

Digital Equity Act Programs Tribal Consultation #2
Moderator: Adam Geisler
October 20, 2022

Adam Geisler

00:00:26

All right, everyone. We are gonna get started at about three after the top of the hour. Just to give folks a moment to come on in, thanks. Alright. Well, we are three past the top of the hour, and it looks like we're reaching critical mass here with our attendees.

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So we are going to go ahead and get started. (Luiseno language) Miiiyum. Good morning or afternoon, depending on where you are joining us today. My name is Adam Geisler, and I am the Division Chief for the Tribal Connectivity and Nation to Nation Coordination division here at NTIA and I'm going to be moderating the digital equity Tribal consultation here.

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As we jump into another program, separate from the tribal broadband program, but I am pinch hitting on the consultation today on behalf of our director, Angie Bennett. Who is actually up in Alaska at the AFN Convention. So, for those of you on the line that maybe from Alaska, you may see our team up there this week along with Director Bennett as well. So, feel free to stop by and say, Hi! And if you have follow-up questions, she's obviously a great resource.

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So today we are going to be engaging in a government-to-government tribal consultation on the digital equity programs specifically. Largely in part because we have four areas that we want to talk about where we have some questions and frankly need your guidance and feedback on how best to proceed giving the overwhelming response and feedback that we received through the NOFO and the LOI process.

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So with that being said, we'll go ahead and move on to the next slide, and we'll just go over the agenda for today. So today, again, this is intended to be a government-to-government tribal consultation, and as always, we're going to be opening in a good way with an invocation today. After that, we'll do a quick background on the digital equity program, which again, is another program funded through the bipartisan infrastructure law.

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I'm going to say it's again. Separate from the tribal broadband connectivity program. It's another pot of funding that we're all going to be discussing, and then we're going to go into the topics of consultation.

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And as usual, when we conduct our consultations, we do have some questions that are queued up along the topic areas for folks to be able to react to or provide

feedback, and we are going to go through those one at a time. So please don't feel shy today as you provide your feedback, and frankly, it's not uncommon to hear people speak on every single one of these topics, and that's really what we're here to do.

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With that being said, then we will go on into the closing remarks, and just cover up a little bit about the timeframe for those of you that are going to be submitting written feedback to the areas that we're discussing in the four areas today.

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We'll go ahead and wrap after that. And I guess I should also say this is the second and the last tribal consultation that we'll be doing on the digital equity program here within the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth at NTIA.

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All right, Mike. We could just move on to the next slide, So, as I mentioned, and we'll go on one more slide. As I mentioned, we always want to start things off in in a good way and in a right way. Today we have one of NTIA's own. Crystal Hottowe, from Makah tribe out of the Pacific Northwest, the very, very, very, very northwest tip there in Washington State. It is my distinct honor and privilege to have Ms. Hottowe provide us with the opening invocation as we start things off in a good way Over to you, Crystal.

Crystal Hottowe

00:06:21

Thank you, Adam. (Makah language). Hello, good morning! Good day, greetings. I am Crystal Hottowe as introduced by Adam. I am a member of the Makah tribe, and that is where I'm coming to you today from is my ancestral homelands in Washington State in the Pacific Northwest.

00:06:41 I am honored to be tapped to do the invocation for today's consultation with tribal leaders for digital equity. And so, I'm going to say a little prayer, and then I will also sing a song which is a prayer song as well. And so, Creator, we ask you to be with us today to guide us with knowledge, wisdom, to give us purpose and intent for our people for today and tomorrow. Thank you. (song omitted).

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The words in that song, first of all that song was created by, it was composed by, my great-great-grandfather. The words in the song are urging people to be as good as they can be to step up to the plate to approach the task in front of them with all the greatness that they have inside.

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I do believe that this is a very fitting song for this occasion, and blessings to you all, and back to you, Adam.

Adam Geisler

00:08:21

Right. Thank you, Crystal, for both the prayer and the prayer song and getting us

started in a good way. I really do appreciate the setting, level setting as we kick off for consultations. Obviously, as many of you know here, that have been engaging with NTIA. We have a really great group of indigenous folks that work within the department, and I just want to thank Crystal for being willing and open to share with everybody today to get us started in a good way.

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So with that, we will go ahead and move forward on to the next slide, please, Mike. Alright, as a reminder, we have a couple of ways in which you can provide your feedback today, as we jump into the consultation, we do ask that you use the raise hand function if you are joining us remotely, or excuse me through the zoom platform. We also recognize that a number of you are likely calling in via phone. Internet access is a real issue that we've discussed on several previous consultations, and so we do have the phone option available. And in the event that you would like to join via phone, you'll just need to hit *9 , and Mike will be able to work with you to bring you off of mute and bring you into the queue.

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A couple of other quick housekeeping items that I want to make sure we're on the same page on today. So, we do want to hear from tribal leaders first and foremost. However, I also do acknowledge that the LOIs, that many of the tribes submitted, identified a consortium body or an entity to essentially administer, down the road, the funds that would be coming to the tribe. And so, I do recognize that there are many on the line today that are working on behalf of a specific tribe. So, what I am going to ask is that if you are not a tribal leader, and you do come on the line today, just that you give, obviously, your name and the organization that you're representing, that you do have the permission to be speaking on behalf of the federally recognized tribes that you are gonna be providing feedback for. So again, government-to-government consultation.

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The other thing I'll say, is this is recorded for those of you that are new to our consultative process here at NTIA. We not only record the consultations, but we do publish a transcript as well as a tribal consultation summary report of the decisions that we make based on the consultative feedback from everybody today. So again, I am going to ask everybody, please provide your comments and feedback. This is a great opportunity for you to put on the record the things that you would like to see in a relationship to the digital equity program, and it also does give a foundation for the actions that are taken by NTIA.

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In the event that there may be questions later, and we're always able to go back and look at the feedback that we received during the consultative process. As again, this feedback drives a lot of the work that we do.

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So with all that being said, the program, details for digital equity and the questions that we're going to be talking through today are legitimate in terms of we have not

baked the cake. Your feedback really does matter in this process. And so, with that, we'll go ahead.

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Oh, written comment... If you do have written comment that you like to provide today, you can email broadbandUSA@NTIA.gov as well, in the event that you want to submit your feedback in writing, which is one hundred percent appropriate, and we'll talk about the closing date for that at the very end. With that, Mike, we'll go ahead and move on into the next slide, which is the background, and one more please.

00:12:08

Awesome. So, as many of you know, at the NTIA there's a variety of programs that have been funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The Digital Equity Act is one of those programs that was established under the bipartisan legislation which provided 2.75 billion dollars to establish essentially three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion.

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And the aim is to ensure that people and the communities have the skills, technology and capacity needed to be able to engage in the full benefits of our digital economy. And so, the three programs that were established under the Digital Equity Act are the following. The first is the State Digital Equity planning Grant program, which is going to be the focal point of our discussions today. Every state is going to be receiving funds to put together their digital equity plan, and that funding is coming from sixty million dollars that is available for States and Territories to develop their digital equity plans.

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In addition to that, 60 million dollars, there is 15 million dollars that has been made available and set aside for tribal entities, and many of you are going at them. Tribal entities, where's that coming from? But what you'll find is you go through the frankly multiple different bills that have been passed by Congress. The definitions are not 100% consistent in terms of who's eligible, depending on the program. There are some nuances there.

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And so when we talk about those tribal entities the reason we're using that terminology has to do with the way in which the statute calls out eligibility for the program.

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So with that being said again, we're here to talk about how best to approach the 15 million dollars that's available. I'll also say that in full disclosure we were talking about the level of interest that we thought we would be receiving for the digital equity program. Frankly, when you guys were looking at the NOFO, and we were looking at awards somewhere between 50 and 150 thousand dollars. That was based on the thought that maybe we were going to receive somewhere between 150 and 200 applications or LOIs in the process. The good news, and also the reason why we're talking today, is we received a lot more feedback than that. In fact, we received over

400 four LOIs from tribal entities that wanted to participate in the program. And we have 15 million dollars in which to approach. So, we're going to be talking about that in more detail. And that's really the driver today, is what our assumptions were, were a little bit off, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's always good to demonstrate the need to Congress for all these programs in terms of what tribes are wanting to engage in and need in your respective communities. So please note that the Planning Grant Program will inform the Capacity Grant program, which is what we'll talk about next.

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So the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant program has a total of 1.44 billion available for States and Territories, and it's going to fund an annual grant program for five years in support of digital equity projects and the implementation of digital equity plans. States, many States, are engaging tribal nations to include tribes in the development of their digital equity plans and in the implementation of the programs and projects that come from the development of those Digital Equity Grant plans for each respective state.

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So again, there is an opportunity not only to receive direct funding through the 15 million, but there is also going to be the ability to plug in and align the work that you are going to be doing for the Digital Equity Grant planning with your respective communities along with the State's plans and the implementation of that 1.44 billion dollars.

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In addition to the State, the tribal and the state components, there will also be a competitive grant program that's going to be coming into the future with a total amount available of \$1.25 billion. Tribes, are obviously a competitive grant program, and tribes are eligible to apply for that program window when it opens up as well, and it will fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects. So again, there's essentially three buckets of money that we're talking about along with the set aside component within the State digital equity planning grant program for tribes specifically in the 15 million. And then, again, in terms of eligibility and participation with the State's implementation funding. Tribes should be included in those state plans. Again, we're hoping that part of your strategies as you develop your plans align there. Lastly, there's also going to be a competitive bucket of 1.25 billion that you'll be able to leverage your tribe's digital equity plans, your consortium's digital equity plans to go after that funding.

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Next slide, please. Without further ado we are going to jump into the topics of discussion today. We do have some questions posed up for each one of the topics. Again, this is meant to be government to government engagement, and I want to thank all the tribal leaders that are on the line today. We know that the digital divide and all the pieces that come along with that are a priority, for every tribe that is out there, especially coming out of the pandemic. I think we all had a realization or a lot more folks had a realization of these needs, and the need to bring a level of equity to

the populations that need assistance in engaging in a digital economy that is continuing to unfold.

