

Digital Equity Act Programs Tribal Consultation #1

Moderator: Adam Geisler

October 18, 2022

Adam Geisler

00:01:05.410 --> 00:01:17.699

Alright. Well, good morning, everybody. We're going to get started here in about another two minutes. We're just going to give it a couple of moments for people to trickle in, so we'll get started here at about three after the top of the hour. Thank you.

00:03:27.530 --> 00:03:43.599

Well, I think we gave that the full three minutes. Good morning, and welcome. (Luiseno Language) Miiyuyum, My name is Adam Geisler. I'm a citizen and enrolled member of the La Jolla band of the Luiseno Indians, and I'm coming to you, live today from the traditional homelands of my community, the Payomkawichum people, also known as Luiseno people, here in Southern California. It is my distinct honor to open up this consultation today with a number of key topics. We'll be having an invocation as well from Ms. Ana Hoffman. Before we go too far, I did want to acknowledge a couple of members of the digital equity program team as well as the folks that are on the line today supporting our efforts from NTIA. I would first like to turn the mic over to introduce and welcome Ms. Michell Morton, she is one of our advisors to the digital equity program, and she's pinch hitting today for Ms. Angie Bennett, who is in the field, who is the director of the program. So, with that Michell over to you for your welcoming remarks.

Michell Morton

00:04:40.780 --> 00:04:54.160

Thank you, Adam. Good afternoon. Good morning to everyone and thank you for joining us today for this important consultation. I just wanted to thank you on behalf of the DE (Digital Equity) team for being here today. Back to Adam.

Adam Geisler

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Awesome thanks, Michell. I guess before we go too far into the agenda today, I know a lot of you are familiar with engaging in tribal consultation for the tribal broadband connectivity program. Today I'm going to be facilitating the conversation and tribal consultation related specifically to the digital equity program that NTIA is administering. A number of you will also recognize that today we're going to be walking through in a similar format, a set of four topics that were identified in the Dear Tribal Leader Letter just sent a couple of weeks ago. So, with that we'll go ahead, and we will jump into our agenda overview, so we'll go to the next slide, please.

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Alright. So, as I mentioned at the top, we're going to be doing an invocation here in just a moment. We're going to talk a little bit about the background on the digital equity program, and then from there we're going to dive into the topics of consultation again. Many of you are familiar with this format. We're going to go question by question, and each question we're going to be receiving feedback from

you, and we sincerely are looking for this guidance from all of you today as we go through this.

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Then lastly, we'll be closing out with the upcoming consultation. We have one more on this topic later on Thursday at the same time, separate registration link. So, if you want to come back, you're welcome to do so. Also, we'll give an overview of the timeline for written comments for those of you that maybe aren't prepared to speak today, or even on Thursday, if you want to submit written comments. Lastly, before we go too far, I also do want to acknowledge that this is intended to be a government-to-government consultation. As we make our way through the topics today, I am going to ask that you identify obviously your name. We do record these, and we do publish them. Not only your name, but that you do have permission to speak on behalf of the tribe or tribes that you may represent. I realize that in this particular program there's a lot of you that are looking to leverage a consortium body or a single tribe to carry out that task. So again, in respecting the Government-to-Government consultative process, I just want to ensure that if you are going to be providing feedback today, that you just acknowledge that you do have consent to speak on behalf of the tribe or tribes that you are representing and that they're aware that you're providing your comments. So, with that, I want to go ahead and move on to the next slide if we could.

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I want to acknowledge, Ana Hoffman, for those of you that have not met Ana, she has been a real advocate in the tribal broadband space up out of Alaska. Specifically, she is a president and CEO of the Bethel Native Corporation, in fact, if you look at the photo behind me, you'll actually see one of the communities that Ana is regularly working with to address the digital divide in her respective community or communities that are part of her tribal broadband connectivity application which was just recently announced. So, congratulations, Ana. But with that I do want to turn the floor over to Ms. Hoffman if she could, to open us up in a good way and start off with our invocation with that over to you Ana.

Ana Hoffman

00:08:26.220 --> 00:08:30.000

Quyana, Adam. (Yup'ik Language) Thank you for the invitation to be with you today to start out this meeting with a prayer. As we center ourselves, let us say together, Creator of all things, visible and invisible, receive our supplication today, and direct our lives. Guide all nations and all leaders toward knowledge in the ways of justice and peace and unity. Help us to put away mistrust, doubt, and judgment. Open our ears, comfort our souls, and inform our voice. Lead us to find peace, respect, and freedom. Intercede to lighten the burdens we carry. Give us faith and wisdom to believe in ourselves and in one another. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters. This we pray. Quyana

Adam Geisler

00:09:33.300 --> 00:09:42.309

Thank you, Ms. Hoffman. I really appreciate your participation and willingness to do the invocation, and for those kind words, and to start us off in a good way and I think that provides a good foundation for the topics that we're going to get into

today. And I do want to just express to everybody that when we at NTIA are engaging in these consultations, we really are engaging in full faith, because we have questions that we are looking to try to get answered with your feedback. I'm looking forward to jumping into our consultation today. Please provide feedback, that the script is not written. We really want to understand the best way to move forward, which we'll talk about in just a moment.

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All that being said, I am going to turn it over to Ms. Carole Garner, who is a member of our production team, to walk through the housekeeping items so over to you Carole.

Carole Garner

00:10:22.940 --> 00:10:41.080

You're going to hear from me on the back end of our platform. If you are raising your hand and want to speak on behalf of your organization. What that will look like for you is we have the raise hand function in Zoom, if you are on a computer. And you can see on the screen here where that is down on the bottom task bar. So, if you're interested in sharing your thoughts, go ahead and raise your hand, we will see that, and we will also verbally call you up when it's your time.

00:10:57.330 --> 00:11:15.669

So that's all you need to do. I will promote you to what's called a panelist, and it may take a second for that to switch you from an attendee to a panelist. When that happens, you'll be able to turn your camera on and unmute your microphone and give your feedback.

00:11:15.690 --> 00:11:33.790

If you are dialing in on a phone, you can also participate. The only difference is that instead of raising your hand or clicking on a raised hand function, you will press *9 on your phone, and we will see that on our side that your hand is quote unquote raised, so you will also be put in the queue to get feedback.

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If you have any questions, or if you want to get rid of written feedback rather than verbal feedback, you can use our Q.A. or the chat box in the zoom task bar at the bottom and submit your comments at any time, and we will see those. Thanks so much. Back to you, Adam.

Adam Geisler

00:11:55.820 --> 00:12:14.179

Awesome. And thank you for the overview Carole. So, as usual, we are going to use a raised hand feature, and whether you're dialing in, or you are online with us today, we're going to be able to see that. We'll put you in a queue, and then I have Mr. Matt Rogotzke. You want to jump on really quick and say, Hello?

00:12:15.840 --> 00:12:18.269

There he is!

Adam Geisler

00:12:18.730 --> 00:12:36.920

Ah, we have Mr. Matt Rogotzke, who is going to be facilitating the feedback in the queue and for those of you. That may or may not have been that before. Matt is one of the folks that helps us manage the tribal broadband leaders network. Which is a new reoccurring meeting that we have every month as a check in with all the tribes to provide status updates. I guess before we jump in, Matt, you want to do a plug on the tribal broadband leaders network and our upcoming meeting date?

Matt Rogotzke

00:12:49.780 --> 00:13:05.159

Yeah, sure. So, we hosted our first meeting last week, last Thursday and that announcement went out to just the general network that we keep for tribal leaders. Adam did a great presentation on our programs that we have open right now. I'm just trying to make it a regular touch point for tribes between us, between tribes, and also just connect with State federal program officers that we have here at NTIA and also State broadband leads. We're trying to just increase those connection points, so that we're building this state broadband plans across the country with all the different programs we have here at NTIA, which is trying to make sure that folks can be well coordinated on that process, and just taking advantage of all the moving parts here, so lots of work to do, and so hopefully, this can help ease that process. And we will be hosting meetings every second Thursday of every month, 3 pm Eastern time and we'll get notifications out there for that, so keep an eye out. We'll have some more conversations, I think, on mapping soon, and some other topics, too. So yeah, more to come there.

Adam Geisler

00:14:12.250 --> 00:14:13.570

Thank you, Matt.

00:14:13.580 --> 00:14:32.270

So again, for those of you that are on the consultation today and you weren't able to attend our tribal broadband leaders network convening this month, we have another one coming up, and these are going to be regularly occurring again, just to share information with all the moving pieces that we have, and to provide a forum for feedback.

Adam Geisler

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It's a two-way street. They're not consultations, but they are a place where we can try to keep our finger on the pulse of what you're all working through and experiencing, so we can prioritize as we need to internally here at NTIA, so thank you.

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All right, Carole. Well, I think we're ready to jump into the background of the digital equity program. As a quick refresher, so we'll go ahead and go on to the next slide if we could.

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So as a quick as a quick background. The Digital Equity Act provides 2.75 billion dollars that essentially established three grant programs that promote digital equity

Adam Geisler

and inclusion and they aim to ensure that all people in communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy. And so, the following programs are the three programs. The first program is the State Digital Equity Planning Grant program, which has 60 million dollars. So, for those of you that have been following the bipartisan infrastructure law funded projects here at NTIA, it should strike none of you with any form of surprise that step one and anything that we're doing with the IJA funds is tied back to a plan.

