

**INTERNET
FOR ALL**

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

November 3, 2023



Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program – Accomplishments and Milestones

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Funding pool
\$3.00B

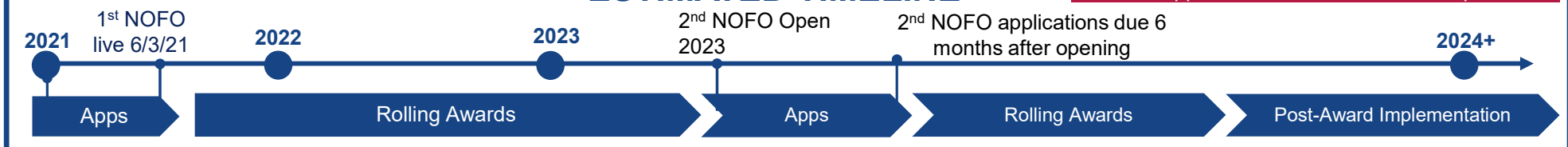
A program to deploy high-speed internet in tribal communities.

The **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)** added \$2 billion to the existing TBCP and relaxed time requirements of the original program. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 created the TBCP and allocated \$980 million for high-speed internet deployment in Tribal communities.

Entities eligible to apply include tribal entities, Native Hawaiian communities and Alaskan native entities.

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified



TBCP Accomplishments



To date, TBCP has awarded over \$1.78 billion in funding to Tribal governments, Tribal Organizations, Tribal Colleges, and Alaska Native Corporations.

191

Total Awards Made

284

Participating Tribal
Governments

159,228

Estimated Tribal
Households with a New
Connection



**Tribal Broadband
Connectivity Program –
Round 2**

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program



How Much	Approximately \$980 Million
Who can apply	Tribal Governments, Tribal organizations, Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs), the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands on behalf of the Native Hawaiian Community, and Alaska Native Corporations.
For What	To expand broadband adoption and deployment on Tribal lands, as well as to support distance learning, remote work, and telehealth for Tribal citizens.
When	NTIA started accepting applications for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grants on July 27, 2023. All applications must be received (or postmarked) by January 23, 2024.



Tribal Grant Program | Eligible Entities



Section 905(a)(8) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Act), stipulates the following eligible entities:

- Tribal Governments;
- Tribal Colleges or Universities;
- The Department of Hawaiian Homelands on behalf of the Native Hawaiian Community, including Native Hawaiian education programs;
- Tribal organizations; and
- Native corporations as defined under Section 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Eligible Entities that previously received Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program grant funding may apply for additional grant funding



Tribal Grant Program | Eligible Lands



Section 905(a)(13) of the Act defines Tribal Land that can be served as:

- any land located within the boundaries of (i) an Indian reservation, pueblo, or rancharia; or (ii) a former reservation within Oklahoma;
- any land not located within the boundaries of an Indian reservation, pueblo, or rancharia, the title to which is held—
 - (i) in trust by the United States for the benefit of an Indian Tribe or an individual Indian;
 - (ii) by an Indian Tribe or an individual Indian, subject to restriction against alienation under laws of the United States; or
 - (iii) by a dependent Indian community;
- any land located within a region established pursuant to section 7(a) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1606(a));
- Hawaiian Home Lands, as defined in section 801 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4221); or
- those areas or communities designated by the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior that are near, adjacent, or contiguous to reservations where financial assistance and social service programs are provided to Indians because of their status as Indians.



Tribal Grant Program | Eligible Entities – Equitable Distribution



To meet the equitable distribution requirement of the Act, NTIA will allocate up to \$500,000 to each of the Federally Recognized Tribes delineated by the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs (including those listed parenthetically). These Tribes may receive awards if:

- The application passes Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review, Merit Review, and Programmatic Review, and
- The applicant or relevant tribal government has not received funding previously under TBCP, or
- The consortium applicant represents tribal governments which have not received funding previously under TBCP.



Key Requirements of TBCP



- Eligible entities cannot be a part of more than one application
- 18 months from award for grantee to commit funds
- Up to 4-year period of performance for all awards, unless an extension is granted (see next slide)
- May only use up to 2% of grant funds received for an eligible entity's administrative expenses
- For Infrastructure Deployment, may only use up to 2.5% of the total project costs for Planning, Feasibility, and Sustainability Studies related to the project

Eligible entities receiving awards for new construction of broadband infrastructure must prioritize projects deploying that infrastructure to unserved Tribal households



Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program Eligible Projects

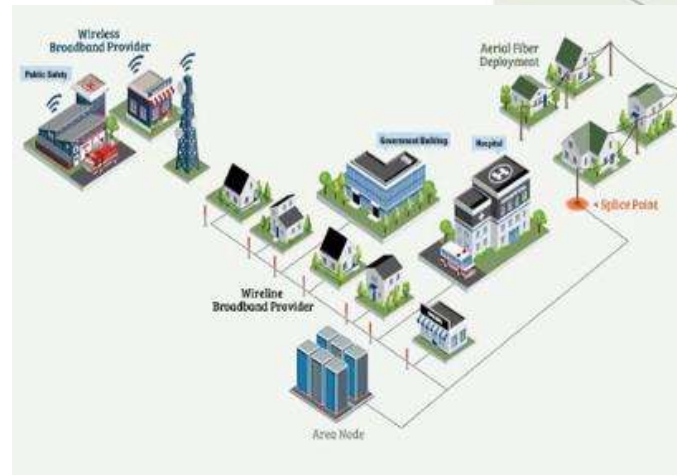
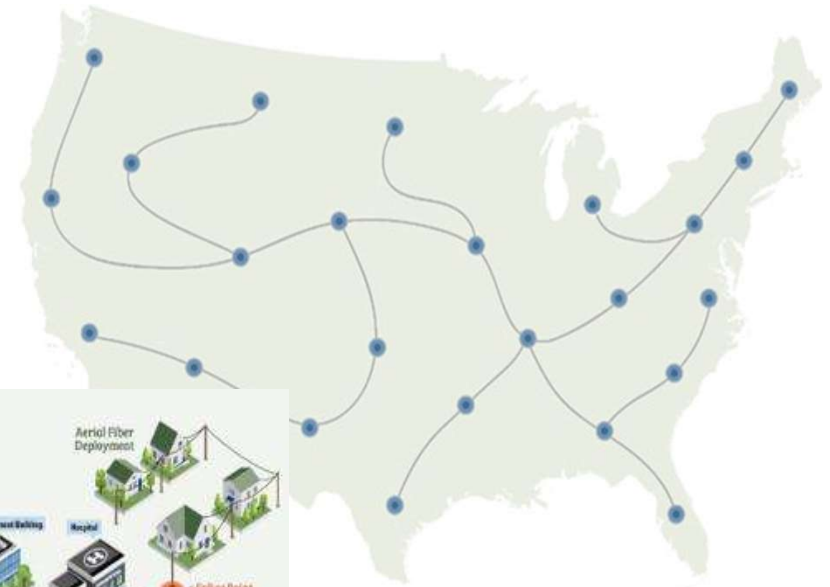
Eligible Projects - Infrastructure