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So first topic, question one. The timing of the application window. So, this first question is really about when we should be looking to launch the application number one. What seems to make sense for those of you that are on the line. And then the second question there is, how long should that window be open for? And are there special considerations that we should be aware of in the timing of when we launch the application process as well as show how long should we leave the application window open for? So, with that I am going to ask a couple of my colleagues here that are that I'm always honored to have join us, Mr. Matthew Rogotzke. If you guys haven't met Matt before, Matt is doing a lot of work for our team and really helps to manage the tribal broadband leaders network as well as the activities that we have in outreach and engagement. Matt is going to be helping to facilitate today the questions as you raise your hands and just to help keep me straight as we walk through this first question. So, with that Matt let's go ahead and open up the bridge for folks to raise their hands if we could. And again, for those of you on the line, let's not be shy. It's a pretty straightforward question, here. Is there a time or a timing of when you'd like to see the application window opened up, and then, with that being said, how long should we have it open for: 30 days, 45 days, 60 days or a longer period? These are the two questions that we're looking for. I'll also just throw a little bit of a teaser out there to get folks thinking. The consultation that we had on Tuesday, we did hear a lot of feedback from tribes about the timing of the application window given where we are in the current calendar year. Obviously, the holiday season is pretty quick upon us, and we did hear feedback from folks about, you know, having a little bit of time to prepare, and there was some feedback about looking at after the first of the year. But we also recognize there's a lot of you that are ready to get going now, and so again. That's why we're opening up the conversation here today. So, first question.

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I guess it's technically a two-part that we have sitting there. We'd love to hear from you today, so if you could go ahead and use the raised hand function, and I'll just hang tight here for a moment.

Matt Rogotzke

00:20:54 There we go, Mr. James Stevens is up. And I think it usually takes a second to get off mute.

Adam Geisler

00:21:14

James, real quick, if you could, we got your name, Mr. Stevens, but if you can also just let us know which tribe you're representing today.

James Stevens

00:21:31

Sure, my name is Jim Stevens. I'm the tribal administrator for the native village of Atka, which is the westernmost tribe on the Aleutian Chain. So, it's actually the farthest west in all of America. So, my response to the question is, it's the opening should be, should reflect the complexity of the application. I don't, I haven't seen yet what the components are, but I know given the small amount of money that appears

to be available, I don't think more than thirty days is, you know, we don't need more than thirty days to put together an application for, you know, 35 to 50 thousand dollars, that's all I have to say. Thank you.

Adam Geisler

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All right Mr. Stevens. Before you go, I have one follow-up for you, and then I want to just make sure you know. Again, we're establishing a record here, so I just want to make sure I heard you correctly.

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So I hear you loud and clear in terms of the timeline and what's reasonable, we are looking at a streamlined application approach. I think you raise a really good point, which is for the amount of funding that's out there, and the level of an effort that the application should reflect a very streamlined approach, given the availability of funding. So, we hear you loud and clear there, and you know, given that if it is a streamline I hear you on the 30 days, if we were to open the application November first, would that be advantageous for you? December first, January first? You know that we have election season going on in Indian country in a lot of places right now, obviously the nation, lets not forget that. But we all would like to get some feedback in terms of when would make some sense. Given all the other programs and projects that many of you are working your way through right now?

James Stevens

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Yeah. I would think December 1st would be the best. Things do shut down, but that gives people like me time to put together applications during the slow period.

Adam Geisler

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So you don't from like an approval process. A lot of tribes tribal governance obviously have their internal processes to work through with their respective tribal leaders and governments. So do you think that as a December 1st would, if we were to do that, put a thirty day that put us, applications due really over the holiday break there? Do you think there'd be any concerns there on your end. I think I heard you say that for you that gives you from a process standpoint.

James Stevens

00:24:12

Well, from a process standpoint, you know. I mean the grant amount, it's so small that I, you know, I don't think there are resolution or special meeting of any tribal council should be required, you know, for the submittal. I mean our letter of interest designates someone who's approved to submit all the documents, and that's already been signed by tribal leadership.

Adam Geisler

00:24:34

Understood... Well, I heard you loud and clear there, December 1st seems to be a reasonable timeframe. I think, with all your caveats of it's a little bit of it's a small amount of money in relation to the level of effort that we need to be cognizant of in a thirty-day application window period. Is there anything else that you wanted to add? Just to make sure we were correct. And in in my understanding and kind of how I just shared it.

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James Stevens
No, you got it. You got it. You got it right.

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Adam Geisler
Ok, sorry again, we're recording. So, I just want to make sure you know nothing's left up to interpretation. So, apologies that it seemed a little like I'm making you repeat yourself.

00:25:16

James Stevens
Yeah, no problem. Thanks.

Adam Geisler
Thank you, Mr. Stevens. And obviously to the native village of Atka for joining us all way out there from the Aleutian Islands. So, I appreciate you being here today. Who do we have next, Matt?

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Matt Rogotzke
Yep, Kristina Andrew. She had a couple comments in the Q. and A. But we'll get her off mute and can hear her say that for the record.

00:25:45

Kristina Andrew
Can you hear me?

Adam Geisler
We can, welcome.

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Kristina Andrew
Thank you. Yeah. I would actually have to say that I would encourage a sixty-day window for the application. Just because some of our tribal councils in our region do not authorize the tribal administrator to just apply for anything. They would have to present it to Council. Councils only meet once a month. So, depending on when the NOFO comes out, some councils might have already met that month, and would need to be able to put it on their schedule for the following month. So having that sixty-day window would work better. Then I know, especially if you're trying to get this put out soon, there's a lot of activities that will be happening in the State of Alaska, that tribal administrators would be traveling, and councils would be traveling for. Like we have BIA Providers Conference coming up. We have Thanksgiving. There are community sporting events that are like the State sporting events would be happening, and people like to participate with that with their families and the holidays are coming up, so I would really encourage a sixty-day window. Just so, then it gives those tribal administrators that have to have that approval from their Council, the time to do so, and still be able to participate in other events that are going on across the State and in their region or in their community. I just you know I don't know when you guys are planning on opening this up. But this is meeting season for our state, so we really need, I'm in Alaska. I don't know if this Federal or State.

Adam Geisler

00:27:41

This is federal. Kristina, if you, don't, mind, what village are you with, or who you representing?

Kristina Andrew

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I work for the Bristol Bay Native Association, we're a tribal consortium of thirty-one tribes. I do economic development, so I do a lot of collaboration with our thirty-one tribes, and then I'm a from the Choggiung Tribal nation myself.

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But that's my, at least sixty days, just to allow for that. Some of these communities need to work with consulting firms in order to get that application done, and so with the lack of connectivity that some of them have. Some of us don't even have cell service in our villages. Like it's very difficult to make phone calls, either with landlines or cell phones, and with the winter months coming up, the winter storms make that even more difficult for communication to having a longer period would be, I know it's a small amount of funding, but just the level of coordination, it would make it that more equitable to our communities.

Adam Geisler

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So, Kristina, I'm just gonna see if you have any thoughts on the specific date, and I'm going to have Matt just jump in there for a minute to make sure that we're capturing. I heard you on the sixty-day window, but if you were, if you were a queen for a day, and you could tell us exactly what the right date would be for launching the application window, what would that be? I'm gonna go just jump off camera for just a moment.

Kristina Andrew

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I would probably request early January just because I know, like the next couple of months have been, are going to be very busy for a lot of our tribal communities. And so, there's a lot of stuff happening right now. So, January 1 would give them time to be able to go through all the processes that are currently underway, like the holiday season, the meetings that are scheduled in the next couple of months and then hit the ground running in January.

Matt Rogotzke

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Okay. So yeah, it sounds like sixty-day window, early January start date and feel like those are the two questions. Did you have anything else to share for this one?

Kristina Andrew

00:30:06

No, thank you.

Matt Rogotzke

00:30:08 Okay, sounds good. We can move on then, for Sally Fineday, who is next up in the queue. Get her unmuted.

Adam Geisler

00:30:18

Alright. Thanks, Matt. Alright, Ms. Fineday. I think we've just got to get you off mute.

Sally Fineday

00:30:45

Boozhoo, I'm Sally Fineday from Minnesota, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. We have some different things going on here at Minnesota. I contacted Theron, the new officer for this region. We have an issue with the State of Minnesota, having statutes that asked for a 50% match with all monies coming through the State Broadband Office, and so Theron said that he would, I informed him about the what's happening here at Minnesota, and so he also let me know that we have a new a state broadband staff person, so that's happening, too. So, I would recommend that we start with January 1st and go for a 90 day window just because I don't know that there are others, other tribes, who are having the same kind of issue. But that's what's happening in Minnesota. We're hopeful that we can work through that and that we can, you know, we can apply for the grant without a 50 percent match. Miigwech.

Adam Geisler

00:31:59

Miigwech, thank you, Sally, I appreciate you being on today, and for the Leech Lake Band. You know one of the things that kind of we've heard different timings right, thirty-days, sixty-day, ninety-day, you know. Maybe one of the things while I have you, Sally, as a question is, I got to double check with the lawyers on the flexibility, but I might as well just throw this out there. I want to make sure we chat about this is, you know this isn't meant to be competitive. At this point, LOIs have been submitted. We have who we have for the pool. What about maybe an approach where we have an application period open for, let's just say it's ninety days, say it's one hundred and twenty days, I don't know, but we're able to make the awards in a rolling fashion based upon those that are ready to bring forward their applications. Does that seem like something that might be, that might kind of, I don't know if it's meets in the middle? Does that type of a process seem like it would make sense for you, and maybe on the same question for others that are on the line as well.

Sally Fineday

00:33:08

Well if it's a non-competitive, then yes, I agree with you. Maybe we should just be like a thirty day to a ninety-day window, and people who are ready can go ahead and like I said in Minnesota, we're hopeful that we can make contact with the new State Broadband office person, and maybe we'll be rocking and rolling by December 1st. If so, good. Thank you.

Adam Geisler

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Absolutely, well, thank you, Ms. Fineday, for joining us, and obviously the Leech Lake Band up there in Minnesota. And just to recap, I hear you loud and clear on the concerns of the fifty percent match. I have chatted with Theron about that right. More broadly that's a state statute thing that I think we need to discuss very much locally. So, we do have that on our radar. But I appreciate you putting it on the record. It's important again for everybody on here. You'll hear us say we just want to make sure we get it on the record. We may know it, you may have called us. I've started in another form, but this is a consultation. So, I appreciate you sharing your concerns and then, in terms of the window, you would share a January 1st, a ninety-day window but you're also flexible if we give it a non-competitive nature, even a rolling review based upon those are in, all right. Is there anything that I missed in in my understanding? Or is there anything you want to clarify?

