Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool (ESAPTT) Overview

NTIA

Federal Funding to Improve Permitting IT

Over the past few years, the federal government launched new mandates and funding sources that aim to apply digital technologies to streamline permitting and environmental reviews.

TIMELINE

June 2023 — Congress passed the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 which mandated the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to "study and report on the potential for online and digital technologies to address delays in reviews and improve public accessibility and transparency related to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements."

October 2023 — The CEQ, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (Permitting Council) convened agency officials and specialists from the environmental and information technology sectors to discuss how software and other tools can deliver more effective and efficient environmental reviews. The Permitting Council announced $30 million intended to modernize permitting-related software and technology, and advance permitting strategy.

April 2024 — The Permitting Council awarded $2.6 million to NTIA to develop a Salesforce-based tool to support environmental review and permitting by screening for categorical exclusions and facilitating NEPA approvals for BEAD projects.

September 2024 — NTIA began development of the Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool (ESAPTT) to modernize NTIA's NEPA review processes and support permitting for the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program.

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Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool (ESAPTT)

WHAT IS ESAPTT?

ESAPTT is a Salesforce-based tool developed by NTIA to help streamline the NEPA review and permitting processes for BEAD. Eligible Entities will use the tool to **screen projects for environmental effects, to transmit and maintain NEPA documents,** and to **track subgrantee permitting requirements and timelines**. NTIA will use ESAPTT to review and quickly approve final NEPA decisions.

ESAPTT will help Eligible Entities obtain and track environmental screening approvals and ensure sub-recipient permitting compliance for the BEAD program.

ESAPTT HELPS ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

Accelerate NEPA Processing Timelines: ESAPTT expedites NEPA approvals for Eligible Entities by automating Categorical Exclusions (CATEX) and Extraordinary Circumstances (EC) reviews.

Increase Coordination and Efficiency: ESAPTT provides a centralized platform for Eligible Entities to submit the documentation of each project's potential environmental effects to NTIA for review.

Organize and Track Permitting Requirements: ESAPTT helps Eligible Entities identify the relevant permit requirements and monitor milestone schedule progress for federal permits.

ESAPTT COMPONENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING

PERMITTING TRACKING

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NEPA for BEAD Environmental Screening

Eligible Entities will fulfill their responsibilities as joint lead agencies for NEPA review via the Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool (ESAPTT).

NTIA has partnered with States and Territories as joint lead agencies to maximize NEPA review efficiency.

States and Territories are building NEPA capacity within their organizations to support environmental compliance and permitting oversight for BEAD projects.

NTIA has developed ESAPTT to support Eligible Entities in applying categorical exclusions, considering extraordinary circumstances, and generating NEPA decision documents for BEAD.
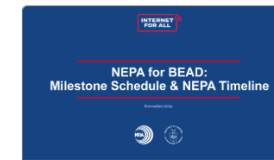
NEPA Resources

NEPA for BEAD

BEAD NEPA OBLIGATIONS are detailed in Section 13 Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) Review on page 7

2024 BEAD Program General Terms and Conditions (GTCs)

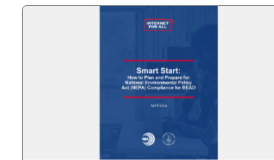NEPA for BEAD: Milestone Schedule & NEPA Timeline

Download Guidance

NEPA for BEAD: Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Evaluation Sample Memo & Recommendations
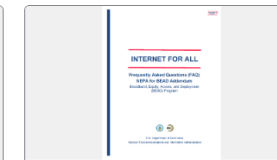
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Evaluating FirstNet PEIS Statement Sections for States/Territories

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Smart Start - How to Plan and Prepare for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance for BEAD