- Middle mile
- Last mile
- Submarine cable landing stations

Projects cannot:

- Duplicate previous federal funding
- Rely on future satellite connections



Eligible Projects - Adoption and Use



Projects that promote the adoption and use of broadband services, including:

- affordable broadband programs, such as providing free or reduced-cost broadband service and preventing disconnection of existing broadband service
- distance learning
- telehealth
- digital inclusion efforts
- broadband adoption activities



Examples of Digital Inclusion Programs



Access / Affordability

- Discount Broadband, Public WiFi, Cell on Wheels (COWs), Mobile Hotspots, Internet in Public / Affordable Housing, WiFi Buses, FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program promotion*

Devices

- School Laptop Programs, Refurbished Computers, Discount Computers, Laptop Lending, Public Computer Centers, Mobile Computer Labs

Technical Help and Support

- Tech Support Hotlines, Digital Connectors / Navigators, Technology Organizers, Volunteers, Community Tech Events

Digital Skills Training

- Digital Literacy, Online Safety, Workforce Training and Apprenticeships, Health, STEM/STEAM

***Important Note:** No Use and Adoption projects may include activities which require NEPA/NHPA clearance



Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program – Round Two Key Changes – Mapping

Round Two Key Changes



The significant changes established for mapping requirements in round two of TBCP funding will:

- Allow application reviewers to efficiently identify critical components of the proposed service area, proposed network, and households, businesses, and community anchor institutions to be served.
- Facilitate the broadband availability and de-duplication analysis.

*See page 27 of the NOFO for "Maps of Proposed Service Areas" requirements



Round Two Application Mapping Requirements

Application Mapping Requirements



- Applicants must submit mapping in the form of a GIS Shapefile as a part of their application.
- Applications with maps that are submitted in any other format will be considered incomplete.
- Applicants must separate or differentiate proposed infrastructure that is part of their application for TBCP funding from existing infrastructure using separate layers or files.



Application Mapping Requirements



Mapping shapefiles must include at least the following elements:

- Proposed and existing fiber
- Proposed and existing infrastructure (e.g., towers, power poles, buildings, or structures)
- Distance/location of overhead construction
- Distance/location of underground construction
- Drop points (identify if overhead or underground)
- Fiber counts
- Innerduct size and count
- Handholes and testing stations
- Power supply and backup power
- Backhaul connection
- Tribal boundary
- Tribal home locations (proposed connections)
- Tribal business locations (proposed connections)
- Community Anchor Institution locations (proposed locations)
- Proposed service area
- Last mile connections (proposed connections)
- Points of presence
- Proposed or existing network shelter
- Census blocks
- Network propagation maps



How to Apply

Required Forms – Infrastructure Deployment Cont.



- **Budget Narrative**
- **Detailed Budget Justification**
- **Pro Forma Financials**
- **Maps of Proposed Service Area**
 - **Maps must be submitted as GIS shapefiles**
 - **Maps should include all existing and proposed broadband infrastructure, proposed service locations, and network details (e.g. fiber counts, power supply, drop points)**
- **Tribal Resolution(s) of Consent**
- **Tribal Government Certification of Unserved Areas**



Required Disclosures for Certification



To be valid, an applicant's certification of unserved areas must include:

- Disclosure of all Enforceable Buildout Commitments.
- Disclosure of a terminated Enforceable Buildout Commitment. Failure to disclose may result in NTIA removing the application from consideration for TBCP funding.
- Disclosure of the presence of facilities capable of delivering qualifying broadband service, including fiber facilities or other broadband technology, deployed on Tribal Lands if the Tribe has knowledge of their locations.
- Disclosure of the Tribe's participation in the FCC's challenge process for its National Broadband Map or its participation in the state's submission for the FCC's challenge process for its National Broadband Map. Provide documentation of the challenge(s) submitted.
 - Certifications should include the total number of locations within the proposed service area included in an applicant's challenge



Broadband Equity, Access And Deployment (BEAD)

THE BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS AND DEPLOYMENT (BEAD) PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FUNDED BY THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW



Where we are today...

Many Americans lack access to affordable, reliable, high - speed Internet

America runs on high-speed internet. A strong internet connection powers our economy and supports education. It fosters better public health. And, it connects loved ones and strengthens social ties. But not everyone is connected. Too many Americans are cut off from the opportunities that high-speed internet makes possible. That's why we're working to bring high-speed internet to all Americans.

... and where we're going

The BEAD Program includes \$42B for high -speed Internet access

Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, BEAD is a federal grant program that aims to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it to and increase adoption of high-speed internet. BEAD prioritizes unserved locations that have no internet access or that only have access under 25/3 Mbps and underserved locations only have access under 100/20 Mbps.