Sally Fineday

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I'm good with that. Miigwech.

Adam Geisler

Okay, Thank you, Miss. Fineday. It's beautiful. All right, Matt. Who do we have in the queue next?

Matt Rogotzke

Sure, before the queue, we have two seconds of that idea from Kristina Andrew, Bristol Bay Native Association. She likes that idea, says roll it out. and Mr. Todd Morgan, president with Cape Cod, Cape Fox Corporation That would agree that a rolling award window would be a good process, stating that aloud for the transcript and then in the queue, we have Mr. Evan Cutler up next, and then after that we will have a Ms. Charlie Toddammon, so we'll get Evan off of mute first.

Evan Cutler

00:35:30

Hi! Good afternoon, I'm working from Red Cliff up here in Bayfield, Wisconsin. We're one of the August awardees that we were on the window. One of the lessons learned coming from the other side of the application is the planning and the submission, and the things should not be the only verticals you should be looking at. You should also be looking at how an application window affects the manufacturing cycles of vendors and things like that, and a January timeframe to a same calendar year approval goes a long way. Because one thing that has occurred for us was the application window for us was in 2020. We got our approval in 2022, and the budgetary requirements meant for the submission didn't match any further. And companies based on their, you know, kind of vendors and manufacturers based on their availability, the price and cost and the national supply chain immediately rolls out. While we were talking to our program managers, both Darren and his predecessor, they had to make a point to me that if I can't fulfill all the homes that I'm still okay to run with, and the reason why they said this, because they've had several different tribes come back and say, because of that time differential it, you know they got costs problems. So, fortunately, our vendor just announced yesterday that he was willing to stay with his 2020 pricing matrix, and we'll work on design and reengineering, you know, because the objective is the homes, not the fiber itself. So, at the end of the day we got lucky.

But I can see that if we manage how the vendors and manufacturers and all the people, especially when we went to the NTTA Conference in Arizona, and all that. Make sure that that calendar window tries to stay as close as possible, so that we don't run into these kinds of problems, because you know if it takes a year and a half to two years for approval, then we have to take that into account as far as our accounting goes. I don't need six million, because that's the cost for today. I need eight million or ten million, because that's what it's going to be by the time you come back to me and say, yes, you can have money, and so that would be the lesson learning we had here.

Adam Geisler

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I really appreciate the feedback, Mr. Cutler and I hear you loud and clear. I think you're right. The reference being made is the tribal broadband connectivity program, which was frankly the first main program that NTIA launched, as all the broadband funding started to come available. A lot of lessons learned. I appreciate you sharing

and frankly providing that candid feedback for us. What I can say is that we, with this program in particular, it's going to move much faster, and the initial funding made available is predominantly going to be for the development of the plans. And so, outside of a lot of folks will talk about hiring some consultative support in order to execute. So, the time, the timing challenges that I think you raised in relationship to the other programs of the tribal broadband program, this is going to be a little bit different. Largely because it's non-competitive. There, isn't as many pieces that we have to move through that would impact timeline which is beautiful.

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I appreciate you raising that and with all of that being said, I am also going to just come back to you with a couple of questions so given where we are in the calendar year and the fiscal year, and looking ahead on behalf of the Red Cliff Band what is the timing that would make the most sense? If we were to do a December, October or November, December or January timeframe. Is there any one of those months that is more advantageous to you than another month? And then the second question there would be is: How long should we leave that application window open from your perspective?

Evan Cutler

00:40:03

I think the application window could be open as long as needed, provided the announcement of the application window comes in advance. So, if you, if you only allow thirty days but you have, like a ninety or one hundred and twenty day hey, this is going to happen in March pay attention because you're only going to get thirty days. They could start that work early. Then, when the window opens up, they can slam down all their files and say, here I am. Because if you say the application window, but the announcement is on the date of day one, and you get thirty days, and what ends up happening, that's part of the lesson that we had here was when we go to vendors asking questions like: How much should this cost? How much should be asked? How much should we assign to ourselves? That low amount of time it takes to get vendors to come back. They're going to say immediately. These are budgetary numbers, you know. I only had a week to look at this. We're trying to push up seven hundred homes a thousand homes, you know.

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We don't know exactly what it's going to look like, but we think it's about this? Well, that's good enough for me. I'm going to submit that. What I'm saying so that's the lesson learned to say that even if the window isn't that big to submit or file that the notification to file that lead time to let people do their homework is key, and the window for them to understand the budgeting requirements to say, okay, you're going to get three years to spend this. Make sure that they understand that and say, plan out all of your equipment purchases not for 2022 but for 2025.

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Make sure that it's understood to counter the supply chain problems that's going to come in and make those clear to the people that want to ask for the money, especially if it's a group that hasn't done it before or hasn't been exposed to this kind of grant process.

Adam Geisler

00:41:52

You know that that does, I think, bring to mind maybe, another thing that we that we haven't discussed or fully explored, is you know, there is a way to launch an application where you know you have thirty days for people to digest what's going to be required in the application, and then you know you put a ninety day overall window, but the first thirty is just to give everybody that heads up that you're talking about, or to get familiar with what's needed, and then you know that the other sixty days, maybe, we then start accepting applications, and then maybe we make those in a rolling fashion as they come in.

00:42:35

Does that seem like something that may, I'm trying to kind of work through what I'm hearing you say, and then balance that with what we may be able to do with an approach like that?

Evan Cutler

00:42:46

I think that's great. At the end of the day, it's all about us being able to either contract somebody for a feasibility study, or for us to be able to go out and do the actual homework, to say how much is really needed, and not just give you a budgetary estimate.

00:43:00

We want to know exactly how much fiber and stuff like that. The more that time differential is key because we don't want to guess.

Adam Geisler

00:43:09

Okay. Well, then, I guess just to recap on, I think I heard a few things there. Well, actually, before we recap in terms of if you had, in terms of, let's just say, a thirty-day preview of what was expected. How long do you think we should leave that window open for folks to meet it?

00:43:31

Again, so, taking into consideration, we're trying to streamline this. It's going to be a very different process for what you experience with TBCP, a lot easier. Again, not being a competitive grant program. How long do you think, you know from your perspective at Red Cliff, if you had that sneak peek to work with the people you needed to, how long of a window once we said, Okay, we're accepting applications, do you think you would need to work within that?

Evan Cutler

00:43:56

I think if you had a thirty-day lead time, and in a thirty-day window that gives somebody sixty days.

00:44:05

Yeah, like I said, I think most people will start their work the moment they know something is coming. Which will reduce the time they need to do it while it's open.

Adam Geisler

00:44:16

Understood. Alright well. Just to recap Mr. Cutler. One of the comments I think about considerations, that's also part of these comma questions here we have, it's really a three-part question right. So I appreciate you raising the consideration of timing needed to scale internally and prepare for. You want to make sure that there is ample notice so you guys can prepare your team and your figures from when the window formally opens. And Mr. Cutler, what I heard you say was that you ideally would like to see some sort of a thirty-day preview period, and then a thirty day application window made available. Did I hear you correctly, or is there anything you wanted to correct?

Evan Cutler

00:45:04

Yes, sir, and the approval process, if it's as quick as what I'm hoping you're saying, that it's within the same fiscal or calendar year, so that vendors who are competing for your business are likely to be in the same bucket area for the expenditures. That way, if we don't go into the next fiscal or calendar year, that all of a sudden their prices go up because the supply chain went up.

Adam Geisler

00:45:32

Understood. Alright, well, Mr. Cutler, thank you so much for being on and to the Red Cliff Band. I hope you guys are staying warm. I hear the snow is starting to fall up there.

Evan Cutler

Right now it's in the seventies!

Adam Geisler

00:45:45

Oh, wow! Well, enjoy the super weather, alright? Well, hey! Thank you again for joining us today. All right, Matt.

Matt Rogotzke

00:45:56

Sure. Yeah, we have Mr. Charlie Toddammon in the queue next.

Adam Geisler

Alright, Charlie, he made us. There we go. Welcome.

Charlie Toddammon

00:46:27

Hi, Thank you.

00:46:30

We just wanted to basically kind of agree and reiterate what everyone else was saying that we agreed was like an expanded time period of sixty days.

Adam Geisler

00:46:47And, Charlie, if you could just real quick which tribe are you with

Charlie Toddammon 00:46:53 I'm a Grant writer with the Monacan Indian nation.

Adam Geisler 00:46:58
Awesome, and you guys are in, Monacan is in the Northeast, right?

Charlie Toddammon Central Virginia.

Adam Geisler Central VA, Yea. Alright. So Charlie, I guess the other question I would have because I've heard different timing on, you know October, November, December, January. Where do you stand? If we were to do a sixty-day window, what would be ideal in terms of timing given where your tribe is at? And you know, the workload, elections and all the pieces that everybody's managing from your perspective.

Charlie Toddammon 00:47:45
We would like to see the window open; my name is Kay and I'm also with Charlie, I'm the financial manager with Monacan Indian Tribe, I'm Kay Khabir-Harvey. We would like to see the window open hopefully in January, be open for sixty days. We have a lot going on right now with all tribal administrators traveling for different USET meetings and conferences. We have a big one that's coming up in a couple of weeks, and then there's the holidays coming up there. We're a pretty small staff here, so you know what's the holidays and all the traveling. It's going to be kind of tight to get ours in.

Adam Geisler 00:48:25
Understood, and Kay, just for the transcript. Can I get your last name as well?

Charlie Toddammon 00:48:31
Yes, it's Khabir-Harvey

Adam Geisler 00:48:34
Do you mind spelling that for us?

Charlie Toddammon 00:48:37
K - H - A - B - I - R hyphen Harvey H - A - R - V - E - Y

Adam Geisler 00:48:45
Awesome. Alright and just to recap with Kay and Charlie. That what I'm hearing you say, and again I know I'm sounding repetitive, but a January timeframe would be most advantageous given what's on your plate right now, and what's scheduled between now and the end of the year, and then a sixty-day window. Is there anything else you wanted to add to that, or correct?