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Each State is being required to develop a digital equity plan with the sixty million dollars. Those plans are supposed to be including tribes in that process, and they should be engaging in some level of consultation with everybody that is on the line today, and your respective tribal governments that you represent as those digital equity plans are being developed.

00:16:14.970 --> 00:16:44.880

In addition to the sixty million, there is actually fifteen million dollars that has been set aside for tribal entities, and I say tribal entities because the definition is actually very broad in terms of each of these programs, and they're different the way that Congress appropriated funds to the TBCP program versus the Digital Equity Program versus the BEAD program. The definitions are a little bit different. And so again, for those of you that are seeing the term tribal entity that is intentional because of the way in which the definition of eligibility was put forward in the statute. So, what we're primarily here to talk about today is going to be how we're treating those fifteen million dollars in terms of implementing and developing respective plans and or implementing those plans altogether.

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And I also want to point out that the plans are then used to inform, these are the State plans, are used to inform the digital equity capacity grant program. So, in addition to the planning dollars, every State is going to be receiving 1.44 billion, and in addition to the 1.44 billion that's going to be going out the door, there's also going to be a competitive bucket that will be coming after we get all the plans in place of 1.25 billion. Which tribes are also eligible to apply for directly.

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So, the name of the game today is to talk about: How do we approach the planning process for the 15 million that is sitting there, that many of you have submitted LOIs for here over the last couple of months and to talk about how to maximize that investment.

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I'll be honest with you. A lot of you in your review of the NOFO at the time saw that there was a placeholder in there somewhere between 50,000 to 150,000 dollar awards. There was some assumptions made, I mean frankly based upon the level of feedback that we saw through the Travel Broadband Connectivity program and also looking at how many tribes have connectivity today. I'll be just candid with you; I think that we definitely underestimated the level of interest for this particular

Adam Geisler

program with respect to the funding amounts that we thought would be made available. We thought we would get somewhere between 150 maybe 200 folks that were going to apply and submit LOIs. More than 400 submitted LOIs, which is why we're here to talk today. We are obviously in a little bit of a math problem, that it's a good problem to have. We have quantified need and we have identified that a lot of folks across Indian country have an interest in this particular program and the needs that come from Digital Equity planning and implementation, so, it's a good thing to know. But we have got to address how best to implement the money that we have available, which is \$15 million to move forward into these planning activities. So, with that Carol we'll go ahead, and we'll move into the next slide.

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So, we have four topics that you will find in your Dear Tribal Leader Letter. Essentially what we're going to do right now is go through each of those topics with a question, and the intent here again, for everybody is to get your feedback.

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Please use the raised hand function. Again, this is intended to be a government-to-government consultation. So, any feedback that you're providing, we are going to ask the tribal leaders. If you could raise your hand. If you are not a tribal leader and you're speaking on behalf of a tribe, when you introduce yourself, can you please give your name, who you're with, and that you have the authority to speak on whichever tribe it is that you are here representing today. I assume we're going to have a lot of that based upon how many tribes have indicated in their LOIs wanting to leverage a consortium body or an entity that they would like to administer the implementation of the Digital Equity Funding available to Indian country. So, with that, we'll go ahead, and we'll jump into the first topic and question we have.

00:20:30.900 --> 00:20:32.450

Question 1. Alright. So, the first one, I think, is pretty straightforward, but we wanted to ask. It's the timing of the application window. Many of you submitted your LOIs and that was again used to gauge the level of interest, and to understand where folks were in terms of wanting to participate in this program. However, there is going to be an application. I think many of you are aware of that, that we intend to put out for the digital equity program, and we have some flexibility here in terms of how long the windows should be open and are there any considerations that we should be aware of in the timing of the window. Obviously, the States that are many of your neighbors are also going through a planning process. Should we try to align the application window with the same timeframe that the States are currently underway with? Is there a separate timeframe that we should be considering? Recognizing that many tribes you're facing a lot of different issues. In fact, I've repeatedly heard tribes talk about timing concerns when these application windows are opened, and how long they're for, because it impacts other things that maybe tribal administrators or tribal governments are tackling at the same time. We don't want to create an extra burden. In fact, I think a lot of what we're talking about here in our four topics today, and our four questions is really intended to understand how best we can be supportive, and not to add an additional layer of complexity or time in your response to this particular program.

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With that being said. I think there's a few things we want to get out of this. The first one is: How long do you all believe we should keep the application window open for? 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 180 days. That's the first question. And then, are there considerations that we should be aware of in the timing of that window in terms of alignment with other programs that maybe you are looking at. Some of you are also working in the nonprofit space. I'm not sure, in terms of timing of other funds that you're looking at, and how you want to address Digital Equity and your respected communities that may or may not make sense. So, with all that being said, I will pause for a moment there to see if we have any hand raises or Carole, I know you're monitoring the phone line as well. So, Matt, I will turn it over to you to field any hand raises that we have in response to how long the application windows should be open. And again, are there special considerations that we should be thinking about in terms of when we open up the window.

Matt Rogotzke

00:23:15.060 --> 00:23:17.490

Sure, we'll just keep waiting. Yeah and for folks not familiar again, we'll just call you as the hands are raised and put you in a queue, but it looks like we got our first one just now from Bernadette Cuthair

Adam Geisler

00:23:31.700 --> 00:23:32.800

Alright. Ms. Cuthair, we are taking you off of mute.

Carole Garner

00:23:37.190 --> 00:23:41.580

She's coming on right now, Adam.

Bernadette Cuthair

Good morning, Bernadette Cuthair a director of planning and development for the Ute Mountain tribe. One of the particular barriers that we experience with the Ute Mountain tribe based on grant applications is, it's not so much to grant a window of time, but the announcement up to the application. I think you know that's where we start scrambling, and say, well, if it's only like a ten or let's just say a fifteen-day window. Then you're scrambling for that time to really pull together the application. So, I think that is you know pre-timeline wise? I'm not sure we have any control over that, as far as when the announcement actually comes out. So, I've seen it where sometimes it's like it could be like fifteen days to the actual application. And then they're trying to figure it out really quick. So that's kind of what happens. But I do think that if we had a little bit more time beyond the traditional application, that would be to our advantage to come up with a stronger application. So, thank you.

Adam Geisler

00:25:08.130 --> 00:25:26.010

Sure, Ms. Cuthair, before you go, I'm going to ask you a couple of questions. I'm gonna peel the onion a little bit and thank you for the you mountain tribe for your participation today and thank you for your leadership. I guess the first question is, if you were queen for a day: What is the ideal window that you think would be appropriate. You know I heard you say fifteen days is just kind of a shotgun. It just gets everybody up in a frenzy. So, I think one thing I'm hearing you say is maybe anything that we could do to let you know before we announce it. So, say we are

Adam Geisler

going to announce the NOFO after the first of the year. I'm looking at the calendar going, Oh, my gosh, It's Thanksgiving already, and we all know it happens after Thanksgiving. Things seem to slow down for everybody. But say we were to give notice of that, say January as an example of a launch. How long of an application window do you think we should keep open that would give you guys time to apply?

Bernadette Cuthair

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Well, I think the appropriate time would be somewhere in the range of, I want to say, perhaps I've seen it traditionally thirty days, but you know, if we go like at least thirty-five days, where we have the additional five, only because internally like other tribes, we have to go through this approval process through our tribal council for approval and then our grants process internally. There are so many steps that we have to go through internally, so I think the appropriate line would be somewhere in the range of I want to say thirty-five to forty-five days. But if there could be, you know I've seen it where some grant funds have like two tiered within a fiscal year, where there's applications being accepted rather than just one a year in a fiscal year. So, I think knowing that it's coming, if you have a pre-planned, let's just say October 1. If we know that October 1 is coming and know the funds are going to be sitting there, or the application will be in there, announced. We know that. So, we're kind of preparing ourselves ahead of that October 1.

Bernadette Cuthair

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And then, if we have somewhere, maybe six months later, knowing that in the summertime that we have another round of funding that we could potentially apply for. I think that's something, that if we miss the first round, we're not out. We can go and be in the second round, so that might help. So, thank you.

Adam Geisler

00:27:47.820 --> 00:28:02.790

That's good feedback. What if I were to say January 1, if what came out of this is even if we don't have the application one hundred percent dialed in. That's why there's more questions here that we're looking for feedback around the application itself. But would that be enough lead time? If you know the next month or so, we were to give you guys forty-five days heads up that we're going to be releasing the application, and then a forty-five-day window. Because I hear you, former councilman myself, that there's process for all of these tribal governments right their governments. They have processes that we need to be respectful of. So that seems, would that seem to be workable from your perspective?

Bernadette Cuthair

00:28:27.600 --> 00:28:36.570

Yes, I think even if you did one round within a fiscal year, a January window would be very adequate, because then, you know you have October to that January, just looking at things that are ahead of us. So that way we're able to either get our plan together or a budget together, whatever we think it might be of what we already know it to be, because I'm pretty sure that everybody on this call has been familiar with applications so we know what that narrative needs to look like, all the elements that belong in there. But at least we're pre-planning to that January. I think that would be adequate enough. Thank you. But thank you for making me a queen for the day.