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) NEPA for BEAD Addendum

Environmental Screening Process

NEPA specialists within the State and Territory Broadband Offices will perform NEPA screening and certify the sufficiency of subgrantee documentation through the ESAPTT tool.
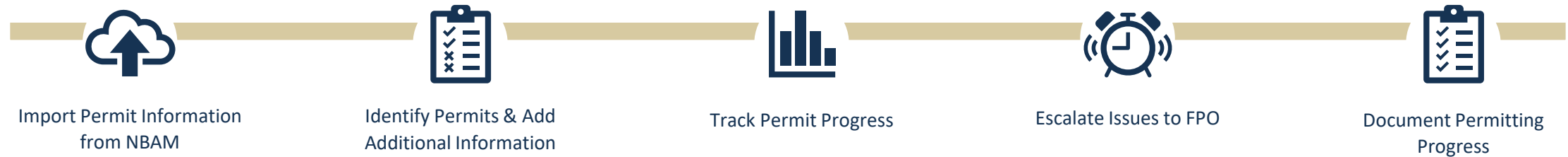
Input Project Information → Complete Tribal Notification Process → Complete Questionnaires → Summary, Validation, Submittal and Approval

ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING STEP-BY-STEP

1 **Input Project Information**: Users will upload a project map and project description to the tool.

2 **Complete Tribal Notification Process:** The NEPA specialist will receive a list of federally recognized Tribes with interest in the project area and follow up to determine potential impacts to historic properties of Tribal significance.

3 **Complete ESAPTT Questionnaires**

- **Categorical Exclusion (CE) Questionnaire:** The NEPA specialist will answer questions on the project's scope to identify potentially applicable CEs; select the CE(s) that apply; and confirm that the project qualifies.

- **Extraordinary Circumstances (EC) Questionnaire:** The NEPA specialist will identify if environmentally sensitive resources (e.g., endangered species or historic properties) are present; upload documentation directly through ESAPTT; and indicate mitigation commitments to avoid potentially significant impacts.

4 **Summary, Validation, Submittal, and Approval:** The NEPA specialist will use their professional expertise to validate that the categorical exclusion should be applied and transmit the Draft NEPA Decision Memo to NTIA for review and approval within ESAPTT.

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ESAPTT | Permitting Tracking

Eligible Entities may track the progress of their projects' permits using the Permitting Tracking capabilities of ESAPTT.
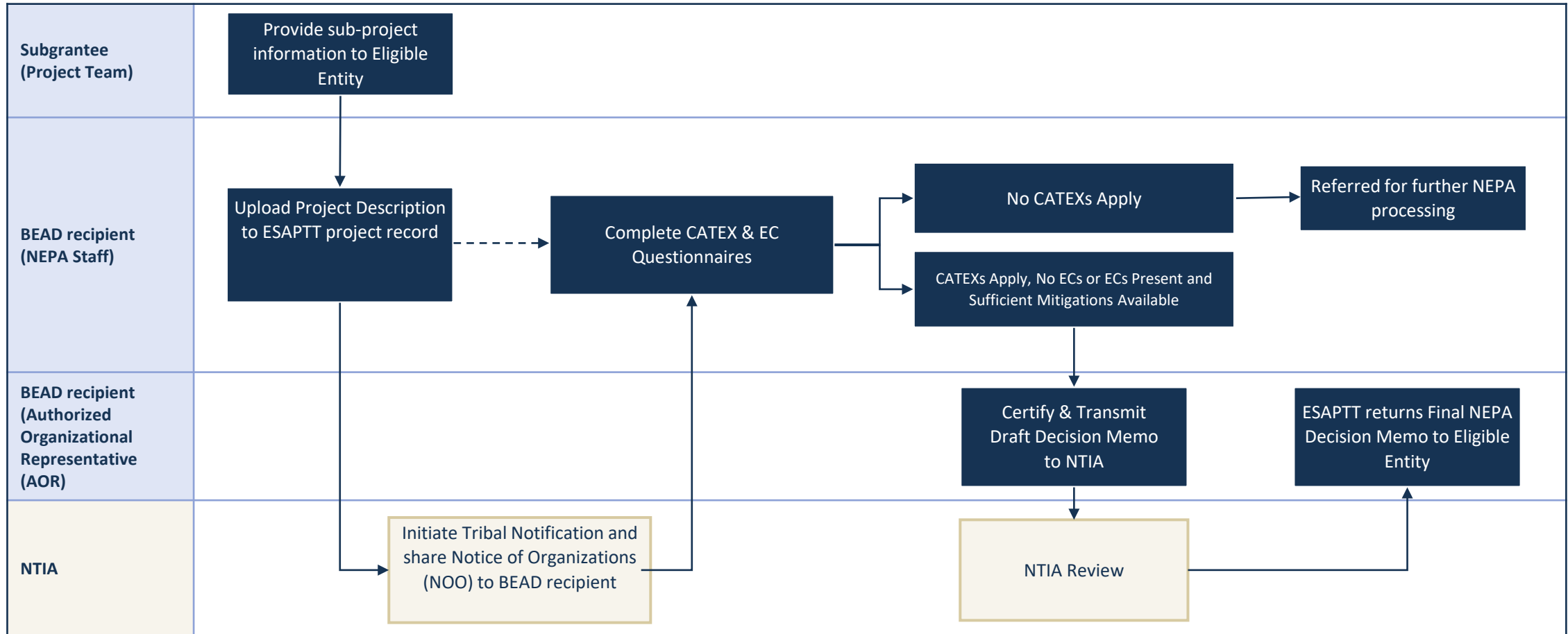
Import Permit Information from NBAM   Identify Permits & Add Additional Information   Track Permit Progress   Escalate Issues to FPO   Document Permitting Progress