Charlie Toddammon 00:49:08
Yes, not only that but we are having some issues with how we're going to work with the state. We applied for the first round of the NTIA connectivity grant, and we were turned down because the provider that we were working with to, the State only approved us to work with one that was a satellite program. When the FCC looked at

their program. It did not reach the specs for the time. I can not think of the right word, the speeds. And so, they were rejected, which basically kicked us out of being eligible for that grant, so we are hoping we can retry for the second round.

00:50:06

But with that being said, we'll need to re-coordinate our efforts with the other company, fiber optic company, that we wanted to work with to see if we can, you know, get all this together. So, it's going to take a bit of planning and working for us. Luckily, we do already have those connections, so it's just a matter of reaching out and the other company that was going to do the fiber optic, they were approved and have already been approved for their fiber optic laying out. It's just the part where they do the drop to the home that isn't going to work out. So, the infrastructure will be there. We are going to need to find a way to connect and then get the equipment for our citizens.

Adam Geisler

00:51:02

Understood, well a couple of things, one and I gotta be careful not to mix the programs because this digital equity program is different. But I hear you loud and clear on some of the challenges you're facing in general with the TBCP application. And I guess one thing I do want to offer is we do have some folks that are working in the, who I'm just going to call the Northeast, the broader New England area. And you know, if there's some technical assistance that you need, or questions that you have, Matt, if we could just make sure that she has our contact information. We'd love to chat with you in more detail about some of the things that you're working through. There's a lot of opportunity to coordinate with the states across multiple programs at NTIA, and if there's anything we can do to help, we want to be a resource to you. So hopefully you'll take us up on that and the Monacan Nation there in Virginia. So, I appreciate you all being on today by Charlie and Kay and thank you for your feedback. I think it's been a helpful informative, not just for the Digital Equity program, but the other feedback you're providing, I think, is relevant. But we want to keep a pulse on that. So, thank you.

Charlie Toddammon

00:52:18

Thank you so much.

Adam Geisler

00:52:22

Alright, with that, Matt, who do we have next?

Matt Rogotzke

00:52:27

Yeah, Ms. Sonia Nez is next in the queue.

Adam Geisler

00:52:32

I think she's coming in. There we go. Alright, Sonia, we have you. I think you just got to come off mute. There we go.

Sonia Nez

00:52:49

Hi, Adam. This is a Sonia Nez, in the Navajo Nation broadband office and Tico Charlee

is also here, from the NNTRC. What we're going to say was the with the nation, we have a forty-five-day requirement to review internally for us to submit grant applications. The nation has to review and go through the different departments, DOJ, OMB and all the different ones. We have a forty-five day, even before the deadline. So, we were saying, probably a sixty-day window.

Adam Geisler

In order to have that 45-day lead time Sonia, so basically, if I'm if I'm hearing you correctly, what would make the most sense is probably a January start date from the Navajo Nation's perspective, so you can get it in front of the various bodies and get their buy-in to do the application. Is that what I'm hearing?

Sonia Nez

00:53:58

Yes.

Adam Geisler

00:53:59

Okay. So just to recap people, even though I just said it, for the record Navajo Nation first-off. Thank you, Sonya, and Tico. I hope you're doing well. We have a sixty-day window; you'd like to be able to have a forty-five-day minimum heads up to be able to work your internal processes so you can have the approval to actually apply. Is there anything that I missed? Is there anything you wanted to correct?

Sonia Nez

00:54:29

Adam this is Tico, you've pretty much got it on there. We have our own internal portion we have to go through, our contract and budget process here. At the same time, we're going through several other grants with three different states at the same time. So that kind of really cuts us short. So that's why we're asking for all of this on there, and we have to deal with that also.

Adam Geisler

00:54:54

No, I appreciate you raising that, Tico. You're right, there's a lot of tribes across the nation that are, they have a lot of neighbors: California, all of our relations there along the Colorado River, obviously the Navajo Nation. You have three states that you're working and trying to coordinate all these activities with. So, I appreciate you bringing that additional consideration as we talk about the timing of the window, and you know how I know you guys are being very intentional about your collaboration with your neighbors, and you're right. We shouldn't lose sight of that. So, I appreciate you raising it. Is there anything else you wanted to add or correct before we keep moving on?

Sonia Nez

00:55:36

No, we're okay. No, we're good. Thank you, Adam.

Adam Geisler

00:55:39

All right, Thank you, Sonia Nez and Tico Charlee from the Navajo Nation. Appreciate you guys joining us today. Alright, Matt

Matt Rogotzke

00:55:47

It looks like we're good on the queue for now. I don't know if you want to pause for a second before moving on but got some good feedback there.

Adam Geisler

00:55:58

Definitely. Alright, we'll just give it fifteen more seconds if there's anybody else before we move. Move on to the next topic. Alright.

00:56:35

Well, I think we can go on to the next question, number two. That's good. The red line keeps making me think we misspelled question. We'll go ahead and keep on going. We'll have to change that up on the next one, Matt. Question number two, we go to the next slide, please. Alright. So, this next one has to do with what information should we be expecting from those of you that are going to apply in terms of the product that's going to come out of the funding that either you or the agency or organization would be administering those funds on your behalf would have included as a final work product or result from these funds. Again, we're talking predominantly about developing these digital equity plans for everybody that submitted their LOIs. So, I'll just read the background here for just a second.

00:57:40

So the applications for the tribal entities' digital equity plan will have required outcomes, and that's what we're going to talk about on the next slide to give you guys a chance to react to it. But these outcomes include, but are not limited to, a description of how the tribal entity will coordinate its use of the digital equity capacity grant funding with any tribal broadband awards it's received through broadband use and adoption. Any relevant projects that you may be working on with the State digital equity capacity grants, as many of you are talking with your States, which is great. And then obviously any other federal funds or private. The nonprofit space is very big on the digital equity piece, that should be considered. So again, we definitely want to make sure that we're identifying how these funds are going to align with those other funding mechanisms. If you're engaging in them and measure those outcomes, so to that end, what additional information should tribal entities provide as project outcomes for their digital equity planning application. Let's go on to the next slide, Matt or Mike, if we could.

00:58:50

Now I'm going to put this up there because for those of you that heard me say, this is not baked, and it is not one hundred percent baked by any means. We did put this up as something for folks to react to. What we're really trying to understand, given what we just read on the previous slide in terms of things that we need to be aware of statutorily, and that we want to make sure we aren't missing in terms of the deliverables that we want to measure. We did put forward an example of some of the potential things that we would want to require in a digital equity plan. And so, I just wanted to walk through this because we want to make sure that we're not asking for too little, and we also want to make sure that we're not asking for too much. Again, given the limited amount of funding that we're working with right again, we thought we were going to have more dollars than we did. Everybody definitely showed that

there was a need to want to be a part of this program. And so, we want to make sure that what we are putting forward in terms of deliverables, as a result of this funding, isn't going to be too...

00:59:56

We're not asking for too much, given the amount of funding and level of effort that would be associated with these outcomes. Obviously, one of the things we'd want to see in a plan is the vision that the tribal entity would have, whether it's an individual tribe or a consortium approach. The second is a description of focal populations covered by the plan and barriers that they face to digital equity. And just again, as some examples.

01:00:27

Is it too much for us to be asking this to say, you know, beyond just saying we want to help our community. We really would like to see, and I'm just being candid with you here, we really would like to see there's a focal point on the digital equity needs of your elder population. For example, a lot of elders have never set an email account. Maybe they've never done online banking. Maybe there's persons with disabilities in your community that you want to focus bringing digital equity to their ability to interface and being able to get online. Maybe there's obviously the youth. There's usually always a youth component, I know, in all of our respective communities, youth is a big deal in tribal communities.

01:01:12

Are we asking too much in terms of saying to be specific in terms of who you want to target with the plan and identifying those target populations within your respected communities?

01:01:25

Then again, we're looking at measurable objectives. So, you know and again, we're asking all this from a lens of: Are we asking you to do too much, given the amount of funding, about measurable objectives, remote digital equity, and digital inclusion. But objectives may address any or all of the following: availability and affordability of broadband technology. So do you believe that you would be able to quantify and identify as again the final product here we're talking about is your digital equity plan. Do you think the funding made available would allow you to identify those that are lacking availability of access or affordability challenges as it relates to technology. And then obviously the digital literacy component. Do you feel like you all have a good sense of those that would benefit from the implementation of this plan, and could you quantify that? Number four is the measures to secure online privacy and cyber security. I have heard it from folks in communities that are now starting to come online the need to ensure that the youth aren't being targeted or the elders aren't being targeted, so is it outrageous for us to be asking for you all to come up in your plans with some way to measure how the security protocols, or how we're protecting our community and community members in the realities of what exists in a virtual environment. Number five, availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support.

01:03:04

As you guys can see, part of the equity conversation, is obviously about affordability, but also availability. In terms of affordable and available consumer devices, laptops, or other equipment that maybe you're looking at in order to engage in technical support. So do you believe you'd be able to articulate what's available, or maybe any barriers that you're having in terms of affordability and access.

01:03:32

Number six is a description of the tribal entity, and how you plan to engage the community and collaborate with key stakeholders to achieve the objective set forth from the plans. So, you know, I don't know that we wouldn't necessarily need, one hundred and eighty pages in your plan. But the hope is that you would be able to articulate a description of how you're going to engage each of those targeted populations. It is a plan, so you know what's reasonable in terms of that ask, how detailed? Do you think that should look, or do you think we should reevaluate that again, given the level of funding? Number seven is: Would you be able to provide a list of organizations as part of this plan with which you would be engaging to administer the funds and or partner with. Some of you may be hiring consultants or maybe you're going to run the focal population for the youth. Maybe you're going to work with your tribes Education Department, and you know, would you? Are we asking too much for you to be able to kind of articulate, not just the plan, but the people that would be involved in the execution of that plan. Brings us to number eight, which is an implementation strategy that explains the proposed core activities of your organization or your tribe, and how you'll implement to address the barriers. Now we're talking, I joked about this on our last consultation, obviously our lawyers are involved, but as it relates to item two, and to achieve the objective set forth in Item three, and B, which sets out to measure to ensure effectiveness across tribal communities.

01:05:20

Oh man, yeah, the lawyers definitely had something to do with this particular bullet. You know how it goes guys. They refer you back to four other things that aren't sitting in front of you sometimes. Then number nine is a timeline for the implementation of the plan. Now I will just throw this out there that we did hear feedback on the last consultation in regards to, should the plan include a timeline?

