Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Application Review Process (October 18, 2021)

The below FAQs are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the NTIA Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and the application requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs.

The NTIA Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) has started reviewing over 300 TBCP applications. During September through December 2021, NTIA will conduct a three (3) stage review process to evaluate TBCP grant applications. The review process, as well as the associated timelines, are outlined in the TBCP NOFO in Section E.3 (pages 43-45). Some important takeaways on this process include:

1. **What are the three (3) review stages of the process?**

   a. **Initial Administrative and Eligibility, Merit, and Programmatic.**

Review Stage:	*Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review*	*Merit Review*	*Programmatic Review*
NTIA objective:	Determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to programmatic requirements	Two objective reviewers will score applications based on evaluation criteria provided in section E.1 of the TBCP NOFO	NTIA will review applications determined to be qualified for funding during Merit Review for conformity with programmatic objectives, requirements, and priorities
Curing timeline:	7 Calendar Days	14 Calendar Days	10 Calendar Days

2. **The curing process for each stage of review is outlined below:**

   a. **Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review of Applications:** NTIA will conduct an initial review of timely received applications submitted in response to

the NOFO to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to the programmatic requirements of the TBCP including a review of the project narrative, and project budget. Applications submitted by anyone other than an eligible applicant will be eliminated from further review. NTIA may continue the initial administrative review process for an application that is timely submitted by an eligible applicant, but that is missing certain documentation required by this NOFO, and will request missing or incomplete information from the applicant as needed. The applicant will have seven (7) calendar days to submit materials responsive to the feedback provided by NTIA, unless this period is extended by NTIA. Pursuant to section 905(e)(2)(B) of the Act, an eligible applicant's failure to remedy deficiencies in a timely manner may result in NTIA's denial of an application.

b. **Merit Review:** During Merit Review, NTIA may ask applicants to submit additional information to resolve perceived material programmatic or financial weaknesses or deficiencies. The applicant will have fourteen (14) calendar days to respond to the reviewer feedback, unless this time period is extended by NTIA. Pursuant to section 905(e)(2)(B) of the Act, an eligible applicant's failure to remedy application deficiencies in a timely and constructive manner may result in NTIA's denial of the application.

c. **Programmatic Review:** During Programmatic Review, NTIA may ask applicants to submit additional information, as appropriate, to clarify or to further substantiate the representations made in their applications. Applicants will have ten (10) calendar days to submit information responsive to the feedback provided by NTIA, unless this time period is extended by NTIA. NTIA Program Staff will review the supplemental information, along with all information submitted with the application, to confirm eligibility and evaluate the applications with respect to the requirements and priorities of the TBCP.

3. **My neighboring tribe received an email regarding incomplete information, when can I expect a similar email?**

   a. You will <u>only</u> be contacted by NTIA if your application has missing information or needs clarifying documentation.

4. **I haven't been contacted about a deficient application, but I want to amend my application. Can I do that if I haven't been contacted about my application?**

   a. No, you are only able to address missing or incomplete information <u>if</u> you have been contacted by NTIA.

5. **Can I add more information than requested in the curing email? Can I change other information regarding my application?**

    a. No, you may only submit the specific missing or clarifying information requested by NTIA.

6. **If I don't submit the requested information within the timeline, what will happen to my application?**

    a. An eligible applicant's failure to remedy application deficiencies in a timely and constructive manner may result in NTIA's denial of the application.

7. **Can I request additional time to respond to the curing email?**

    a. If extenuating circumstances will prevent you from submitting the required materials by the relevant deadline discussed above, you may send an email to NTIA requesting a deadline extension. You must submit this request before the existing deadline, and it must explains those extenuating circumstances. In such a situation, NTIA may grant an extension of up to three (3) business days from the date upon which the extension is granted (or from the original deadline, whichever is later) to submit the required documentation.