Adam Geisler

00:29:15.600 --> 00:29:34.360

Queen every day I appreciate the feedback, Miss Cuthair. So, I think I hear you loud and clear. Your forty-five-day window would be ideal as a heads up so January 1 notice doesn't freak you out. So, I think we're in a good spot there, so thank you for the feedback. Well Matt, we had Ms. Cuthair kick it off from Ute Mountain tribe. Is there anybody else that has thoughts around the timing or the feedback, or the comments that either we have made, or Ms. Cuthair has made? Anybody else support those ideas? As well, and I'm not trying to couch any conflict here. I mean, if it all makes sense to everybody great, then we can move on to the next question. But love to get some affirmation around anybody else on the call that would be willing to share today

Matt Rogotzke

00:30:04.170 --> 00:30:20.620

Sure. No, hands up at the moment. But I just wanted to put for the record that Marc Payan has said 60-day timeline into the Q&A, just for our transcripts. We just wanted to note that is a comment as well.

Adam Geisler

00:30:21.270 --> 00:30:24.789

All right, Marc, do you want to go ahead and come off mute for a moment.

Marc Payan

00:30:42.050 --> 00:30:43.750

There we go. I am unmuted, there?

Adam Geisler

There you are, if you just name the tribe you're with, and then we'll go ahead and get your comments,

Marc Payan

00:30:53.340 --> 00:30:56.089

Agua Caliente, Band of Cahuilla Indians

Adam Geisler

00:30:57.580 --> 00:31:04.349

All right. California is in the house today. Good to have you, Marc. And so, your thoughts on the window.

Marc Payan

00:31:04.860 --> 00:31:09.679

Yeah, my only comment was, a sixty-day window would be great. I understand if there are shorter windows. But that usually leads enough time to work with the appropriate department or champions that are going to be administering and doing the actual work of the funding opportunity, and then to go through any of reporting to council and such. A sixty-day window is great. We could always work with shorter windows. But if you were asking for the ideal, I think that'd be great.

Adam Geisler

00:31:48.760 --> 00:31:49.840

Okay, and Mark, in terms of again planning perspective, and I realized a lot of you, I was looking at the list coming in today. A lot of the participants here today are not the elected leadership. But I also realized that you're managing the grants of programs. So, are there any thoughts around like a January launch from a calendar

year perspective? Does that give you guys enough lead time to at least kind of gear up in preparation? Realizing you have your process of the application itself.

Marc Payan

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Yes, you know January 1st date actually works well. Knowing ahead of time it's going to come out January 1st and you're going to have a specified window to put that together. I think it allows us to put it on the calendar already and start thinking through that process.

Adam Geisler

00:32:41.640 --> 00:32:42.570

Awesome. Alright. Well, Mr. Payan. I appreciate you sharing, and for the participation from Agua Caliente, your sixty-day window and January seems to make sense. Again, I'm just looking at the calendar going. Okay? Well, November, November's here, right? It's October 18th and December is right behind that, with a lot of holidays and people taking time and good at their families. So, it seems like January may make sense. Anybody else have any thoughts. Thank you, Mr. Payan for being on.

Matt Rogotzke

00:33:15.620 --> 00:33:23.209

Yep. Another comment in the Q&A for Kevin Hamer that one seems like it should be, I guess, live, if Kevin wouldn't mind coming off mute. If we could get Kevin off mute.

Adam Geisler

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Mr. Hamer. We'd love to capture the feedback in the record here today if we could. There we go, alright, and I think we just got to get off the mute button there.

Kevin Hamer

00:34:26.790 --> 00:34:30.189

Okay, I think I think we've got it now. I'm well Adam, how are you?

Adam Geisler

Doing good. Doing good.

Kevin Hamer

Thanks for joining speaking from Bethel, Kevin Hamer Yukon Kuskokwim Delta tribal broadband consortium and my question, and I think it applies to the timing is trying to get an understanding. I thought the program for the tribal set aside under the state digital equity program was an allocation program which can be a very streamlined process.

00:35:06.030 --> 00:35:23.159

Those who submitted letters of intent being, you know, by the timeframe being asked to go ahead and go through hopefully a streamline application process. Has that changed into a competitive grant program?

Adam Geisler

No.

Kevin Hamer

Okay, Okay. So, the application process, then, would be a fairly streamlined process if it's still an allocation program. So, it doesn't argue necessarily for a long timeframe for the application window. So that's what I was trying to get straight in my head,

and maybe some other folks on the phone have that same question. Thank you for putting me on.

Adam Geisler

00:35:43.620 --> 00:35:57.529

No, I'm glad you raised it. Because I think that if you're thinking that, I'm sure five other people are thinking it. No, the intention here is, if you submitted an LOI initially into the NOFO, there's a placeholder there. So now, the next step is for those that applied or submitted the LOI to the NOFO that we still have an application component that would need to be filled out. We're going to talk about what's reasonable to require. Given that, given the amount of funding available, even if these are bundled up into consortiums of multiple tribes, we want to make sure that the level of effort, one in the application, but two in terms of the deliverables is reasonable, based upon the amount of funding available.

00:36:30.980 --> 00:36:42.390

You know, we thought that that may have been there at fifty thousand. I mean. You guys are probably all doing the math pretty quickly. You divide fifteen million by four hundred, and it's a lot less than fifty thousand dollars.

Adam Geisler

00:36:42.400 --> 00:37:00.630

Right? So, to your point we don't want to make an onerous application process. We do want to streamline. We have some questions about that here in just a moment. But to answer your question, no, the intention is not to make this competitive at any point here moving forward. It is really meant to for the satisfied.

00:37:00.640 --> 00:37:15.270

There's a completely different leg of this program that is competitive that will be announced later on. After all the planning pieces are done. But hopefully that address the concern, Kevin. But I do, while I have you want to ask given that understanding, does a January timeframe give you pause or concern? Or if we were to say November or December, does that I realize there's a lot of moving parts in Alaska. There's villages that are spread apart. And we don't want to put anybody at a disadvantage in this process, and that's really why we're asking. So, I'll ask you that first question in terms of the timeframe.

Kevin Hamer

00:37:41.750 --> 00:37:53.099

So of course, it all depends on if we can get to work earlier. Right? So, if you have a NOFO process that is a November-December timeframe, that's really challenging to get the communication out here. I'm sure we'll tell you it is very difficult. Folks are doing a lot of traveling back and forth, and communication is always a challenge with around the holiday months. It can be especially so. With tribal offices sometimes not being available, but a whole office for smaller tribes. So, I think January makes much more sense in terms of making sure we can get to all the folks in all the communities. We have twenty-two, and the letters of intent for our consortium. So, we have a lot of outreach to do. January sounds great. I don't have any problem with sixty days. We can make it less if it's a more streamlined application process. Those are my thoughts.

Adam Geisler

Thank you. Awesome. Appreciate the feedback, and you also just brought to mind, I think something else that many tribes are dealing with in in the November December timeframe, which is elections. Many tribes have elections annually, or they stagger them. And so, I think, just as the nation we're adding into election season, we're definitely in it. You know. I think that is also another caveat to consider in terms of the timing of the window.

00:39:11.360 --> 00:39:27.769

So, I appreciate it, Mr. Hamer, for you joining us today, and for the folks from the Y. K. Delta giving the feedback. And so, I hear January would be nice, and sixty days or less, if it's a streamlined process. So more to come there. Thank you.

00:39:29.130 --> 00:39:52.949

Alright. Well, I'm hearing some continuity here in terms of the timing. Hopefully, I didn't lead with it too much. But you know again, we're just trying to be cognizant of the level of effort, burden, and the realities that many of you have in considering that many of you are looking to do this through consortium. Is there anybody else that has feedback that they'd like to add to this particular topic or conversation, and maybe I would just also offer. Is there anybody that we've heard from a few people so far. Is there anybody that's just going. Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! For us that doesn't work, that that gives you pause. You know, maybe it's you'd like to see it later than January. I don't know. Maybe you would like to see it next month, for whatever reason. But you know clearly we want to make sure that everybody's voice is heard here. So is there any other feedback where people may have pause, or maybe you're just in support of the timeframe as well.

00:40:30.840 --> 00:40:32.100

Alright, maybe thirty more seconds, Matt and Michell, and if not, then we'll move on to the next question. I think we've kicked this one pretty good in terms of this question. We'll move on to the next one.

00:40:47.200 --> 00:40:49.930

Alright, question number two. We'll go to the next slide, please. As you guys saw in the Dear Tribal Leader Letter, we had a second topic that was up for conversation, and it was the required components of the digital equity plans themselves.

00:41:03.340 --> 00:41:17.969

So, some background, the requirements, and the reason why we're raising this is that again, the requirements that are being put on the States and their plans. We have some latitude with the tribal digital equity plans where it's not as prescriptive. So, we have some flexibility in terms of what we want to be requiring in the application itself. So here I'll read this slide in a little bit of background here. The application for the tribal entities Digital Equity Plan will have required outcomes. So, like any program we're going to have to make sure that we meet the requirements of the statute

00:41:38.410 --> 00:42:03.289

Adam Geisler

These outcomes include, but are not limited to, a description of how the tribal entity will coordinate its use of the funding. Any tribal broadband connectivity program awards it has received for broadband use and adoption. Again, you guys are going to see where we're funding through one program. We also want to make sure that we're encapsulating that in another program for awareness, because we don't want to duplicate activities.