Select BEAD program details



Eligible entities

- All 50 States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
- Other Territories: U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Example eligible uses of funds

- Planning for the deployment of high-speed Internet, including conducting research, collecting data, outreach, and training
- Deploying or upgrading Internet in unserved or underserved areas or improving service to community anchor organizations
- Installing Internet and Wi-Fi in multi-unit residential buildings
- Adoption and digital equity programs
- Workforce development programs and vocational training

Ways to get involved

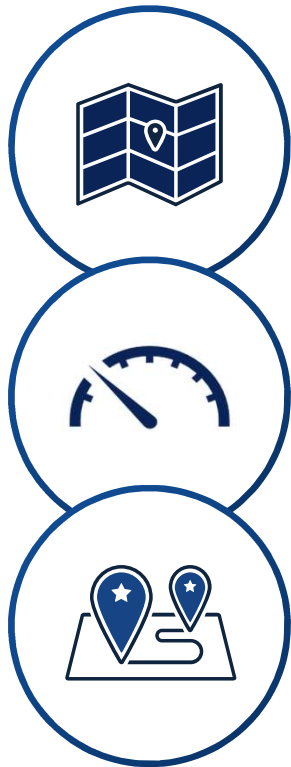
Eligible entities must conduct coordination with local governments, Tribes, community orgs, and individuals within their jurisdiction. Members of the public are encouraged to contact U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and territories to learn about more ways to get involved.



Tribal Consultation & Coordination



Engaging Tribal Entities is key to tackling their complex and unique challenges related to high-speed Internet.



Due to a unique set of challenges related to **geography, topography,** and **persistent poverty** and **historical disinvestment** by the Federal and state governments, among other factors...

...Tribal Entities often experience Internet service that is **unreliable,** **slow,** and **expensive,** if available at all.

Engaging Tribal stakeholders is critical to **understanding these communities' challenges** and **coordinating resources** to meet their needs.



BEAD Requirements

To the extent the Eligible Entity encompasses sovereign Tribal or Native entities, the Eligible Entity **must ensure** that such entities are **involved in development of the Eligible Entity's plans,** including, but not limited to a **formal Tribal consultation process** with the Eligible Entity.

Digital Equity Requirements

Describe **how the State plans to collaborate** with key stakeholders in the State, including Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations



Tribal Broadband Leaders Network

Tribal Broadband Leaders Network



TBLN

- Started October 2022 and announced by Secretary Raimondo at National Tribal Broadband Summit
- Monthly online meetings for Tribal leaders
- Meetings are strictly for representatives for Tribal governments



Resources & Upcoming Events

Upcoming Webinars



NOFO Webinars coming up (All at 3:00 pm EDT):

- November 2nd & 29th: Budget Narratives, Justifications, & Templates.
- November 15th: Technical Assistance Office Hours: <https://ntia.gov.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlSd-urpzojHq00TT9IR5WSWoQBKJeUsGQ>
- December (Date TBD): Environmental and Historic Preservation Essentials.
- December 12th: Technical Assistance Office Hours: <https://ntia.gov.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJltce6orT4pHU1T3A15AG-6Ntu-jZELA-E>
- January Webinar: Grants Online Navigation and Submission.



Contact Information



- Rebecca Seewald: rseewald@ntia.gov
- Questions regarding NOFO 2: tbcпноfo2@ntia.gov
- To learn more and apply: broadbandusa.ntia.gov





THANK YOU





USDA Funding and Community Engagement

FCC Tribal Workshop
Penobscot Nation, Indian Island
November 3, 2023

Presented by:
Jessica Beal Hamilton
ReConnect General Field Representative





Jessica Beal Hamilton

General Field Representative (GFR)

Rural Utilities Service

Telecommunications Program

Loan Origination and Approval Division

Rural Development's (RD) Mission

USDA Rural Development

Committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America.

- Provide **loans, grants, and loan guarantees** that support essential services, such as:
 - Housing
 - Economic Development
 - Health Care
 - First Responder Services and Equipment
 - Water, Electric, and **Telecommunications Infrastructure**



Rural Development Background

Rural Development includes 3 agencies with unique programs and objectives:

- **Rural Utilities Service (RUS)**
- Rural Housing Service (RHS)
- Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS)
- Across the three agencies, Rural Development administers over 40 programs.
 - RUS Electric & **Telecommunications** programs are administered by National Office
 - RHS and RBS programs are administered by State & National Offices



RUS Telecommunications Program History

From electricity to broadband...

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1935 | Rural Electrification Administration (REA) created and began providing financing to promote rural electrification |
| 1949 | REA received authority to finance telephone service in rural communities |
| 1995 | Evolving from the REA, the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) required all financed telecommunications networks have the capacity to deliver broadband |
| 2010 to present | RUS has approved nearly \$11.9 billion in loans and grants to build out broadband infrastructure and expand distance learning and telemedicine services in rural areas |

Telecommunications Programs – Maine Investments

Since 2010, RUS has approved over \$34 million in projects serving Maine residents:

Program	Projects Approved	Funds Awarded
ReConnect Program - Cost Overrun	1	\$60,253
ReConnect Program	3	\$2,727,976
Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program	69	\$23,910,488
Community Connect Grant Program	1	\$1,320,373
Broadband Initiatives Program	2	\$6,182,883
Grand Total	76	\$34,201,973

Telecommunications Programs

FY2022 Tribal and Trust Area Investments – Across the Country

Program Name	Projects Approved	Funds Awarded
Telecommunications Infrastructure Program	1	\$10,233,000
ReConnect Program	22	\$328,314,226
Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program	1	\$60,506
Community Connect Grant Program	3	\$5,611,764
Grand Total	27	\$344,219,496

Telecommunications Program – General Field Representative (GFR)

What is a GFR? – National Office field personnel providing program and project administration, origination of applications, servicing of funding through project completion and overall oversight of award completion and compliance. Provides outreach and assistance as needed for potential projects/applicants.

CONTACT: Jessica Beal Hamilton, GFR
Maine ReConnect GFR and as assigned across the country
Email: Jessica.Hamilton@usda.gov
Phone: (207) 659-0612

CONTACT: Robert Fry
(NY, NJ, PA, CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
Email: Robert.Fry@usda.gov
Phone: (202) 308-8944

Telecommunications Program Overview

- **Purpose:** Provides loan and grant funding to expand broadband networks primarily serving rural residents.
- **Eligible Entities:** State and local governments, Tribal entities, Non-Profits, For-Profits, LLCs and Partnerships.
- **Eligible Projects:** Based on regulation and funding announcements, financially and technically feasible and meets non-duplication requirements.
- **Application Periods:** Except for Infrastructure Program, applications accepted during annual period based on release of funding announcement.

