Permitting Roundtables: An Overview

BEAD Grantees may opt to use NTIA's P*ermitting Roundtables* framework and resources to support project specific permitting issue resolution to meet the BEAD Terms and Conditions Section 13D requirement.

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> The **BEAD General Terms and Conditions (Section 13D)** direct Grantees to "establish Permitting Roundtables and/or working groups of relevant federal, state, local, and tribal authorities and representatives of impacted industries, including utility pole owners, railroads, communications providers, and BEAD subgrantees, that will:
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> 1. meet regularly to identify and facilitate resolution of any delays or disputes related to deploying BEAD-funded facilities; and
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> 2. collect and escalate complaints (and supporting information) from ISPs that are not timely resolved through this process."

WHAT ARE PERMITTING ROUNDTABLES?

Permitting Roundtables can serve as an **ongoing multi-lateral forum at the state or territory level** to **promote early and ongoing coordination** between local, state/territory, Tribal, and federal partners to **resolve specific permitting issues** for projects funded by NTIA's grant programs.

- The term "round table" originated in Middle English and is coined from King Arthur's legendary gathering of knights. The historical reference to the round shape of the table reflects that no participant sits at the head, and everyone seated has equal stature.

- In the 1980s, the concept of "roundtables" evolved as a **consensus-building strategy to convene decision-makers and stakeholders** to identify problems and seek solutions

The main goals of the Permitting Roundtables are to:

Resolve project-specific permitting issues at the lowest possible level and the earliest possible time, to reduce project delays and preserve staff bandwidth.

Promote early and ongoing coordination and improve communication among local, state, territory, Tribal, and federal stakeholders.

Proactively engage permitting agencies to streamline programmatic processes and encourage consistent decisions.

Enhance NTIA's project-specific support for permitting across all NTIA programs.

INTERAGENCY ENGAGEMENT ON PERMITTING ROUNDTABLES

NTIA has been working to prepare federal land and resource management agencies to quickly process broadband permits and resolve project-specific issues. Since 2023, NTIA has held regional interagency broadband permitting meetings to share key program information and deadlines and to foster interagency dialogue on broadband permitting and Permitting Roundtables. In 2024, NTIA convened an interagency summit where broadband permitting agencies provided information to ensure BEAD program success.

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Resources to Establish Permitting Roundtables

ROUNDTABLES IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

When developing and facilitating Permitting Roundtable models, NTIA recommends considering the approach to the following meeting and issue resolutions steps:

1 **Prioritize Agenda Issues |** Identify cross-program permitting delays and issues with NTIA to develop an agenda and prioritize discussion topics.

2 **Invite Partners |** Develop an invitation list based on the agenda to ensure all stakeholders are included.

3 **Facilitate an Effective Meeting |** Host and facilitate the Roundtables meeting with a structured facilitation plan that covers notetaking, technology support, and a forum for open discussion as needed.

4 **Support Issue Resolution |** Track and follow-up on actions, answer questions using available program knowledge, and share meeting summaries with key next steps to support issue resolution.

TOOLS TO SUPPORT ROUNDTABLES

BEAD Subgrantee Milestone Schedule
Subgrantees are required to prepare the BEAD Milestone Schedule and share with their EEs. SBOs/TBOs can use this to **monitor subgrantee progress** and **prioritize issues aligned to upcoming milestones**.

Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool (ESAPTT) Performance Schedule
The ESAPTT permitting dashboard provides notional timelines based on average agency broadband permit processing durations. SBOs/TBOs can use the optional permitting tracking dashboard to **monitor permit statuses and delays** to inform Permitting Roundtable discussions. EEs can also use ESAPTT to escalate specific permit issues for NTIA awareness or intervention.

> 🔔 SBO/TBOs should notify NTIA of interest in using the ESAPTT Permitting Tracking functionality as early as possible to request assistance in identifying project-specific permit requirements.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on Permitting Roundtables and the preparing for permitting and environmental & historic preservation compliance, please see the following resources:

1. **Permitting Roundtables Implementation Guide**: Basic resources and templates to support the establishment and execution of Permitting Roundtables across every state and territory, including meeting agenda templates, issue prioritization matrix examples, and more.

2. **ESAPTT Portal – User Guide**: Provides instructions to SBO/TBO users on accessing and using ESAPTT to complete environmental screening and track and manage broadband permits for BEAD projects.

3. **Smart Start Part II: How to Approach and Implement BEAD Subgrant Permitting Conditions**: Assists grantees in meeting program requirements and promoting permitting success in their capacity as BEAD administering agencies and joint lead agencies for NEPA compliance.

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