01:05:44

Most folks seem to think, Yeah, of course there should be some timeline in association with the plan; but one of the flags that was brought up on our last consultation was that we at NTIA should not be limiting in terms of what that implementation plan looks like given a lot of you are involved right now in deploying the infrastructure, so maybe the implementation of your plan could be two years out from now or 3 years out from now, hopefully, it's not longer than that. But you know, are we asking too much of you to put forward a timeline as part of your plan for implementation. So, I know that was a lot, and I'll stop talking now. But we really are asking the question here: Are any of these activities like, is it too much given the amount of funding available, or is it too little? And we should be asking a few other things that are part of

the digital equity plan. So, I'll pause there, and we'll go ahead and go to Steve, who's in the queue, Matt? For anybody that wants to give feedback.

Matt Rogotzke

01:06:50

Yeah, we have a Kristina Andrew with her hand up and we'll get her off mute. She also posted in the Q&A. What's the expected funding amount? Is it between thirty and sixty thousand? I don't know if you want to provide an update.

Adam Geisler

01:07:03

Yeah, no, that's a fair question. I'm going to give a range because we are still working our way through the LOIs and some of the eligibility there, and I know that there has been some concerns raised that we've been fielding about some of the notifications you all have been receiving, and some of you may be receiving retractions. There was a big email blast that was put out about eligibility. But all that being said, we're looking at a funding range of somewhere between thirty and forty thousand dollars, depending on what the final number of LOIs are, that we are going to be accepting. So, that hopefully that gives you some perspective, Kristina, on the amount of funds that we're talking about. So, it likely won't be more than forty thousand dollars in order to do the activities that we have sitting here again as a point of reflection for you guys to react to.

01:07:57

So what do you think is this doable with the amount of funding available?

Kristina Andrew

01:08:02

I'm gonna have to say, possibly. I have seen a Digital Equity plan from a tribe in Portland, and it was fairly comprehensive. It was about twenty-four pages long, and it looks, I personally think, I'm going to be using this as a template for our planning process. The only issue, I've applied for this on behalf of I want to say nine of our tribes, so we get to pool our resources together. But what concerns me is our communities are rural and remote because we are in Alaska. None of them are connected by road. So, if we wanted to have meaningful public engagement, that's a lot of travel.

01:08:59

And then also not all tribal members are in the tribal community, which I feel like it's important to have their engagement in the tribal process as well, because they are still tribal citizens of that nation, and should be benefiting from their activities as well.

01:09:23

But I think this list is pretty comprehensive. The Portland plan I saw looks pretty similar to what you guys are asking. The timeline might be tricky, especially if you have multiple tribes working together in a consortium. Typesetting a year might be too little timeframe to work on this, but it's definitely not a lot of money to hire a consultant if tribes need that. Like to set out all of these objectives with the amount of funding that's, I feel like that would be unrealistic. If you could do it in-house on an individual level, then yes, it's realistic to me.

Adam Geisler

01:10:10

If there were any activities, Miss Andrews, that you think maybe if we were to eliminate any activities that you see on here in terms of what maybe in the plan. Is there one or two things that you think we could put it in as optional, maybe not necessarily as a requirement?

Kristina Andrew

01:10:32

List of organizations with the entity who administer the funds. I don't think that's necessary, because that could always change based on firms that are available, or organizations that are available in our region. We pretty much already know who those players are and know who we're going to go and talk to so like for us to have to list that out in a plan seems kind of redundant. There are only so many resources we have. Other than that, I feel like all this is so important. It's so hard, I don't want to cut it.

Adam Geisler

01:11:05

We, in full disclosure, pared down again and this was just to get folks to react to. The requirements on the States are quite a bit higher in terms of the expectation. So, we tried to pull from that their requirements something that we thought would, you know, be it seem a little bit more obtainable, given the amount of funds and effort. And you hit the nail on the head as we were talking about this internally. This is kind of where we landed going well, let's just see what the reactions are, and if we miss the mark, or if there's more or less, we need to add, and I think we struggled with the same thing you just pointed out, which is: These are all critical elements that should be discussed. And so...

Kristina Andrew

01:12:07

I feel like availability and affordability, that's something to consumer devices and technical support. Like we currently, we know who our Internet providers are. We know what kind of hardware is out there that is necessary for digital equity. I feel like that might be a little bit redundant. You can't really, and then people know what they want to pay for broadband already. We've been put in a position in our region that we're having to pay over three or four hundred dollars a month just to have semi-ok quality Internet. But I think that one might be, I don't think we're going to need that one. I think the population data that's pretty easy to obtain. The stated vision is pretty easy to figure out. The timeline, I think, is pretty easy to figure out. I think really the challenge would be if you have to hold multiple meetings. And the other challenge with hopefully multiple meetings is that people don't always want to come to a meeting, and unless especially in tribal communities, you need to have door prizes. It's ridiculous, and you have to make them be very enticing door prizes. You can't just like great t-shirt. Like people aren't gonna just jump for a t-shirt. But like, I just had to I've been working on a remote work opportunity study to figure out more telecommunications options once we do get broadband. And I had to raffle off a couple iPads, not raffle, but door prize off a couple iPads just to entice people to participate in the survey. So, you know that was a few like eight hundred dollars.

01:14:11

And so, if you have the right person doing this, it can be done. If you don't have

someone who can understand planning processes, that amount of money is not realistic to make sure all of these are in effect, but, like for me, I do our comprehensive economic development strategy. So, it'd be easy for me to like jump right into this because I'm already doing something similar. But if you need a consultant, that amount of funding with these deliverables, is not going to work.

01:14:41

If you're working on sets, I can easily see how you may be able to slide through something like this. But I appreciate you raising the reality that not everybody is in the same right. And that's kind of the hard part of all these programs. is we're trying to build something that fits a dynamic, that is, it's really broad in terms of where everybody's at and what resources they have, based on a lot of different nuances of their location, morality, financial capabilities, etcetera. So...

Kristina Andrew

01:15:16

I want to, I was just gonna say, if you guys could provide a template for this requirement so that tribes could just plug that in. That would probably help ensure that these deliverables are met, and it can be put in a way that tribes can easily do the work. I think that would be helpful.

01:15:43

Here's how to do this to get this information. Like a user guide for that. And I'm trying to pull up that plan. I'm going to share it with you in the chat, so you can see what plan I'm talking about, because really this is going to be a good one to share, a good model for you guys. So, I'm loading it now. But I feel like that might be like, I know the USDA creates templates for their funding applications. But basically, why not create a template for a digital equity plan?

Adam Geisler

01:16:15

So I think one of the things I'm hearing you say, Ms. Andrew is, if we were to keep these potential requirements as they are here today, that one of the things to help not recreate the wheel is to give a template. So, folks don't feel like they're having to start from scratch, but they have a guide to help their way through, and we would even be able to provide some level of technical assistance.

01:16:43

And I do want to put that out there, right, for those of you that maybe you don't feel like this is enough to hire a consultant or you want to try it on your own internally. I mean more power to you. I think that's great, too, that we are available to provide technical assistance. So, you believe, Ms. Andrew, that if we were to put forward a template, and if we were to have some technical assistance available for folks. Do you think this could work given the funding amounts? If we're there as kind of as a backstop and somebody else help guide.

Kristina Andrew

01:17:13

Yeah, I think you would also, I believe, the award implementation period is a year correct?

Adam Geisler

01:17:20

I'd have to go back and frankly, double check that. I don't want to misspeak, so I need to go back to double check the implementation timeline. But I would also say, I think we have some flexibilities.

Kristina Andrew

01:17:31

If yeah, I would allow some flexibility on getting that plan put together, especially if you have people that have never done this before. I would not hold them to a year, especially some tribal administrators are probably working on other things. You know, there's all kinds of infrastructure funding coming out. They're already really busy people. \$30-40K is not enough to bring a staff on full time, plus you have to locate the right staff person to implement this so that could cause some challenges and barriers. I would say, be flexible in the timeline for getting the plan developed, maybe eighteen months. But I think if you had the right processes in place, it could work.

Adam Geisler

01:18:14

Understood. Well, Miss Andrew, I appreciate your feedback. I think it has been very welcome and appreciated, and just the honest reflection on what we have here. I think it helps us to have an understanding of what your concerns are, and I think we have a lot from your feedback here to consider the requirements there and thank you for sharing the sample. We'll definitely.....

Kristina Andrew

01:18:40

Yeah, I think also, digital equity, there's only so much parameters around it as well like you're gonna have to learn how to use Adobe. You're gonna have to learn how to navigate Word and have software update training or whatever you know. Some people don't know how to access their settings. There's only so many things around digital literacy that can be done. So maybe also having a list of activities that could be implemented that they can kind of like, check the box and say, oh we definitely need this. We need this, and we need this, and then they can plug it into that template, would be helpful. Because I mean with you know, the computer and apps and all of that. You only want them to be able to get online and fill out a form and access to a scanner. It's pretty plug and play at that point and figuring out where your community actually is at that level. So that might be something to help execute this as well. You know, there's only so many online security cybersecurity trainings and techniques you can do to teach people. So just that might be having that template and then having the options of objective, maybe even suggested goals would be helpful. Because yeah...

Adam Geisler

01:20:07

I like where you're going with this. I think... Because you're right. I think, folks, there's so many buzzwords that fly around, and there's a vernacular component to this that I think folks are learning, and I think you raised a really good point of the more that we can help in terms of guiding or providing samples or examples, or even, you know, types of activities they may want to do versus types of activities that that you know, maybe even have another category beyond. I think some of the examples that you mentioned are definitely worth exploring here... Oh, go ahead.

01:20:46

Kristina Andrew

I just think like you can... You can pretty much... Like availability and affordability on customer consumer devices... like you can look all that up and put it in a... That's going to be dependent on the market, too. But I mean some of that research you can already do for the communities. And so, then it reduces that redundancy. So otherwise, everybody doing that same... And it's, you know the data is going to look fairly similar and iPad costs so much. No matter where you live, you can buy it on Amazon for x amount of dollars, and it ships worldwide pretty much. So, like those types of things. Anyway, I'll stop.