Funding for Rural Broadband

- Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program
- Rural Broadband Program
- Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program
- Community Connect Grant Program
- ReConnect Program
- Broadband Technical Assistance Program



Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program

Available Funding

\$690 million available in FY21, FY22 & FY23

- Loans finance new & improved telecommunications infrastructure, primarily for the benefit of rural populations in communities of 5,000 or less
- Loans may serve non-rural subscribers if the financing of facilities for nonrural subscribers is necessary and incidental to furnishing or improving telephone service in rural areas.

Infrastructure loan application submission will begin in Sales Force in FY24.

Program Updates

FY2021

- **4 loans approved: \$71.1 million**
 - **States**
 - CA x 2, NM, IN

FY2022

- **5 loans approved: \$106.3 million**
- **States**
 - OK, VA, AK, GA, AZ

FY2023

- 2 loans approved for \$17 million (WA,AZ)
- Applications are accepted year round

Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program

Standard Loan Terms include:

- 2 Year Principal Deferral
- Interest Rate at the Cost-Of-Money
 - fixed rate at current U.S. Treasury rates depending on loan maturity at time of each advance
- Loan Maturity - Life of the Facilities Financed Plus 3 Years

Staff can assist and review loan applications before submission

Rural Broadband Program

Available Funding	Program Updates
<p><u>FY2019</u> \$121.7 million available</p>	<p><u>FY2019</u> 3 loans approved: \$47.8 million</p>
<p><u>FY2022</u> \$76 million available</p>	<p><u>FY2021 forward</u> The program is closed and will open when a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is published.</p>
<p><u>FY2023</u> \$53 million available</p>	<p>We are expecting the Broadband Loan Program to reopen possibly in FY24.</p>

Rural Broadband Program

Recent regulatory changes include:

- Lengthening build-out period of the broadband system from 3 to 5 years
- Tying the required broadband lending speeds to the term of the award
- Providing technical assistance and training through grant funding to help applicants intending to serve the most rural areas prepare an application

See 7 CFR 1738 published in the Federal Register on March 12, 2020 for a comprehensive review of the updated content.

Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program – The Basics

Available Funding

FY2021

- **\$40.2 million** available for Traditional
- **\$ 9.6 million** available for Substance Use Disorder
- Minimum Grant amount: \$50,000
- Maximum Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

FY2022

\$71 million available

FY2023

- **\$106 million** available for Traditional DLT projects
- **\$23.7 million** available for Substance Use Disorder projects
- Includes funds from FY2022
- Minimum Grant amount: \$50,000
- Maximum Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Program Updates

FY2021

- **274** applications received for **\$122.2 million**
- **105** grants approved for **\$49.6 million**

FY2022

- Did not run DLT Program due to ReConnect Program
- Did obligate 7 CDS Projects for \$2.4 million

FY2023

- 288 applications received for \$170 million
- Application reviews are ongoing

Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program

- **Distance Learning** means a real-time, interactive, telecommunications link to an enduser through the use of eligible equipment for the following purpose:
 - Provide educational programs, instruction, or information originating in one area, whether rural or not, to students and teachers who are located in rural areas
- **Telemedicine** is a real-time, interactive, telecommunications link to an end-user through the use of eligible equipment which electronically links medical professionals at separate sites in order to exchange health care information in audio, video, graphic, or other format for the purpose of providing improved health care services primarily to residents of rural areas.
 - Benefits rural residents both in reduced travel and improved access to service

Community Connect Grant Program (FY2019 – FY2022)

Available Funding	Program Updates
<p><u>FY2021</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">FY2021 - \$35 million appropriated for FY2021, plus carryover <p><u>FY2023</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">FY2023 – Approx. \$80 million available for fundingPopulation of 20,000 or lessAmounts from \$100,000 to \$5 millionService Area must not have access to Broadband ServiceMinimum Broadband Service defined as 25 Mbps/3 MbpsSatellite and mobiles services are not considered broadband serviceMinimum Broadband Grant Speed is defined as 100 Mbps/20 Mbps15% Matching Requirement	<p><u>FY2022</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">No funding window opened <p><u>FY2023</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">FOA published March 20, 2023Application window closed June 20, 2023Available Funding \$78,933,31683 Applications received for \$272,902,769Currently working on scoring and SAVs (Service Area Validation)

Community Connect Grant Program

Program Purpose:

The grant program offers financial assistance to eligible applicants that will construct broadband networks that provide service on a community-oriented connectivity basis in rural areas.

- New FY23 Strategic Economic and Community Development (SECD) applications.
 - Up to 10% of available funds set aside for such applications
 - Program eligibilities still apply to the project
 - Provides applicant additional scoring points
- Applications that apply for, but do not receive, SECD funding will still be considered under the general application window, there is no penalty for applying for SECD funding.

ReConnect Program

Available Funding

FY2022

- \$1.9 billion

FY2023

- \$1.762 billion

FY2024

- FOA expected in the Nov/Dec time frame

Program Updates

FY2022 – “Round Three”

- FOA released on October 25, 2021
- \$1.15 billion available per the FOA
- Application window **closed** on March 9, 2022
- **305** applications submitted: **\$4.81 billion requested**
- **103 projects** funded totaling **\$1.68 billion**
 - Over 30 States/Territories impacted

FY2023 – “Round Four”

- FOA released on August 4, 2022
- \$1 billion available per the FOA
- Application window **closed** on November 2, 2022
- **258** Applications submitted: **\$4.4 billion requested**
- **89 awards** funded for **\$1.734 billion**

ReConnect Program

Program Purpose:

The ReConnect Program provides loans, grants, and loan-grant combinations to bring high-speed internet to rural areas that lack sufficient access to broadband. ReConnect Program funds can be used to fund the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service.

- Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) establishes:
 - Broadband eligibility speeds
 - Scoring Criteria
 - Project and Funding requirements for application period
 - Other FOA requirements based on reference from regulation 7 CFR 1740
- Applications through online portal – www.usda.gov/reconnect

ReConnect Program (Continued)

- 3 Year Principal & Interest deferment on Loan funds
- 5 Year Construction Period
- Applications require annual, unqualified, comparative audit for eligibility
- Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA): Contains important eligibility, scoring and application requirements for funding window.
- Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA): Authorized \$2 Billion for additional ReConnect Funding. (Round 4)

ReConnect Program (FY2023 Overview)

Type of Funding Available	Total Funding and Maximum Award Available	Key Funding Requirements
100 Percent Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$150 million total funds • \$25 million maximum, per project • \$35 million maximum per project if the PFSA meets certain guidelines detailed in the FOA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive review based on scoring criteria • 25 percent cash match requirement
Loan-Grant Combination (50-50)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total funds: \$150 million for loans, \$150 million for grants • \$25 million maximum for the grant, per project • \$25 million maximum for the loan, per project • Loan and grant amounts will always be equal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive review based on scoring criteria • Interest rate set at the U.S. Treasury rate at the time of each advance of funds
100 Percent Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$150 million total funds • \$50 million maximum, per project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds are awarded on a rolling basis until exhausted • Interest rate is fixed at 2 percent
100 Percent Grant for Tribal Governments, Alaska Native Corporations, Colonias, Persistent Poverty Areas, and Socially-Vulnerable Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$350 million total funds • \$25 million maximum, per project • \$35 million maximum per project if the PFSA meets certain guidelines detailed in the FOA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only available to those entities and areas defined in the FOA • No cash match is required if the applicant meets the requirements for this type of funding as set forth in the FOA
100 Percent Grant for projects where 90 percent of households lack sufficient access to broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$200 million total funds • \$25 million maximum, per project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must demonstrate that at least 90 percent of homes in the proposed service area do not have sufficient access to broadband as defined in the FOA • No matching funds required

Broadband Technical Assistance (BTA) Program

Purpose

- BTA provides financial assistance to eligible entities to receive or deliver broadband technical assistance and training and to support the expansion or development of broadband cooperatives.

Supported Activities

- BTA funding supports include project planning and community engagement, financial sustainability, environmental compliance, construction planning and engineering, accessing federal resources, and data collection and reporting

Matching Requirement

- BTA does not have a cost share or matching requirement.

Broadband Technical Assistance (BTA) Program

Funding Vehicle

- Cooperative Agreement is the instrument used to fund the support of RD's goals of increasing rural economic growth. In a cooperative agreement, federal employees participate more closely in project activities, often working side-by-side with the cooperator
- The proposed project must include a component that allows for active participation and substantial involvement by RD in the applicant's project proposal.
- Examples of measurable substantial involvement include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Joint convenings of community members, partners, and stakeholders
 - Joint delivery of training for RD programs
 - The development of training sessions and outreach materials
 - Joint efforts to form new broadband cooperatives and support existing cooperatives efforts to expand broadband service into rural areas

Telecommunications Program Resources

- **Telecom Map:** [Telecom Program Mapping Tool](#)
- **Broadband Infrastructure Loan Program:** [Telecom Program Mapping Tool](#)
- **Rural Broadband Program:** [Telecom Program Mapping Tool](#)
- **Distance Learning Telemedicine Map:** [DLT Mapping Tool](#)
- **Community Connect:** [Community Connect Mapping Tool](#)
- **ReConnect Program Applications Map:** [ReConnect Mapping Tool](#)
- **Broadband Technical Assistance (BTA):** [BTA Mapping Tool](#)

Map links provides project location and information regarding funding specific to each project.

Available Resources

- **Telecom Programs Website:** [Telecom Programs](#)
- **Rural Development eConnectivity Toolkit**
 - Rural Prosperity Taskforce - Launched February 6, 2019
 - [USDA Broadband](#)
- **General Field Representative (GFR) & State Office**
 - [Telecom GFR Contacts | Rural Development](#)
 - [State Offices | Rural Development](#)
- **FCC Broadband Map:** [FCC National Broadband Mapping Tool](#)

Rural Utilities Service Telecommunications Key Contacts

Assistant Administrator

Laurel Leverrier, Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications
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Deputy Assistant Administrators

Shawn Arner, Telecommunications Program
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Peter Aimable, Portfolio Management & Risk Assessment Division
peter.aimable@usda.gov / 202.720.1025

Randall Millhiser, Loan Origination & Approval Division
randall.millhiser@usda.gov / 202.720.0800

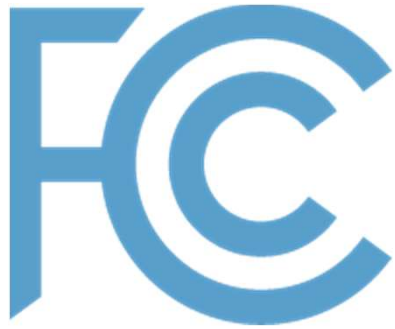
Kenneth Kuchno, Policy & Outreach Division
kenneth.kuchno@usda.gov / 202.690.4673





Questions?

Questions?



Opportunities for Broadband Funding: Universal Service Programs

Molly O’Conor, Attorney Advisor
Telecommunications Access Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau
Federal Communications Commission