00:42:03.300 --> 00:42:10.749

Also, any relevant States projects funded via the State digital equity capacity grant funding. So, there are a number of you working with your States where maybe there's projects identified, that you've identified with your respective States. So, we want to make sure we identify that in the application process. And then, lastly, any other Federal or private digital equity funding. I know some of you, it says, private digital equity funding or where those activities are occurring. Maybe some of you are using your Treasury funds. Maybe some of you have gotten creative and are using your aid to tribal government funding to do some of these activities. The bottom line is we want to make sure that we identify those funds. So, to that end, what additional information should tribal entities provide as project outcomes for their digital equity planning applications? So are there anything, any items in particular that you all feel are critical that we need to encapsulate in the application process. And I'm going to give you guys something to react to. So, we're going to go to the next slide. Voila! Okay.

00:43:14.700 --> 00:43:23.129

So required components of the digital equity plans. And again, I'm gonna say it again. This is not baked but the team did want to pull something for you all to react to. So, we are interested in these broad sweeping questions and something like this topic so potential requirements that we have discussed in terms of what should be a part of your digital equity planning application that we would want to see identified. So, the first one and again, guys, the goal here is: Does any of this not make sense? Do you think we need to change it? Are there any additions? Are there things that we need to remove off of this list? That is really what we want to get some feedback here on. So, a stated vision for digital equity, right? We want to make sure that you're able to tell us what your goals and your vision are for implementation of meeting the digital equity needs in your community. The second is a description of the focal population covered by the plan and the barriers they face to digital equity. And I'm just going to give you a set of examples. The idea here would be to go a lot deeper than just saying we want to help every tribal member. Really, I think what we want to get to the root of in terms of focal populations are, how are the elders doing in terms of their ability to access the Internet? Persons with disabilities, maybe, is an area that you'd want to focus on.

00:44:39.540 --> 00:45:05.760

Adam Geisler

Unfortunately, I think there is a level of incarceration that occurs in a number of our communities. Are there any components that you may want to do in terms of working with that particular population. Let's not forget about the youth. If there's

any particular aspects that you're thinking of. So again, are we asking too much here? And I don't think we are. But we're asking in terms of the focal population.

00:45:05.770 --> 00:45:22.410

The third is measures. Any good grant program has to be able to articulate the objectives and measure those objectives. So, we want to understand. Promoting digital equity and digital inclusions, and some of those activities may address the availability and affordability of broadband technology. Are we asking too much of you if we say, if you come to us and say, you know we want to help our elders, and as part of that we want to understand how many of them actually have access to devices, equipment, services, or are they currently have access to affordable broadband? Also, what level of literacy they may have going into it.

And again, I think the intent here is to measure success over time. So, we would want to. We need to be able to put that into the application itself, where we have a starting point. So are we asking too much of you to be able to articulate that?

00:46:04.870 --> 00:46:16.380

Item four, measures to secure online privacy, and cyber security. One of the things that I think we all realize in this digital age is there are elements of our population that are absolutely targets of people that are doing unscrupulous things. You know I can give you an example of somebody trying to scam my grandmother. I'm sure others of you have run into those situations where they send an email or something. So, you know, one of the things that we would want to ask is how, as part of the implementation of digital equity activities, would you measure the security aspects to that?

00:46:46.390 --> 00:46:52.639

The fifth is availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support? So again, we want to understand in the application how many folks actually have availability to equipment and it's not just, you know, sure Best Buy, and my Alaska colleagues I'm going to say this broadly. Best Buy may be down the road, but can everybody afford a \$1500 laptop? I don't know. Probably not in feedback that I've seen previously. But you know we would like to understand what's available in terms of consumer devices and is it affordable? Also, what capacity exists from technical support to help your communities. Does that exist? So, we'd like to know. Again, we're putting this out there. Is it, do these seem too difficult to be able to answer, or do they seem too onerous? In terms of what we're asking in the application.

00:47:41.220 --> 00:47:42.649

Number six, a description of how the tribal entity plans to engage the tribal community and collaborate with key stakeholders to achieve the objective set forth in the plan. Again, I don't think the goal here and I don't think we're looking for fifty-page narratives, but I think that the hope would be that if you're going to say and I should just stick with an example. We're going to work with our elders to teach them how to get online. Is it, we would like to be able for you to articulate what that plan and path looks like. You know are you gonna set aside thirty minutes that your

weekly elder or community gathering and talk about devices one week, and then talk about how you set up an email account the next week, and then the following week, have them send emails to each other. I don't know. But is it too crazy for us to be asking for you to provide a description of how you're going to meet those objectives. What's reasonable, I think, is the other question here. You know again a couple of paragraphs, a couple of pages. You know what's reasonable?

00:48:48.330 --> 00:49:02.969

Number Seven, a list of organizations with which the entity who will administer the funds for the tribal entity collaborated in developing the plan. A lot of you have an intention of working with a consortium body and, you know one of the things that we would want to understand or figure out how to encompass in the application is who you intend to be working with as you administer those funds? Obviously, the participating tribes. But if you're coming in looking at a specific area or population, it would be great to know beyond just saying, well, you know I'm "X" consortium, and I'm gonna work with this tribal government. It would be good to know if you really deep dove into that a little bit more and said, well, yes, we're going to be working with this tribe, but specifically within that tribe their Education Department, their persons with disabilities department. I've even seen folks even taking it down the public health path. I mean, maybe that's the direction you're headed. So again, recognizing that we want to streamline, right, Mr. Hamer? We want to streamline, but we also need to keep in mind the level of effort to meet the requirements of the law. What is too much? What is too little? Love your feedback there.

00:50:09.810 --> 00:50:14.809

Number eight, an implementation strategy that explains the proposed core activities that the tribal entity will implement to address the barriers identified in item two, I feel like the lawyers wrote this, and to achieve objective set forth in item three, and sets out measurements to ensure effectiveness across tribal communities. I love our lawyers by the way, it's not a dig, but it just you know how it goes with legalese, you know, see five pages that aren't the ones in front of you is how this one looks, sorry. And then, lastly, is a timeline for the implementation of the plan. So, what's reasonable?

00:50:41.510 --> 00:50:55.859

A lot of you are going through hiring and workforce development in general. So, as you look to build out your digital equity plan and applications, what's a reasonable timeframe for the execution of those activities. Just coming off of our tribal broadband leader's network call last week, I'm already hearing from a number of our applicants that have raised concerns about the ability to timely hire the consultants or the staff that they were looking for because of whatever is impacting their community. Covid is still out there, virality, there's a lot of issues that I think we're all dealing with in today's world. So, what's a realistic timeline for the implementation of the plan should be capping those timelines? So, talked too much on this slide, but there's nine items to digest. So, with that, the outline that I just ran through in the last ten minutes on this slide, which again I'm sorry was a long one. Does anything on here, give you pause and go: Adam, for the money and the level of effort, that's a lot to ask in an application. Are there any of these things that you feel

like would create some sort of excess burden that maybe you couldn't handle internally, or within your consortium body itself. That would add extra layers of expense or time or burden. So, I will stop talking, and we will go ahead, and I'll turn it back over to Mr. Rogotzke, to see if we have any feedback in the queue about it. Again, this is an outline that we put up for folks to be able to react to. But we got to start somewhere. So, does this seem like we're on point? Are we asking for too much? Are we asking for too little? I highly doubt you are going to say we are asking for too little, but maybe you will. I don't know. But we'll hit pause there and over to you, Matt.

Matt Rogotzke 00:52:36.100 --> 00:52:37.169
There is a Q&A I think, let's see, Louise Doney. I'm not sure if you want that one. But she says the letter of credit is difficult. That seems like a bit much. And not seeing any hands up at the moment.

Adam Geisler 00:53:02.440 --> 00:53:13.999
While we have it in the chat we have Michell direct from the program. Michell, is there any feedback you wanted to give in terms of the letter of credit comment that's here?

Michell Morton 00:53:23.720 --> 00:53:40.469
Not off the top of my head. My comment is also as you all are thinking about the things that might be difficult. It would be also good to know the things that maybe we need to include, maybe, or things that we need to take a closer look at. So, I would also be interested in that feedback as well.

Adam Geisler 00:53:41.020 --> 00:53:43.850
I think that's a great point. Obviously, the level of interest far exceeded the availability of funds in terms of what we had anticipated, which shows a huge level of need. But it is pretty common for the different layers within government that ask questions to ask about what do tribes need? What is really the level of need that's out there? So that's a good point. Are there any things that we haven't highlighted here that you think would be beneficial in telling the story or the needs of your respective communities, when Congress or others may ask us. Great comment, Michell.

00:54:33.290 --> 00:54:37.840
Alright, and I am just gonna call Mr. Hamer, still on and hopefully he's not a multi-tasking. If he has. I'm sorry, Kevin, for calling you out here. But I'm going to ask you directly, because you brought up the streamlining question, and you're working with a number of tribes. Does it seem like this is onerous, or does it seem obtainable? Given the environment that you're working in? So, we'll go ahead and pull Mr. Hamer off of mute.

