I really do want to emphasize workforce development, you know, really have a full picture around where you think your Tribe is going to go, in terms of exercising your digital sovereignty in this space. And in thinking about your economic needs and thinking about your education needs, and thinking about your critical institutions, or anchor institution, in your households. This is a unique opportunity that really can address a lot of things that we know that are impacting our families, that Covid has highlighted. So, you know, with that, I just wanted to say thank you to everybody for your time. We want to wish you well, and be safe, and we really look forward to working with you on this program. It's an exciting time for Indian Country, and we really look forward to partnering with you on this project.

1:28:01

Jean Rice: Thanks for joining us. Thank you.

1:28:05

Laura Spining: Come back next month for new material.

1:28:10

OK, there's the slide about the series and the link to our website. I hope you'll sign up for future events and visit our website, or reach out to us via e-mail for specific questions and comments. Thanks so much for your participation, and have a wonderful afternoon.

END TRANSCRIPT.