01:21:27

Adam Geisler

Understood. No, this is great. This is why we're here. We really try not to do the 'two minute', Thank you for your feedback. I mean your feedback's been great, and I think there's one other item that I'm going to just say. We're going to parking lot for one of the next questions, which is the incentive discussion. In the communities that I come from; people don't show up unless you have a meal like that's just traditionally, we feed. If you're going to bring the community together, then we eat together, and we have our meetings and conduct our business that way. And so, I think you bring to light something that we need to explore what our flexibilities are. But I'm going to parking lot it because I think that will dovetail into other eligible expenses. Which is another question that we're going to talk about here in just a moment. You wanted to add before we move on to the next person?

01:22:19

Kristina Andrew

Yeah, make sure we can buy food and do door prizes with our funding, because and make sure to tell people, call it door prize, not raffle. I got in trouble recently with accounting for calling it a raffle when it wasn't a raffle. It's a door prize. People interchange their words. But I think those would ensure that you have good community participation. Quyan.

01:22:44

Adam Geisler

I understand. Thank you very much and appreciate you being on and thank you to the Bristle Bay Native Association for all the great feedback here. Thank you. Alright, Matt. Who do we have next?

01:22:59

Matt Rogotzke

We don't have anyone else in the queue right now. Perhaps everything was just covered right there. So, we can wait.

01:23:06

Adam Geisler

So, let's pause for a moment. Everybody's always in different places, and I didn't want to say, you know. Let's pause for any dissent. I don't know maybe that's not the right term. But is there anybody else on the line, even if you're in agreement with what you just heard, that would be great to capture. Again, we're establishing a record for the decisions that we make. So, would love to hear your feedback on this topic

01:23:32

Matt Rogotzke

Awesome. And we did get one, Sally Fineday again from Leech Lake.

01:23:36

Adam Geisler

Alright. Alright, Sally. We just got to get her off of mute. There we go.

01:23:57

Sally Fineday

Boozhoo, Sally Fineday of Leech Lake Band of Ojibwa from Minnesota. I'm just going to say ditto on the Kristina Andrew's recommendations. I really like the template, and I also like the fact that when we get community engagement, we need to have door prizes and definitely food. Miigwech.

01:24:19

Adam Geisler

Miigwech, thank you, Sally. Alright. Any anybody else.

01:24:27

Matt Rogotzke

Yup! And another one, Will Micklin is up next.

01:24:39

Adam Geisler

All right, Mr. Micklin,

01:24:43

Will Micklin

Hi Adam.

01:24:44

Adam Geisler

How are you today, Mr. Micklin?

01:24:47

Will Micklin

Good. I'm Will Micklin, Vice-president of the Executive Council of Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Richard J. Peterson, President and CEO. Ewiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians in East Santa Cruz County, California. So, I think my comments align with most others. To see the components of the requirements of the proposed for the digital equity plans are very much, they look very much like requirements for a state and state subdivision jurisdiction, like a state or a county or a municipality. There's different levels of resources, state digital equity and digital inclusion plans have been ongoing for some time. They have available to them the tax resources of the state and local government. They have a number of state affiliated organizations that support those efforts, and they have been working mostly in the larger municipalities, producing digital equity and digital inclusion plans and no those are appropriate because: one, they've got reasonable amount of resources and two, they have a large universe of applications within the state government to where they need space to talk about affordable broadband, affordable equipment, digital literacy and computer skills training, all the computer access. Those are all inclusion issues. And then equity issues, of course, are just accessibility and connectivity.

01:27:11

I think that the real question for tribes that are less resource and have specific parameters for deployment. You know, as we've heard earlier, if a provider or carrier doesn't provide. We're kind of stuck. We can't get it right-of-way permit, we're kind of stuck. We don't have a lot of options, because we are so constrained historically, and

the effort is to change that dynamic. So, to me the question is, what's the benefit of the equity plan? If it's just to recite what typically digital equity and digital inclusion plans provide, we can make best effort and produce that, and the discussion has been very good about time and timing. Given the dollars available, I just think that there should be enormous flexibility on the deliverables and interpreting the responses. Tribes always make best effort. Given the resources that we have, I just don't think that they, a long and extensive and lengthy recitation of what are all, are typically known to us, but unknown as to how we're going to achieve those deliverables. Recitation of the outcomes is going to be productive.

01:29:05

So certainly there needs to be assurance that we are in alignment with the objectives of the funding sources that the BIL, the BEAD and the Last Mile programs that this primarily is concerned with. So that's reasonable. Yeah, the attorneys need to check the box and say, yes, the recipient of the funding, the tribes, or have in this document committed to the objectives the purpose and intent of the program. I think, an intensive review and interpretation, applying what was delivered in the tribal documents to what the outcome is, is an unnecessary burden and stress on tribes.

01:30:06

We ought to make best effort with the information that we have, and a lot of those outcomes described in the digital equity plan are highly dependent on how we get there, and what resource we have to get there, so I am just making an assertion that the responses should be, not simple but simply stated, and attributed to best effort, in providing the deliverables responsive to the purpose and intent of the programs that have funded this effort. You know forty, thirty to forty thousand dollars, it's not going to get a whole lot of verbiage, but what you get is going to be the best that we've got.

01:31:06

I think, Adam, you know, the tribal officials and our staff put a world of heart and effort into these plans in trying to deliver the best we can to our populations that have a lot less of what they should have than folks outside of the tribal communities. So simply stated, simply accepted, and a demonstration of intent and purpose, I think, is really where we're at and thank you. Thanks again.

Adam Geisler

01:31:47

Thank you, Mr. Micklin and I really appreciate the feedback as always. I think you bring into context some very real realities of what everybody is facing here, especially for those that are experiencing the realities of the digital divide today, now, and I think you bring up a good point that I like. I actually like how you said it is that we need to meet the objectives of whatever the laws and objectives are. But we also shouldn't be creating requirements where we're running around rejecting plans, when what we got, what's submitted, we should be open to the fact that the level of effort was, was what was available, and it was the tribes best effort in that submission. So, I think you raise a good point in terms of what we're going to call required. It just makes me hit pause for a moment, and really think about how much are we truly requiring as part of this plan versus what would maybe more of additional supporting information if you choose to include it? So fair comment. Is there anything that I miss there, I mean I'm

speaking broadly, in terms of what I heard from you. But is there anything that I missed, or that you want to just make sure to correct for my understanding.

Will Micklin

01:33:14

No, I think you're right on point. You know there's a number of organizations like Financial National Digital Equity center. I think you can provide links to resources that are engaged almost exclusively with State and local governments in producing these plans as a starting point for a lot of tribes that are going to, their first responses, well, great, but I don't know where to start with this. I have an idea what is wanted, but I would feel much more comfortable if I had some kind of map to guide me in my response. In that way. I think we leave a lot of stress and tribal staff that are really worried that they don't want an effort insufficient, and a denial of funds that would reflect badly on the tribe and their objectives. So any kind of assistance on what this plan looks like would be, I think, be appreciated.

Adam Geisler

Understood. Yeah. So, I think we're back to the template discussion we had earlier. And you know...

01:34:28

How can we tee those of you, that are going to be doing this work, up with a menu or a template, or guidance to help drive the process to help drive whatever the final plan looks like. But I think the other thing that I'm hearing from this, Mr. Micklin, is a focal point on ensuring that the community is engaged in how the level of effort it almost seems like really needs to start with the ensuring again. Maybe the requirement here is that you that this is built based on the feedback from the community and community engagement, and that is the requirement as opposed to some of the other byproducts that may come from that, right?

01:35:18

So good food for thought. I appreciate the feedback, and as always the perspective that comes out of Alaska. For those of you that have not been to Alaska, there's a huge difference between folks maybe that you talked to out of the Aleutians, like we heard from earlier today versus folks that are interior, folks who are in coastal, that are all looking at different factor in terms of support, and how to execute this. I think all of you up there have a transportation challenge consideration on a daily basis, in terms of executing some of these community engagements that we need to keep it perspective. But nonetheless, I think you're all tackling this in different ways, for different reasons, and we need to remain open to that. So, I appreciate you keeping us centered there. Anything else, Mr. Micklin, before we move on to the next speaker?

Will Micklin

01:36:15

No. Just that perhaps maybe help if they look at the information around the Digital Equity Act that's pending before the Congress. It has a lot of information and definitions and descriptions of what digital equity and digital inclusion really is, and they provide some verbiage that could be helpful. Thanks.

Adam Geisler

01:36:36

Thank you alright, Matt. What do we have next?

01:36:42

Matt Rogotzke

Sure, we have Sally Fineday up next, and while we're getting her off mute, Kristina Andrew had a couple of comments. She says, amen to Will, so seconding that idea and that Federal and State plans should reflect what communities and tribes identify, not the other way around. Bottom up not top down, accept what we provide, because it's reflective of tribes. And she's Bristol Bay Native Association again and yes so, for the record. Okay Sally...

01:37:21

Sally Fineday

Boozhoo. This is Sally Fineday, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in Minnesota. As I was thinking about things, the tribes here, for instance, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, knows best where people are, what they're lacking.

01:37:35

For instance, right outside my window, there's Tract 33 community and next to that is Norway Heights, I believe, and then Tract 34. Those are three communities that are right here in the city of Cass Lake, and I've met with our big telecom here in this area, Paul Bunyan Company and they have told me that they're not going to go to 33, Norway Heights or Tract 34, because of the fact that there is so much allotment land there, and that takes too much time and effort. I know that some of the reasons that these telecoms go through our communities has a lot to do with the return on investment because we are small communities.

01:38:18

We also have a lot of poverty in those communities. So, I think that those are things that we from the tribe would know. We know our communities, and I think that if we had a chance to engage with people and talk with the aging and the veterans and people who are living in poverty, that it would create a bigger, broader picture than what the state of Minnesota could describe. Miigwech.

01:38:47

Adam Geisler

Miigwech. Thank you, and thank you for raising another area or another population of focus which is our veteran's community. So, thank you for raising that up here. And you know again, I think, as we're processing all this, I'm hearing some commonality from everybody that's providing feedback, which I'm not shocked. But again, we're establishing the record today. This really does need to be led grassroots with an emphasis on really making sure that the community is engaged, and that the activities really are focused on what the community needs as opposed to just some cookie cutter. I think there's a need for a template. I'm definitely hearing that coming out of this, but also in recognition, right, that it's a starting point for discussion in these community engagements, and maybe not necessarily where everything is going to land. So maximum flexibility with these plans and its requirements, I think, is really the undertone that I'm picking up here. So, Sally, is there anything else you wanted to add before we move on to our next speaker?