Kevin Hamer 00:55:13.750 --> 00:55:25.180
OK, there we go. Here we are, and not until we get the fiber out here. It's slow out in remote Alaska. So, this is the plan itself. I mean, if you're asking tribes to come up with all this information as part of the application process, they're going to have to

spend some time and effort doing this. That's the kind of thing that their plan ought to be getting funded for them to do this work. So, this is not streamlined at all. This is a lot of work to do as an application for something that's not going to be funded at the levels that we had hoped. This is something that I would expect to see in the plan itself, a lot of this stuff, such as the online privacy and security and availability and what are the availability and affordability, consumer devices, technical support, things like that. That should be something that is funded to research and gather this data within the tribal communities themselves, and not part of the application upfront. It's going to take a lot of work for a lot of our tribes to come up with all of this as part of an application for something that my calculation was like \$37,000 dollars at most for the actual grant. That's fifteen million divided by four hundred.

So this is our smaller tribes working with them to get all this information and data as part of our application process is really overkill and will create a barrier to us getting this work done.

Adam Geisler

Well, this is the kind of feedback we need, so I'm going to do what we did with Miss Cuthair. Kevin, if you were King for a day, how would you change this?

00:57:17.020 --> 00:57:36.120

You know. Where does that level of effort go for what's reasonable for the application, start and end? And again, you know, if you were to remove things off of here, what would you remove? Again, this was just to get people to react to. What are the bare minimums that would make it reasonable for you in the initial application.

00:57:53.270 --> 00:57:54.620

Did we lose, Kevin? We might have lost him. Alright. Well, let me ask this question for everybody else, since we're here. Oh, looks like we might have Kevin back.

Kevin Hamer

00:58:18.660 --> 00:58:23.739

Can you hear me? Sorry about that? And it's asking me to join as panelist. If you guys can hear me, I'll just speak as I am without trying to rejoin this panelist. Is that okay? All right, Thank you. So, the Capital Projects Fund, at Treasury had a very streamlined process for their applications, and it was a Q&A with very little narrative required. I know there's been a lot of problems with the Capital Project Fund making the awards under the CPF program for tribes, the allocation award. But having something where you don't make it narrative intensive, stated vision, a few things where it's one or two sentences and a response in a portal application that makes it very easy for folks to go through and give direct answers to direct questions online without coming up with a whole proposal basically.

I'd take out all the things that should be in the plan instead of the application. You know one or two lines for measure objectives, measured security on online privacy, that ought to be in the plan. I take 4 out, portability consumer devices. 5 out, that ought to be in the plan itself, instead of the application. 6 keep in and 7 is fine. Implementation strategy, I'd limit that to three sentences or so. Right? That's about

it. And again, if you can do that in a portal application and make it as streamlined as easy as possible. I think you will get a lot more applicants and a lot better responses.

01:00:12.230 --> 01:00:31.710

Adam Geisler

Perfect, this is the kind of feedback we need. Go ahead, Matt.

Matt Rogotzke

Just hopping in here quick for a second. So, this is what's going on in the plan, not the application itself, the two are separate. I just wanted to highlight that. That the application you don't have to come up with this entire narrative. Once you put in your application, and you get to do the planning process, then you get to put together the components of that we're asking about here. The application itself will have some separate elements like project narrative, budget narrative, things of that nature so just wanted to call that out quick.

Adam Geisler

I appreciate that. So, I think that dovetails to Mr. Hamer's feedback, Matt, that at the end of the day, we're not, these don't seem impossible from a digital equity plan component standpoint. But I do hear you, Mr. Hamer, in terms of we should ensure, and I think we've noted all of the concerns that you raised on what makes sense in the initial application versus how those are stated. You know these are the things, just kind of talking out loud, these are the things that we're going to be looking for in your app or in your plan, and we put that as part of the commitment if you were to be awarded and that makes a ton of sense. Is there anything here from the planning space itself to Matt's point that even if we get to that streamlined process that you articulated, is there anything in here that seems impossible? And given the math that you ran pretty quickly in that range of thirty thousand dollars.

Kevin Hamer

01:02:00.540 --> 01:02:28.740

Nothing that's impossible. What I'd really like to do is to make sure that this is focusing on the core content. The plan itself, the core content, and the plan would be to do as you describe is to help give a plan that, if implemented, the tribe would get the skills, the tools, and the knowledge to safely use all the benefits of affordable broadband.

01:02:28.850 --> 01:02:43.679

So, you know, things like number 4 measures to secure online privacy and security, make that a checkmark. Yes, your plan will include that as part of the application process. But description of how the yeah, most of this is fairly easy to do in the plan as long as it doesn't overcome the plan core, which is, what are the number 8? What are the specific core activities that you will do to achieve your outcomes, to provide, to raise the level of digital skills within the community. So that's what I really proposed.

01:03:13.070 --> 01:03:30.490

The rest could be as much checkmark as possible but focus on the content that is really going to drive the change, and the rest of this make us Yes/No questions as you can. That would be my feedback. Thank you for the opportunity.

01:03:30.500 --> 01:03:44.109

Adam Geisler

Awesome. Thank you, Mr. Hamer, I think just to recap that was great and hopefully, we have other feedback that folks are willing to share that maybe you agree or want to augment some of Mr. Hamer's feedback. But just to recap, I'm glad you raised the Treasury example, because I agree, I think, that the only thing I thought was a little weird was the facial scan stuff. But like outside of that, I hear you loud and clear on the streamline, and in terms of your thoughts.

Also, just to recap that it doesn't seem like anything from your perspective, that we're asking in here is, given the funding available, like we're not asking you to climb a mountain with no shoes in the cold with somebody throwing rocks down at you. Right, this is obtainable. In terms of the funding that would be made available in that thirty to forty thousand per tribe range. Correct?

01:04:28.820 --> 01:04:35.989

Kevin Hamer

You're going to get a very simple plan. There's not going to be, you know. Folks are going to work to the available funding, and you know what we're going to work above the available funding, because we always do. That's just the nature of it. We're working for the benefit of our communities. So, we're going to work above the funding. We appreciate that there will be some funding for it. So that that's the way I'd take that.

01:04:54.070 --> 01:05:05.100

Adam Geisler

All right. Well, Mr. Hamer, thank you again for the feedback on this, and that was really valuable, and it looks like we have a few other folks that are coming off the queue here, Matt: Good.

01:05:05.390 --> 01:05:06.490

Matt Rogotzke

Sure, yeah. We had a couple in the Q&As. We can maybe turn to that once we're through with the comments here. But Jim Berlin had a hand up first, and then Bernadette had another hand up as well as a Q&A comment, so we'll turn to Jim first.

01:05:25.200 --> 01:05:27.200

Carole Garner

Jim should be coming on soon.

Jim Berlin

You should be able to hear me. Can you hear me?

01:05:48.370 --> 01:05:56.989

Adam Geisler

Yes, I can so just name and the tribe that you're speaking on behalf of today.

01:05:57.000 --> 01:06:00.479

Jim Berlin

I'm Jim Berlin and I'm with the Alaska Tribal Spectrum consortium representing a lot of tribes, about 104 tribes now. So, my question, by the way, Kevin, thank you. I agree with everything, Kevin said.

01:06:17.300 --> 01:06:25.470

You know we have tribes of different sizes, but in a lot, you know most of them are small natured. Communications are very difficult this time, so collecting a lot of information beforehand would be very difficult. But you know, as part of the plan, obviously, you want to collect all that information, so that makes total sense.

01:06:39.200 --> 01:06:41.080

My question was: We have tribes of different sizes. Some we have that are quite large in the digital equity plans much larger organizations. Is there? Is the money going to be apportioned just for the plans. Is it possible to have different sizes for the money that's distributed that use for the plan, because, as Kevin said, you'd do the math, and it's like thirty-seven thousand dollars, but some of these to collect and to collect information, for the plan is going to be a lot more work than you know in a community with fifty people, some of these communities are much larger.

Adam Geisler

01:07:13.180 --> 01:07:23.850

Yeah, that's a fair question. Our intention and, Michell, you correct me if I step on anything here, but our intention is to do, it's a straight division irrespective of the size, shaped nature. We're taking the approach to divide it evenly, essentially based on the number of LOIs.

Jim Berlin

01:07:37.770 --> 01:07:47.560

Okay. I can understand why you want to do that. I just want to ask the question to say what you were going to do.

Adam Geisler

01:07:47.570 --> 01:07:58.829

It's a fair question. Mr. Berlin, just to recap. It sounds like you're on the same page with Mr. Hamer's feedback as well. And again, I'm just capturing this for the record we record these. This is an establishment of a record when we make our decisions for each of these programs. And so, if Congress asked later why we did something, we go back to the consultation and say, here's what we heard. And this is why we did what we did. So just want to reaffirm that that was your position.

Jim Berlin

01:08:10.270 --> 01:08:20.290

Yeah, I think you know when I saw this I went, my goodness, how are we going to get all this done? And you know, before we even get the funding. This is going to be very difficult. It's going to be really difficult to do. But, as Kevin said, you know, these are certainly all the I think these are valid elements for putting in the plan, you know, once you develop a plan, but you know our intent is to do all these things. It's just to get them all done. And in the amount of time with the numbers that we're talking about would be very difficult to do in remote Alaska with the communications being as they are. So yes, Kevin well said.

Adam Geisler

01:08:44.660 --> 01:08:45.750

Awesome. Well, thank you, Mr. Berlin, and we will go on to our next speaker, Matt. Who do we have?