PERMITTING TRACKING STEP-BY-STEP

1 **Import Permit Information**: NTIA may, depending on the information provided by NTIA's National Broadband Availability Map, pre-populate identified federal and Tribal permits for each project area.

2 **Identify Permits**: Eligible Entities may cross-reference the imported permits with their milestone schedules and add additional permit details to each permit record, like permit type and application acceptance date. Eligible Entities may choose to add additional permits, where identified.

3 **Track Permit Progress**: ESAPTT will have pre-built reports and dashboards to assist Eligible Entities in viewing their progress towards obtaining permits including upcoming deadlines, when data is available.

4 **Escalate Issues to FPO:** Eligible Entities will be able to track permit progress against average permitting timelines, enabling them to identify and escalate any major delays and other permitting issues to FPOs for their review and resolution.

5 **Document Permitting Progress**: Eligible Entities will be able to add updates about their permit progress including the date the permit was obtained, which will be reflected in the dashboard.

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Environmental Screening Process Flow

The ESAPTT environmental screening process will help automate and expedite portions of the environmental screening review for BEAD recipients.

Subgrantee (Project Team)	Provide sub-project information to Eligible Entity
BEAD recipient (NEPA Staff)	Upload Project Description to ESAPTT project record → Complete CATEX & EC Questionnaires → No CATEXs Apply → Referred for further NEPA processing / CATEXs Apply, No ECs or ECs Present and Sufficient Mitigations Available
BEAD recipient (Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR)	Certify & Transmit Draft Decision Memo to NTIA / ESAPTT returns Final NEPA Decision Memo to Eligible Entity
NTIA	Initiate Tribal Notification and share Notice of Organizations (NOO) to BEAD recipient / NTIA Review

This is a notional and simplified flowchart, representing the external ESAPTT user experience.

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ESAPTT | Release Schedule & Features

ESAPTT's Environmental Screening component and the Permitting Tracking component will be released in a staggered timeline in Spring 2025.

EXPECTED RELEASE TIMELINE

April 2025: BETA Release
- Environmental Screening Tool

June 2025: Release 2
- Enhancements to Environmental Screening Tool
- Permitting Tracking Tool

September 2025 and Beyond: NTIA creates NEPA Projects in ESAPTT from BEAD final proposals; Eligible Entities can begin environmental screening

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES

Integration with NTIA Grants Portal (NGP)

Developed using back-end efficiencies and coding elements from USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) NEPA screening tool

Incorporates the best practices from Permitting Council's FAST-41 Dashboard

⭐ **NTIA is developing training materials to support internal and external ESAPTT users.**

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