01:39:56

Sally Fineday

I'm good for now. Miigwech.

Adam Geisler Thank you, thank you Sally. Alright Matt.

Matt Rogotzke We are all out of questions for now. I could pause again before moving on.

01:40:10

Adam Geisler Okay, just give me a couple of seconds here.

01:40:17

A lot of good feedback on this one, and I again, I just want to thank everybody for just being candid about the realities of the availability of funds, and what we should be requiring. I think there was a lot of good feedback there that I think we need to take to heart as we move forward in drafting up this application, and what we want to see as the deliverables, so appreciate it. Well, Mike, Matt, I think the next one.

Matt Rogotzke We did have a comment a late one from Ms. Sonia Nez. All right, going in.

Sonia Nez 01:40:57

Hi again Adam. this is Sonia Nez of the with the Navajo Nation broadband office. We were having a side discussion here about the actual, the full digital equity plan. Where we are talking about the target. We're saying the young folks probably have the most digital skills. So would this be toward the elderly and the other folks out there the middle-aged folks. And then also, you know, if you teach the people the skills, the technology, if they don't have means to like, let's just say, like a cell phone, you'd say this is how cell phone works, and we can get to the broadband. Do this XYZ. But if they don't have that phone, you know they're not going to retain that knowledge. And those are just some of the things that we were talking about. Anything else guys? Because, and so really is. We want this to work. We want the community to have the skills, the technology. And then question about working on the capacity. But those are the thoughts we were having. Thanks.

01:42:31

Adam Geisler Absolutely, you know, I think, that in terms of who you want to focus on, and really like, where are those inequities currently in your community in relationship to access or digital literacy. I think that really, I think this is going to be up to you. If you want to focus on a particular portion of your population or particular communities. I think that's really what we were hoping for you to identify in your digital equity plan, and to kind of be able to explain why they've been identified as a place that needs additional resources and support.

01:43:11

And how you want to do that. So, I think it's pretty wide open, Sonia, in terms of who. All that being said, Navajo Nation is big, thirty and forty thousand dollars to do community engagement. I mean you have more chapters than you do funds to probably get around with the funding. As you know, I totally understand that. There's some limitations there that you're probably thinking through in terms of how do you gain this buy-in and how do you make that work? But there is a ton of flexibility there

in terms of who you believe needs the assistance, and how you want to incorporate them into the plan. So that really is going to be on a case-by-case basis.

Sonia Nez

01:43:59

Okay. Yup. Thank you.

01:44:05

Adam Geisler

Absolutely, thank you, Sonia, for the good question and the feedback. I think everybody's thinking about this differently, right? I think we went. We've gone from some very small communities out in the Aleutians to very large communities, such as the Navajo Nation. Where everybody's getting the same amount of funding, I think, with the same challenge sitting in front, which is, you know, how do we craft plans that fit given the limited resources? So, a lot, I think, has been shared here today that I think we need to take back and reflect on internally about what's required, and how flexible we need to be given what we've heard. So, I appreciate everybody that's put those concerns on the record today, and even the suggestions about templates.

01:44:50

So with that, I think Matt and Mike, we're going to move on to the next question, which I remember correctly, is the eligible expenses. So, this is probably a great time. It is all right, good. So, this is in terms of eligible activities for the digital equity planning funds.

01:45:07

Are there specific activities that you want to make sure we include in terms of activities for your development of your tribes, digital equity plan, staffing, stakeholder engagement, data collections, plan development? I'm going to throw the one there that we've heard, I think, from a number of you about door prize consideration. So, we for the recording, we have absolutely heard that there is a need to be able to leverage some of these funds in a way that could help bring community engagement in a way that is culturally appropriate and respectful in how these plans are going to be developed. So, since we're on this topic, and further recording and for the summary report, I'm just going to put that out there that we have previously heard that here today.

01:46:02

Are there other items that you believe you want to make sure that we capture from an eligible use standpoint of the funds? And then also, there are some of you that what you really want to be doing is your plan may be to use the funds to engage in the State plan in itself. Some of you have really great relationships with your States, and you actually would prefer that the equity strategies and planning activities that would meet the needs of your community, maybe would be better coupled in under the State umbrella's plan in itself. Again, I realize everybody's relationship with their States is different, obviously, for those of you... Or maybe you're doing your own plan, and you want to make sure that your plan is included and rolled up into the State digital equity plan, and you want to be able to travel, where you want to be able to pay for staff to help engage in those activities as well.

01:47:08

So again, what should allowable activities be for the digital equity planning funds? Is there anything that you see on the list here as examples that gives you pause. Is there anything that we're missing that you want to make sure that we don't. So, I'll pause there. Matt, we'll see if we have any feedback from folks on the line.

Matt Rogotzke

01:47:38

There you go, Mr. James Stevens again.

Adam Geisler

01:47:53

Alright, Mr. Stevens.

James Stevens

01:47:55

Yeah. Food. It's always a big thing when we have gatherings. That's all.

Adam Geisler

01:48:06

Okay. So, for the record Mr. Stevens did share that he's looking for eligible expenses in relationship to food for bringing the community together. Thank you, Mr. Stevens. Anybody else, that sees things that we should ensure, that are missing on the list that we want to make sure are eligible uses?

01:48:44

I guess maybe another way to ask this is: Is there anybody on the line that believes that any of these should not be being used as an eligible activity? You think that we shouldn't be allowing these activities. It's kind of loaded.

01:49:05

I understand how crazy that may sound. But I'm going to ask it. Again, just to make sure that it's another way to maybe just understand that folks are on board with this. Well, I guess I will, we'll take the feedback or the silence as support of the identified activities here on the screen with the caveat of, we should have some flexibility for door prizes and food which I know we've heard previously on the consultation.

01:49:44

Alright, well we're moving right along. I think we have one more question to chat with you all about, and so we'll go ahead and move on to the to the next slide, please.

01:49:54

Wonderful! So, the last question is, how can we ensure equitable allocation of resources for all tribal entities within a consortia application. So, a number of you are leveraging a consortia in order to administer the funds, and that has brought to question internally an equity question. Which I realize, a number of you've been administering federal funds for a number of years via TANF, or housing, or there's a whole bunch of instances where you're already working in and distributing funds and doing planning activities with other Federal or State or local resources that you have.

01:50:42

But again, in the spirit of establishing the record for this particular program, one question did come up that folks we just wanted to make sure we got some feedback on today. Which is: How are you approaching or how are you thinking about the consortium approach from your perspective? And how are you going to be ensuring, if you are the lead or the consortium that's going to be doing this work, that everybody is receiving the benefit of the work that the consortium is going to be leading.

01:51:17

And so I guess part of the question, or maybe one of the things that we wanted to explore a little bit more is, some of you have twenty, thirty, forty tribes as part of your consortium. What kind of assurances? And again, I'm saying this for the record purposes, knowing that many of you are already doing this, and I've been doing this for years. But what sort of assurances have you been thinking about to ensure that no tribe is left behind in your consortium.

01:51:47

Are you doing individual plans for each one of the tribes? Are all of the tribes buying into one mega digital equity plan that is falling underneath the umbrella of your particular consortia? The other day, on Tuesday, we heard an example out of Alaska, where the consortium entity is going to be working with each tribe individually, and they also applied as well, and their role is going to be to roll all those tribal digital equity plans into one omnibus equity plan for the consortia.

01:52:28

So how are you thinking about this and how are we really ensuring that folks are included when you have multiple tribes, and that nobody is left behind. So, I am going to just hit pause there. But I am really going to hope that you'll all raise your hand and give us some feedback and guidance again. No, insults intended here. I realized a number of you, I've been doing this for years, but again, we're just establishing that record and just making sure that we did ask it and have that feedback.

01:52:58

So I'll stop talking and, Matt, I'll turn to you. Do we have anybody in the queue, or is there anybody that is ready to go?

Matt Rogotzke

01:53:06

We do not, at the moment. But yeah, definitely have a pause here.

01:53:13

Yeah, it looks like Kristina Andrew had to pop off for a second, but I think she might have been a good candidate for this question. There we go, Sally Fineday again.

Sally Fineday

01:54:00

Boozhoo. Sally Fineday, Leech Lake Ojibwe in Minnesota. We wouldn't be applying as a consortium, but I do have something at the back of my... It's kind of on the sideline. I have a friend here in Minnesota who had talked early on about a consortium of tribes

in Minnesota, to all be linked with fiber down to either the Metro area or another place in Nebraska where we would have direct access, cable fiber access to all of our tribes.

01:54:43

Now that would be something that probably we at Leech Lake might want to jump on board with. But at this point, we don't have, that's not been asked again. I think I heard about it in early September.

01:55:00

But anyway, that's an idea. And I like the idea, because the fact that you know, for us, we're in North Northern Minnesota. We're in the woods, and we're about 250 miles away from the Twin City area, where that would be where we'd be getting our fiber if we had a direct access to that access hub that would be where we'd go, and other than buy it through a telecommunications company coming through our tribal lands. That would be an option for us.

Adam Geisler

01:55:32

Sally, can I ask you? I guess a little bit of a follow up. So, you're obviously, you guys are coming in individually for the digital equity plan, I think, is what I heard you say earlier. Given the fact that we're looking at a smaller dollar amount than what we had anticipated when the NOFO went out. Would you want to be able to reconsider coming in the application as a consortium?

01:56:04

I guess that's the other question that we should probably be asking here. So, you would like to have the flexibility just to make... I just want to make sure you get on a record, that you would like to be able to modify your LOI, or be able to come back in when the application window opens up as part of a consortium, given the landscape and everybody's finding out today. Is that correct?

Sally Fineday

01:56:26

That's correct. That's what I... that's the timing is just a little bit off for this. But you know what I had heard when I heard about this. This was a person who was submitting a grant application for one of the Lower Sioux tribes in Minnesota, and talking about being that talking about this consortium, and I thought, well, I can't see why we wouldn't want to hop on. You know we're in northern Minnesota. Our hub is 250 miles from here, so that's a lot of fiber that we'd have to you know own and purchase. But if we came in as a consortia with this other, with all the other Tribes in Minnesota, that would be an option. We have eleven tribes in Minnesota, and we're all from this as far as probably three to four hundred miles. You know a part in distance at the greatest distance.