Matt Rogotzke

01:08:51.740 --> 01:08:54.690

Ms. Bernadette Cuthair again.

Adam Geisler

01:08:57.050 --> 01:09:00.170

All right, Ms. Cuthair. We're going to be bringing you off of mute. All right.

Bernadette Cuthair

01:09:15.200 --> 01:09:17.329

Adam. Can you hear me? Hello! I think it's just on my side. I'm not sure if you can hear me.

01:09:27.689 --> 01:09:56.179

Okay, So I will continue to speak. Bernadette Cuthair, Ute Mountain tribe. So, I just have a couple of comments on the potential requirements. I put in the Q&A that one, two, seven, eight, and nine. I can see that streamlining this because it's a preliminary planning stage that we're talking about. So, I think some of these are a little bit more down-the-road kind of information, or you know how that would happen. But my question is that I understand that I'm not sure how this applies in each state, but in the state of Colorado we have a map showing the underserved and the unserved household and businesses according to the Colorado broadband office map. So, I also understand that NTIA also has published a map as well. So, my question is, and I think this is something that could potentially show our area to say Ute Mountain tribe in the state of Colorado. If we're showing those areas that are either in those two categories, underserved or unserved in the planning application, a link to that. Because here's why I'm just saying this ahead of time is that you sure want to indicate in you know as far as what kind of work needs to be done. Let's say in 2023. By the time you get to design and construction, three to five years from now, your map should change, based on what has been done. But as a planner, it's in my mind all the time to think about the necessary documents that we create is somehow historical in nature. Because you want to leave that information. Let's just say ten or twenty years from now, technology certainly will change. And you have this historical documentation that we need to help them to understand the infrastructure what has been laid down.

01:11:55.700 --> 01:12:25.690

So that's the only reason why I'm really proactive about getting the historical documentation like the pre documents, and then the post documents. So is that something that will be required, and I think it's for the Ute Mountain Tribe. But certainly, is something that I advocate for, because, you know, I'm due to retire here in two years, and it's something that I want to leave this information for the next planner, so that way they clearly can see the tribe's vision as far as this infrastructure objective. So that's kind of what I'm indicating. So, and I understand that there isn't really going to be an emphasis on speed data testing. Because sometimes the, what is it, service? Or can, you know they state one thing like the one hundred BPS, and it's not always the case. It can be three to twenty, so you know, I think those are the indications that well trigger to Congress that this is really truly underserved. So, I think some of those technical aspects, even if you do like, let's just say random sample of within your community. It doesn't have to be the entirety. But a random sample of those areas, I think, would help support the planning stages of why the next step is needed, or why the millions is needed. So just my comments. Thank you.

Adam Geisler

01:13:43.090 --> 01:13:47.700

Ms. Cuthair, I thank you for that. I don't, is your audio working?

Bernadette Cuthair

01:13:48.090 --> 01:14:06.769

I can hear. I'm not sure if you can hear me.

Adam Geisler

I can hear you. I think you raised a couple of things that really draw my... first off, Thank you for the feedback on items one, two, seven, eight, and nine from a streamlining perspective.

01:14:06.920 --> 01:14:23.920

Also, I think you raise a really valid point. And frankly, this is in part why I think some of our assumptions when we went out for the LOI were what they were, right. We, part of the methodology was digital equity.

01:14:23.930 --> 01:14:43.810

How much can you do in terms of digital equity without having connectivity in a lot of these communities? Which is very clear that there are lots of things that can still be done while broadband deployment and the infrastructure is coming to the table. But I think the thing that struck me the most about your feedback is that these plans are going to look a lot different or potentially have some caveats to them that we need to be considering at NTIA due to the nature of the level of unserved households that still exist and that the timelines for implementation of the activities in these plans really need to have some flexibility. Is kind of what I was pulling out from your feedback because some of these communities that you're looking at in the Colorado map that you pointed out, or even we have the national broadband availability map at NTIA. It's on our website if you guys want to check it out.

01:15:21.340 --> 01:15:35.190

But to your point there are whole communities that may not be receiving service for three or four years down the road, and we should be mindful that these plans need to be, they're not going to fit the here and now, because not all of those activities are going to be able to be done right now. That doesn't mean that you don't want to do it. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't identify it in the planning process. But I mean you raise a good point in terms of time and phasing, I think, Michell, this also gives us some thought around the timing of the competitive launch, I mean, you're right, I don't know that we'll solve that today. But Ms. Cuthair, I do want to just say thank you for your feedback, because that is a reality.

01:16:08.000 --> 01:16:27.110

Adam Geisler

I have a feeling, my colleagues from Alaska would echo similar feedback, that the timing of implementation needs to be relative to when infrastructure is happening at different times and in the communities. And again, a lot of consortiums are on here today that we need to keep in mind, so I also think that maybe it won't be a required form, Michell or Matt, but one of the things that we should talk about is optional submissions in relationship to any mapping that folks want to provide that would go in tandem with their justification for a certain timeframe in either their

application or what the final plan looks like. So, appreciate the feedback, Ms. Cuthair, I really do. Being queen for a day is serving you well, for sure I thank you. Any other feedback from our listeners here from our participants here, tribal leaders here today that want to add to this conversation about the application, and any of the requirements that we have where we should be capturing again, I think, to Miss Cuthair's point for Congressional awareness, or anybody else that may ask what's going on in Indian country, and what do they need? Any other feedback? I'll pause there for just a second.

01:17:35.020 --> 01:17:49.739

Matt Rogotzke

We did have a couple in the Q&A. I just wanted to point out. One attendee says, I agree with Mr. Hamer. Many items in this request were submitted, and the initial NTIA requests of the LOI, and there's a section in the LOI that said a few stated activities that you'd have as part of your plan. So, there's that element in there, so at least those are maybe something we could call upon. And then Louise Doney had a comment, our tribe that struggles with a cash match. We see that the tribes can request a waiver so appreciate seeing that in the guidance.

Adam Geisler

01:18:16.370 --> 01:18:18.989

Yup, no match on this program. We want to make sure that the folks that have the needs can access these critical funds to suit your communities. So, it's good stuff. Alright. Well maybe fifteen more seconds. If we don't see any hands pop up or comments come in, we'll just give it a few more seconds here, and we'll move on to the next question.

Michell Morton

01:18:42.180 --> 01:18:51.030

Adam, I did want to go back to Ms. Doney's question about the letter of credit if she's willing to come off the line and just explain why that might be an issue that would be helpful provides more clarity around that.

Adam Geisler

01:18:53.140 --> 01:18:54.370

Awesome. Carole you're coming in a little fuzzy.

Carole Garner

01:19:05.810 --> 01:19:09.389

Okay, is it? There we go need the name again. My apologies.

Adam Geisler

01:19:09.389 --> 01:19:21.920

It looks like Louise Doney, sorry if I'm butchering the name, I apologize.

Carole Garner

01:19:21.920 --> 01:19:28.339

I'm not seeing that on our list. I don't think she's on anymore. Yeah, I think she left.

Adam Geisler

01:19:30.700 --> 01:19:38.590

We do have, Michelle, we do have the contact list, so we maybe we can do a direct follow up afterwards and just see if we can track down the concern. Well, on to question number three. There we go. Alright. So, in terms of allowable activities for the digital equity planning funds, what should allowable activities be for the digital equity planning funding. But again, we have some latitude here.

01:20:01.900 --> 01:20:21.079

Some of you may want to use the funds obviously for the development of your tribal organizations Digital Equity plan, which is great, staffing, stakeholder engagement, data collection, plan development. The question really here is? Are there items in particular that you would like to be able to use the funds for that in other programs, maybe you haven't been able to do it, or that, you just want to really make sure that we don't lose sight of one of those activities, and you'll also see here on the second area in bold, support development of state digital equity plans. Some of you may want to come in and, this is a question, really of wanting to incorporate into the state digital equity planning process. And so, you want to use these funds to engage and be included in the state plan in itself. So maybe you want to use the funds to travel for any consultations or in-person engagements that they're having. Maybe there's some surveying elements that you're considering that you would want to do in collaboration with the state and then, obviously, you know, staffing in relationship to your interactions with the state process. So, these are just again. These are placeholders up here for folks to be able to react to.

01:21:26.190 --> 01:21:43.509

I would like to hear, do folks agree that these are good examples of eligible uses? That's really the first one and the second one is: There are things that aren't on this list here that you see that would make sense to add and we'll pause there. It's okay for those of you that are providing feedback. This we're here. I realized it. Maybe in other forums. You just speak once, and the way we do it at NTIA we're gonna have a question by question. Don't be shy about coming back on. If you've already given feedback, and for those of you that are holding off on raising your hand, I'm going to encourage you guys again to go ahead and raise it.

01:22:09.770 --> 01:22:20.319

And if you could just identify yourself and the name of the tribe or organization that you're representing for today's consultation. So, we'll hit pause there. Okay, again and I'll just ask everybody on here. The feedback that you provide here drives what we do with the application and determination of eligible expenses. Even if even if you're in agreement with these, I would love to be able to get some feedback on what we have on the screen for affirmation in terms of the even the examples that we've given here, if possible. So, I think I saw one hand pop up there.

01:23:19.400 --> 01:23:24.249

Yeah, it was Jim Berlin popped up for a sec. All right.