November 3, 2023



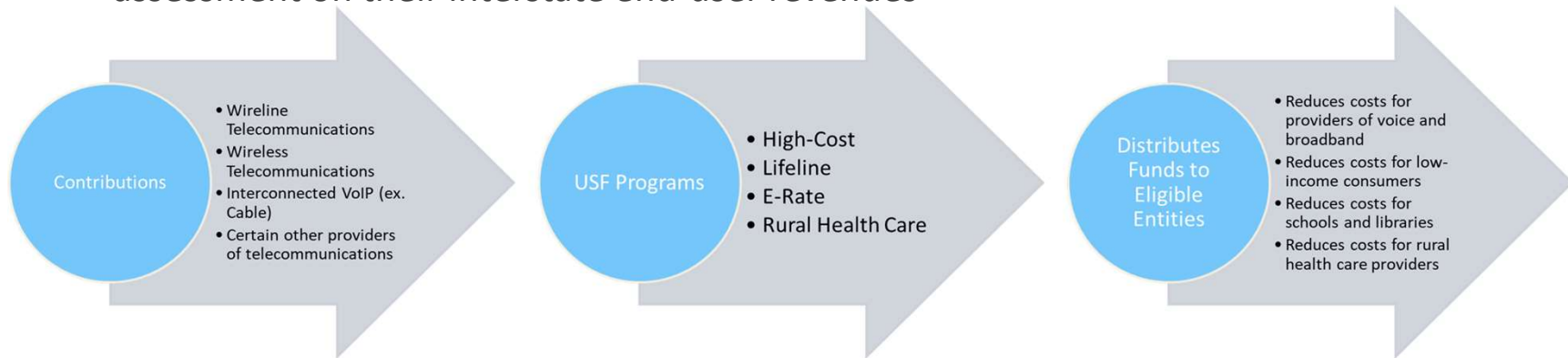
Overview

1. Introductions
 - A. What is the Universal Service Fund?
 - B. FCC & USAC
2. Overview of Universal Service Fund Programs
 - A. E-Rate Program
 - B. Lifeline Program
 - C. Rural Health Care Program
 - D. Connect America Fund (High-Cost)
3. Q&As

Universal Service Fund (USF)

Universal service is the principle that all Americans should have access to communications services.

- Pursuant to Section 254 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the FCC established the **Universal Service Fund** in 1997 to subsidize telecom services for low-income consumers, rural health care providers, schools and libraries, and consumers in high-cost areas.
- The Universal Service Fund is paid for by contributions from telecom providers based on an assessment on their interstate end-user revenues



USF Programs - Roles

The **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)** is responsible for oversight of the USF, including policy decisions.

The **Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)** is an independent, not-for-profit organization designated by the FCC as the permanent administrator of the USF and its four programs.



E-Rate Program

Funding Telecommunications and Broadband
Services for Schools and Libraries

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E-Rate Program Overview

Annual FY 2023 Funding
Cap: \$4.768 billion

Provides funding to help schools and libraries obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.

- **Eligible Applicants:** Public and private schools (K-12), libraries, and groups of schools and libraries (e.g., consortia, districts, library systems).
- **Eligible Services:** Schools and libraries are eligible for funding for 20% to 90% of the costs of eligible equipment and services:

Category One: Services that support connectivity **to** schools and libraries. For example, data transmission and Internet access service, including special construction services for network builds.

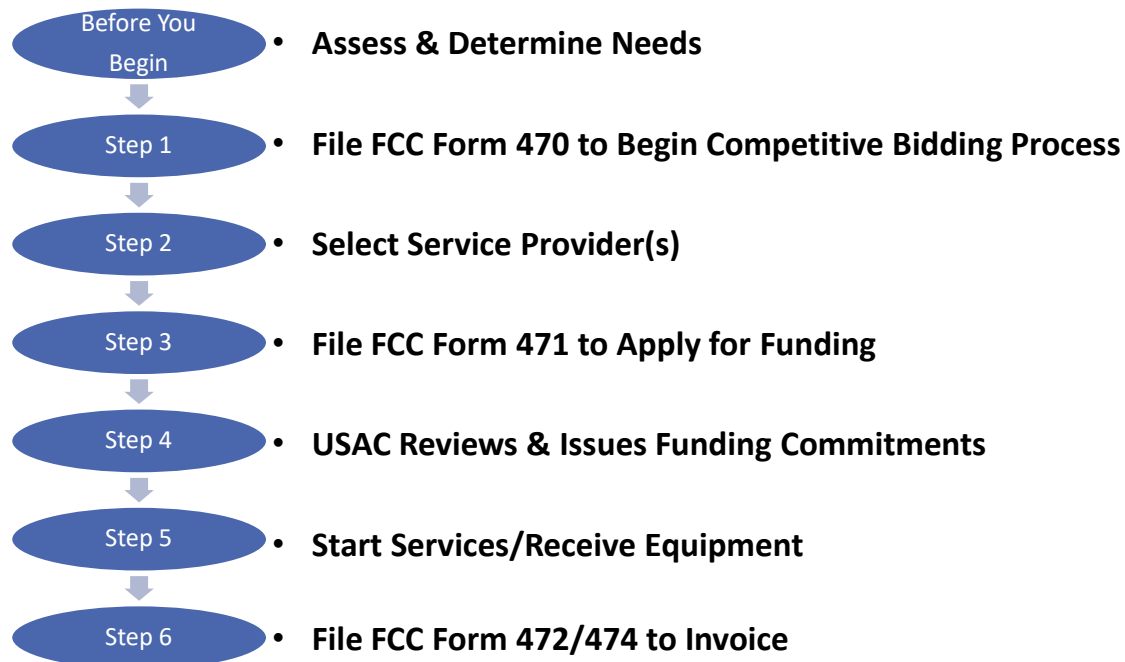
Category Two: Services that support connectivity **within** schools and libraries. This includes internal connections (i.e., routers, cabling, or other equipment needed for a Wi-Fi network); managed internal broadband services, and basic maintenance of internal connections.

**Discount varies based on the school or library's level of poverty, the urban/rural status, and the type of service.*

Impact on Libraries

- The E-Rate program supports libraries of all sizes for a wide variety of connectivity needs.
 - A small library might seek funding to upgrade its Wi-Fi network equipment and purchase monthly service from its local service provider.
 - A larger library system might seek funding for a wide area network that shares data between the library buildings.
 - And in cases where it is the most cost-effective option, libraries and library consortia might seek funding to build the broadband infrastructure themselves (a practice known as “self-provisioning”) or for special construction for services over a third-party’s network to get much-needed connectivity to unserved libraries.
- Since the first program year in 1998, libraries have received over \$2 billion in funding.