Adam Geisler

01:57:22

Okay, well, Sally, I appreciate you raising the topic, because I think part of this is that some folks are reassessing, given the amount of funding available. Maybe they do want to come back again for the digital equity plan as a group, or join on, you know, thirty or forty thousand dollars for one tribe is, you know... It's not enough, let's just

call it what it is. It's limiting to some extent. But if you can aggregate that over ten, twelve, twenty, fifty tribes that given now knowing what you know. That seems to be a point of potential worth exploring and so I guess, Sally, just again, just for the record you would like to see the flexibility. Then, when we do open up the application for you to amend your LOI, or revise, and come in with a consortium.

Sally Fineday

01:58:17

Yes, I agree with that statement.

Adam Geisler

01:58:20

Okay, thank you.

01:58:23

Thank you, Sally. Alright, Matt. Who do we have next?

Matt Rogotzke

01:58:28

Elliot Christensen is next in the queue.

Adam Geisler

01:58:45

While we're waiting for Elliot to come on for those of you that applied, or that submitted your LOI as an individual tribe. And again, this is just good for the record. Would you like to have the same flexibilities that I think we just talked through with Sally. So, I'll put that out there as a tease just before we go over here to Mr. Christensen over to you, Mr. Elliot Christensen.

Elliott Christensen

01:59:11

Hi! My name's Elliot Christensen I'm the tribal planner and grant writer here at Lower Sioux Committee, and Sally is right. We did put in a Middle Mile to NTIA, or if we have to, if we can't find any private providers. One thousand eight hundred and sixty-six miles to link up all the tribes and support and strengthen the backbone for the state as well. So, we do have some partnerships with the state and, Sally, I will get a hold of you and make sure that you get into our meetings that we're starting, because now we're starting to bond work as we're hoping for March. But everything you guys have said is great. That's the Middle Mile as far as consortium. We're not looking right now to enter in with the tribes. Let the tribes, individually, you know, conduct their own last mile in their own equity as they see fit, instead of doing it as a consortium. But that is something we can't talk about but having the flexibility would be nice.

Adam Geisler

02:00:15

Well, Mr. Christensen, thank you for joining from Lower Sioux, and I think what I heard you say there was that we should allow for flexibility for folks to come in as a consortium. Given the new information right about the amount of funding, if that makes sense, and that you'd be supportive of those flexibilities?

Elliott Christensen

02:00:43

Correct.

Adam Geisler 02:00:45
Alright. Well, thank you so much for the feedback and for joining us today. Awesome. And who do we have next, Matt?

Matt Rogotzke 02:00:53
Sure, yep. Charlie Toddammon from I believe it was Monacan Indian Nation again.

Adam Geisler 02:01:02
All right. We'll give it just a moment.

Charlie Toddammon 02:01:08
This is Kay with the Monacan Indian Nation, I just wanted to say, I agree with the option to join a consortium if it becomes that we may be able to do that. We'd like to have some flexibility to be able to do that. Right now we're looking at it individually, but so having that possibility would be nice.

Adam Geisler 02:01:39
Awesome. So again, I'm sorry to sound repetitive, but just to confirm Kay and with the Monacan nation that you guys are looking for maximum flexibility. And in the event that you guys would like to come in when the application opens up, to be able to modify if you can work out a consortium.

Charlie Toddammon 02:01:59
Yes.

Adam Geisler 02:02:01
Ok, thank you, alright. And who do we have next? Matt?

Matt Rogotzke 02:02:07
Yup, Ms. Sonia Nez.

Sonia Nez 02:02:20
Yes. Ah, Tico would like to speak. Ok, I like the portion with the flexibility of trying to create an umbrella because we got five different service providers on our reservation, and I just... I like the idealism of communicating across because we're so big, but at the same time being under one umbrella just to, I guess, basically you know, one size doesn't fit all. But I like to hear everybody's descriptions of what problems are having. And basically, those are about the same. But how do we get around it together? As a as a nation?

02:03:05
And that way we can gather our stuff to our thoughts and our, I guess, our ways of getting around or working through it, and getting more of the government-to-government relationship on there, and this will make more sense. And what we're finding out is... There's a lot of duplications, and we don't need that and reinvent the wheel.

02:03:33

If you go into one umbrella, it kind of gives you more strength, and becoming one that really does what we're after and to best use the monies that do come down to the best way we can and make the most of it what we can and that's what we're working on right now. Thank you.

Adam Geisler

02:03:52

And to the Navajo nation, again just to confirm what I'm hearing you say is maximum flexibility. In allowing folks to maybe amend their LOIs or permit an adjustment if they came in individually to consortiums, correct?

Sonia Nez

02:04:12

Correct. Thank you.

Adam Geisler

02:04:14

Thank you, alright. Who else do we have, Matt?

Matt Rogotzke

02:04:17

Uh, no one else in the queue. But we had a question from Pamela Mats about. Is there a match, she thought she heard about a fifty percent match. Just I think from the Minnesota comment.

Adam Geisler

02:04:29

Gotcha. Yeah, so this program is non-competitive, and there is no match that we're talking about here. So, there's a which is a good thing right? Always happy when we're able to not add another layer, so hopefully that clears up the question that there is no match requirement for the digital equity planning funding available to tribes that we're talking about here today.

Matt Rogotzke

02:04:57

Yep, and that was all the comments and people in the queue that I've seen.

Adam Geisler

02:05:03

Okay, well, I think that we've gotten plenty of feedback here today and on Tuesday's consultation. You all have given us a lot to think about, and frankly, I just want to thank you for your guidance. We really do pride ourselves at NTIA and trying to build programs that meet the needs of what you're trying to accomplish. We're not, nobody here at NTIA is here to do anything for you. I think we're here to be a partner with you, and that means building programs that make sense.

02:05:36

Given the restraints and challenges and realities of where you are all at in addressing the digital divide in your communities. So, Mike, can we go to the next slide, please? And so, as we move to wrap up a couple things.

02:05:56

First, maybe you didn't provide verbal comment today and you want to provide some

written comments around the topic areas that we had. The deadline for written comment is going to be November 4th.

02:06:10

We like to leave the window of written comment open for a total of thirty days. I realized that we had about a two-week lead time, which isn't always how we would like to do things. But obviously we wanted to get this feedback quickly. But given where we are and what's coming up in the holidays, and everything else that we're looking at. Same thing is the feedback that you shared earlier. But we did leave that window open for written comment. The full thirty to make sure that folks have time and want to digest this. If you want to provide written comment, you can send that to the Digitalequity@NTIA.gov in terms of any written feedback that you may have. You also saw the broadbandUSA@NTIA. Either one of those we're going to get the feedback so pick what you'd like ideally digital equity would be preferable. Also, I think, as we've had our conversation today. You know clearly there's other topics that have popped up in relationship to other programs. I really do appreciate everybody thinking through holistically how the infrastructure piece ties to the timeline of the activities that you're thinking about doing and planning for with digital equity and the implementation of those activities. One of the things that I just wanted to make a quick plug on, and I'm going to kick it over to Matt, is that we at NTIA have started a tribal broadband leaders network as a forum. In other consultations we've heard folks share that you'd like to hear from us more frequently. And so, what we've done is we've established a monthly convening of everybody working in the broadband space on behalf of tribes. We are limiting in terms of participation, industry. We want to make sure that we're really just talking amongst ourselves and sharing best practices.

02:08:06

And also sharing information, the feedback, for example, on the match issue that was raised in Minnesota, for example, is something that I know we heard on our last one. And so, it's also meant to be a place where we could hear some of the challenges that maybe you're experiencing, as these programs are being implemented. It's also a place for us to share updates around the status of the tribal broadband program, or we're looking at having our partners from the FCC on the next meeting to talk about mapping and how that tie into other programs that NTIA is administering. So, with that, Matt, if you don't mind giving everybody the plug on the upcoming tribal broadband leaders network and a little bit about the schedule.

02:08:50

Matt Rogotzke

Sure, yeah no, you mentioned it great. I think it's an awesome opportunity to host ideas. I was thinking a little earlier when Mr. Cutler had mentioned just like how the timing the window can affect manufacturing timeframes. That's a great example that we want to hear on that network, and we hope people can join the network and share items like that, because that's helpful for tribal leaders to just have a touch point with each other. Have a touch point with NTIA. We're trying to connect with State broadband leads with Federal broadband leads, and just make sure that tribes are taken into account for all this broadband planning that's happening right now. So, we host meetings the second Thursday of each month, 3pm Eastern standard time.

02:09:45

We have registration links for now. At some point, where it'll probably get easier, maybe it'll be a calendar invite. But for now, we're just trying to make sure that registration stays with tribal representatives who are authorized to speak on behalf of their tribal nations. And yeah, so, if you want to be added to the network, you can reach out to me, and we'll put you on the list for that registration link. We actually put out a press release today for that. So, if you look at NTIA press releases, you can check out my contact info. I think it's in there. And then our tribal nation page probably has links to that, too. I know I actually have consultation recordings and information in there as well. So, relevant to this, that will go up on our website as soon as we can process that information. So yeah, I think that's it for now.

Adam Geisler

02:10:49

Perfect, so second Thursday of each month, we're going to stick to it.

02:10:54

Love for you guys to register. Join us there if you can. And if you can't, you can catch us on the next one. So, with all that being said everybody, I really do, I want to sincerely thank you for the feedback. This has been, I think, just a great consultation. A lot of diverse discussion from across the country. We had everybody from the northeast to down in California, up to Alaska, and everywhere in between and the Great Lakes region. Thank you all for your feedback today, as we work to try to make this program fit your communities and your needs. We don't want to add an extra layer of burden. We know that there's a lot on everybody's plates. And so hopefully, we heard you well, and we'll put together the next set of pieces that make life easier and can help everybody meet the missions that you have.

So, with that, please everybody have a safe weekend. NoŞúun Lóoviq from myself my family here from La Jolla Indian reservation on behalf of NTIA, the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth. Thank you for your participation in today's consultation. Have a blessed day. Thank you so much. And thank you to the team. Matt, Maci, Crystal, Isabel, Mike, for the support, and pulling this off with the consultation. Appreciate everybody's help with support today. Thank you.