Matt Rogotzke

01:23:25.000 --> 01:23:28.779

Okay, can you hear me? So, if you just want to affirm. I think these are valid things to use the funding to do. I mean that's exactly what we're going to be doing is talking to tribes, traveling to figure out you know what all this is and so I think this is right on exactly, especially on the first one. On the second one, according with the state digital equity plan, I wanted to ask the question. Is the elements of the plan that the state digital Equity plan is going to do, is it substantively different than what the list we were just looking at before?

Jim Berlin

Adam Geisler

01:24:16.320 --> 01:24:32.869

It's more detailed. So, I think I would say that level of effort that the states are going to be required to engage in is a lot more. I don't want to use the word burdensome, but there's a lot more detail that we're asking of the States.

Jim Berlin

01:24:32.880 --> 01:24:45.209

Yeah, are they naturally good? I mean, they would naturally want to reach out and find and get this information from all the various tribes at some point, anyway, right? And we would want them to have that as part of their overall plan.

Adam Geisler

01:24:45.260 --> 01:25:02.459

I would sure hope that the states are, and again, we have shared with every governor's office and their teams, the expectation to include tribes in their state plans. I know you're coming out of working with folks out of Alaska, so the intention is 100% there. That really we're hoping that the planning efforts between the tribal digital equity plans and the state digital equity plans don't look like two completely separate concepts. That they're aligning based upon, you know, similar activities, maybe potential complementary funds, and activities where folks can be aligning, you know again, especially in Alaska.

01:25:28.030 --> 01:25:45.349

Not to call Alaska out. But for those of you that have never been up to Alaska. It is 100% unique in their makeup and their interactions, and frankly, the relationship that exists not only at the Federal level but at the State level, the borough level and at the regional corporation level, and ANC level in addition to the tribal government. The hope here is that we don't have a bunch of silos, but that everybody's talking, and that each plan is reflective of the coordination and partnerships that should be evolving here over the next few months.

Jim Berlin

01:26:05.750 --> 01:26:09.270

So, there is going to be a decent amount of coordination with that. But I think once we develop a conduit to get into that. I don't think it's a, you know, a repeatable part of every plan. I think once we do it as a as a whole, at least for our consortium, and get coordinated with the State for the kind of things they're looking for on what we're doing. It's an activity we'll do, you know, once, and then we get down to the specifics of the demographics of individual tribal areas that we're going to collect anyway. But I do think there would be some time and effort spent on that. But most of the time an effort is going to be spent on the first one, which could be a lot, because, you know, just at least in remote Alaska getting ahold of these folks is very, very difficult. Catching them in. There's a storm going through, The phones, you don't have a phone. You can't make phone calls. They don't have any really good Internet access. So, it's a lot of time and effort involved in outreach. So, paying for that seems to make a lot of sense.

Adam Geisler

01:27:07.730 --> 01:27:24.100

Okay, well, I appreciate the confirmation and it just, you know again, not to belabor the point. But those issues are real. We did a trip with our assistant secretary up to Alaska here. I don't know it's been a little over a month now.

01:27:24.110 --> 01:27:36.950

In fact, again the background I have is one of the communities that we visited in the Bethel region. Another place that we went on that trip was to the native village of Port Lions which is out on Kodiak Island, and we got fogged in. So, we sat there all day at the airport, waiting for a break in the weather, and the reality is, we lucked out and found a way to get out of there. But I totally respect what you're saying in terms of the realities of travel and coordination in a lot of these communities that are, they're just not easily accessible, for most folks in the way that they would think about it in the lower 48.

Jim Berlin

01:28:00.040 --> 01:28:05.430

Yeah, the only way to really, you know, we can't just do it remotely. Sometimes we have to, we just have to go there and look people in the eye and track people down. It takes a lot of time and effort.

Adam Geisler

01:28:09.800 --> 01:28:11.109

It does, Okay.

Jim Berlin

01:28:12.020 --> 01:28:13.280

Thank you.

Michell Morton

01:28:13.520 --> 01:28:25.819

Thank you, I was just going to add to that. I think Adam touched on it. This is an opportunity for things for these plans to be complementary to the existing DE plans for the state, and for them to really do the outreach work that we would help them to do to tribal communities. So, I would highly just encourage you all to, you know, coordinate, and talk to your state broadband offices about their digital equity plans and become involved in that as much as possible.

Adam Geisler

01:28:45.570 --> 01:28:49.910

Absolutely, all right. Well, Matt, who else do we have in the queue?

Matt Rogotzke

01:28:50.030 --> 01:29:00.619

Sure. A couple of comments, I think I saw. But we'll get a Carol Piscoya. She has her hand up so she will be next.

Carol Piscoya

01:29:14.110 --> 01:29:18.890

Okay, can you hear me now. I just unmuted myself.

Adam Geisler

01:29:18.900 --> 01:29:19.790

We can, welcome.

Carol Piscoya

01:29:19.800 --> 01:29:39.059

My name is Carol Piscoya. I'm in Kawerak and work for the tribal consortium of Kawerak in Nome, and I just want to say I'm glad Jim Berlin is on there. We've been working with him on our other project, so I look forward to working with him, too. But I chimed in late, so I had a little crisis here. I couldn't chime in earlier, but I'm really looking forward to working with Jim and developing our Digital Equity Plan. I'm really curious if we can do this as a consortium, and also keep in mind that our region has gone through this huge storm. We have very little connection with the Internet right now to some of our villages. So right now, the focus of the folks in the villages with the storm is to just get them ready for the winter. So, we're not, Internet is high on our list, but we've got to find, make sure, that they're ready and safe and warm for the winter first. So, I'm really curious about the deadlines for this project but I'm glad Jim's there, so that I can work a lot closer with him, too, and helping get our information out as quick as we can.

01:30:40.980 --> 01:30:55.769

So, thank you. And maybe I'll listen in at the beginning of Thursday session, just because I missed part of it. So, I'm really curious about how this is going to go. And when the deadline for this is, and I'm sure you can address all those issues already.

Adam Geisler

01:30:55.950 --> 01:30:58.570

We asked a question. Thank you for attending today. Miss, Is it Piscoya? Did I say that correctly? Oh, yeah, yes, awesome. And thank you for joining and thank you Kawerak for being a part of the consultation today. And yeah, I mean I'll just catch up real quick, and you're welcome to join us again on Thursday. But what we did here pretty much overwhelmingly was you know the January timeframe seems to make a little bit more sense than launching something between now and through the holidays was the first bit of feedback. I didn't hear anybody say no to that or raise issues with that. And then the second item was having a window open long enough to accommodate tribal government processes, and we heard anywhere between that thirty, forty-five, sixty-day window in terms of the period. So, folks can do what they need to do internally in the application process with their respective governments.

01:31:51.780 --> 01:32:09.800

Then lastly again, thank you for joining and raising the realities of what you all face in Alaska in terms of coordination, timing, and frankly the nature of the expenses. Bringing people in and out of the communities isn't cheap and so I'm happy to hear that you're supportive in terms of Mr. Berlin's feedback in a relationship to the eligible expenses. So, thank you again, Ms. Piscoya, for joining us today from Kawerak, thank you.

Carol Piscoya

01:32:24.250 --> 01:32:25.320

Thank you.

Adam Geisler

01:32:27.370 --> 01:32:28.679

Alright. Do we have anybody else, Matt?

Matt Rogotzke

01:32:31.270 --> 01:32:42.450

Just the last comment was from Kevin Hamer. Again, about maybe adding a survey report printing cost. So just saying that out loud, so transcript has it.

Adam Geisler

01:32:44.670 --> 01:32:46.880

We should have had you say your name, spell it, I'm kidding Matt. All right perfect. So fair comments, Mr. Hamer, and I think we have those captured in the record, so I appreciate. Those are all good examples I think of expenses. We want to make sure that we don't leave off of the eligible expenses list.

01:33:05.600 --> 01:33:24.390

Alright. Well, I think if we don't have anybody else in the queue Matt, we're going to move on to the next question, which I think gets to the root of one of the items that Ms. Piscoya just raised. We'll go to the next slide, Carole, which is consortiums and the treatment of. So, obviously a lot of you are here representing consortium bodies, or a coalition of tribes and you represented that in your LOIs. If you notice that I'm giving some flexibility today and the feedback on the consultation. And who's providing that feedback? It is because I have a working knowledge of which tribes have identified your associations or organizations to lead them in this application process. And so again, it's a little nuanced in our approach. But I want to be respectful of what the LOIs have said and what's been provided. Obviously, given the amount of funding that potentially is available, which is again somewhere between thirty and forty thousand dollars depending on where the final number lands. That's not a lot of money, we all recognize that which is why we're here to talk about the next topic which is, you know, in the event that we have everybody, or we would love to see folks. Maybe this is some new news to you in terms of the potential funding allocation. And you're looking at it, going out of thirty thousand dollars, thirty-five, thirty-seven, whatever the number ends up landing on when we finalize eligibility.