The E-Rate Program – Process



When can you apply? January - March 2024

- E-Rate funding is available by funding year:
 - Each funding year runs from July 1st through the following June 30th.
 - For example, funding year 2024 will run from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.
- Applicants can request funding for the upcoming funding year during the application filing window, which will be open from January – March 2024 for the upcoming funding year 2024.
- **Applicants can start planning for funding year 2024 now.** For example, the FY 2024 FCC Form 470, the form that is used to request bids for equipment and service became available beginning on July 1, 2023.
- You can also find further information about how to participate in the E-Rate Program at <https://www.fcc.gov/tribal-libraries> and <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/>.

Recent Tribal Library E-Rate Changes

The FCC has also focused its efforts on encouraging greater Tribal participation in the E-Rate program, particularly amongst Tribal libraries.

January 2022 - First, the FCC amended its rules to include “Tribal library” in its definition of “library,” clarifying that Tribal libraries are eligible for E-Rate support.

What constitutes a Tribal library eligible for E-Rate support?

- Tribal Governments can designate a library as a Tribal library (Ex: through a Tribal Resolution).
- Tribal libraries should demonstrate three basic characteristics of a library:
 - (1) **regularly scheduled hours**;
 - (2) **staff**; and
 - (3) **materials** available for library users.
- Tribal libraries may also work with the state library administrative agency where they are located.

Recent Tribal Library E-Rate Changes

July 2023 - The FCC also unanimously voted to amend its rules to enhance the E-Rate program for Tribal Libraries through program simplification and increased access to funding with the Tribal E-Rate Order, including:

- Making Tribal College or University Libraries eligible for E-Rate if they act as a public library in their community
- Increasing Category Two funding opportunities (e.g., Wi-Fi network funding).
- Creating a competitive bidding exemption for libraries seeking \$3,600 or less for Category Two equipment and services.
- Creating a safe harbor to simplify E-Rate required cost-allocations.
- Adding a Tribal representative to the USAC Board of Directors.

Tribal College and University Libraries

Since the E-Rate program was established in 1997, funding was limited to eligible elementary and secondary schools as well as libraries with budgets separate from any schools, including colleges and universities.

In the 2023 Tribal E-Rate Order, the FCC made an exception, and found that Tribal College and University Libraries that also serve as public libraries, are eligible for E-Rate support.

- This funding is limited to eligible equipment and services to the library, not the rest of the college or university.
- Tribal College and University Libraries must have a dedicated library staff, regular hours, and a collection available for public use, to be eligible.

Increased C2 Funding for Tribal Libraries

Category Two (C2) equipment and services support connectivity **within** schools and libraries (e.g., routers, cabling, or other equipment needed for a Wi-Fi network).

The 2023 Tribal E-Rate Order increases Tribal libraries' access to Category Two funding in two ways:

- Increased the maximum discount rate from 85% to 90% of the pre-discount price.
- More than doubled the minimum 5-year Category Two funding floor budget from \$25,000 to \$55,000 for Tribal libraries.

Only Tribal libraries are eligible for the increased amounts of Category Two support.

E-Rate Simplification and Streamlining

New Competitive Bidding Exemption for Libraries

- Libraries seeking up to \$3,600 in pre-discount funding for Category Two equipment and services are exempt from the competitive bidding requirements.
 - This is in addition to the existing competitive bidding exemption for E-Rate applicants seeking up to \$3,600 in pre-discount funding for commercially available Internet service at speeds of at least 100 Mbps down and 10 Mbps up.
- This means a library can receive funding for up to \$3,600 in Internet equipment like cabling, routers, switches, and other equipment for maintaining Internet connections within the library, as well as Internet service at a cost of up to \$300 per month *without* going through the E-Rate competitive bidding process.

E-Rate Simplification and Streamlining

Cost Allocation Guidance

The 2023 Tribal Library Order simplified several cost-allocation requirements for the E-Rate program.

- Safe Harbor: If 90% of the E-Rate funded Internet service is for an eligible use, the remaining portion is presumed ancillary, and does not require any cost allocation.
 - Minimal use of the Internet service by ineligible users will not require libraries to cost-allocate the costs for this ineligible usage on their funding application.
- Clarified that cabling “drops” or “jacks” installed as part of a local area network primarily serving an eligible purpose (i.e., distributing broadband throughout the school or library building) are eligible for E-Rate support and do not require cost-allocation.

Enhancing Tribal-FCC Communication

USAC Board of Directors

- The 2023 Tribal E-Rate Order requires a representative from the Tribal communities to be added to USAC's Board of Directors, the first change of membership of the Board of Directors since its creation.
- On September 26, 2023, the Bureau issued a Public Notice seeking nominations for the Tribal community USAC board member. Nominations are due by Monday, November 20, 2023. Additional information can be found at: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-23-903A1.pdf>

Definition of Tribal

- To ensure that Tribal libraries have access to the increased Category Two funding, the 2023 Tribal E-Rate Order adopted a definition of Tribal for the E-Rate program based on feedback from Tribal stakeholders and commenters.
“An entity is ‘Tribal’ for purposes of E-Rate funding if it is a school operated by or receiving funding from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), or if it is a school or library operated by any Tribe, Band, Nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska native village, regional corporation, or village corporation (as defined in, or established pursuant to, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq.)) that is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians. “

Tribal Library E-Rate Pilot Program

- Last year, for Funding Year 2023, the FCC and USAC offered a Tribal Library E-Rate Pilot Program to help support new Tribal Libraries applying to the E-Rate program.
 - The Tribal Library E-Rate Pilot Program offered participants with a variety of cohort trainings and one-on-one assistance during the application, invoicing, and other post-commitment processes.
 - As a result, several Tribal Libraries received E-Rate funding for Funding Year 2023 and others are prepared to apply for E-Rate funding in future funding years.
- In September 2023, the FCC announced the Tribal Library E-Rate Pilot Program would be extended to Funding Year 2024 to help even more Tribal libraries apply for E-Rate funding.

What will the Pilot Program Provide?

- One-on-One assistance during all aspects of preparing, applying for, and receiving E-Rate support for the upcoming funding year.
- Overview of the E-Rate program and its benefits.
- Information about program rules and requirements, including tools and resources available to applicants.
- Guided E-Rate Training using the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) system.
- Walkthroughs on the competitive bidding and application processes and what services/equipment are now exempt from competitive bidding.
- Technical training sessions to better understand the requirements and processes.
- Opportunities to provide feedback on how to improve the E-Rate program and the application process.