01:34:44.020 --> 01:34:58.190

Maybe you're looking at this process going, man, I can't afford to do this on my own. I have reporting. I have my every year audit that I have to do. That's not even enough money to pay one person. Maybe you're now looking at a consortium, and we absolutely would love to hear feedback in terms of if that's something you'd want to reconsider doing as part of this discussion. All that being said, there is also a question mark for those of you that are already landed on doing a consortium process. Internally here at NTIA, there's just been some discussion about equities. Go figure for the digital equity program in relationship to how are the funds going to be treated and part of the reason why we're asking this I mean, I promise. I'm not trying to be insulting. Many of you are managing federal funds already on behalf of consortium bodies, and you do this day in and day out. But this is a new thing for this particular program. It's a new program. And one thing that we did want to talk about with everybody and to get feedback on is, you know what budget requirements should be requested from consortia entities submitting an application on behalf of tribal entities.

01:36:01.160 --> 01:36:19.599

And I think the bigger question, you know, what is it? This three-part question I'm asking now, two part, is inclusion in terms of the plan development process? Right? So how do you, or how should we be thinking about, or how are you thinking about ensuring that you know? Maybe there's fifty tribes in your consortium, or twenty-five tribes? How are you thinking in your approach that you are going to ensure that all of their voices are heard and reflected in this plan,

01:36:33.690 --> 01:36:52.299

Because you are receiving the allocation on that individual tribe's behalf. And again, I'm not trying to be insulting. I know many of you are already doing this with TANF programs, housing, I mean I could go down the laundry list. But for the record, I do want to capture your respective feedback in terms of how are you thinking about ensuring that there is inclusion, participation and that these plans are reflective of everybody that is a part of your consortium. Are you looking at a single plan for each individual tribe within the consortium? Are you looking at one overarching digital equity plan on behalf of all of those represented tribes? How are you guys thinking about this? What level of assurances would you be able to share with us today that you're thinking about to make sure that people aren't left out in the process.

01:37:32.530 --> 01:37:50.459

I'm gonna hit pause there. And again, I guess I'll tease it a little bit here. Would love to get your feedback on this. I realized for some of you that this is everyday operations for you. But it is a question that has come up that I want to be able to go back to our lawyers and say, look at the end of the day, the tribes and the consortiums are very cognizant that they're not going to be providing, I think part of the concern is that that the consortium may take one tribe's funds and spend it on another tribe, and then you know that tribe is left out in the digital equity plan. So how do we make sure everybody is included in an equitable way in these plans. If you're going to be doing a consortium approach. There we go, I finally got it out. And again looks like maybe we have Mr. Hamer coming off from mute?

01:38:32.880 --> 01:38:35.980

Matt Rogotzke

I don't. I don't think I saw a hand raised for him.

Adam Geisler

01:38:36.000 --> 01:38:40.330

Sorry about that. I thought I saw him come over into the cue.

Kevin Hamer

Was that a suggestion?

Adam Geisler

01:38:41.400 --> 01:38:48.280

I'll send it out there as a leading, as a leading one. Maybe you have any thoughts on that, Mr. Hamer?

Kevin Hamer

01:38:49.800 --> 01:39:04.240

Sure. It's very important and not only important for us is in our accountability to our tribes, but in our relationship to NTIA as the funding entity. It would be one way to do it is account for costs, and you know, make sure that somehow there's a report that segments what was actually expended under the program.

01:39:23.080 --> 01:39:26.180

So, you can do it on the back end. I think that might be a little easier to do. But it's a complicated thing when you, unless you, which we do, segment the funds as they come in and make sure that you have your accounting process set up as we do for each job, and then for your accounting for it under each tribe as a separate job. So that's how we do it. Now who do we share this with, and what the requirements are for sharing that with NTIA, or as a requirement for this program. That's a little, that's very challenging. It's an open question. I think it was the SBA had a recent change in regulation for the Tribal 8 (a) program where we provided that sort of the same feedback, us telling you how we're going to use the funds for our tribal government. Our tribal entities get to the question of self-determination for those tribal entities. So I'm not, I would like to say that I would make the requirements as minimum as possible, and we, you know, have to be accountable to our and for tribal entities in the process of the work and the process of these grants.

01:40:56.580 --> 01:41:14.240

I would not make a requirement from NTIA for us to segment the cost of the report on them. I think that, especially under a small program like this, you're asking us to take on an administrative burden that, you know, is outsized by the level of funding for the grant itself.

Adam Geisler

01:41:14.250 --> 01:41:19.090

So, in that same vein, Mr. Hamer, do you see in your consortium. Do you see an individual digital equity plan for each respective tribe? Or do you see one master digital equity plan that has a segment in it that addresses priorities? And I think you kind of get where I'm going with this. So, are you looking at an omnibus digital equity plan for all members of the consortium? Or are you looking at individualized plans? And you guys are kind of acting as that I guess consulting arm to do the work.

Kevin Hamer

01:41:55.390 --> 01:41:56.490

Well, I hate to say it, but both. Yes, we're going to do one plan for each of our tribal entities. We're also, we requested, as you said, it's not there's tribal governments that were eligible for the for this grant, and that's why you have four hundred applications. We as a consortium submitted a letter of intent.

01:42:15.700 --> 01:42:34.289

So, the consortium's grant application will be the roll-up of all of our entities, and work with our state Digital Equity Office for the state plan, inclusion in the state plan. So that's what we're proposing to do for our thirty-seven thousand to thirty thousand thirty or forty thousand for the consortium letter of intent that we submitted on behalf of the Consortium as an eligible entity. So that was our approach that grant will fund our roll out of all the separate grants and our coordination with the State digital equity planning office.

Adam Geisler

01:42:56.120 --> 01:43:08.620

Cool. That, by the way, is exactly the feedback that we're looking for in this segment, is to understand the approaching methodology. So actually, I mean, that

makes me smile because it makes a ton of sense of what you just laid out, obviously for others that are on the line. We're not being prescriptive here. So please don't take it what I'm sharing with Mr. Hammer, and say you have to do that, but that makes a ton of sense in terms of the approach, and I think that addresses the questions spot on in terms of what we're looking at in terms of one way to approach the consortium role and how you guys are thinking about it, and that's helpful for us to encapsulate as we develop the app.

01:43:41.240 --> 01:43:48.709

Any other feedback that is out there from the others that are here representing consortiums, or individual tribes, for that matter, as well. Maybe you're wanting to change and go join a consortium. And that's another thing that's obviously worth discussing here as well given right that you know what was unknown at the time. We now know that somewhere right around thirty to forty thousand dollars is not what I think anybody anticipated when you submitted your LOI.

01:44:12.050 --> 01:44:15.450

So, maybe some of you may be reconsidering your approach. So, with that any other feedback along the lines of what you're thinking, or how we should be treating consortium applications or consortium processes, as it relates to budgets and funding and inclusion of plans.

01:44:37.030 --> 01:44:50.080

This is a big deal love to get a few more points of feedback here given that many of you have elected to use a consortium body as your as your lead. So, I would love to get the feedback. If you want to think about it, there's also no pressure. We have another consultation coming up on Thursday, and also the ability to submit written comment as well. So we'll show that slide here in just a moment, so you all can be brought up to speed on where to submit written comment.

01:45:09.800 --> 01:45:15.090

So, we'll pause here for a few more moments to see if there's any other feedback. We have anything in the questions or the chat, Matt?

Matt Rogotzke

01:45:20.140 --> 01:45:22.580

Not seeing any others for this one.

Adam Geisler

01:45:34.100 --> 01:45:36.500

Okay. Alright, we're going to get ten more seconds. Again, raised hand feature. You're on the phone star nine to come off mute. Carole can help you out. Alright.

01:46:00.230 --> 01:46:16.849

Alright, I still need to working on a couple of jokes just to break the silence. Maybe next time we'll work on our stand-up routine. But all right, guys. Well, again, I want to thank everybody for your feedback here, and I think Carole will go ahead and move on to the to the next slide

01:46:17.290 --> 01:46:34.019

As a reminder, the deadline for submitting written comments is November 4th, and we've kept the window open, obviously because we like to give thirty days as a whole. When we announced consultations, we realized, in terms of feedback. We realized that many of you had about a two-week notice or so when these notifications went out. So, we want to make sure that we keep the deadline open for any written feedback. Also, if you're going to send your feedback, it's to the DigitalEquity@NTIA.GOV inbox.

01:46:56.020 --> 01:47:15.120

And lastly, again, if you guys are able to join us on Thursday, you want to collect your thoughts around what we've discussed today, we would welcome you back here on Thursday, same time, different registration link. Same time. That's this: Thursday, October Twentieth.

01:47:15.130 --> 01:47:37.359

I love to have you back. If there's additional feedback or comments that you want to make as we capture your thoughts, and with that for everybody that joined and provided comments and feedback today, or just in general for participating and listening in. I want to thank you for your time and attention to this matter. The digital divide in Indian country is real and as connectivity comes online, the equities of the vulnerable populations in our community that also need to have that access is important. And we don't want to lose sight of that as we embark on this historic time in and the evolution of our nation, and the access to our population to this really critical tool and utility for our communities. So, with that being said Michell, is there anything you wanted to add before we go ahead and wrap?

Michell Morton

01:48:04.830 --> 01:48:10.929

No, just thank you for your time today. Really appreciate all the great feedback

Adam Geisler

01:48:11.630 --> 01:48:12.690

Awesome. And with that again big thank you to Ms. Ana Hoffman from the Bethel Native Corporation as well for that beautiful invocation! And with that we'll go ahead and wrap this up. (Luiseno language) Nosuun Looviq! Hopefully, we'll see you again on Thursday. Thank you so much for your time. Bye, now.