How to Join the Pilot Program

- The Pilot Program is open to Tribal libraries that are new to the E-Rate program or had challenges applying to the E-Rate program in the past.
- Tribal libraries that are interested in participating should complete the application survey at <https://tinyurl.com/TribalLibraryPilot>.
- Interested Tribal libraries should be prepared to provide a brief description about your library, including existing broadband resources and what broadband services your library would like to offer to its library patrons, contact information, and Tribal affiliation.
- We are accepting applications on a rolling basis, so please apply soon!





Lifeline Program

Affordable Services for Low-Income Consumers

Lifeline Program

Eligible low-income households receive a discount on their monthly broadband or telephone bill of between \$5.25 and \$9.25 (depending on service type).

Each eligible household can receive one Lifeline benefit.

Consumers must meet one eligibility criterion described below and apply through the Lifeline National Verifier:

- Income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Participate in Medicaid
- Participate in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Participate in Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Participate in Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Participate in Veterans Pension or Survivors Benefit

Lifeline Program Enhanced Tribal Benefit

Lifeline offers an enhanced benefit to consumers who live on qualifying Tribal lands:

- Up to \$25/month extra is available for subscribers on qualifying Tribal lands (up to \$34.25 per month total).
- Up to \$100 “Link Up” benefit to connect telecommunications services from a carrier receiving High Cost support on qualifying Tribal lands. Available once per residential address.

Additional eligibility options for consumers living on Tribal lands who also participate in:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance (BIA-GA)
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Tribal Head Start (must meet qualifying income standard)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)



Rural Health Care Program

Connecting Health Care Facilities Across America



Rural Health Care Program

- The **Rural Health Care (RHC) program** provides funding to eligible health care providers for telecommunications and broadband services needed to deliver health care.
 - Telecommunications Program funds voice and other telecommunications services.
 - Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program funds broadband services, network equipment, and related costs.
- **Eligible applicants:** Must be a non-profit or public health care provider located in a rural area as defined by the FCC. Eligible health care providers must meet [program requirements](#).



High-Cost/Connect America Fund

Expanding Access to Modern Communications Networks in High-Cost Areas

High-Cost Program

- The federal universal service High-Cost program (including the Connect America Fund and the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund) is designed to ensure that consumers in rural, insular, and high-cost areas have access to modern communications networks capable of providing voice and broadband service, both fixed and mobile, at rates that are reasonably comparable to those in urban areas.
- The program fulfills this universal service goal by allowing eligible carriers who serve these areas to recover some of their costs from the federal USF.

High Cost Program: How It Works

- The FCC determines which areas of the country are eligible for funding under the standards for each new program.
- Through different support processes, eligible service providers are authorized for support in deploying and maintaining network infrastructure in those areas and providing service meeting required performance standards.
- Service providers report progress on deployment and required service quality.
- USAC monitors compliance with build-out obligations.

FCC Form 481

- All eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) participating in High Cost and/or Lifeline programs must file Form 481 annually.
- Form 481 collects financial and operational information used to validate carrier support.
- Tribal Officials can download and view FCC Form 481 data submitted by carriers that serve their lands using the 54.314 System in E-File.
- New! USAC's [Tribal Access to FCC Form 481 User Guide](#)

FCC Form 481 – Tribal Engagement Requirements

- Carriers are required to certify that they have addressed the following items in annual discussions with the Tribes they serve:
 - A needs assessment and deployment planning with a focus on Tribal community anchor institutions
 - Feasibility and sustainability planning
 - Marketing services in a culturally sensitive manner
 - Rights of way processes, land use permitting, facilities siting, environmental and cultural preservation review processes
 - Compliance with Tribal business and licensing requirements

Enhanced A-CAM Tribal Requirements

- Enhanced A-CAM program will provide universal service high-cost support to participating carriers for deployment of 100/20 Mbps or faster broadband service to all locations served by the program, including some of the most difficult-to-reach areas of the country
- Enhanced A-CAM support offers are expected to be made and accepted by October 2023
- Within 90 days of the offer of Enhanced A-CAM support, a carrier that accepted an Enhanced A-CAM offer must initiate engagement with all Tribal governments in its service area
- The Commission expects Enhanced A-CAM carriers to take reasonable steps necessary to obtain Tribal consent that meets the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD) requirements
- If a state awards BEAD funding to another service provider to serve locations subject to an Enhanced A-CAM authorization, the Enhanced A-CAM provider and Tribal government can notify the FCC that they mutually forego the Enhanced A-CAM deployment obligations for those locations
 - If such a notification is made, an Enhanced A-CAM recipient's support and deployment obligations will be adjusted accordingly

Questions?



Resources



E-Rate Resources and Contacts

Further information on the E-Rate Program can be found at:

- <https://www.fcc.gov/tribal-libraries>
- <https://www.usac.org/about/tribal-nations/usf-programs/e-rate-program/>
- [Subscribe to USAC's E-Rate Tribal Newsletter](#)

A helpful resource for getting started: [Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit](#)

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

**Telecommunications Access Policy
Division, Wireless Competition Bureau**

Molly O'Connor

Molly.OConor@fcc.gov

Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

USAC E-Rate Customer Service

Call: (888) 203-8100

Hours: M-F, 8 am - 8 pm ET

TribalTraining@usac.org

RHC & Lifeline Program Resources

LIFELINE

Consumer Guides

- <https://www.fcc.gov/lifeline-consumers>
- <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>

Program Details

- <https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers>
- <https://www.usac.org/lifeline/>

RHC

- <https://www.usac.org/rural-health-care/>
- <https://www.fcc.gov/general/rural-health-care-program>

Connect America Fund Resources

- <https://data.usac.org/publicreports/caf-map/>
- <https://www.usac.org/high-cost/>
- <https://www.fcc.gov/general/connect-america-fund-caf>
- <https://www.fcc.gov/auction/904>
- <https://www.usac.org/high-cost/annual-requirements/file-fcc-form-481/>

